

Mr. Buchanan said he was pleased that the gentleman from New Hampshire / W. Bartlett) [sic] had moved the amendment now before the House; but he felt sorry there was not a better prospect, that it would prevail. Sir, said W. B., I trust there is not gentleman upon the floor, who would give nay vote, tending in the slightest degree to evince a sense of respect for religion, and more reluctance than I would myself. It is for this reason, that I shall trouble the House with a few remarks, explanation of the vote which I intend to give in favor on this amendment.

When the practice, of using the Hall of the House of Representatives in a place for public worship, commenced, it was perfectly proper. And why? Because it was then necessary. At that time, there were but few churches in this City, and they were not sufficient to accommodate all the persons who desired to attend public worship. At present the case is altogether different. Many churches have since been erected, & there is now no longer any necessity, that his House should be used, upon the Sabbath, for the purpose of religious worship. There is ~~now~~ an abundance of room in the different churches for the accommodation of all those who think proper to attend. Both the pastors & the people of these churches are proverbially polity to strangers. No member of Congress enters a church in this City, who is not immediately offered a comfortable seat. I believe I have been in nearly all of them, & can therefore testify, that no necessity now exists, for convening this Hall into a place of public worship, for the accommodation of members of Congress. I have conversed with some of the clergy, & with other ~~several~~ individuals of the City upon the subject, & they ~~have~~ all expressed but one opinion, & that was in accordance with the amendment proposed by the gentleman from New Hampshire.

[Baker written in pencil at the beginning of this paragraph] ~~It appears to me~~ From my own observation, I cannot say that I think this Hall is ~~now~~ a very suitable place for public worship. Can there be any doubt but that a large portion of those who attend here, come from motives of mere idle curiosity? A love of novelty – a desire to see the Hall attracts such crowds, that the members who attend can rarely be accommodated. I have often been unable to obtain a seat upon the floor, & when I did I have ~~rarely been permitted to occupy it, until~~ generally yielded ~~obliged~~ it up, from motives of politeness, before the end of the service. It has often been my fate ~~when I attended here~~, either to stand upon the promenade behind the seat which you now occupy, or to sit upon the steps outside of the [bar?] of the House. There is nothing in the whole

scene like what we have been accustomed to behold in a house of worship. When we enter a church, which has been dedicated to the worship to the Deity, our attention is at once arrested & fixed by the order & solemnity of every thing [sic] which surrounds us. ~~In such a place the mind receives powerful unifier~~ Religious feeling is the natural offspring of such a place. But what is the case of this Hall? I have often been here, when people were continually entering, during the whole service, & thus producing continual confusion.

There is no necessity that this House should be used as a place of worship; & I feel confident that the great cause of religion is not advanced but injured by ~~the~~ such a practice. We have two excellent chaplains – pious & eloquent men – who pray for us alternately every morning. I should never think of dispensing with their prayers. These chaplains both have respectable congregations in this city. We now deprive them of the religious service of the pastors on the Sabbath, although we might attend the churches in which they officiate, with much more comfort & convenience to ourselves, than we experience in the Hall. ~~There is room for us all &~~ There is room enough for us all in the different churches & we should all be welcome. In voting for this amendment, therefore, I utterly disclaim the imputation which the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. Chilton) would attach to its friends, that they are opposed to religious worship.

This House has now become so dirty that I have recently seen ~~the~~ clouds of dust rising from the carpet to the ceiling, in such a manner as to obscure the view. It is perfectly notorious that more dirt is brought into this Hall by the crowds who attended here upon Sunday, than during the whole remainder of the week. As the cause of religion does not require that we should submit to this inconvenience; for one, I am willing to close these doors upon the Sabbath. I am glad the amendment has been offered, although I think it is very doubtful whether it will prevail. I do not pretend to be a prophet; but yet I shall venture to predict, that it will not be twelve months before we shall feel ourselves compelled to adopt it.

[On back of page 2: Mr. Buchanan and three words struck through]

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