

now, sir, not by my own choice, but by the earnest solicitations of a noble and generous constituency.

I do not think that ministers ought to neglect their flocks to go the Legislature; but neither do I think, that you have the right to *disfranchise* them as *free-born American citizens*. Sir, it is the principle for which I contend. Ministers have rights in common with other citizens. And now sir, I have discharged what I have conceived to be my duty, very imperfectly, it is true. I thank you sir, and through you the honorable body, for the respectful attention with which they have listened to my remarks.

Mr. JENIFER disclaimed any intention to enter into the argument on this question. But he thought the gentleman from Baltimore county was mistaken in some of his views. The provision in the Constitution does not exclude clergymen, more than others who fill civil offices, from sitting in the Legislature. All persons who fill civil offices are equally excluded. There was therefore nothing oppressive in this exclusion. A minister of the gospel has a high mission; his functions are of a class which lift him above the ordinary business of political life; and it must lessen the usefulness of his position and distract his duties when he enters into political strife. The gentleman says the ministers ought to be relieved from taxation. He, (Mr. J.) did not know that clergymen were taxed.

Mr. CHANDLER. They were. His tax last year amounted to twenty dollars on his property.

Mr. JENIFER. Aye, for property—not as a clergyman. If the idea of the gentleman, that property should be exempt from taxation were carried out, there would be a speedy falling off of the revenue for the support of the State. Any man who desired to escape the payment of taxes would only have to join the class of privileged persons and he would escape.

Of all forms of government, that which comprised a religious element, was the most to be deprecated. Where religion had become united with political rule, there had always been the greatest amount of tyranny and despotism, and the least possible exercise of freedom. The moment you permit the ministers of religion to assume political power, their whole character is changed. Whilst in the exercise of their religious duties exclusively, they command the respect and veneration of all good men, no matter of what denomination; transfer them to the arena of party contest, let them mingle in the heated contests of the day, and they cease to be the humble and christian dispensers of those blessings, which belong to their high mission. The Legislature is no place for ministers of the gospel. The pulpit is the appropriate sphere for their teachings.

Mr. J. said, it would not be understood that he, by any means, objected to them or any other citizen being members of a Convention like this to frame a Constitution for the State. He was gratified to see the reverend gentleman from Baltimore county, here in this body, and to receive the benefit of his advice, and if all clergymen

would conduct themselves in the dignified, charitable and unexceptionable manner, as he has done, his, [Mr. J's.] objection would be greatly lessened. But this cannot be expected; religious and political professions are incompatible amidst the frailty of human nature; and the high respect he entertained for the clergy, would prevent him from permitting them to be placed in a situation, where their usefulness would be impaired.

Mr. CHANDLER made some further remarks in which he complained, that while other professions were permitted to hold seats in the legislature, by a solemn declaration, clergymen are disqualified. He thought, as a matter of conscience, that it was better that ministers of the gospel should not become members of the legislature; they have higher occupations—occupations which demand the entire devotion of their time and talents. But his objection was to the adoption of the principle of disqualification in the Constitution.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles said, all things may be lawful, but all things may not be expedient. The clergy do not desire to be placed in a position in which they are not denied the rights and privileges of American citizens. He perfectly agreed with the gentleman from Charles, (Mr. Jenifer,) as to the impropriety of a union between Church and State. Against such union the clergy were united; and they now complained, that, by this very provision, the government is interfering with the clergy, and will not leave them alone. He denied the statement that where religious governments prevailed the worst consequences follow. It was true that under the mask of religion, those who are falsely called religious, have persecuted and destroyed their fellow creatures, but these are not members of the true christian church. It would be as reasonable to repudiate the metallic currency of the United States, because some of it has been counterfeited, and to close all our banks and refuse to receive silver and gold coins. While we affect to leave all men free, to oppress none, and to extend to every one liberty to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, we, in the same instrument, disqualify all who are the ministers of religion, for the enjoyment of the rights which all other citizens enjoy.

Mr. JENIFER said,

In reply to the worthy gentleman's remark, "that those religious governments which persecuted, did not belong to the true christian church," he did not know what the gentleman calls the true christian church. But, if he would go back a little into the history of the church, he would find from its earliest period to the present day, that all denominations were alike, when political power was placed in their hands. Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Episcopaleans, down to the Mormons, all had been guilty of the greatest oppression and tyranny. One of the greatest curses inflicted on mankind, had been by religious fanaticism, united with the power of political rule. And even in our day, in this glorious land of freedom, that spirit attempts to ride over the laws and Constitution.