

sistently take this oath? And any man who has ever professed any sympathy with the government across the Potomac, who at any period of his life has expressed any sympathy or feeling in their behalf, no matter what may be his feelings and opinions now, he is precluded by this oath. Can any man who had done this, whatever may be his position now, no matter what may be his situation now, no matter however desirous he may be for the restoration of the government, can he under this test oath, under the oath of this schedule, be allowed to vote?

And do you intend, do you desire to impose such restrictions upon your fellow-citizens as that? It is contrary to the principles of the Christian religion. [Laughter.] You may laugh, but it is nevertheless so. When our Saviour came upon earth, for what did he come? He came for the purpose of proclaiming peace, and repentance and confession of your sins. And if you will come and confess your sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive you your sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. But according to the theory of this test oath you cannot purge yourself. How are you going to purge yourself? You impose this oath to be taken before you submit the question of this constitution to the people of Maryland. It does seem to me to be the strangest thing that ever happened.

The gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Oushing) said that he gloried in having voted for the act of emancipation. And having gloried in voting for the act of emancipation, as I presume you all do who voted for that act, you deny to those whom you have robbed of their property by that act of emancipation the right of passing upon that act—

Mr. BARRON. I call the gentleman to order.

The PRESIDENT. The gentleman will state his point of order.

Mr. BARRON. He has called us robbers, and I won't stand that.

The PRESIDENT. I do not suppose the gentleman meant anything personal.

Mr. BILLINGSLEY. Certainly not.

Mr. BARRON. He says we have robbed him. I do not think he has lost a cent—not a copper.

Mr. DAVIS, of Charles. I hope my friend from St. Mary's will take his seat if he cannot speak without interruptions.

Mr. BARRON. I will interrupt him when he calls us such names as that.

The PRESIDENT. The gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Barron) will not interrupt the gentleman from St. Mary's.

Mr. DAVIS, of Charles. Then I—

The PRESIDENT. The gentleman is out of order. The chair will protect the gentleman from St. Mary's (Mr. Billingsley) in his rights, without the interposition of the gentleman from Charles (Mr. Davis.) The chair

does not suppose the gentleman meant anything personal. He will proceed with his remarks.

Mr. BILLINGSLEY. What I say here I say politically. The gentleman from Baltimore city said that he gloried in his vote upon the act of emancipation.

Permit me to say that, so far as it regards the abstract question of slavery, I can see that any man may be honest in whatever opinions he may entertain upon that subject. I deny to no man the right honestly and conscientiously to entertain his opinions in regard to the abstract question of slavery. He may look upon it as a sin. He may look upon it as a foul stain upon the statute book of Maryland. He may look upon it as a cancer upon the body politic. He may look upon it as the cause of perpetuating the war, and he may even think that the destruction of slavery may be the means of bringing to us peace and tranquillity, and restoring the government. But how any gentlemen entertaining these views can deny to me the right to compensation is to me a very different question. You take away from me my vested rights—my rights under the constitution—the rights which you have heretofore protected—rights which I had every reason to believe would be perpetual. And after having taken them away then you deny to me, believing, as you say you do, that those rights were an injury to the government and to the State, you deny to me the right to compensation. I do think that this is a most singular and extraordinary proposition—that you can take away my property and yet not compensate me for it. Yet this you have done.

And now by this test oath you deny to me the privilege of testing this question before the people. I do not say that you have deprived me particularly, but you have deprived those men who are conscientious in regard to the oath itself, and who perhaps, under the operation of this oath, it being retrospective, might feel some conscientious scruples in regard to taking it, although they are as desirous as any man in this convention of having this government restored, with all the rights of the States as they were before the separation, and the constitution as it now is.

When we passed the bill submitting the question of a convention to the people, it was distinctly and emphatically expressed in that bill that the whole constitution should be submitted to the people.

The PRESIDENT informed the member that his time had expired under the rule.

Mr. AUBOURN. I had not intended to say anything at all upon this question. Nor should I feel it my duty to do so now, but for the fact that I have seen from the first day of the session until now a determination on the part of the minority of this con-