

I Love the Lord's Day

by Robert Murray McCheyne

"The Sabbath was made for man"

DEAR FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN, – As a servant of God in this dark and cloudy day, I feel constrained to lift up my voice in behalf of the entire sanctification of the Lord's day. The daring attack that is now made by some of the directors of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway on the law of God and the peace of our Scottish Sabbath – the blasphemous motion which they mean to propose to the shareholders in February next – and the wicked pamphlets which are now being circulated in thousands, full of all manner of lies and impieties– call loudly for the calm, deliberate testimony of all faithful ministers and private Christians in behalf of God's holy day. In the name of all God's people in this town, and in this land, I commend to your dispassionate consideration the following

REASONS WHY WE LOVE THE LORD'S DAY

I. BECAUSE IT IS THE LORD'S DAY – "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice, and be glad in it" (Ps. cxviii. 24). "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. i. 10). It is His, by example. It is the day on which He rested from His amazing work of redemption. Just as God rested on the seventh day from all His works, wherefore God blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it; so the Lord Jesus rested this day from all His agony, and pain, and humiliation. "There remaineth therefore the keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). The Lord's day is His property, just as the Lord's Supper is the supper belonging to Christ. It is His table. He is the bread. He is the wine. He invites the guests. He fills them with joy and with the Holy Ghost. So it is with the Lord's day. All days of the year are Christ's, but He hath marked out one in seven as peculiarly His own. "He hath made it," or marked it out. Just as He planted a garden in Eden, so He hath fenced about this day and made it His own. This is the reason why we love it, and would keep it entire. We love everything that is Christ's. We love His word. It is better to us than thousands of gold and silver. "O how we love His law! it is our study all the day." We love His house. It is our trysting-place with Christ, where He meets with us and communes with us from off the mercy-seat. We love His table. It is His banqueting-house, where His banner over us is love—where He looses our bonds, and anoints our eyes, and makes our hearts burn with holy joy. We love His people, because they are His, members of His body, washed in His blood, filled with His Spirit, our brothers and sisters for eternity. And we love the Lord's day, because it is His. Every hour of it is dear to us—sweeter than honey, more precious than gold. It is the day He rose for our justification. It reminds us of His love, and His finished work, and His rest. And we may boldly say that that man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ who does not love the entire Lord's day. Oh, Sabbath-breaker, whoever you be, you are a sacrilegious robber! When you steal the hours of the Lord's day for business or for pleasure, you are robbing Christ of the precious hours which He claims as his own. Would you not be shocked if a plan were deliberately proposed for breaking through the fence of the Lord's table, and turning it into a common meal, or a feast for the profligate and the drunkard? Would not your best feelings be harrowed to see the silver cup of communion made a cup of revelry in the hand of the drunkard? And yet what better is the proposal of our railway directors? "The Lord's day" is as much His day as "the Lord's table"

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is His table. Surely we may well say, in the words of Dr. Love, that eminent servant of Christ, now gone to the Sabbath above: "Cursed is that gain, cursed is that recreation, cursed is that health, which is gained by criminal encroachments on this sacred day."

II. BECAUSE IT IS A RELIC OF PARADISE AND TYPE OF HEAVEN – The first Sabbath dawned on the bowers of a sinless paradise. When Adam was created in the image of his Maker, he was put into the garden to dress it and to keep it. No doubt this called forth all his energies. To train the luxuriant vine, to gather the fruit of the fig-tree and palm, to conduct the water to the fruit-trees and flowers, required all his time and all his skill. Man was never made to be idle. Still when the Sabbath-day came round, his rural implements were all laid aside; the garden no longer was his care. His calm, pure mind looked beyond things seen into the world of eternal realities. He walked with God in the garden, seeking deeper knowledge of Jehovah and His ways, his heart burning more and more with holy love, and his lips overflowing with seraphic praise. Even in Paradise man needed a Sabbath. Without it Eden itself would have been incomplete. How little they know the joys of Eden, the delight of a close and holy walk with God, who would wrest from Scotland this relic of a sinless world! It is also the type of heaven. When a believer lays aside his pen or loom, brushes aside his 1 worldly cares, leaving them behind him with his week-day clothes, and comes up to the and comes up to the house of God, it is like the morning of the resurrection, the day when we shall come out of great tribulation into the presence of God and the Lamb. When he sits under the preached word, and hears the voice of the shepherd leading and feeding his soul, it reminds him of the day when the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed him and lead him to living fountains of waters. When he joins in the psalm of praise, it reminds him of the day when his hands shall strike the harp of God– Where congregations ne'er break up, And Sabbaths have no end. When he retires, and meets with God in secret in his closet, or, like Isaac, in some favourite spot near his dwelling, it reminds him of the day when "he shall be a pillar in the house of our God, and go no more out." This is the reason why we love the Lord's day. This is the reason why we "call the Sabbath a delight" A well-spent Sabbath we feel to be a day of heaven upon earth. For this reason we wish our Sabbaths to be wholly given to God. We love to spend the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is taken up in the works A necessity and mercy. We love to rise early on that morning, and to sit up late, that we may have a long day with God. How many may know from this that they will never be in heaven! A straw on the surface can tell which way the stream is flowing. Do you abhor a holy Sabbath? Is it a kind of hell to you to be with those who are strict in keeping the Lord's day? The writer of these lines once felt as you do. You are restless and uneasy. You say, "Behold what a weariness is it" "When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may sell corn?" Ah! soon, very soon, and you will be in hell. Hell is the only place for you. Heaven is one long, never-ending, holy Sabbath-day. There are no Sabbaths in hell.

III. BECAUSE IT IS A DAY OF BLESSINGS – When God instituted the Sabbath in paradise, it is said, "God blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it" (Gen. ii. 3). He not only set it apart as a sacred day, but made it a day of blessing. Again, when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week before dawn, He revealed Himself the same day to two disciples going to Emmaus, and made their hearts burn within them (Luke xxiv. 13). The same evening He came and stood in the midst of the disciples, and said, "Peace be unto you;" and He breathed on them and said, "receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 19). Again, after eight days, – that is, the next Lord's day,–Jesus came and stood in the midst,

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and revealed Himself with unspeakable grace to unbelieving Thomas (John xx. 26). It was on the Lord's day also that the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost (Acts ii. 1 ; compare Lev. xxiii. 15, 16). That beginning of all spiritual blessings, that first revival of the Christian Church, was on the Lord's day. It was on the same day that the beloved John, an exile on the sea-girt isle of Patmos, far away from the assembly of the saints, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and received his heavenly revelation. So that in all ages, from the beginning of the world, and in every place where there is a believer, the Sabbath has been a day of double blessing. It is so still, and will be, though all God's enemies should gnash their teeth at it. True, God is a God of free grace, and confines His working to no time or place; but it is equally true, and all the scoffs of the infidel cannot alter it, that it pleases Him to bless His word most on the Lord's day. All God's faithful ministers in every land can bear witness that sinners are converted most frequently on the Lord's day—that Jesus comes in and shows Himself through the lattice of ordinances oftenest on His own day. Saints, like John, are filled with the Spirit on the Lord's day, and enjoy their calmest, deepest views into the eternal world. Unhappy men, who are striving to rob our beloved Scotland of this day of double blessing, "ye know not what you do." You would wrest from our dear countrymen the day when God opens the windows of heaven and pours down a blessing. You want to make the heavens over Scotland like brass, and the hearts of our people like iron. Is it the sound of the golden bells of our ever-living High Priest on the mountains of our land, and the breathing of His Holy Spirit over so many of our parishes, that has roused up your satanic exertions to drown the sweet sound of mercy by the deafening roar of railway carriages? Is it the returning vigour of the revived and chastened Church of Scotland that has opened the torrents of blasphemy which you pour forth against the Lord of the Sabbath? Have your own withered souls no need of a drop from heaven? May it not be the case that some of you are blaspheming the very day on which your own soul might have been saved? Is it not possible that some of you may remember, with tears of anguish in hell, the exertions which you are now making, against light and against warning, to bring down a withering blight on your own souls and on the religion of Scotland? To those who are God's children in this land, I would now, in the name of our common Saviour, who is the Lord of the Sabbath day, address

A WORD OF EXHORTATION

I. PRIZE THE LORD'S DAY – The more that others despise and trample on it, love you it all the more. The louder the storm of blasphemy howls around you, sit the closer at the feet of Jesus. "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet" Diligently improve all holy time. It should be the busiest day of the seven; but only in the business of eternity. Avoid sin on that holy day. God's children should avoid sin every day, but most of all on the Lord's day. It is a day of double cursing as well as of double blessing. The world will have to answer dreadfully for sins committed in holy time. Spend the Lord's day in the Lord's presence. Spend it as a day in heaven. Spend much of it in praise and in works of mercy, as Jesus did.

II. DEFEND THE LORD'S DAY – Lift up a calm, undaunted testimony against all the profanations of the Lord's day. Use all your influence, whether as a statesman, a magistrate, a master, a father, or a friend, both publicly and privately, to defend the entire Lord's day. This duty is laid upon you in the Fourth

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Commandment. Never see the Sabbath broken without reproving the breaker of it. Even worldly men, with all their pride and contempt for us, cannot endure to be convicted of Sabbath-breaking. Always remember God and the Bible are on your side, and that you will soon see these men cursing their own sin and folly when too late. Let all God's children in Scotland lift up a united testimony especially against these three public profanations of the Lord's day

(1) The keeping open of Reading-Rooms – In this town, and in all the large towns of Scotland, I am told, you may find in the public reading-rooms many of our men of business turning over the newspapers and magazines at all hours of the Lord's day; and especially on Sabbath evenings, many of these places are filled like a little church. Ah, guilty men! how plainly you show that you are on the broad road that leadeth to destruction. If you were a murderer or an adulterer, perhaps you would not dare to deny this. Do you not know—and all the sophistry of hell cannot disprove it— that the same God who said, "Thou shalt not kill," said also, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?" The murderer who is dragged to the gibbet, and the polished Sabbath-breaker are one in the sight of God.

(2) The keeping open Public-Houses – Public-houses are the curse of Scotland. I never see a sign, "Licensed to sell spirits," without thinking that it is a licence to ruin souls. They are the yawning avenues to poverty and rags in this life, and, as another has said, "the short cut to hell." Is it to be tamely borne in this land of light and reformation, that these pest-houses and dens of iniquity—these man-traps for precious souls—shall be open on the Sabbath, nay, that they shall be enriched and kept afloat by this unholy traffic, many of them declaring that they could not keep up their shop if it were not for the Sabbath market-day? Surely we may well say, "Cursed is the gain made on that day." Poor wretched men! Do you not know that every penny that rings upon your counter on that day will yet eat your flesh as if it were fire—that every drop of liquid poison swallowed in your gaslit palaces will only serve to kindle up the flame of "the fire that is not quenched"?

(3) Sunday Trains upon the Railway – A majority of the directors of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway have shown their determination, in a manner that has shocked all good men, to open the railway on the Lord's day. The sluices of infidelity have been opened at the same time, and floods of blasphemous tracts are pouring over the land, decrying the holy day of the blessed God, as if there was no eye in heaven, no King on Zion Hill, no day of reckoning. Christian countrymen, awake! and, filled by the same spirit that delivered our country from the dark superstitions of Rome, let us beat back the incoming tide of infidelity and enmity to the Sabbath. Guilty men! who, under Satan, are leading on the deep, dark phalanx of Sabbath-breakers, yours is a solemn position. You are robbers. You rob God of His holy day. You are murderers. You murder the souls of your servants. God said, "Thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy servant;" but you compel your servants to break God's law, and to sell their souls for gain. You are sinners against light. Your Bible and your catechism, the words of godly parents, perhaps now in the Sabbath above, and the loud remonstrances of God-fearing men, are ringing in your ears, while you perpetrate this deed of shame, and glory in it. You are traitors to your country. The law of your country declares that you should "observe a holy rest all that day from your own words, works, and thoughts;" and yet you scout it as an antiquated superstition. Was it not Sabbath-breaking that made God east away Israel? And yet you would bring the same curse on Scotland now. You are moral suicides, stabbing your own souls, proclaiming to the world that you are not the Lord's people, and hurrying on your souls

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to meet the Sabbath-breaker's doom. In conclusion, I propose, for the calm consideration of all sober-minded men, the following

SERIOUS QUESTIONS

(1) Can you name one godly minister, of any denomination in all Scotland, who does not hold the duty of the entire sanctification of the Lord's day?

(2) Did you ever meet with a lively believer in any country under heaven – one who loved Christ, and lived a holy life – who did not delight in keeping holy to God the entire Lord's day?

(3) Is it wise to take the interpretation of God's will concerning the Lord's day from "men of the world," from infidels, scoffers, men of unholy lives, men who are sand-blind in all divine things, men who are the enemies of all righteousness, who quote Scripture freely, as Satan did, to deceive and betray?

(4) If, in opposition to the uniform testimony of God's wisest and holiest servants—against the plain warnings of God's word, against the very words of your catechism, learned beside your mother's knee, and against the voice of your outraged conscience—you join the ranks of the Sabbath-breakers, will not this be a sin against light, will it not lie heavy on your soul upon your death-bed, will it not meet you in the judgment-day? Praying that these words of truth and soberness may be owned of God, and carried home to your hearts with divine power—I remain, dear fellow-countrymen, your soul's well-wisher, etc.

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SCRIPTURES TO BE MEDITATED ON

1. Sabbath commanded – Ex. xvi. 22–30; xx. 8–11; xxxv. 1–3. Lev. xix. 3–30. Dent. v. 12–15. Neh. ix. 14.
2. A sign of God's people – Ex. xxxi. 12–17. 2 Kings iv. 23. Ezek. xx. 12. Lam. i. 7. Heb. iv. 9.
3. Sabbath-breaking punished – Num. xv. 32–36. Lev. xxvi. 33–35. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. Jer. xvii. 19–end. Lam. ii. 6. Ezek. xx. 12–26. Amos. viii. 4–14.
4. Day of blessing – Gen. ii. 2, 3. Ex. xvi. 24. Lev. xxiv. 8. Num. xxviii. 9, 10. Isa. lvi. 1–8; lviii. 13, 14. John xx. 1, 19, 26. Acts ii. 1, with Lev. xxiii. 15. Rev. i. 10.
5. Rulers should guard the Sabbath – Ex. xx. 10. Neh. xiii. 15–22.
6. Sabbath in gospel times – Psalm cxviii. 24. Isa. lxvi. 23. Ezek. xlvi. 1. Mark ii. 27, 28. Acts ii. 1; xx. 6, 7. I Cor. xvi. 2. Rev. i. 10.