

be an overwhelming majority; those who sign the other, if they sign it at all will constitute a minority, perhaps an invidious minority, the sole object of which will be to afford the opportunity to some demagogue to say that they deny the Christian religion, because they do not sign that declaration. I think if we intend to open the door, and admit all who are embraced in the amendment of the gentleman from Baltimore county, we should not keep up the two tests. I think, acting in our official capacity here, upon the liberal principles which prevail at this time it is better to adhere to the language employed by the gentleman from Baltimore county. As he has well said—who is to decide whether a man is a believer in the Christian religion or not? That question is creating more and more difficulty every day, as can be seen from the theological controversies arising everywhere, especially in Great Britain, where the State controls the creed of the church. In England, one of their bishops has published a book which those who differ from him denounce as infidel; they say he is not a believer in the Christian religion that he is not fit to be a bishop. Yet he is a bishop of the Church of England, so recognized by the State, though he differs from others in belief. I think that for the sake of uniformity it is better to have but one test, and that the test proposed by the gentleman from Baltimore county.

MR. BOND. I see no substantial difference between the amendment of the gentleman from Baltimore county, (Mr Ridgely,) and the amendment of the gentleman from Prince George's (Mr. Clarke.) They both arrive at the same result; they both allow men to hold office who declare their belief in the Christian religion, and men who declare only their belief in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments. They both arrive at the same conclusion at last, the only difference between the two propositions being that one leaves out the declaration of belief in the Christian religion.

My friend from Somerset, (Mr. Jones,) talks about making an invidious distinction between men who are willing to declare their belief in the Christian religion, and men who are willing only to declare their belief in the existence of God and a future state of rewards and punishments. Now, I see no invidious distinction at all. If there are men who do not believe in the Christian religion, is it invidious to say that they do not believe in it? And why should we strike out of this article the declaration of belief in the Christian religion? Is there anything in the Christian religion to be ashamed of, that we should strike it out altogether from qualifications for office? When we put upon an equal footing those

who declare a belief in the Christian religion—which is admitted on all hands to be the religion of the great majority of the people of this State—and those who are unwilling to declare their belief in the Christian religion, but only to say that they believe in God and a future state of rewards and punishments, have we not done enough for that class of people? And why should we go to the further length of striking out of the article the words, "belief in the Christian religion?"

I am willing to vote for either proposition, for it does appear to me that they both arrive at the same conclusion; they both admit to office the same classes of persons, and there is nothing to my mind invidious in either proposition towards the one or the other class. Still as I see no particular reason why the language of the article should be changed, I shall vote for the proposition of the gentleman from Prince George's, (Mr. Clarke.)

MR. TODD. I agree with the sentiments expressed by the gentleman from Anne Arundel, (Mr Bond.) I see no necessity or propriety in striking out of this article of the Declaration of Rights the words, "belief in the Christian religion." But I do think there is very great propriety in retaining that phrase. As has been remarked by other gentlemen upon this floor, we are a Christian people generally; and I think we should be careful in our action here, not to do anything that will be construed in the sense of ignoring the Christian religion. I hope, therefore, the amendment of the gentleman from Prince George's (Mr Clarke) will prevail, and that this Convention, while it extends to other classes of citizens the right to hold office, will not do any act that will be construed into a want of recognition of that religion which is the prevailing religion of this State.

MR. JONES, of Somerset. I have but one word more to say. I do not wish to be understood at all as discouraging in any way whatever a profession of belief in the Christian religion. That is my hope; that is my creed; and humble and unworthy a member as I may be of the Christian church, I am connected with a branch of the Christian church that holds to its creed as rigidly perhaps as any other of the denominations into which the Christian church is divided. But I mean to say this, that a written name at the foot of such a declaration amounts, as Judge Dorsey said, to very little, and he had never known it to keep a man from accepting office. I think the best profession of a belief in the Christian religion which a man can afford to those who know him and with whom he is associated, is to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly before his God. That is a profession of the christian religion which I most heartily commend to all men.