

State of Maryland
Executive Department
Annapolis March 10th 1863

to Messrs John M. Buck
& other Stewards of
Central M.E. Church &c

Gentlemen:

Your letter of 3rd Inst. has been read, and I avail myself of the first opportunity allowed by other engagements to reply to it.

You commence by saying, that having been by an extraordinary order of Major Genl. Schenck, deprived of the right and privilege of holding public Worship except upon conditions prescribed by him, you feel constrained to make application to me for that relief and protection which is guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of Maryland, and which you say you are well persuaded is entirely within my power to afford.

I have looked through your letter with some interest and curiosity, to ascertain, if I could, what is the particular relief and protection which you have in view, and which I, as you think, have clearly the power to afford. But there is nothing that indicates how or by what process you expect me to interfere to redress the grievance of which you complain. Under our system of Government, its various co-ordinate departments are carefully separated and distinguished, and it is distinctly declared by our Constitution that "no person exercising the functions of one of said departments shall assume or discharge the duties of any other." Such being the case, it rarely if ever happens, that any personal wrong inflicted upon the Citizen, is in the first instance, a proper subject of complaint to the Executive. That Department of the Government is not adapted to the investigation, always necessary to be made, in determining the character and extent of all such wrongs. This is a duty confided to the Judicial Tribunals which can ascertain the facts, apply the law and provide the appropriate remedy.

If therefore you have been wrongfully ousted from your place of Worship, or suffered any unlawful interruption in your religious exercises, the Courts of the State are obviously the only tribunals where all the circumstances can be properly investigated and your legal and constitutional rights lawfully determined.

This view of the case might perhaps relieve me of the necessity of a further reply to your communication; but as it would seem that the same considerations could scarcely have escaped your own notice, and as you have gone with such particularity into the full history of your religious Association and of the alleged outrage upon its rights, it would seem that you may have expected, that if I could do nothing more, I might express a sympathy in your complaint and utter some protest against the proceedings which have led to them. — It is due therefore to you and to myself, as well as to that frankness I desire always to observe, in all communication with my fellow Citizens, that I should take a more particular notice of the facts you have brought to my attention.