

I wish to claim, in connection with this matter, no merit further than that of seeking to serve my fellow-countrymen and of being governed by what I believe to be good intentions. I do not present the Bill because I think it reflects the opinions of one section more than another, but because its provisions will benefit the whole country. I believe it to be a public measure, conceived in the highest interests of the people. I believe that, if passed, it will reflect credit on the House and be a blessing to the people. This is not a popularity yielding measure certainly; but it will be a beneficent measure, in my humble opinion, if it passes.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is based, of course, upon religious considerations. The sabbath was set apart in the first place to commemorate the creation of the world; it was set apart by the Creator and hallowed by him. The only institutions that were transmitted to posterity from the possessions of man's first estate of innocence were the sabbath and marriage, and when the time came to inaugurate a greater event than the creation of the world, when the time came to redeem man, the hallowed day was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first and re-established as a memorial of redemption. And thus it stands to-day recognized by nearly all Christian churches—recognized by the Catholic church, recognized by almost every Protestant church—as the day set apart by Divinity to celebrate that great event, the greatest of all events in human history.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I propose to present this Bill not from the religious standpoint except incidentally. I propose to present this Bill and urge its claim upon the members of this House from a civil standpoint. I propose to present it as a civil measure; as a measure designed to secure for the people of this country their civil rights, and their religious rights as well, under the law. The aim of the Bill is not to prescribe religious observances; it will not interfere with the belief or religious observance of the Mahomedan or the Jew, the Pagan or the infidel. It will prescribe to no man what his religious belief or his religious conduct or his religious observances shall be. It is designed to secure to all men certain civil rights; it is designed to secure to the labourer the right of rest on the first day of the week; it is designed to secure the right to the Christian labourer to enjoy religious observances or ordinances upon the first day of the week—and, unfortunately in many cases, unless the law steps in and protects him in that right, it is impossible for him to exercise it. The foundation for action in this Bill is, first, that the Bill is in the interest of human liberty, and second, that it is in harmony with divine law.

Now, while we may not be called upon to legislate with regard to religion and morality, while we may not make a man's religion or a man's standard in morals something that will determine whether he shall

be a member of this House or a member of any other body or not; religion and morality, nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, have very much to do with the interests of the state. George Washington, in his farewell address to the American people, used this remarkable language:

Of all the dispositions and habits that lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who would labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness.

Now, the state, while it is not called upon to dictate what a man's religion shall be or what a man's religious observances shall be, ought not to sanction that which promotes irreligion and vice. No Christian state would be justified in doing that. The state is not justified in sanctioning and promoting obscene plays, the introduction of obscene literature, gambling or vice of any kind. It is the proper function of the state to prohibit all those usages and practices; it is the proper function of the state to refrain from that which promotes irreligion and vice; and no civilized state, whether there be there a connection between church and state or not, would be performing its duty if it permitted any usage which promoted irreligion or which created or increased vice.

All human law rests upon the Decalogue: Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; thou shalt not commit adultery—these are the foundations of civil law. And the Decalogue, Mr. Speaker, is not of partial obligation—it is a symmetrical whole; and the state cannot observe part of the Decalogue and disregard part of the Decalogue. If it gives heed to the sixth or the seventh or the eighth commandment, it must give heed also to the fourth, which is part of the symmetrical whole. Now, although there is no union of church and state in this country, there is, nevertheless, some intimate connection between the civil institutions of the country and religious obligations. No state can be entirely divorced in its laws and usages and constitutions from this obligation. St. Paul said with regard to the empire of Rome, "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." "By me kings reign and princes decree justice," said Solomon, in referring to Jehovah. Men cannot sever the connection that exists between religious obligation and civil institutions, whether there is a union of church and state or not. Christianity has stamped its distinctive features upon the civilization of this century, upon its political institutions, upon its social institutions, upon its religious institutions—the teaching of the great prophet of Nazareth leavens all phases and all functions of society; and the contrast that exists between the civilization of the nineteenth century and the civilization of Rome under Nero and Caligula is entirely due to the operation and influence and the formative