

Mr. JONES, of Somerset. I concur very fully in the views which have been submitted by my friend from Baltimore county (Mr. Ridgely.) I do not think, sitting here as we are for the purpose of establishing a form of civil government for a community that does not recognize the propriety of uniting Church and State, that we can undertake, with any show of consistency, to exclude from any civil office of trust and profit in the State, a very large class of persons who may differ from those of us who hold to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion. I believe that all the States of this Union have gradually brought their organic law to this condition: that the only religious test—if it can be called a religious test—which shall be required as a qualification for admission to any civil office of profit or trust in the State, shall be a declaration of belief in the existence of God, and in a moral accountability in a future state of rewards and punishments, whether that be in this world or in the world to come.

Now, sir, it is well known how much of disorder, confusion and strife has been induced by matters of difference in religious belief. It is well known that one of the fundamental principles upon which our Government is based, is the entire separation of matters of religion and matters of civil government; leaving all matters of religion to be questions between man's conscience and his God; and all questions of civil government to be controlled by those considerations which are embraced in the good and benefit of society. At the same time all experience shows that those only are to be trusted with the exercise of important functions of civil government among us, who do recognize the responsibility binding upon their consciences in a belief in the existence of God, and their moral responsibility to Him for all their actions.

Test oaths and stringent restrictions in reference to religious belief, have frequently retarded the growth of population and wealth in civil communities. Where the restrictions are narrow and stringent, a great many worthy persons who would otherwise settle among us, are excluded and compelled to go elsewhere. The restriction in regard to the Jews, which existed in this State for so many years, had the tendency to exclude them from our community; very worthy, intelligent and excellent persons of that belief went elsewhere, where no bar of civil government excluded them from consideration in the State. For a long time that class of population in our State was very small. But since that restriction has been removed it has very considerably increased, and I believe they are as peaceable, quiet and worthy citizens as any we have.

There is a singular fact connected with the settlement of Maryland, which it may be

well to advert to here, by way of showing that, in the providence of God, we may perhaps owe much to the fact that in some of our sister colonies there existed restrictions which turned the fortunes and course of Lord Baltimore to the waters of the upper Chesapeake, and ultimately led to the settlement of this State. The first Lord Baltimore was brought up a Protestant. While holding a very high position in the cabinet of the British King, he was converted to the Catholic faith. In the conscientious exercise of his faithfulness to his sovereign, the test oath, and the persecution for religious belief, which then existed in Great Britain, and which the Government energetically enforced, so pressed upon him, that he resigned his office, upon the ground that he could not conscientiously enforce the exactions of the Government in relation to religious belief. Not only that, but in order that he and those who believed with him might escape persecution for their religious belief, he left the shores of England and took up his residence upon the island of Newfoundland, in the province called Avalon, for which he obtained a grant, and remained there with his followers for some two years. The climate and soil of that island not proving such as were desirable for his purposes, he left that island, and with his family and followers set out to take up their residence in the colony of Virginia. When he arrived there the authorities of the colony immediately tendered to him the oath of allegiance and supremacy. It so conflicted with his views as a Catholic that he declined taking it, and frankly informed the authorities of Virginia that he and his followers could not take that oath. But he prepared a modified form of oath, which he presented to the authorities as one which he was willing to take; being an oath of allegiance and a declaration of belief in the Christian religion. This the authorities of Virginia rejected. Lord Baltimore consequently left the colony of Virginia, and took a tour up the Chesapeake, examining the bay, rivers and harbors. Seeing what a beautiful country it was, he returned to England and obtained a grant of the then reigning monarch, of this province of Maryland, when he returned here and effected the settlement of this colony. Thus by that action on the part of the authorities of Virginia, Lord Baltimore, with all his influence and wealth, together with his followers, was excluded from settling in Virginia. And no doubt, under the providence of God, we owe much of the freedom, growth of population, and the benefit of the institutions which have been handed down to us by our ancestors in Maryland, to that single fact. It seems, therefore, that religious persecution sometimes inures to the benefit of others. Lord Baltimore returned from Eng