

tion to the privilege of holding office. But I do not desire, by striking out the term "Christian religion," to deny that we are a Christian community, and to let them in as a matter of right without any distinction between them and others.

I do not care, sir, what other States have done. I know that the most of them have left the words "God" and "religion" altogether out of their Constitutions. But in my opinion it has been on false principles; on principles which our fathers never established, and which have no foundation either in justice or in right. The law says you shall not require any man to believe in or support any particular form of worship. But when you are passing upon qualifications of office it is your business and your duty to recognize the conditions of society in which you live, and to fix the qualifications for office to suit those conditions of society; and you do no injustice to any man by providing safeguards around the seats of power in the State. That is the reason why no man has the right to say, if you require an oath of allegiance from him, that you are fixing upon him principles to which he does not agree. It is for the sovereign people of the State to say what principles they consider safe; and if they make up their judgment that it is necessary for the safety of the community that certain principles only shall be sanctioned, no man has the right to complain.

The idea of the gentleman from Baltimore county (Mr. Ridgely), that every man who is a voter shall be entitled to hold office, cannot be carried out. You allow a man to vote when he is twenty-one years of age; but you require a Senator to be twenty-five years of age, and a judge to be thirty. You allow a man to vote in this State after one year's residence; but you do not allow a man to hold office in this State until he has resided in it three years. The distinction between the qualifications of a voter and of an office-holder is kept up all through the Constitution.

The part of my amendment relating to the oath of allegiance, I do not suppose can be objectionable to anybody; because it says, "such oath of allegiance and fidelity to the State and to the United States, as may be prescribed by this Constitution." I give notice that I shall offer what I have read as a substitute for this whole article.

Mr. CLARKE. I agree entirely with the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stirling) in all he has said in reference to the declaration of belief in the Christian religion. And when I first drew up my amendment, my idea was that all men who believed in the existence of God, the God whom we Christians recognize as God, were believers in the Christian religion, except in the case of Jews.

Mr. STIRLING. And that is the class I want to get in.

Mr. CLARKE. And I think my amendment covered all classes when it provided for a declaration of belief in the Christian religion, or in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments. I think it will meet the views of the gentleman in relation to this last clause, to move to strike out all after the words "Christian religion," and insert the words "or in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments." The article will then read—

"That no other test or qualification ought to be recognized on admission to any office of trust or profit, than 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 in a future state of rewards and punishments."

That, I think, would cover all cases. As to the other point, which the gentleman proposes to raise by his substitute, in reference to allegiance, etc., we do not desire to meet those questions now. I think they will be better met hereafter.

Mr. STIRLING. I do not offer my substitute to be voted upon now. I have no objection to the amendment indicated by the gentleman from Prince George's (Mr. Clarke.)

Mr. RIDGELY. I desire to say a word or two in reply to what has fallen from the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stirling.) And first, in relation to the interpretation which he has put upon the argument which I addressed to the House upon the subject of the qualifications of the elector and the elected. He has entirely misapplied the idea which I desired to convey to the House, and therefore the comment he has made upon my argument does not at all meet the case. The theory of my argument was that the qualification in relation to a religious test—the subject then particularly under consideration—should not differ between the elector and the elected. Of course there may be different qualifications in other respects, such as age, length of residence, &c., which it would be perfectly competent for the Constitution to prescribe, as our present Constitution does prescribe.

I now ask the attention of the House to the very impressive view which the gentleman has attempted to take in relation to this word "Christian;" and the interference he seeks to make, that if we withhold the word "Christian" from the Constitution, we in point of fact ignore we are a Christian people. Now, it is hardly necessary for me to offer a word in reply to the argument that the withdrawal of the word "Christian" from our Constitution necessarily or even