Is the Constitution of
The United States
Christian?*

IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION.
No question with regard to our government
can be more important than this one—for on
the answer to this one it will stand or fall. The
Constitution is the legal basis of our govern-
ment laid by the hand of man. “Jesus Christ
is the foundation other than which no man
can lay.” If the Constitution is built on
Christ, if it recognizes and serves Him, flood
and tempest will not harm it for it is founded
upon a rock; but if it is not built on Christ,
if it does not recognize and serve Him, it is
certain that in the day of flood and tempest
it will fall and all built on it will go down with
it. The testing time will surely come and we
should know where we stand and prepare for
what awaits us.

The Constitution of the United States is the
public and authoritative expression of the will
of the nation, and in no other document is the
will of the whole people so made known. This
Constitution declares itself to be “the supreme
law of the land,” and every other law of the
general government must be made in pursu-
ance thereof, under its authority and inter-
preted in harmony with its provisions. All
officers of the government, legislative, execu-
tive and judicial, are bound by oath or affirma-

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tion to support this Constitution, and the higher officers are bound by no other law. All
whom vote on election day do what they can to
send the candidate they support as their rep-
sentative to swear to this Constitution. If
an alien wishes to become a citizen of this
country, he must swear to this same instru-
ment of government. The character of this
Constitution therefore is of the first impor-
tance, for if our nation and government are to
recognize Christ and give Him the supreme
place, the recognition must be made in this
supreme law.

The Bible, which is the Word of God, de-
clares that Jesus Christ is the Ruler of Na-
tions. He is "the King of kings and Lord of
lords." "the Prince of the kings of the earth." UntiH Him all authority in heaven and on earth
is given, and it is to the glory of God, the Fa-
ther, that all men recognise and serve Him.
To the Lord Jesus, therefore, belongs primari-
ly all right to make, interpret and execute law.
All nations are living in His country, all gov-
ernments are set up under His government,
and to it they owe allegiance, and all citizens,
being His subjects, should acknowledge His
authority and be obedient to His law.

Is the recognition of the authority and law
of Jesus Christ found in the Constitution of
the United States? This Constitution declares
in its opening words the authority of the peo-
ple of the United States, do the people recog-
nize in the Constitution the authority of God?

This Constitution requires every officer in
the United States to swear to support it; does
it in turn offer any support to the moral con-
stitution of the kingdom of Christ? This Con-
stitution requires the constitutions and laws
of the several States to be construed in har-
mony with its provisions; does it recognize
the necessity that all its own provisions be
construed in harmony with the law of God?

This Constitution declares itself supreme,
does it recognize the supremacy of Christ? Is
the Constitution of the United States Christian?
The character of the Constitution may best
be known by an examination of the instrument
itself, and to this we invite the reader's care-
ful attention.

NO RECOGNITION OF GOD IN THE
PREAMBLE

I. The preamble, or as it should be called,
the enacting clause, of the Constitution, is as
follows:

"We, the people of the United States, in or-
der to form a more perfect Union, establish
Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide
for the common Defence, promote the general
Welfare and secure the blessings of Liberty to
colons and our posterity, do ordain and es-
tablish this Constitution for the United States
of America."

It is clearly the teaching of God's Word that
all political power should be held in the hands
of the people and that they are to choose their
own rulers from a class of men approved of
God, He Himself being recognized as Lord of
all; but it is nowhere taught, or admitted, in
the Bible that men may, without sin, set up a
government and not recognize the authority
and law of Christ. God charged Israel with
rebellion when He said: "They have set up
kings, but not by Me; they have made princes,
and I knew it not."
The Constitution of the United States begins
with a declaration of the authority behind and
above the government, and, without any hint of divine authority or law, asserts that "We the people of the United States . . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Does this clause found human upon divine authority, and human upon divine law? Is it in harmony with the Word of God which declares that "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God?" No other, no higher power than that of the people is recognized and this power, it is assumed, covers the whole field and leaves room for no other. God is excluded and His place and power in government are assumed by the people of the United States. All officers, States and individuals are accountable to them, but "the people of the United States" acknowledge accountability to no one. This is to assume absolute sovereignty and be a god to themselves? Is this according to the teachings of Christ? Is the Constitution Christian, or does not this beginning lay the foundation for atheistic politics? 

If it be said that the assertion that the people of the United States ordain the Constitution states only the simple fact in this matter, we reply, did not God provide this country with all its vast and wonderful advantages? Did He not oversee its settlement and make it a haven for the oppressed? Did He not care for its people in war and in peace, as was in some measure recognized by the Continental Congress? Did He not control the conditions that led to the framing of this very Constitution? The one chief and pervading fact in the whole history of this great event was that God had made the people what they were and had made possible this Constitution. Why should not grudges as well as truthfulness have led to the recognition of the authority and law of God? A heathen monarch of old was driven from among men because he said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have build," and ignored God who had given him power and opportunity. Wherein does our position differ from his, except in the fact that we have clearer light and greater sin? 

The purpose of the Constitution, the several objects which the people sought to secure in adopting it, are found in this enacting clause and are all of them most excellent. They are so good that God in His Word declares that He provides for them and that they are the gifts of His goodness, but the people of the United States propose to secure those great ends through the Constitution without recognizing that God and His Providence have anything to do with the results of their efforts. The first object specified in the Constitution is ordained "in order to form a more perfect Union." This is to make the United States a nation by uniting them closely in one political bond. We must remember, however, that God makes nations. He said to Abraham, "I will make of thee a great nation." God "blessed the lot of the nation," and Franklin was in support of his notion that graces be offered in the Constitution that framed the Constitution, "a motion defeated by a vote to adjourn."—"If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?" But here in this Constitution men propose to make a nation without recognizing God's Providence, or even invoking His blessing.
The second object set forth is to "establish Justice." God has declared Himself to be the God of Justice and He provides for Justice among men. "By me kings reign and princes decree justice." The magistrate is "the minister of God, a revealer to execute wrath upon him that doth evil." Yet here in this Constitution we have a proposal to establish Justice without any recognition of Him who in the sources and fountain of right and justice. Where do the people of the United States get the right to execute Justice, to punish, to deprive of liberty and of life, if not from God who gives liberty and life?

The third object specified is to "ensure domestic Tranquility." This is the place in which we might look closer at the Providence of God would be recognized, for here God asserts His power: "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when He hideth His face, who then can behold Him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only." This text is a challenge from God as to the power to produce tranquility in a nation, and the people of the United States seem to have accepted the challenge and to be saying in effect, "We will try to ensure domestic tranquility without recognizing you." Is the Constitution Christian in this position?

The fourth object in ordaining the Constitution is to "provide for the common Defence." As the Almighty is the God of battles, one might expect that this would be the place where the people would wish to recognize Him. Franklin, when urging his notion for prayer reminded the members of the Convention that they had appointed fast days in the war of independence to supplicate God's aid in that struggle and that they should not forget Him now in the time of victory and peace; but his argument was of no avail. How different this from the behalf of old who sang, "The Lord is our defence," and even from the position taken by the signers of the Declaration of Independence eleven years before, when, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, they mutually pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

The fifth object in ordaining the Constitution is to "promote the general Welfare." Again we might conclude the end desired would lead the people of the United States to recognize God, for "He hath not dealt so with any nation, as He hath dealt with Israel, to give them understanding in the sight of all nations." In the Thanksgiving proclamations of the presidents we are called on to thank God for His goodness in providing for the general welfare, though all mention of Christ, through whom alone our gratitude can reach the Divine Giver, is carefully omitted, but in the Constitution, which is the supreme law, there is no recognition of God as having anything to do with "the general welfare." Is this Christian? or is it not contrary to the whole spirit and teaching of Christ?

The sixth and last object specified is to "secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity." This is to hold all the good we now have and to maintain it in the future. It is the present generation providing for itself and for those to come. If associated with God's blessing and with builtin faith in His aid, nothing can be better but what shall we
say when it is proposed to accomplish this without God? God knows the end from the beginning, but man knoweth not what a day will bring forth. "Man proposeth but God disposeth." God has promised to keep and guard His people, but will He take the people of the United States to be His people, if they refuse or neglect to take Him to be their God?  

In this ordaining of the Constitution with all these objects in view and without any recognition of God, is there not an assumption of divine attributes? When the people of the United States propose without recognizing God to do what He alone can do, are they not putting themselves in His place and assuming His power?  

If it be said that all this assumption is absurd and unreal, that the United States of America could not exist a day without God, that is certainly true; but the same could be said of every unbeliever among men; yet that would not make him any the less an unbeliever; it would rather increase his guilt. Nothing can be more certain than that the position here taken by the people of the United States is contrary to the teachings of history and of sound philosophy as well, but this does not alter the fact that the position is taken. Is the Constitution of the United States Christian? So far as its ethical clause is concerned, it is not. It is not even deistic.  

NO RECOGNITION OF GOD IN THE OATH.  

II. The next point in the Constitution inviting our attention is the oath prescribed for the President of the United States. It is found in Article II, Sec. 3, Par. 6, and reads as follows:  

"Before he enter on the execution of his office, he shall take the following oath or affirmation:  

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."  

The remarkable thing about this constitutional oath and the particular feature of it that concerns this discussion, is that it contains no appeal to God. If an appeal to God be an essential part of an oath—and we believe that it is—this is not an oath but simply a promise. The Constitution, however, calls it an oath, providing no affirmation as an alternative, and we must therefore consider it from that aspect.  

The omission of the appeal to God from this oath is the more remarkable because it is in violation of the common rule in English and Colonial practice. This oath, therefore, must have been framed with the deliberate purpose to omit all recognition of God. The reason for this omission we shall find, when we come to consider the "no religious test" clause in the Constitution, for there is much of religion in the appeal to God in an oath. Such an appeal, intelligently made, necessarily implies the existence and personality of God. His omnipotence, holiness and justice, with a recognition of His power to punish or reward those who swear. The appeal to God in the constitutional oath would have been in harmony with all past usage and with the present practice of our courts, but it would be a recognition of God and would bar the way to the Presidency of a man who does not believe in God. The appeal to God is left out, though
the law of God is specified in its requirement: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name."

What conclusion can we, must we, draw from this omission? Are we not driven to the same conclusion forced upon us by an examination of the enacting clause, that the Constitution of the United States is not Christian?

III. The third point of our examination is the "no religious test" clause. The paragraph in which it is found is as follows: Art. VI, Par. 1.

"The senators and representative before mentioned, and the members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Every one chosen or appointed to office in the State or national government, whether his work be legislative, executive or judicial, is obliged to swear or give his affirmation to support this Constitution before he can perform one official act. He must agree solemnly to carry on the government, as far as it is entrusted to him, according to the Constitution. If the Constitution recognizes Christ, those who swear to it agree to carry on this government in a Christian way; and if it does not recognize Christ, they agree to carry on this Government without Christ. If it recognizes the law of God, they will administer it according to that law; but if it does not recognize the law of God and is in some respects con-

trary to that law, they agree to administer it without regard to His law. The Constitution declares itself to be "supreme" and recognizes no law higher than itself, and one who swears to it must, if he keep his oath, administer it as supreme. Has an officer, while he retains his office, the right to appeal from it to the "Higher Law," when with his eyes open he swore to it as "the supreme law of the land?"

The second part of this same paragraph forbids any religious test. If by this it were intended to forbid any ecclesiastical or denominational test, so that an office holder should be required to be a member of a certain church, the prohibition would be right and desirable, but this is not what is forbidden. It is "any religious test." It is evident that the Constitution is itself a test, an universal political test, which every office holder must accept. This is recognized in the requirement of an oath to support the Constitution. Now if the Constitution had any religion in it, it would be so far a religious test, for one must swear to the Constitution as it is. If there were any religion in the Constitution, it would contradict itself, because it prohibits any religious test. The requirement of an oath to a Constitution containing any religious principles would be diametrically opposed to the prohibition of a religious test. This proves to a demonstration that the Constitution of the United States has no religion in it, for if it had, it would require and forbid a religious test in the same paragraph.

This prohibition of a religious test is plainly opposed to the requirements of the law of God. That law requires under the most solemn sanction that "He that ruleth over men
must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Again the Word of God says, "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers." Of the ruler we read that "He is a minister of God to thee for good." In forbidding a religious test the Constitution forbids what God requires. Many who accept the Constitution declare that they will vote only for Christians as candidates for office, but in taking this position they violate the spirit of the law which they have sworn to support, for it declares that "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

SUMMARY OF EXAMINATION.

When we look on the Constitution as having no religion in it, as prohibiting any religious requirement of those who are to administer it, as omitting the appeal to God from the oath of office where it had been required before, as assuming for the people of the United States what God alone can do and yet making no acknowledgment of God, not even the recognition of "Divine Providence" found in the Declaration of Independence, or of "the great Governor of the world" found in the Articles of Confederation, and all this in opposition to the well-known requirements of the Word of God, the Sovereign Ruler of nations, and of Jesus Christ, the divinely appointed King and Lord of all, what can we conclude but that the Constitution of the United States is not Christian, that it is contrary in letter and in spirit to the Word of God?

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EXCEPTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN URGED.

The only place in the Constitution where it is even hinted that such a thing as Christianity is in existence is in the phrase, "Sundays excepted," in the clause giving the President ten days to consider a bill. This recognizes the day as not being a legal day, or one on which the President is required to work, but it requires no observance of it from any one, and has never been pleaded in court as a reason why the government could not require labor on that day. It does not necessarily imply even a recognition of any authority setting apart the day as a day of rest.

In poverty of resource it has been attempted to find something of religion in the words "Done in Convention, by the unanimous consent of the States present, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven, etc." This clause forms no part of the Constitution as adopted by the people, June 21st, 1788, when the ninth State ratified the Constitution. The people did not adopt the date on which the framers signed it. Then, as it happens, this mention of "the year of our Lord" was no part of the clause as adopted by the Convention that framed the Constitution. The clause as adopted by the Convention was in this short form, "Done in Convention by the unanimous consent of the States present, the 17th of September, etc." (Elliot's Debates, Vol. I., page 217.) So far from the reasons alleged showing that the Sovereignty of God is implied in our fundamental Instrument, a careful examination of it serves to make manifest that there is no such implied reference therein, even to His existence.
THE VIEWS OF THE FRAMEURS.

We add one or two instances of how the Constitution was interpreted by its framers with regard to its relation to Christianity. The members of the first Congress meeting under the Constitution were sworn into office by the following oath: "I, A. B., a representative of the United States in the Congress thereof, do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) in the presence of Almighty God that I will support the Constitution of the United States, so help me God." The first act of the Congress, June 1st, 1789, was to formulate a new oath which left out the appeal to God and which is as follows: "I, A. B., do solemnly swear or affirm (as the case may be) that I will support the Constitution of the United States." The former oath was in violation of the "no religions laws" clause of the Constitution.

In 1797 a treaty was made with Tripoli, a Mohammedan power, in which the following statement is found: "The government of the United States is in no wise founded on the Christian religion." It is well known that the government of the United States is founded on the Constitution of the United States, and the conclusion seems clear that it was understood that there was no recognition of Christ, or of Christianity, in the Constitution. As the signature of the President and the concurrence of two-thirds of the Senate are necessary to ratify a treaty, this action taken only nine years after the Constitution was adopted when many of the men who framed it were still in high position, is good evidence of the understanding and of its meaning by those who framed it. Again are we not driven to the conclusion that the Constitution is not Christian by adoption.

THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES decided a few years ago that this is "a Christian nation," but it did not decide that this nation had a Christian Constitution, neither did it draw any of the arguments supporting its conclusion from this source. The Court presented a good reason, however, if its decision was correct, why we ought to make the Constitution Christian by adopting a Christian amendment.

SOME EVIL RESULTS.

The Constitution, as it stands, is no help to Christianity in making or in keeping this country Christian; on the contrary, it has taught the nation, as far as its interests go, that Christ is not needed in political life and that the people are in general to have learned the lesson. It has helped to make our politics as politics as selfish; for there is no man who is satisfied with it as his supreme political law, but will conclude that there is no need of God, or of Christ, or of the Bible in politics.

The moral reformer finds little help in it. The leaders in the anti-slavery contest refused to appeal to it and ceased to vote and hold political meetings on its basis. They gave no influence to "the laws of all states," The confederated states which adopted that they were right in their estimate of its character. At the present time one great weakness of all moral reform lies in the fact that the Constitution recognizes no God and no moral law, so that Christian reformers have to push into political thinking what our fundamental law tends to exclude, a moral sense and a political conscience. Moreover, when the Christian reformer goes into politics, he must swear to carry on the government according to a law which knows no Christ, or even a God, and this oath obliges him to stand on the very platform that he is trying to lift, so that his efforts go for little.
If he tries to take the salt of his Christianity into politics, his salt of the essence takes the savour out of it and leaves it fit for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men, as is done regularly every election day. Worse than all is the disregard of God, the ingratitude, the rebellion of a supreme law adopted by the people of the United States without any recognition of Jesus Christ, the King of Nations, of His authority as of His law.

There is no power of true moral elevation in the world apart from applied Christianity, and a Constitution that does not recognize this power, nor the law that governs it, must exert an influence in the way of separating Christianity from politics that is to be overcome before the truth of God can do its work. Were it not that the Constitution by its lack of religious character, consistently resists the application of the principle of the Bible and so the government by the Son of God, the Christian patriot might be the less anxious on this subject, but we may not be entirely con-}

Why should the Constitution, so greatly beneficent in other respects, not be amended in this regard? Has the Lord of all a right to our loyalty and obedience that we, as a nation, have never owned and respected? Would it not add strength to our human government to find it upon the divine government, and give to our citizens an example of obedience by our loyalty as a nation to the Ruler of Nations? And would it not be the greatest safeguard to our liberty to lay on our officers the divine law of duty, that perfect law of love and of justice between man and man? Whatever in the world the Bible is best known, there is the greatest civil liberty. Why not seek still greater liberty by acknowledging the law of God in the very forefront of this greatest political law of man?