

church. He was no sectarian. Believing himself in the doctrines of Christianity, he had always entertained the opinion that every civil officer of the State of Maryland, when entering upon the discharge of his duties, had to subscribe to a belief in the Christian religion, or at least in a state of future rewards and punishments. And when the gentleman from Baltimore county, (Mr. Ridgely,) offered an amendment, the object of which, as he, (Mr. W.) conceived, was to depart from the good old system which had so long existed in our State, he felt it to be his duty to oppose it. He was also of opinion that it would open the door to the admission of ministers of the gospel into our legislative halls. He intended to vote against any such innovation.

He did not pretend that his opinions upon this or any other question were infallible, but, he believed, that if no restraints were to be imposed—if a man did not so far believe in the doctrines of Christianity, as to have some dread of eternal retribution—the result would be, that the better portion of mankind would be placed at the mercy of that corrupt and depraved portion, who would not hesitate to swear to any thing, however diabolical, which might subserve their own purposes of interest, malice, or revenge. He had declared yesterday, and he now repeated, that, in his opinion, all those persons who were so callous as to proclaim their disbelief in a state of future rewards and punishments, should be excluded from testifying. This was his judgment. He had declared it yesterday, and would acknowledge it any where. This, however, was a mere matter of opinion. He would go as far as any gentleman, to promote and secure religious toleration, but he thought that the adoption of this amendment would open wide the door for immorality, and lead to a total disregard of the solemn obligations of an oath. For these reasons he should vote against the amendment.

Mr. DONALDSON suggested a contingency in which, under the amendment of the gentleman from Baltimore county, (Mr. Ridgely,) difficulty might arise; and said, he, (Mr. D.,) thought the amendment went beyond the gentleman's own meaning or intention. To avoid ambiguity, and make the amendment more explicit, he suggested to the mover to place it at the end of the section, though he, (Mr. D.,) was of opinion that it would come in better as an amendment to the thirty-sixth article.

Mr. BRENT, of Baltimore city, offered an amendment, to come in at the end of the section, [and which as subsequently modified by Mr. RIDGELY, read as follows:]

"Provided, That nothing herein shall be construed so as to qualify as witnesses, jurors or judges, or other officers under the constitution and laws of this State, any Atheist or other person who does not believe in any accountability to the Supreme Being for his acts."

Mr. RIDGELY said that this amendment suited his views, and he would therefore accept it as a modification of his own.

And the question being on the modified amendment,

Messrs. McLANE and RIDGELY asked the yeas and nays, which were ordered.

Mr. McLANE called for the reading of the article, as it would stand with the modified amendment.

And it was read.

Mr. RANDALL suggested that the gentleman from Baltimore county, (Mr. Ridgely,) had confined the application of his amendment to two classes, whereas there were hundreds of officers who were to take the oath. Did the gentleman intend that the amendment should apply to all, or only to a part?

Mr. RIDGELY modified his amendment to meet this suggestion.

Mr. CHANDLER thought that the Convention should be very cautious in throwing off the moral restraints, which should guide and control men when about to give their testimony upon the witness stand. It was contended that every man had the right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. This doctrine was believed by every branch of the christian church; and no law, no organic regulation should be introduced, the effect of which, would be to deprive men from the exercise of that sacred privilege. But there were classes of men who did not believe in God, nor worship him, nor acknowledge any responsibility to him. He was opposed to such men being called upon to give testimony in any case—because, there was no moral restraint to guide them in bearing testimony to the truth. It might be said, that such men might be thrown on their honor. Why not then throw all men upon their honor, and allow the most reckless and abandoned characters to come in and bear testimony without check, responsibility, or restraint of any kind?

The gentleman from Calvert, (Mr. Weems,) had objected to the amendment, because he thought that, under its provisions, a minister of the gospel might find his way into our legislative halls.

He, (Mr. C.,) opposed the amendment on no such ground. He did not think that, in the part which he had taken in the deliberations of this body, he had given much evidence of being a dangerous man; and, in taking a view of our fellow citizens generally, he thought that ministers of the gospel were found to be as quiet and peaceable as any other class.

He repeated, therefore, that he did not oppose the amendment on that ground; but he thought that ministers had equal rights in every respect, with other citizens. As to the expediency or propriety of their serving in the legislative halls, that was a question to be left to the judgment of their own consciences, and to the decision of the people at the ballot box.

He proceeded to refer, in language of high eulogy, to the patriotism, the fortitude, and the self-sacrificing devotion with which this class of our citizens, had stood forward in the front of the battle during our revolutionary struggle, and asked, whether we were now to be told that ministers of the gospel, were not entitled to equal privileges with ourselves, and that they were only