

of Scripture on the point is accounted for by acceptance of the moral command of the Decalogue. I am utterly at a loss to know how our friends can make up the requirements of the sacred day after they have thrown the Old Testament overboard. * * *

I hold myself free on the first day of the week to do what promotes my own spiritual well-being, responsible to God, and to God only, for what I do, and that I take to be keeping the Sabbath-day holy to the Lord, and resting to Him. But the twofold limitation must be kept in mind. On the one hand, I have no right to purchase this spiritual improvement at my fellow-creatures' expense. God, who knew our selfishness, when he bade Israel rest, bade him let his cattle, and his slaves, and the strangers living within his gates, rest too, lest he should be resting and they working for his gain. And just so—though it is but an illustration—just so, I have no right on the Lord's-day to purchase my Christian freedom or my spiritual privileges at the cost of my fellow-creatures' rest. And there is another limitation as stringent as that. "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient. If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." An idol is nothing; an idol sacrifice is nothing; meat that had been presented in an idol shrine was neither better nor worse than if it had never been there, but yet if there were men who thought that by eating that meat St. Paul, or any other Christian, was doing reverence to the idol, he was forbidden to partake. And so there are many things, Moderator, and fathers, and brethren, that I have often felt to be perfectly right and fair for me—things that would have done me good on the Lord's-day—from which I scrupulously abstained, because I knew I should have been misconstrued; for though they were weaker brethren, in my opinion, that would have misconstrued me, still they were brethren, and I would not offend even them. And thus, after all that Dr. Macleod said of the impossibility of keeping the Fourth Commandment, I repeat that I can keep it, not perfectly—God forbid that I should say that—but as perfectly as I can keep any other commandment of the law of love. He speaks much of Christian freedom; I find my Christian freedom in obeying the Fourth Commandment; in remembering the Sabbath-day and keeping it holy to the Lord. Then, pushing this a little farther—a nation, a corporation, a company, just because each of these unions of men consists of men, has, and ought to have, Christian liberty, and is and ought to be, responsible for the exercise of it, and I say every rule that applies to the individual applies also to the nation—so that the nation in its enactments, the corporation or company in its proceedings, is to do what it believes to be right and good, and tending to good, as keeping a day holy to the Lord.

It is to act on the principle of its own Christian freedom limited on the one hand, as I have said, by that inability to purchase this freedom at another's expense, and, on the other hand, by that danger of making other brethren to offend. I need not dwell on these views. It is admitted by all the best Christians in our land, and it is a great blessing that it is so admitted, that every body of men, joined together for any public purpose have a corporate conscience and a corporate responsibility appointing them to do what in them lies to keep for themselves, and enable others to keep the Sabbath-day holy.

There is just one point of view I may mention in a parenthesis ere I hurry to be done, and it is this—We are not to make the Lord's-day a day of gloom; and Christian parents and others having charge of youth must seek God's help, (and I know not for what they will need it more), to tell them how to make it a day distinctively religious, and yet not a day of gloom and dread. In point of fact, I believe it cannot be a gloomy day if it is really a holy one. There are many, of course, who think everything religious gloomy—to whom heaven itself would be dull. Such people, do what we will, we can never conciliate until we crowd, as they do on many parts of the Continent, our dancing parties and the benefit nights of the actors of the theatres within the compass of the daylight of the Lord's-day. It is a day when we are to remember our Master, and to have a religion like that which was His—loving to God and kind to man; a day when we are to rest from sin, and shame, and work, and care—a day devoted to kind deeds and holy thoughts—to happy family intercourse, to blessed neighbourly charity, and to holy spiritual communion with the God and Father of our spirits. We shall never succeed in making men think it not gloomy—some men, I mean—if it is in itself religious; but we are to strive that whatever they may think, it shall not be in its own nature gloomy. * * * And thus I believe that we can hold the sacred and perpetual obligation of the Decalogue, because it is a moral law—that we can hold this most firmly, and at the same time have all the Christian liberty which others would purchase by throwing the Decalogue from them. And when I see in other countries, or when I hear at home, descriptions of Sabbaths, not like this of Scotland, I am glad that both in the country and in the town we have fathers, and mothers, and children enjoying their day of rest, and trooping to the house of God; and when I see it, there seems to me—and the metaphor, I think, would bear examination—there seems to me to be upon our Sabbath a sober stillness like that of our mountain heights, hearing, as they do, the impress of the Creator's hand.