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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

NATIONAL CONVENTION

TO SECURE THE

RELIGIOUS AMENDMENT

OF THE

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES,

HELD IN

PITTSBURG, FEBRUARY 4, 5, 1874.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

PHILADELPHIA:

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

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mit the same without even a cavil to our children. Here let us note the true status of Christianity and God under the laws, Constitution and government of the United States, as matters now stand. Our nation is a Union, not of the several States, but of the people residing within the United States. And "we, the people of the United States," retain all our common law and statutory rights, which we have not expressly delegated to our national authorities or restricted in the Declaration of Rights in our National or State Constitutions. So that our United States Constitution leaves undisturbed and enforces the common law and statutory rights of the people, living throughout the various States, except wherein the express language of the Constitution modifies those rights. Among the most sacred of these common law and statutory rights to-day, stand the acknowledgment of our God and Christianity. This is the unmistakable sense of the decisions of all our courts, both state and national. We, therefore, desire this acknowledgment, not only to place it beyond all doubt and legal construction, which necessarily attend a matter depending on the blending together of common and statute law; but also for the purpose of calling the attention of the people of this and other nations to the fundamental importance of such safeguards as will prevent the loss of our religious securities by mere supineness and indifference,—those insidious enemies of liberty. In view of all the considerations we have advanced, we claim that this movement is one of great practical importance; for without the spirit and inspiration of true Christianity to keep a nation from corruption and decay, certain national death must follow. You may build your national edifice with all the embellishments of architectural grandeur; you may construct it with all the durability of the Pyramids; you may dedicate it to reason, science and intellectual culture; you may decorate it with all the beauties of nature and art, you may fill it with all the luxuries and inventions of modern times; you may consecrate it with the purest patriotism, and adorn it with the wreaths of victory, and deck it with the Star Spangled Banner; and yet, if reverence for our God has departed, and Christianity, the life principle of our nation, is gone, your magnificent national structure will remain, like the Pyramids, only as the mausoleum of a forgotten people, or, like the Tower of Babel, as a monument of striving against God.

The Rev. S. F. Scovel was introduced by Mr. Brunot, and gave the following address :

NATURAL MORALS AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

BY REV. S. F. SCOVEL.

After expressing his gratification at hearing a Christian lawyer (the Hon. T. H. Baird Patterson, who had preceded him,) in favor of the movement, proceeded as follows :

My text for this novel sermon is found in the eighth verse of the first chapter of the new gospel of Liberalism.

Being designed to rid this entirely too-Christian country of a great burden, it may not be too modest and cannot be too specific. It reads thus :

"We demand that all laws looking to the enforcement of 'Christian' morality shall be abrogated, and that all laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality, equal rights, and impartial liberty." (*The Eighth "Demand of Liberalism."*)

The phrase "equal rights and impartial liberty" is the blazing tail to this comet. It covers large space, especially in the American heavens, but (as the astronomers all assure us) is "too thin" to frighten any body. Above all, it must not be suffered to distract our gaze from the nucleus, in which, indeed, I think there is enough solid matter to eclipse the sun. And, in short, that is just what they propose to do with it. Listen! "We demand that all laws looking to the enforcement of 'Christian' morality shall be abrogated, and that all laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality."

This is radical enough. It admits there are laws founded on Christian morality and looking to its enforcement, but, so far as this part of our national edifice is concerned, it must be taken down to the foundations, and rebuilt on an entirely different pattern. The plummet, rule and line must be changed. What has been built upon Christ, ("other foundation can no man lay,") must be built now on Nature.

THE ISSUE IS SQUARE AND CLEAR.

We ought to look before we leap, for this is a long way down. The change which they seek is so deep-going and far-reaching, and feels so closely after the life-strings, that we will surely be pardoned for pausing and asking for the considerations which support this demand. There must be something to be gained where so much is to be lost!

Christian morals are in possession, and the *onus probandi* must rest upon those who desire change. They must reverse the lesson of the past, and show the oppression and misery which have resulted from the type of morals chosen at its foundation by this nation. They must show the vast superiority of natural morals. They must overcome the inertia of a century's success.

When it is answered that all this is urged against our own position in seeking the Religious Amendment, we submit and accept the task, and they must do the same. We are ready to prove the need of our amendment by our past history, and stand waiting for them to prove the need of the change they advocate. But we would not exchange places for the world. We seek to cut out the last tucks by which the garment shall be stretched to meet the life throbbing within it; they seek to accommodate the boy to his trousers; and because the original pattern has become too small, to cut the growing legs to suit. We have only an omission to supply, they have a century of commissions to bring the nation to repentance for. We are trying to develop the bud of our national century-plant just ready to burst; they seek to change its life and make it a cryptogamous plant, and keep only the thorny outside of the cactus. We are willing to take our part of the *onus probandi*, and they must take theirs.

While waiting for this, a work they have scarcely taken in yet in its magnitude, we can very easily see certain very clear and strong reasons for retaining the laws that are founded upon Christian morality. One only of these I have now time to adduce.

The first great consideration which disposes us not to yield to this demand, is the conviction that upon comparison we shall find much that we have hitherto counted not only good but indispensable, lost in the substitution proposed.

We consider that Christian morality in its most condensed expression is the moral law as given upon Sinai, with all the added light and force it derives from its re-annunciation by Christ, from His exemplifying life and spiritualizing interpretation. Our general estimate of the value of this moral standard was admirably expressed

by the lamented Guthrie when he called the Decalogue "the ten stones of the arch on which our domestic happiness, the purity of society, the security of life and property, and the prosperity of nations stand." "It was these commandments," he adds, "which the Son of God came from heaven (our substitute) to obey; not to abrogate, but to enforce them; on His cross to exalt, not in his tomb to bury them; and cementing the shattered arch with His precious blood, to lend to laws that had the highest authority of Sinai the no less solemn and more affecting sanction of Calvary."—"*Moses*," *Sunday Magazine*, April, 1867.

To see, then, whether and what we shall lose by the substitution proposed, we must look at the various precepts of this moral law, and compare them with the teachings of natural morality, which we suppose to mean the collective result of the philosophy and practice of the world, ancient and modern, all the light of the Christian religion being excluded.

As to the *First and Second Commandments*, we know that when Nature dictated morals, natural morals polluted religion. "They changed the truth of God into a lie."

Men deified all their own passions and appetites, and provided a seat in Olympus for every propensity. They thus depressed themselves by lowering that which alone could have elevated them.

The history of the growth of idolatry is a commentary on this proposition never to be forgotten. The world was perfectly successful in degrading the original conception of God, and making it the instrument of destruction! How few echoes of the doctrine of the true God, linger among the polluted fanes of an ancient and of uncivilized worship.

Men were unwilling to be spiritual because they were immoral. The object worshipped was depraved, and the methods deteriorated.

Nor is there any better hope than this in the modern Pantheism, or Positivism, or Atheism. All-God or No-God, it ends in the same. There is an idolatry with no images.

Natural morality ignores the *Third Commandment*, and provides no penalty for profanity.

Nothing is sacred! Among the Greek and Roman writers oaths abound.

But nothing is more awful and imbruting when unrestrained by other moral checks than blasphemy.

Reverence for God gone; will reverence for man continue?

The *Fourth Commandment* is at once swept away by "natural" morality.

The *Fifth Commandment* receives its "coup de grace" from natural morality, by substituting, for the honor of parents,—

1. Increasing withdrawal of reverence from them, and from all subordinate and delegated authorities?

2. Exposure of parents to death by the uncivilized. It would scarcely claim, per contra, the tyranny of parents living, and the terror of their manes when dead, which chain the Chinaman, and prevent railroads in the "Flowery Land."

Concerning the *Sixth Commandment* the world has more widely wandered still, and yet this interest might, one would think, be most safely of all left to the care of natural morals.

CRUELTY IN WORSHIP.

Human sacrifices were appointed by the most venerated Oracles, prevailed among the Phœnicians and Canaanites, Moabites and Ammonites, Egyptians, Athenians,

Lacedemonians, Romans, Carthagenians, Germans, Gauls, and Britons. They were customary, in some places frequent, even daily, and on extraordinary occasions reached large numbers.

SLAVERY.

Aristotle taught that the Athenians might lawfully invade and enslave any people who, in their opinion, were fit to be made slaves.—*Polit. Lib. II. c. 14.*

The same philosopher taught that a slave was "a tool with a soul in it."

Life and death power was given the Master, and all the lesser power that went with it.

If any say that Christian morality wavered there too, we must answer :

1. That Christian morality, having a definite standard, must be judged by what it is, not by what it is said to be, and Christian morality never sanctioned slavery.

2. That even Christian moralists, who approved our form of it, practised a very different kind of slavery from that of the East, or of Greece and Rome.

Under natural morals, many sorts of private revenge are held legitimate.

The law is perplexed by the extent and depth of popular convictions on these points, though they are often absurd and partial; and not unfrequently justice is defrauded of its victim.

Anger is not tabooed by any stigma of inconvenience like that of Christ's teaching, and the fear of murder. Even the "ira furor brevis est" of the Latin sage, approaches it only from the lower side of advantage.

SUICIDE.

Natural morals make man his own end, and leave him without inspiration or consolation under failure. Stoicism was the purest philosophy in Greece, and transplanted to Rome, but it has an ugly record about suicide. "Good not to wait for death," it said, "but to choose one's own way of dying." Courage was above all, and the greatest of courage against the great enemy. "As they believed neither in God, nor in a future life, they had no other resource but to exalt the importance and value of man, and to identify the notion of right with that of personal dignity. To all objections drawn from the contradictions of humanity, or from those of nature, they added, 'Thou canst die.' When they endeavored to prove that pain did not exist, their last argument was death. 'Dost thou complain of being a slave?' Seneca would say, 'Look at that tree,—freedom hangs upon its branches.'"—*Le Devoir, Jules Simon, pp. 382, 3.*

And you remember the recent justification of putting out of the way the hopelessly invalid.

"It ought to be right to put to death such suffering Christians as I am," was written in Astor Bristed's last letter.

The case stands the same with infanticide and natural morality! The humane and maternal feelings themselves wither under the touch of a wrong conviction of the right!

CHILD MURDER IN CHINA.

A correspondent writes that the Chinese parent hails with joy the little son that is born to him, but turns away with disgust, and even anger, from the poor babe when it is a girl, and often kills it with his own hand, and apparently without the slightest remorse. The writer adds: "You can hardly believe that any father could kill his own child—the little wee babe, so innocent, so weak! And yet, I suppose, this child-murder is committed here every day in the year. I know of hardly a family

that has not been guilty of it. And, what seems more dreadful, even the mother apparently feels no pity or love for the female babe, hurried out of the world away from her arms. I have talked with many upon the subject, and, as yet, have met but one who manifested the least sorrow for the loss of her child. She did not seem to feel naturally. She described her joy when her first little one, a little girl, was given her; what a nice child it was—how much she loved it. But her husband took it, had a tub of water brought into the room where she was, and then put the little one's head down into the water, holding it there, while the poor mother begged for its life. Then she shut her eyes and stopped her ears that she might not see or hear the dreadful tragedy."

Infanticide not only exists in China and India, but existed also in Rome. "Infanticide was regulated by the laws of Romulus, and the practice approved, both by Plutarch and Seneca." At Rome a new-born infant was not held legitimate unless the father lifted it up from the ground, and placed it on his bosom. "Plato taught (*de Repub. lib. V.*) the lawfulness and expedience of exposing children in particular cases, and Aristotle also, of abortion."—(*Polit. lib. VII. c. 17.*) The exposure of infants, and the putting to death of children who were weak or imperfect in form, was allowed in Sparta by Lycurgus. At Athens it was "enacted that infants who appeared to be maimed should either be killed or exposed."—*Horne*, I., 11, 12, eleventh edition, English.

There is no foundation in reason for the transfer of power to take life from individual to government, and no delegation by Divine power.

And with this falls all right to aggressive war in case of rebellion: for this is but capital punishment enlarged.

* NATURAL MORALS AND LICENTIOUSNESS.

The *Seventh Commandment* has always been and must always be the battle-ground between natural and Christian morals. Here the race has always been unsettled; here antediluvian sin began; hence postdiluvian corruption spreads out. Here was the plague spot in the highest civilization of antiquity. Here is where men waver most to-day.

Natural morality, instead of giving us Eden again, gave the race the flood and Sodom, and then gave Israel innumerable sorrows, and then blasted the civilization of east and west and the Grecian peninsula; just because it ignored the Seventh Commandment. The peril of licentiousness underlies the race in every condition other than that of Christian morality.

It is inevitable. Cut off the protecting growth of moral laws even for one generation, and this evil crop sprouts and takes the field.

The indulgence shown to incipient forms of vice, in even the most refined societies of the world, proves how ready it is to seize its first opportunity, and become dominant.

The tendency to this evil seems so omnipresent in human history that it has suborned religion for its purveyor constantly. It will come in through the temple door, if everything else be shut, unless the presence of Christ be there.

Natural evil is so strong that it has perverted even the Christian faith from the purity of its morals. Remember the abominations of the "Ethics of Gnosticism."—*See Schaff's History of Christian Church.*

Nothing can more conclusively prove that there can be no admixture of moral systems here. The pure air comes only from Heaven. Mr. Bayne says: "If we

drive away from us religion when arrayed in the spotless robe of Christianity, if we will insist that we can devise for ourselves, with the aid of reason and science, better rules of action and modes of life than are offered by that Gospel, * * * we will find religion, by an unalterable necessity, re-appearing among us, but now in a polluted garment, and bearing a curse rather than a blessing. Is there no lesson for the age in our St. Simonisms and Mormonisms? 'The History of Rome illustrates this!'—(*Bayne's Christian Life*, p. 513.)

Natural morality has taught and written in defence of the sins against the Seventh Commandment since literature began. See Mandeville's book, (England, 1733,) entitled "*Private Vices, Public Benefits*," in which he maintains that "the luxury and voluptuousness of one class in society give employment and support to another class." It was the first attempt to found vice upon the principles of political economy, and justify it by a reference to the general welfare.

Lord Bolingbroke taught that "the only foundation of modesty is vanity or prejudice; that polygamy is part of the religion of nature, and that adultery is no violation of the law of nature.—*Horne, I., p. 28.*

Hume teaches that "adultery must be practised if men would obtain all the advantages of life; that, if generally practised, it would in time cease to be scandalous, and if practised secretly and frequently, it would by degrees come to be thought no crime at all."

"Both Voltaire and Helvetius advocated the unlimited gratification of the sensual appetites, and the latter held that it is not agreeable to policy to regard gallantry (that is, unlawful intercourse with married women,) as a vice in a moral sense; and, that if men will call it a vice, it must be acknowledged that there are vices which are useful in certain ages and countries."—(*Horne, I., p. 29.*)

Rousseau—a thief, a liar and a debauched profligate, who sent his children to the poor house for support—during the whole of his life, according to his own printed "confession," also had recourse to feelings as his standard of morality. "I have only to consult myself," said he, "concerning what I do. All that I feel to be right, is right. Whatever I feel to be wrong, is wrong. All the morality of our actions lies in the judgment we ourselves form of them." And just before the French revolution broke out, it is a known fact that the idea of moral obligation was exploded among the infidel clans in every part of France.

If any further answer were needed, this is a significant one: The private lives of the most distinguished opponents of Christianity have been themselves exhibitions of the weakness and evil of natural morality—Voltaire, Rousseau, Frederick the Great, Tindall and Hobbes.

It is strange and yet true, that scarcely an anti-Christian writer on morals has ever lived, but has been found guilty of some infraction of this command, or of some loose teaching which encouraged disobedience. Even Stuart Mill is no exception.

That to which the abolition of Christian morality leaves us is plainly:

1. The legalization of prostitution, which despite all that may be said, does fix it among the permissible things, does tend to remove the fearful natural penalties by which God punishes it, and gives it a deceptive safety. Who that knows anything of continental morality the heritage of centuries of misconduct, the evidence of unchristian standards and the miserable curse of hundreds of thousands of each generation, can regard without horror the substitution which would infallibly make us worse than Rome or Naples, Vienna or Paris.

2. The next result will be the ascertained impossibility of legislating against per-

nicious literature and obscene displays. Whatever is now—and there is much—is in violation of law, and when there is moral sentiment enough, the law can be executed.

3. Then we may regard the reproach of Mormonism, and any other form of life men may choose, as settled upon the nation, and its wholesale destruction of human souls as perpetuated to the day of doom. It is surprising to see how readily such a conclusion has been already acquiesced in in some quarters. Witness the discussions on the Cullom bill.

NATURAL MORALS AND PROPERTY.

Natural morality and the right of property, bring us to the *Eighth* and *Tenth Commandments*. They settle it. This is the battle-ground between the classes as the Seventh Commandment is in relation to sex. It is among the "brennende frage," this inability of natural morality to agree on a basis of property. Europe is convulsed to contortion over it; and the throes have touched our own eastern border.

Theft, it is said on the authority of Diodorus Siculus, was permitted in Egypt; and in Sparta we know it was encouraged as an exhibition of skill and hardihood.

Where the Eighth and Tenth Commandments are, there can be no rioting or communism, for that delivers property from the aggressor, and even the aggressor from his own selfishness.

[The temporary communism of Christian love, when a man may give all to the poor, if he will, is decidedly different from that which relies upon barricades and petroleum.]

NATURAL MORALS AND TRUTH.

Coming to the *Ninth Commandment*, we perceive that natural morals give no security for truthfulness.

Menander said: "A lie is better than the truth."

Plato says: "He may lie who knows how to do it."

Maximus Tyrius says: "There is nothing decorous in truth but when it is profitable."

Both Plato and the Stoics are said to "have framed a Jesuitical distinction between lying in words and an assent to an untruth, which they called lying in the soul. The first they permitted."

Truth now prevails just in proportion, in North and South Europe, as Christian morals do.

Carleton Coffin gives this account of a class of Hindoos whose instruction he witnessed:

"The next exercise is on the mind, with Abercrombie's 'Philosophy of the Moral Feelings' for a text book. Subject: 'Testimony.' Upon this they are at sea. The Hindoo is wanting in all sense of moral obligation. His sacred book—his Bible—contains no code of moral laws. His priest sets human example of duplicity. He never trusts his dispute with his neighbor to the arbitrament of a native judge, who has ever an open palm for him who will pay the highest fee."

We understand in Pennsylvania, that natural morals give no guarantee for truth as against interest. Accordingly, we incorporate in our Bill of Rights the section which excepts to the testimony of those who deny the being of God, and the existence of a future state of rewards and punishments. And this section we have twice *refused* to remove.

God and a future imply Christian morals, because they are the motives to keep us up to the standard from which all courts of justice are a confession of our liability to fall.

Here, then, is the state of the question :

Natural morality, on every point of essential value to society, has wandered, and is polluted in its teachings, and affords no shadow of evidence that it will not debase and disorder the whole fabric of social life.

Natural morality, taking away Christianity, would make us responsible for the infanticide of Chinamen; the polygamy of Utah, the legalization of prostitution, and the abominations of the Oneida community; the sudden disturbances of mob-law and private revenge; the destructive doctrines of Communism; the Fetishism of our (uncivilized) negroes; the code duello; and the lottery. It must encourage dishonesty, and fail to rebuke blasphemy. It opens the way for theft and rapine, and the doctrine that might makes right. It opens the window for every imprisoned dove of virtue to fly away; and flings wide the door for every beastly sin to enter. The outlook is not encouraging.

President George P. Hays, D.D., was next introduced by the President, and spoke as follows :

THE INDIVIDUAL LIFE OF THE NATION.

ADDRESS OF PRES. GEO. P. HAYS, D.D.

In the effort to anchor this nation to fundamental truth on the subject of morality, it is often asked, would it not be better to address yourselves to the people? Is the nation a thing other than the people? We shall understand this point best by beginning with a private corporation, and then going up to public corporations. Suppose Brown, Jones and Smith organize a bank, under the name of the Merchants' National bank, and so receive deposits and lend money on notes and mortgages. Who owns this banking house? Who is sued when payment of deposits is refused? Who sues when mortgages are foreclosed? Not Brown, surely, nor Jones nor Smith, but the bank. And suppose Brown sells out to Davis, and Jones to Jenkins, and Smith to Wilson, is then the bank not the same national bank? Does any one deny its liability for its deposits, and its right to collect on the notes it holds? And now suppose Brown, Jones and Smith, organize themselves again into a bank, by the name of the Merchants' National bank, can they collect the mortgages they took before? But, if, the corporation is not distinct from the individuals, they ought to, as they are the same men in the same business, and with the same name as before.

Now, all the experience of governments shows that it is of vital importance that these corporations should be bound by strict regulations. In the late Constitutional Convention there was no subject of greater difficulty than that of corporations, and every effort was made to control and restrain them by provisions so explicit that they could not be evaded. The very same Convention found a like difficulty in laying down regulations for the government of the State itself. The State is only a public corporation, as the bank is a private one, and the call for a Convention to amend the Constitution came from the people, not so much because they felt that new regulations were needed for the private corporations, as that they felt that the old Constitution did not properly regulate the duties of the State itself. The organization, duties and powers of the government itself, in its executive, legislative and judicial departments, in their judgment, needed revision, and they called the Convention for