

no greater curse can ever befall any church than an accumulation of property. Let the church use its money and means from day to day, without accumulating a large amount of property, or large endowments. I know the wisest men in a large number of denominations have held the accumulation of property to be an abuse; I know that in my own denomination, one of the most distinguished ministers of the Presbyterian church declared, in his quaint language, that wherever there was a bag in a church there was a Judas to carry it. He was opposed to the accumulation of property by the church, and I think he was right. I am, therefore, opposed to striking out this article.

Mr. THOMAS. And I will state another reason why I am opposed to striking out this article. To do so would be to throw open the door wide for all the churches in the State of Maryland (you can hardly count the denominations now) to hold just as much real estate as they please, and as they can get, until in the course of time they will own half your landed property, if people choose to give it to them, and then you will find every denomination down to your Legislature lobbying to get that property exempted from taxation. There is a provision in our code now exempting a certain amount of church property from taxation, and if they get this enormous power in their hands of holding as much real estate as people may choose to give them, you will find the State of Maryland rather backward in raising revenue. In that light I am opposed to striking out this article.

Mr. DANIEL. I do not see the force of the objection just urged to striking out this article. Certainly the State of Maryland can regulate the matter of taxation, so that beyond a certain amount of property churches shall be taxed as others are, and if they find that exemption abused, they can say the whole of the property shall be taxed.

I am in favor of striking out, for I think this article as it stands, like some other articles in this bill of rights, is striking at ministers and religious denominations as such. I think we ought to get rid of all such invidious distinctions. I believe there are none on earth who ought to be more entrusted with property, and who can be more safely entrusted with it, than ministers and religious denominations. And I believe if there are any men who ought properly to hold office, they are ministers and religious persons. I think we are going to too great an extreme in carrying out the principle embodied in this article. And I want to see struck out of our Constitution all those articles that make distinctions against ministers, because it is making a distinction to some extent against religion as such.

Mr. THOMAS. Does the gentleman desire to make churches land-brokers?

Mr. DANIEL. I think if the churches were land-brokers the business would be in great deal better hands, and a great deal better conducted than it is now. I cannot see the reason why every other corporation in the State can amass any amount of property it pleases, and can dispose of it in any way it pleases, without your pretending to restrict them; and yet, if a poor little church endeavors to accumulate a little property so as to provide for a dark day, and to help its ministers, and to help a little in its church arrangements, you find the State coming in, and by the sanction of its organic law, saying these people, because they are ministers and members of churches, are not fit to be trusted to hold property. I think it is wrong in principle. I think we ought to remove all these barriers; and that such men ought to be encouraged to hold office and to hold property.

I believe one of the evils of the times that have brought about the present unhappy state of affairs, is, that we have legislated too much to exclude religion from our laws and Constitutions, both State and National; that we have not enough acknowledged the existence of God, and been guided by His rules in our State and National affairs. I am in favor of everything that will encourage and promote churches and disseminate religious doctrines, that will help to sustain and build up churches. Look throughout the country and see the debt of the churches, and how hard it is to build up a new church. Now, if you would allow churches to accumulate some property in this way, they might not only have enough to sustain themselves, but could help some other poorer churches in their day of distress, and their time of anguish and trouble. I think they are fit to be entrusted with this power; or that it is at least safe to leave the matter under the control of the Legislature.

Mr. CUSHING. The remarks of my colleague (Mr. Daniel) who has just spoken, would convince us, I think, if we agreed with him, that this article ought to remain exactly as it is, if it be not even more stringently drawn. The gentleman has told us that because we have not recognized the Christian religion in our laws and our Constitutions we are now being punished for it. I fully agree with my colleague in that, and I think that in acknowledging the Christian religion, we should endeavor as far as we can, to bring it back as near as possible, to the views of its founder. His directions to the first ministers of the gospel were not to accumulate goods and property, to take no thought for the morrow, to take not even bread for the second day with them.

Now, in the history of the Christian religion, wherever churches and religious denominations have accumulated property they have been thorns in the side of all good govern-