

indirectly implies that we ignore the Christian religion. Such an argument answers itself. And I do not think I could, with any degree of propriety, attempt to detain the House to respond to that theory or that argument.

But I would call the attention of the House to the provision in the Constitution of the United States, and upon that I desire to submit a word or two of argument. Section three of article six is as follows:

"The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State Legislatures and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several States shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office, or public trust, under the United States."

Judge Story says, the clause requiring an oath of all State and national functionaries to support the Constitution, was first carried by a vote of six States to five, and was afterwards unanimously approved. On the final vote it was adopted by a vote of eight States against one or two divided. The clause respecting religious tests was unanimously adopted. Now, will any one pretend to argue that because the Constitution of the United States did not spread upon its pages that we were a Christian people; that because the Constitution of the United States did not require, as a qualification for office, that a party should take an oath or make a declaration of belief in the Christian religion, we are, there ore, any the less a Christian people? Is it not equally true in relation to the people of the United States at large, as it is true in relation to the people of the State of Maryland, that we are a Christian people? I grant with the honorable gentleman that we are a Christian people; that we of Maryland are for the most part a Christian people. But we are no less a Christian people in our character as the people of the United States. Yet the Constitution of the United States requires no declaration of belief in the Christian religion, no religious test whatever, though framed by men who recognized the Christian religion, and who, in every step made in the struggles of our revolutionary fathers as distinctly recognized the favor and protection of God, as they recognized that God in the light of the Christian religion. Those men, experienced, wise, worthy, time-honored, Christian men, in framing and establishing a form of government which was intended for men of every variety of opinion, of every shade of religious belief, regarded it as wise and proper, and just, and equitable, to steer clear of any difficulty upon that subject, of all others perhaps the most delicate and most vital.

And is there anything in the declaration of a belief in the Christian religion that adds to the qualifications or fitness of a party for office? Will the requirement of a declaration of belief in the Christian religion deter a bad man from making such a declaration? Will it deter a man who is not a Christian from making the declaration in view of his opportunity to obtain an office? What practical purpose, therefore, will it serve? The only purpose it can serve is to give character to us as a Christian people; to recognize our veneration for that system of religion. And is that needed? It can serve no practical purpose, because it can add nothing to the fitness of a party to hold office, and will not deter an unworthy man from making the declaration in order to obtain office. And then I would ask, how many make a declaration of their belief in the Christian religion, who act out the very reverse; who even in the very act of making the declaration not unfrequently give to the world the strongest proof that they are practically of any other faith.

I shall therefore vote for the amendment suggested by my friend from Somerset (Mr. Jones), and which I have submitted to this Convention. There are portions of the amendment read by the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stirling); which as a separate and independent proposition I shall take pleasure in voting for. But these portions are not germane to, or in legitimate connection with, this proposition, and I trust will not be pressed upon us now in this connection.

MR. STIRLING. I merely read it for information; I do not desire the vote taken on it now.

MR. RIDGELY. The idea that the gentleman is induced to offer this proposition, only for the purpose of admitting one class of people to the exclusion of other classes, is a reason with me for not voting for it. He is willing to enlarge the rule and admit a respectable and important class of people, a very worthy class of citizens, but not more so than the Universalists and the Unitarians, who expressly deny our Christian religion.

MR. STIRLING. Can the gentleman find a Universalist or a Unitarian in this State who does not profess to be a Christian, who does not repudiate as an insult the charge that he is not a Christian, and hold that such a charge is but an instance of bigotry on the part of those who make it?

MR. RIDGELY. I have known them to be ruled out of a court of justice.

MR. STIRLING. Not because they were not Christians, but on account of their not believing in a future state of rewards and punishments.

MR. RIDGELY. The very fact that men are divided upon the subject of the Christian religion is a reason why we should not