

and not *punitive* in their character. These odious disabilities were imposed in the midst of a sanguinary strife, when passion had usurped the domain of reason; when the barriers of the Constitution were overleaped under the plea of preserving the Government; but now all danger has passed; the Southern people have expressed an almost unanimous desire to return to their allegiance; many of their chosen leaders are engaged in the peaceful pursuits of industry; and thus, the cause of these enactments being removed, why should not the effects cease? If the provisions of the Constitution are *preventive*, there being no longer any danger to apprehend, it is nothing short of oppression to continue them; and if they are *punitive*, they are clearly illegal and void under the decision of the Court of Appeals.

We cannot believe the disfranchisement of our people justifiable, and therefore would say to those who assumed the power in trying times, that if then excusable, a heavy responsibility will rest upon those who persist in denying, without reason or justification, the dearest rights of citizenship to a large majority of the people of Maryland. At this auspicious period, when the dark clouds that enveloped the country for four long and bloody years are passing away; when the bright era of unity and peace is dawning upon the Republic; when the wise and generous statesmanship of the President of the United States is receiving the well-merited plaudits of the civilized world, are the people of Maryland alone to be deprived of their most valued privilege for simply exercising the sacred right of conscience?

The undersigned cannot believe that the honorable members of the General Assembly will longer sanction the proscriptive clauses of the Constitution, but that they will at once perceive the justice of removing the undue rigor that has been exercised towards so many of their fellow citizens. Such an act of well-timed justice would, in the opinion of the undersigned, receive the sanction of three-fourths of our people, greatly conduce to the prosperity of our State, and the restoration of that kindly feeling which should exist among citizens of a common country. All history proves that no government can rest secure upon proscriptive principles, and that *they* should participate in the exercise of political power who have great and endearing interests to provide for and protect. Let us then draw lessons of political wisdom from the contemplation of the past to guide us to the goal that lies open to our future; and let us firmly assert and maintain those cherished constitutional principles which can alone render our nation great and our people happy.