

land not only with the followers which he originally brought over to this country, but he brought with him a great many other gentlemen of education, wealth and high standing who settled in this State. And I think it would be but a poor commentary upon that example of religious freedom established by the first settlers of Maryland, for us to exclude from any civil office under our Government, any one who believes in the existence of God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, whom the people may deem worthy to be trusted with civil authority.

Mr. STIRLING. It is not in order now for me to offer an amendment which I have drawn up, as an amendment to the pending amendment, for it contains some matter which is not germane to the pending question. I wish, however, to give notice that at the proper time I shall move to strike out all of this article after the word "That," and insert the following as a substitute:

"No other test or qualification ought to be required on admission to any office of profit or trust, than such oath of allegiance and fidelity to this State and to the United States as may be prescribed by this Constitution, and such oath of office and qualification as may be prescribed by this Constitution, or by the laws of the State, and a declaration of belief in the Christian religion, or in the existence of God, and a future state of rewards and punishments."

Upon the latter clause of this I desire to say a few words. There is but one class of persons whom I wish to embrace in the provisions of this article beyond those who believe in the Christian religion, and that is the Israelitish or Jewish population of this State. No other consideration but my desire to allow them the privileges which are intended to be extended by this provision would induce me to vote for any change whatever in this portion of this article. But for that I would prefer to let the article stand as it stood in the old Constitution, and require a declaration of belief in the Christian religion from everybody. But I recognize the fact that there is a large class of the population of this State who hold the Jewish belief, which to a certain extent is cognate with the Christian religion. They hold to a great part of that same Scriptures which the Christians believe. They hold that the same law which was miraculously given on Mount Sinai was given to them as well as to us. They recognize the existence of God in the same sense that we do; not the god of the Romans, not the god of the Indians, not the god of the Mahomedans, not the god of Chinese idolaters, but the God that is revealed in the Holy Evangelists, and in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. And that is the only God that I mean by my declaration of belief. I believe that any oath

in regard to religion, with any distinction between sects and denominations, ought forever to be prohibited. And I believe that the requirement from any individual of any declaration of belief in any kind of religion ought forever to be prohibited.

Now there is no such thing as the right to hold office. No man has a right to hold office. The prescription of qualifications of office, are within the power of the people of this State; and they have a right to provide in their organic law just such qualifications as they choose to provide, and no man can say that his rights are in the slightest degree infringed upon, no matter what qualifications of office may be prescribed. The fact is, not that this is merely a Protestant community, a Presbyterian community, or any other kind of community so far as religious sects are concerned; but that this is a country of Christian people, as a general rule, cannot be denied. Our population is not a Jewish population, a Mahomedan population, or an idolatrous population, but a Christian population. And there is a propriety in saying that in a community so thoroughly united in its religious belief, from its earliest settlement—its people coming from England, Germany, France, Spain, or any other country, running back to the Christian stock, the only exception being those who belong to the Jewish persuasion, and which form but a small portion of all our population, and is really cognate to the Christian religion in belief—there is a propriety in a Christian people saying that they do not want a Mahomedan, or a Chinese idolater to occupy any office of profit or trust under their Government; that he cannot rule in such a manner as to accommodate himself to the proper interests and feelings of the people of this State. It is not a question of right but a question of expediency, and of expediency alone. The Court of Appeals of this State has summarily decided that the Christian religion is a part of the government of this State; not in any particular form, but in its general principles. And while I wish, for the purpose of admitting this large class of persons to which I have alluded, to put out of the Constitution this word "Jew," to which they have some serious objection in this connection, I do not wish to leave out the words "Christian religion," because I want to assert this general principle, that this is a Christian community, which, while it recognizes no natural right in any individual to hold office, yet from motives of kindness and expediency, are willing to extend the blessings of toleration as far as they can practically be exercised even in regard to office, to this class of population, not as a right but as a privilege. I desire while still asserting that we are a Christian community, to admit this class of our popula-