

over from the Jewish institution to the Christian one. But as a matter of fact there is not a word in the Old Testament anywhere to indicate that the Jews were required to devote the day to religious services at all, nor is there anything to show that previous to the time of Christ they ever so understood it. True, the sacrifices in the temple were to be doubled on that day; but the people were not required to be present at them, save when they occurred during the great annual festivals. Subsequent to the restoration and the establishment of synagogues, it was customary to have services throughout the land which the people were encouraged to attend. But the law required only cessation from labour, and so long as they avoided work they seem to have considered themselves at liberty to spend the day in any way they chose. If there was any form of relaxation, social or otherwise, in which they could indulge without infringing that prohibition, this they felt free to enjoy. And practically for the great majority, instead of being a day of solemnity and gloom, it was a day of feasting and rollicking. We have not, therefore, applied to the Christian Sabbath the Jewish restrictions as to recreations, for there were none to apply. In fact we reject the Jewish Sabbath under the Christian dispensation, not because it was too rigid, but because it was wholly inadequate and insufficient for the object it has in view.

Then again it is assumed wrongly that Christian liberty always involves a relaxation of the old Testament law, when in fact it very frequently exalts and strengthens it. No doubt it does imply deliverance from the ceremonial observances that hedged the Jews around on every side. But one has only to read the Sermon on the Mount to see that in every other respect Christianity demands not less from its followers than Judaism, but a great deal more. Every law that remains is made more comprehensive and heartsearching. Every institution that remains is elevated to a higher plane, is tuned to a higher key. Take for example the institution of marriage. Here we do not find that the bonds are released but drawn more firmly than before. Or take the institution of the ministry. The Jewish priesthood was a hereditary caste. Whatever their character, they held office by right of birth. The Christian ministry is meant to consist only of picked men who are called to the office because of their fitness for its duties. So it is in reference to the Sabbath. The institution itself, we have received from Judaism, but the mode of its observance is Christian; and just because it is Christian, we expect the standard to be higher than before. We are not surprised therefore to find that in the New Testament, whenever the first day of the week is referred to, it is not with a view of insisting upon the duty of rest. That is only incidental. It is rather as indicating the blessedness of worship. It is observed by the early Church, not that they may obtain relaxation, but that they may commemorate the resurrection of the Lord and hold holy communion