

the right of any individual to hold office who did not acknowledge his just moral accountability to the Supreme Being I hold therefore, in perfect consonance with the principle and spirit of the Constitution of the United States, that no religious test should be required. I hold that the enlightenment of the age endorses that sentiment; that the experience of the past confirms the wisdom of it; and that no interest in the State would be imperilled by the adoption of a provision of that kind in our organic law.

There are people who believe precisely as the Jews believe, yet who do not call themselves Jews. There are a great many varieties and shades of opinions upon this subject of religion. As a Christian man I object to this indirect and constructive mingling of the Church and the State. I do not believe it is proper, by the faintest possible recognition, to introduce into our Constitution any recognition of any sect in particular; they should all be treated alike. Although I hold the Christian religion to be the highest possible moral and sublime theory of religion, yet I am not willing to introduce it into and engraft it upon our Constitution, to the exclusion of all other forms and theories of religion. I propose to admit every man who believes in the existence of God—the Great God who created the Universe—and in a just moral accountability to that God, either in this world or in the world to come. And I want to keep out of the Constitution every idea, every species of language, which would indicate that there was any particular sect or creed, or any particular theory of religion, that was to be preferred; or that was, by the peculiar and special sanction and approval of this body, to be recognized as the especial and peculiar religion of the State. I hold that, although you may not in so many words establish any particular creed; may not in so many words establish any peculiar rule of faith for the people and the Government, yet you constructively establish one when you say that a man must believe in a certain religious faith, or otherwise be ineligible to office; you thereby, indirectly and constructively, establish a Government creed.

Therefore, as a Christian man, a humble and unworthy member of that profession though I may be, I am opposed to the introduction of any provision which recognizes any sect, class or theory of religion, in the Constitution, as the peculiar and preferred religion and sentiment of the people of this State. I have my peculiar theories upon the subject of religion. I honestly and conscientiously believe the Christian religion to be the only true religion. But I cannot consent to fasten down, to chain down, to bolt down, to bar down, the minds and

sentiments of my fellow man, who entertain his religious views as conscientiously as I entertain mine. It is for this reason that I am opposed to the introduction of these words into the Constitution.

This matter of religion is a sacred matter; it is a peculiar matter; it is a matter between man and his God only; it is a spiritual matter; it is a matter of inter-communication between the spirit of man and his God. And every man ought to be left to the free and independent exercise and enjoyment of that inter-communication, and that sentiment. And neither by direction nor indirectness ought there to be any attempt in our Constitution to give character or color to any peculiarities of religious sentiment. I propose, therefore, that these words that specify a particular character of religious sentiment shall not enter into our Constitution.

And, as my friend from Somerset has embodied in an amendment which he has suggested to me, the idea I desire to have embodied in this Constitution, and as it is in perfect consonance with the 35th article which this House has just adopted, I will substitute it for the one I have offered. It is to strike out the words—"in the Christian religion, and if the party shall profess to be a Jew, the declaration shall be of his belief;" and insert the words—"in the existence of God, and," so that the clause shall read: "and a declaration of belief in the existence of God, and in a future state of rewards and punishments." I submit that as my amendment, in lieu of the motion to strike out simply which I first submitted.

Mr. CLARKE. I do not know that that really differs from the amendment which I submitted.

Mr. JONES, of Somerset. It differs in this respect only: the amendment submitted by the gentleman from Prince George's (Mr. Clarke) provides two forms of declaration of belief, either of which the party could sign; the one a belief in the Christian religion; the other a belief in a future state of rewards and punishments. This provides but one form—a declaration of belief in the existence of God, and in a future state of rewards and punishments. It includes both of the clauses which would be embraced in the amendment of the gentleman from Prince George's: for the man who believes in the Christian religion, believes in the existence of God, and in a future state of rewards and punishments."

Mr. CLARKE. I am willing to accept that amendment, and therefore I withdraw the amendment I submitted.

The question was upon the amendment of Mr. Ridgely, to amend the latter part of article thirty-six, that it should read—"and a declaration of belief in the existence of God, and in a future state of rewards and punishments."