

more cognate in the thirty-sixth article. It would be more consistent if every thing relating to the oath were put in the thirty-sixth article. He would now offer his substitute.

Mr. RANDALL then offered the following as a substitute for the amendment of Mr. DORSEY:

*“Provided, That an oath may be legally administered to any person who believes in a state of future rewards and punishments, by a Supreme Being, in this life or in the life to come.”*

Mr. R. said he did not think that this was the proper place for the amendment. But he would offer it again to the thirty-sixth section, and could then move to strike it from this article, if it should be adopted here.

Mr. McHENRY said he should vote against both the substitute and the amendment, and he should be constrained to vote against every amendment which adds to the bulk of the bill of rights. When our ancestors framed the present bill of rights, they were in the midst of a severe struggle; and the circumstances in which they acted, made them careful so to construct it, as that its great principles should be stamped on the minds of those for whose benefit it was made. But now, when the sovereignty of the people is universally acknowledged, this minute elaboration of their rights is unnecessary. It seemed to him that a few brief and comprehensive articles illustrating our position as contrasted with foreign governments, and as to our internal relations, and laying down the principles which should regulate the conduct of the officers of the government, who are the agents of the people, in their official capacities, should be deemed sufficient. When other matters are introduced, it should be in the Constitution itself—the consideration of which will come up hereafter. To insert these provisions in the bill of rights, he thought would be entirely superfluous.

Mr. CHAMBERS said, reluctant as he was to obtrude any remarks upon the House, he could not give a silent vote on this subject. One of the proposed amendments, opened a question of the utmost concern—a question not new to him.

It would be recollected that originally, no other than one professing to be a Christian, could hold office. Some thirty years since, while he was a member of the State Senate, a clamor was raised against the Constitution, because it excluded Jews. Under pretence of admitting Jews, the attempt was made to admit infidels. It failed, and after a long struggle, the Constitution was so far changed, as to admit a Jew to hold office, who would profess his belief in a future state of reward and punishments. It was no part of his purpose now to renew the discussions in which he, at that time, participated. A proposition is now before the chair, which he deeply regretted to see the learned gentleman from Anne Arundel, (Mr. Dorsey,) submit—the direct effect of which would be, to demolish the partition which divided the Christian and the unbeliever. Sir, (said Mr. C.) this is a Christian community—the Holy Bible, as the revelation of God’s will and word, is a part of the law of the land, adopted by the common law of England, and with the other

parts of that law, received by us. Our statutes enact penalties against *blasphemy*, and all our laws proceed on the assumption that they are to regulate a Christian people.

We afford protection to all: to those who have any religious worship, we secure the form of worship which their conscience or tastes approve; to those who have no sense of religion or of obligation to worship the Deity, we guarantee exemption from coercion. But in the privilege of holding office, the privilege of ruling in a Christian community, we have never allowed unbelievers to participate. Professed unbelievers were, in this respect, on the other side of the wall or partition, and while he had breath in his body, he would use it to protest against any and every attempt to prostrate this partition. There might be some few men deluded and most mistaken on this subject, in his poor judgment—there might be some amongst the acquaintances of the gentleman from Washington, (Mr. Fiery,) who might for aught he knew, punctually discharge the duties of some of the offices of the State, but it was better, far better, that those few persons should give place to others, than to demolish this time-honored doctrine, which, in some sort, sanctifies our system. Every general rule must, of necessity, produce an individual instance not absolutely within the expediency of the rule. Here the general rule was, that our State being a Christian community, our laws suited to the government and conduct of Christian men, Christian rulers, and none others, ought to rule such a land and people, and no power on earth could ever induce him to turn his back upon the faith of his forefathers. Educated in a Christian community, they came to this continent to establish a *Christian government* here, and as such it has hitherto been maintained.

Sir, said he, by God’s blessing, I have been educated in the Christian faith—the faith of the Bible—by God’s grace, I hope to live a Christian’s life and die the Christian’s death—by God’s mercy I have been born in a Christian State and here have passed my three score years and more, and so sure as my soul lives, I will peril the loss of every temporal hope before I will act or aid in any declaration that Maryland withdraws herself from the Christian families of the earth.

Mr. RANDALL said this was a provision similar to that which prevailed in England, where there was an established church, and that country had not been unchristianized, as the gentleman from Kent, (Mr. Chambers,) apprehended we were about to be by adopting this amendment. As there seemed to be some doubt as to the law which governed this matter in England, he would read one or two authorities on the subject. He then read extracts from Greenleaf, Smith’s leading cases, and other law writers, sustaining him in his position that a witness was competent who believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, who would punish perjury whether that punishment would be in this world or in the world to come. If the principle had not proved dangerous in England, he saw no reason to apprehend that its operation would be dangerous here. In almost all the States of the Union, and in England, laws