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Be Thou Faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life

The Church at Smyrna was to pass through great tribulation, as has been the lot of the true Church of God down through the ages. The enemies of God have ever sought to destroy the witness for Christ in the earth and have at different times inflicted upon the true people of God and servants of Christ grievous afflictions. The Lord knew what the Church at Smyrna was passing through and would yet pass through. He spoke to her as the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive. He is before all things and by Him all things consist that are. He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending". All things have their source in Him, and all things have their end in Him. It was through John, the beloved disciple and apostle, that the Lord Jesus Christ wrote to the Church at Smyrna and to the other churches in Asia Minor. John describes himself as their brother and companion in tribulation. He could write as one sympathetic towards them in their sufferings, having himself suffered tribulation. Yet it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who was speaking to them as the sympathetic High Priest, who in all their afflictions was afflicted, and who on their behalf had endured afflictions inconceivably great in His sufferings unto death on Calvary's accursed tree. As the Church in Smyrna passed through these fires of tribulation, the Saviour could say to her, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich). Here was a Church in great poverty and need, yet all the while rich, inconceivably rich, through the riches of divine grace and mercy and love, through the true riches and righteousness. To this Church in her hour of need the Lord gives an exhortation and also a word of encouragement.

The exhortation which the Lord has for this Church in the midst of her tribulation is: "Be thou faithful unto death". A call to be faithful to Christ, to His Word, to His Cause in the world is surely a high matter, yet one to which the true people of God ought to aspire. How easy it is for us, if left to ourselves, to be unfaithful to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ even though we are His people. How easy it is for worldly considerations to prevail, how easy it is for Satan and our own fallen hearts to get an advantage over us, especially if we are in a low spiritual condition or in a backsliding state. How easy it is then at such a time to fail the Master whose service we have entered into and to whom we have sworn to be faithful. Paul could say of His Lord — "whose I am, and whom I serve".

The Lord has had His faithful servants in the world. Joshua and Caleb were two of these when they brought back the good report of the land of Caanan and encouraged the people to go up and take it. They wholly served the Lord, being faithful to Him in their day and generation. No doubt, too, the Lord still has His faithful people and servants in the earth who cleave to His truth in a dark day and endeavour to show forth His praises. The servants of Christ must be faithful to their Lord and Master — "It is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful." We are told of Moses that he was faithful in all his house but we are also told of a greater than Moses — the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to Him that appointed Him. He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses. Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant, but Christ as a son over His own house. His Name is called Faithful and True. His people are to be followers of Him in His faithfulness. He never deviated from the path of obedience but set His face like a flint. So must those who would be true followers of Him. Only in the strength of divine grace may they be faithful.

The faithfulness required of the true people of God is faithfulness unto death. It is not faithfulness for a short period in a particular service, but faithfulness throughout a lifetime of service to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is faithfulness in the dark day as well as the bright. It is faithfulness at all times to a Master who requires faithfulness of His followers and who is worthy of it from those for whom He has done so much. It is faithfulness to Christ and to His Cause even in suffering unto death, if the Lord should call for that from them. In Scotland, as well as in other lands, where much blood was shed, men and women were found who were faithful unto death, death by the sword, by the bullet, by torture, and privation, by the block, by drowning and by the gibbet, and only because they would not deny

their Lord and Master. They were faithful unto death. We are called to be followers of them, and may yet have our faithfulness to Christ tested as theirs was. Would ours stand the test?

The Lord gives the Church at Smyrna encouragement in her tribulation. He says: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Though some of them were to be cast into prison by the devil to be tried, and others have tribulation for ten days — that is, a prolonged period of tribulation, yet Christ was saying to this Church: "Fear not." At another time He had said: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." The Lord would give strength to bear all these afflictions. He would sustain them and be with them, so they had no need to fear. And to them He promised a crown of life — a glorious crown as their reward — even a crown of eternal life. Of this crown the Apostle Paul had to say as he came to the end of his life here: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Can we say the same? Have we the hope of eternal life and of the inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away? If not, let us seek an interest for our never-dying souls in Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Notes of a Sermon

by Rev. D. A. MacFarlane, M.A.

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him." Matthew 9: 9.

I intend, as enabled, to make a few remarks about Matthew. We see from this verse that Christ called Matthew to follow Him. Certainly, he was called to follow the Divine Redeemer as a believer, but he was also called to follow Him in a more especial way; as one of His apostles. Matthew could never have followed Christ unless he was both enlightened and made willing. You cannot have the one without the other; there is a binding unity between the two.

It is likely that Matthew had his "receipt of custom" at a pier or jetty, where there would be much coming and going and where people could conveniently pay their taxes. The Lord came down from the north end of the Lake of Galilee and at a certain point crossed over to the other side. There he saw Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom and He called him to follow Him. "Follow me," said Christ; and Matthew "arose and followed Him".

Matthew was probably converted before this particular time. Perhaps the change occurred under one of Christ's sermons — maybe the Sermon on the Mount, which we have recorded in the chapter previous to this one. If that was the case, Matthew got such a view of the glory of Christ then that he could not but love Him and follow Him. That sermon would be to Matthew as the lattice through which Christ showed Himself to him, and through which he got a soul-ravishing view of the glory of Immanuel. How he must have loved that sermon. Now question yourself, dear fellow-sinner: Do you have some measure of understanding of that sermon, and some measure of love for it?

“The entrance of thy words gives light,
makes wise who simple are.”

That such a work of grace was wrought in Matthew is very evident. He was brought to love the narrow way which leads to life eternal. He had no quarrel with the narrow way, seeking to walk constantly in it, taking up the cross of Christ and kissing the yoke of Christ.

Another evidence of grace in his soul is that some of the parables which he recorded were evident in his own life. Take for instance, the parable of the sower. Was Matthew a stony ground hearer? Was his heart like a much trodden path? No! The word took root in his heart. It was not the rocky ground root which is evident in some — a spurious change with no conviction of the carnality of the heart, but a root which sprung up to the bearing of fruit. The parable of the wheat and the tares is another. At the time of harvest it was evident which was tares and which was wheat; and the fruits of the Spirit were evident in him. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” And had not Matthew got possession of the “treasure hid in a field” — Christ in the gospel being all his treasure.

When Christ called Matthew to follow Him, we find Matthew immediately leaving all and following Him. No doubt he directed those who worked with him to take over and attend to the business in hand, but he did not delay to follow Christ in this special way.

We are not all called to follow the Lord in this particular way — for Matthew was called to be one of the appointed apostles, but we are called to love and fear the Lord. Happy is he who so follows the Redeemer — loving his blessed name and walking in His fear. “Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways.”

We need no new revelation to do so. The Reformers dwelt much on the testimony of the Holy Spirit, namely, that no new revelation is given, but that the Holy Spirit sheds light on the divine, written Word, enlightening the mind in the knowledge of the truth. At the same time the soul

is made willing and able to walk in the truth. Thomas Halyburton is very strong on the necessity of a divine, supernatural work being done in the soul before it can or will (or even have the least inclination to) walk in the ways of the Lord and keep His commandments.

It may be helpful to compare Matthew with some of the other disciples — for instance, Peter and John. We may say, within the bounds of charity, that Peter was inclined to be impulsive and had to be reproved by the Lord a number of times. “Get thee behind me, Satan,” was the solemn rebuke. Peter once said to Christ, “We have left all and followed thee. Look at that fishing smack there, and that coble lying on the shore, and these fishing nets — we left it all and followed thee. What will our reward be?” “Ah, look you here, Peter; you need not worry about that. You shall have your reward an hundredfold. You shall have trials and persecutions in this world, but the end shall be everlasting life; and you shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel.” Perhaps Peter was the oldest of the disciples and they looked to him as their spokesman, but nevertheless he was impulsive. “Though all should deny thee, yet will not I deny thee.” “Stay, stay Peter! Before the cock crows thrice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” Some of the old divines — I am thinking particularly of Mr Finlayson of Lochs, latterly of Helmsdale — used to say that Peter had a great measure of zeal which was without knowledge, but that as he went on his way he was taught and gradually began to walk with zeal mingled with knowledge — mingled with holy wisdom and discretion. So it is with the Lord’s people — they do learn from their mistakes which are made bitter to them. Now, you can imagine Matthew perspiring over his body as he listened to Peter being so bold before the Lord.

I believe that Matthew was a most modest man. We never hear of him butting in or speaking inadvisedly. We find not only Peter but also Thomas and Philip, and even John, speaking indiscreetly as it were, but Matthew appears to stay in the background, listening and learning, drinking in the words of Christ, of which he is the author in this Gospel, although not in the supreme sense.

Matthew had a great love to the souls of his fellows, and no doubt wept many a tear in his soul for them. We find him gathering together many, not just a few but “many publicans and sinners” for a “feast in his own house”. We do not find him saying, “I will spend no more than five pounds,” — no, he gathered “a great company of publicans and others.” The invitations went out: “Come you to the feast. My servants will have everything ready by such and such an hour, and then afterward the Master will address us as He sees fit.” One has the feeling that they came willing-

ly — not making the excuses: “I have married a wife,” or “I have bought a yoke of oxen.” They did not have to be coaxed with the bait of a sumptuous feast. Perhaps as they sat with Jesus and His disciples, they heard the invitation, “You that are weary — they have a heavy load, even although you do not feel it as you ought to do although it is a millstone around your neck — come unto me.” Whether any were converted at that feast we cannot say — the Great Day will reveal that.

What will the Great Day reveal with regard to yourself? We hear of so called accidents on the roads — people we know called into the great eternity in a flash. Put it to yourself, dear soul: Where will your eternal portion be if you be suddenly called away?

One last point before we conclude: Do you not think that Matthew loved his own Gospel? This is where we see that he was the author of it and yet was not. That seems a contradiction, but we shall see. Many authors, in their pride and conceit, have loved their own works. But Matthew loved this Gospel which he wrote because it was the words of the Lord which he was led to record. So we see that, in the supreme sense, the Lord is the author of the Word. Perhaps Matthew, being a man who was used to writing and business matters, felt inclined to take notes of the things he heard Jesus say; and maybe he often prayed, “Lord, help me to remember these things.” But then there was more than that: Matthew was led — was carried along by the Holy Spirit to put on record this Gospel. And he loved it, every word of it. Do you not think that he loved the Old Testament too? Ah yes, he did. In this Gospel alone we find no fewer than sixty-five direct quotations from the Old Testament. How he must have loved it. Seek, dear soul, to have that same love to the holy Word of the Lord. Seek that it would be blessed to your own soul so that you would be like the Saviour, and indeed, like Matthew himself.

Brief Notes of a Sermon

by the late Rev. Arch. Beaton, Gairloch

“Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his Saints.” The Saints are called Saints because they are a people who are justified by faith in Christ. They are freed from the claims of God’s law and justice, and have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. Christ satisfied the claims of law and justice for them in his obediences, sufferings, and God will never require it again of His people.

Christ bore the penalty of their sins and so they are secure in him for ever. They are called Saints in that they are set apart for God’s use in

the world, and by His word, Spirit, and providence, they are being prepared and sanctified to be with Himself in Glory.

As well as being justified, they must be sanctified. They become more and more conformed to His image, growing in His knowledge and grace, and are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory. It has been said that there is one thing in which the church on earth, and saints in heaven do not agree. The Saints in glory desire that those on earth would join them in glory, but those on earth desire that they would still remain with them on earth.

Saints are not taken home in the day of justification because they have service to do for God on earth. They witness for Him. They honour and glorify Him in their walk and conversation on earth. They have great and manifold reasons to praise and magnify his blessed name. They have the song of praise for Him here, and they will have it in eternity, as it is written, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God Kings and Priests and we shall reign on the earth." They are precious to Him because he also bought them with His blood. They are precious in that they are His spoil, Christ's spoil taken out of the hands of Satan, their enemy. They are precious in that they manifest the glory of His grace. His grace is in exercise in their hearts, and they are by it lights in the world, as He said unto them. Ye are the light of the world. It is Himself that gives them the light. They are precious to Him in that they die in faith giving glory to God. They hope and trust in Him. They are precious to Him in death.

Let us seek to die the death of the righteous. There are many that deceive themselves in thinking that they may die the death of the righteous, while living an ungodly life here. But let us seek earnestly to be born again and to live unto Christ so that we may also die in him.

A Prayer for Revival

by Rev. James S. Sinclair

Hab. 3: 2

At the beginning of a new year it is customary for people to express to one another their good wishes for happiness and prosperity during the year on which they have entered. The thoughts in this connection that manifestly occupy the mind of the greater number are those of natural happiness and material prosperity. They have no concern about anything

higher, and desire nothing better than their own and their neighbour's worldly success. But the case is — or at least ought to be — different with those who fear God. The thought which should have the uppermost place in their minds at this season, as at all seasons, is the spiritual prosperity of the kingdom of God. It would become them to be deeply concerned, in times of darkness and declension such as ours, that the Lord would send, for His own name's sake, a season of genuine spiritual prosperity to the vineyard of the visible Church.

The prophet Habakkuk, in his own day, was greatly concerned about this matter. True, he did not live in the very worst times that the Jewish people ever saw. It is reckoned that he wrote his prophecy during the reign of good King Josiah. This excellent king had made a valuable reformation of an outward kind in Judah; but it would appear that many of the sins which had been encouraged by his predecessors still held too large a place in the land. The Lord sent messages of warning by His servants, Jeremiah and Habakkuk, and intimated to the people that He would "raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation," to chastise them for their sins — a judgment which came to pass in due time. Habakkuk was thus deeply moved to plead with the Most High for a time of reviving in the following terms; "O Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." We shall briefly notice the words, with application to the case of Church and nation in our day.

I. — Let us observe the prophet's *fear*: "Lord, I have heard thy speech and was afraid." The prophet had heard the voice of Jehovah speaking concerning the evils of his time and proclaiming woes unto those who were guilty of indulging in these evils. To all appearance, the wicked were at this period numerous, strong, and deceitful, and the truly just few and weak, unable to resist effectually the inroads of iniquity. The Lord had declared His intention of sending dreadful enemies into the country, and the prophet, conscious not only of the sins of the wicked but of his own sins and the sins of God's children in general, trembled with fear lest the work of God should be entirely swept out of the land. He confesses this in lowly entreaty before God. "Rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself that I might rest in the day of trouble."

Now, it is plain to everyone who studies, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the condition of Church and nation in our day, that things are in a low and degenerate condition. If we have ears to hear the Lord's voice speaking to us in the Word, we may well tremble and be afraid lest marked judgments speedily overtake us. Sins against the precepts of law and

Gospel abound on almost every hand. Immorality of life and vain practices in worship are on the increase. The living witnesses for truth are few, and some of them spiritually weak and powerless. It would be good if those who perceive the needs of the times were filled with a humble, earnest, godly fear for the cause of God and righteousness.

II. — Let us notice, secondly, the prophet's *supplication*: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known." His godly fear impelled him to earnest prayer. There is an unbelieving, slavish fear that drives many poor sinners away from God; but there is a believing, filial fear that constrains them to draw near to Him with all their difficulties and temptations. Such was the fear of Habakkuk, and such is the fear of all those who truly know the Lord still. The prophet felt that the grand remedy for the sad state of affairs was the revival of God's special and saving work — the making known of His glorious character as the God of salvation. "In the midst of the years" of calamity he felt much afraid of God's judgments, and longed and prayed for manifestations of His grace and power. "O Lord, revive thy work." And such is the exercise of those in our own time who earnestly desire to see the coming of Christ's kingdom in power and in the Holy Ghost.

Let it be observed, then, that there are two things that are needed in order to constitute a true revival of the Lord's cause — first, the revival of His work in the souls of those who are already among His living people; and secondly, the revival of His work in relation to sinners outside the kingdom — "the other sheep" who must be brought in from the mountains of vanity.

(1) There is need to seek the revival of God's work in the souls of His children. It is plain that we live in a comparatively dark and dead time in the spiritual experience of even the living in Jerusalem. We do not see the liveliness and vigour of soul, the heavenly elevation of spirit, the intense earnestness at a throne of grace, the warm, loving, and self-sacrificing zeal, and the close and holy walk with God, of Christians of a bygone generation. Possibly a few here and there may be found exemplifying these characteristics in some marked degree. But the lamentable case is that, in general, among those who may be credited with the possession of divine life there is too much spiritual lethargy, carnal security, coldness, and worldliness of mind and conversation. People are at ease in Zion — too much satisfied with the form of religion apart from "the power" — exceedingly diligent in attending to their worldly affairs and prospects, but lukewarm in the all-important matters of making "their calling and election sure," and of seeking the real advancement of the kingdom of God.

There is great necessity that the Lord would send forth anew His Spirit and Word with special power, into the understandings, consciences, and hearts of His own people, so that they might be humbled, emptied, laid low, and brought afresh — as if it were for the first time — to the feet of Christ and to “the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel,” and might thus experience special outflowings of the love and power of God in their souls, and be filled with a more tender and lively zeal for the glory of His name and the good of His cause.

When the Spirit was poured forth on the day of Pentecost He first descended on the disciples in the upper room before He came upon the multitude who were awakened to a sense of their sins. Peter and the eleven were eminently anointed of the Holy Ghost. It is greatly to be desired in our own day that those who stand up in the name of Christ to preach the Word would receive a special baptism of the Spirit, and that the Gospel would go forth from their lips “not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.” The preaching of the Gospel has been the chief means employed by the Lord in all ages for promoting His kingdom in the souls of those already taught from above, and in calling effectually others out of darkness into His marvellous light.

(2) There is special need for the revival of God’s work in relation to those outside the kingdom. It is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be (or, rather, were being) saved” (Acts 2: 47). Now, it is perfectly plain that there is a most urgent call that prayer would ascend for the revival of the Lord’s work in this respect. We must not be deterred from earnestness in this direction because we see, perhaps, others proceeding upon wrong and unscriptural lines, imagining that they can, by fleshly means, convince and convert sinners. Their mistaken efforts must not make us callous about the salvation of perishing souls. Nor must we abuse certain solemn and precious aspects of divine truth by misapplying them to the detriment of real zeal for the everlasting benefit of our fellow-sinners. Some may be ready to fold their hands in ease and say, “The Lord will make sure of His own elect — all those whom He has ordained unto eternal life; He will call them effectually at His own time, none of them shall be lost.” These are certainly valuable truths, but it must not be forgotten that the Lord has ordained the means as well as the end, and that He employs such means as the reading of His Word, the preaching of the Gospel, Christian counsel, and earnest prayer at the throne of grace, for the accomplishment of His gracious purposes in the conversion of poor sinners. If we neglect or undervalue these means we fight against God and against the ways of infinite

wisdom and goodness, and are in danger of being consumed with spiritual judgments, if not with eternal miseries.

Let us consider how few they are that truly fear the Lord in our day and generation, and how few are savingly impressed even when the truth is proclaimed in a lively and convincing manner, and we shall see abundant reason for crying mightily unto Him who sitteth between the cherubim, that He would vouchsafe a season of awakening and converting power. Young people are growing up, even in godly households, who continue quite unconcerned about their eternal prospects. The messenger of death is frequently busy, and what an awful thing it is to contemplate poor sinners who are brought to the very gate of heaven — so far as outward privileges are concerned — falling thence into the blackness of darkness for ever!

The very smallness of the flock of Christ in the present day ought to be a stimulus to those who call upon the name of the Lord, to plead earnestly with Him for a day of power, as also a goad in the side of those who may be near “the door” — not far from the kingdom — pressing them to “strive to enter in,” that they may be saved. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force.”

III. — Let us observe, in the last place, the prophet’s *plea*: “in wrath, remember mercy.” He acknowledges that the Lord is justly displeased with the land and the people. He cannot plead the righteousness of any creature whatsoever, good or bad. All had sinned and come short of the glory of God. The Most High is “slow to wrath,” and so when He is manifestly displeased it is a sign that much iniquity has been committed. “Judgment is his strange work.” Habakkuk feels that he must cast himself unreservedly on the mercy of Jehovah. He entreats that the Lord in His just anger would not forget the attribute of His mercy. He had manifested Himself times and ways without number in the past history of His chosen people as a God of abundant mercy, and now, the prophet pleads, is a large opportunity for the display of that same mercy.

This is *the plea* that is suitable for our own case as a generation. We have sinned and done wickedly and God is justly angry with us. We have provoked Him to hide His face and to send spiritual and temporal judgments upon us. Our only becoming plea is that He would remember His covenant mercy. That mercy is abundantly revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, and so when we ask Him to remember mercy, we ask Him to remember One whom He shall not forget eternally, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. “The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand.” Let us plead then that for the sake of the gift of His in-

finite mercy, He would revive His work among us as a people, and throughout the land in which we live. The prophet was beginning to cherish the fear that the Lord had forgotten to be gracious, as has been often the case with God's people under lengthened and trying dispensations, and so He pleads that He would *remember* mercy. But this fear must be resisted by the power of divine grace, and we should seek to have our expectations enlarged and our hopes strengthened in view of the riches and unchangeableness of God's mercy in Christ. Let us seek to wait with earnestness and patience upon Him, praying that He may grant a little reviving, in the midst of the bondage of the present time, during the coming year. "His mercy endureth for ever."

WHITFIELD'S PRAYER FOR HIS BROTHER. — One Lord's-day morning, Mr Whitfield, with his usual fervour, exhorted his hearers to give up the use of the means for spiritual good of their relations and friends *only with their lives*; remarking that he had a brother for whose spiritual welfare he had used every means. He had warned him and prayed for him; and apparently to no purpose, till a few weeks ago, when his brother, to his astonishment and joy, came to his house, and with many tears declared, that he had come up from the country, to testify to him the great change that divine grace had wrought upon his heart; and to acknowledge with gratitude his obligation to the man whom God had made the instrument of it. Mr Whitfield added, that he had that morning received a letter which informed him, that on his brother's return to Gloucestershire, where he resided, he dropped down dead as he was getting out of the stage coach, but that he had previously given the most unequivocal evidence of his being a new man in Christ Jesus — "Therefore," said Mr Whitfield, "let us pray always for ourselves, and for those who are dear to us, and never faint." — *Dr Cheever's Anecdotes*.

The Real Presence: What is it? by Bishop J. C. Ryle

"If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Exod. 33: 15.

There is a word in the text that heads this page which demands the attention of all English Christians in this day. That word is "presence". There is a religious subject bound up with that word, on which it is most important to have clear, distinct, and scriptural views. That subject is the

“presence of God”, and specially the “presence of our Lord Jesus Christ” with Christian people. What is that presence? Where is that presence? What is the nature of that presence? To these questions I propose to supply answers.

I. I shall consider, firstly, *the general doctrine of God’s presence in the world*.

II. I shall consider, secondly, *the special doctrine of Christ’s real spiritual presence*.

III. I shall consider, thirdly, *the special doctrine of Christ’s real bodily presence*.

The whole subject deserves serious thoughts. If we suppose that this is a mere question of controversy, which only concerns theological partisans, we have yet much to learn. It is a subject which lies at the very roots of saving religion. It is a subject which is inseparably tied up with one of the most precious articles of the Christian faith. It is a subject about which it is most dangerous to be wrong. An error here may first lead a man to the Church of Rome, and then land him finally in the gulf of infidelity. Surely it is worth while to examine carefully the doctrine of the “presence” of God and of His Christ.

I. The first subject we have to consider, is *the general doctrine of God’s presence in the world*.

The teaching of the Bible on this point is clear, plain and unmistakable. God is everywhere. There is no place in heaven or earth where He is not. There is no place in air or land or sea, no place above ground or under ground, no place in town or country, no place in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, where God is not always present. Enter into your closet and lock the door: God is there. Climb to the top of the highest mountain, where not even an insect moves: God is there. Sail to the most remote island in the Pacific Ocean, where the foot of man never trod: God is there. He is always near us, — seeing, hearing, observing, knowing every action, and deed, and word, and whisper, and look, and thought, and motive, and secret of everyone of us, and everywhere.

What, saith the Scripture? It is written in Job, “His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves” (Job 34: 21, 22). It is written in Proverbs, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Prov. 15: 3). It is written in Jeremiah, “Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according . . . to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 32: 19). It is written in the Psalms, “Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou

understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. . . . Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee" (Psalm 139: 2-12).

Such language as this confounds and overwhelms us. The doctrine before us is one which we cannot fully understand. Precisely so. David said the same thing about it almost three thousand years ago. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalm 139: 6). But it does not follow that the doctrine is not true, because we cannot understand it. It is the weakness of our poor minds and intellects that we must blame, and not the doctrine.

There are scores of things in the world around us, which few can understand or explain, yet no sensible man refuses to believe. How this earth is ever rolling round the sun with enormous swiftness, while we feel no motion, — how the moon affects the tides, and makes them rise and fall twice every twenty-four hours, — how millions of perfectly organised living creatures exist in every pint of pond-water, which our naked eye cannot see, — all these are things well known to men of science, while most of us could not explain them for our lives. And shall we, in the face of such facts, presume to doubt that God is everywhere present, for no better reason than this, that we cannot understand it? Let us never dare to say so again.

How many things there are about God Himself which we cannot possibly understand, and yet we must believe them, unless so senseless as to be atheists! Who can explain the eternity of God, the infinite power and wisdom of God, or the works of God in creation and providence? Who can comprehend a Being who is a Spirit, without body, parts, or passions? How can a material creature, who can only be in one place at one time, take in the idea of an immaterial Being, who existed before creation, who formed this world by His word out of nothing, and who can be everywhere and see everything at one and the same time? Where, in a word, is there a single attribute of God that mortal man can thoroughly comprehend? Where, then, is the common sense or wisdom of refusing to believe the

doctrine of God being present everywhere, merely because our minds cannot take it in? Well says the Book of Job, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job 11: 7,8).

Let us have high and honourable thoughts of the God with whom we have to do while we live, and before whose bar we must stand when we die. Let us seek to have just notions of His power, His wisdom, His eternity, His holiness, His perfect knowledge, His "presence" everywhere. One half of the sin committed by mankind arises from wrong views of their Maker and Judge. Men are reckless and wicked, because they do not think that God sees them. They do things they would never do if they really believed they were under the eyes of the Almighty. It is written, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (Psalm 50: 21). It is written again, "They say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people: and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" (Psalm 94: 7-9). No wonder that holy Job said in his best moments, "When I consider, I am afraid of Him" (Job 23: 15).

"What is your God like?" said a sneering infidel one day to a poor Christian: — "What is this God of yours like: this God about whom you make such ado? Is He great or is He small?" "My God," was the wise reply, "is a great and a small God at the same time: so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and yet so small that He can dwell in the heart of a poor sinner like me." — "Where is your God, my boy?" said another infidel to a child whom he saw coming out of a school where the Bible was taught. "Where is your God about whom you have been reading? Show Him to me, and I will give you an orange." "Show me where He is not," was the answer, "and I will give you two. My God is everywhere." — Well is it said in a certain place, "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty." "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise" (1 Cor. 1: 27; Matt. 11: 16).

However hard to understand this doctrine may be, it is one which is most useful and wholesome for our souls. To keep continually in mind that God is always present with us, to live always as in God's sight, to act and speak and think as under His eye, — all this is eminently calculated to have a good effect upon our souls. Wide, and deep, and searching, and piercing is the influence of that one thought, "Thou God seest me."

(a) The thought of God's presence is a loud call to humility. How much that is evil and defective must the all-seeing eye see in every one of us! How small a part of our character is really known by man! "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16: 7). Man does not always see us, but the Lord is always looking at us, morning, noon and night. Who has not need to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner?"

(b) The thought of God's presence is a crushing proof of our need of Jesus Christ. What hope of salvation could we have if there was not a Mediator between God and man? Before the eye of an ever-present God, our best righteousness is filthy rags, and our best doings are full of imperfection. Where should we be if there was not a Fountain open for all sin, even the blood of Christ? Without Christ, the prospect of death, judgment, and eternity would drive us to despair.

(c) The thought of God's presence teaches the folly of hypocrisy in religion. What can be more silly and childish than to wear a mere cloak of Christianity while we inwardly cleave to sin, when God is ever looking at us and sees us through and through? It is easy to deceive ministers and fellow-Christians, because they often see us only on the Lord's Day. But God sees us morning, noon and night, and cannot be deceived. Oh, whatever we are in religion, let us be real and true!

(d) The thought of God's presence is a check and curb on the inclination to sin. The recollection that there is One always near us and observing us, who will one day have a reckoning with all mankind, may well keep us back from evil. Happy are those sons and daughters who, when they leave the family home, and launch forth into the world, carry with them the abiding remembrance of God's eye. "My father and mother do not see me, but God does." This was the feeling that preserved Joseph when tempted in a foreign land: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. 39: 9).

(e) The thought of God's presence is a spur to the pursuit of true holiness. The highest standard of sanctification is to "walk with God" as Enoch did, and to "walk before God" as Abraham did. Where is the man who would not strive to live so as to please God, if he realised that God was always standing at his right hand? To get away from God is the secret aim of the sinner; to get nearer to God is the longing desire of the saint. The real servants of the Lord are "a people near unto Him" (Psalm 148: 14).

(f) The thought of God's presence is a comfort in time of public trouble. When war and famine and pestilence break in upon a land, when the

nations are rent and torn by inward divisions, and all order seems in peril, it is cheering to reflect that God sees and knows and is close at hand — that the King of kings is near and not asleep. He that saw the Spanish Armada sail to invade England, and scattered it with the breath of His mouth — He that looked on when the schemers of the Gunpowder Plot were planning the destruction of Parliament, — this God is not changed.

(g) The thought of God's presence is a strong consolation in private trial. We may be driven from home and native land, and placed at the other side of the world; we may be bereaved of wife and children and friends, and left alone in our family, like the last tree in a forest: but we can never go to any place where God is not, and under no circumstances can we be left entirely alone.

Such thoughts as these are useful and profitable for us all. That man must be in a poor state of soul who does not feel them to be so. Let it be a settled principle in our religion never to forget that in every condition and place we are under the eye of God. It need not frighten us if we are true believers. The sins of all believers are cast behind God's back, and even the all-seeing God sees no spot in them. It ought to cheer us, if our Christianity is genuine and sincere. We can then appeal to God with confidence, like David, and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139: 23, 24). Great is the mystery of God's presence everywhere; but the true man of God can look at it without fear.

The Riches of Christ reach Poverty Bay and East Cape

The following three extracts are to show how, in the amazing Providence of God, the gospel spread to a remote part of New Zealand early last century.

1. Rev. Henry Jacob

The first is taken from a book entitled "Colonial Church Histories — New Zealand", by the Rev. Henry Jacob, published in 1889. Jacob states:

"It is truly refreshing to turn to the many instances recorded at this period of the eager and growing thirst for knowledge among the natives in almost all parts alike, and of the spread of the gospel among fresh tribes by the spontaneous and almost unaided exertions of some of their own countrymen. I will relate one instance."

Among the party of East Cape natives taken to their homes by Rev. Wm. Williams in January 1834 after having been under instruction at the Bay of Islands, there was a liberated slave named Taumatakura. He was not thought to have taken much interest in Christian teaching and was not even a candidate for baptism, but he had learned to read and write at a school at Waimate. He was fired, however, with a desire of imparting to his countrymen such knowledge as he possessed. "His 'educational apparatus' writes Archdeacon Leonard Williams in his memoir of his father (William) consisted of some scraps of paper upon which he had written some short prayers, hymns and texts of scripture.

Taumatakura was held in high estimation, and his bits of paper were regarded by many with superstitious veneration being credited with some of that power which the charms of the old tohungas (priests) were supposed to possess; but he was not too mean an instrument for God to use for the purpose of quickening the people after clearer light." Another circumstance tended greatly to increase the growing reverence for Taumatakura. Being urged to join a war-party in an expedition against a pa at Cape Runaway he consented on certain conditions: "I will go," he said, "if you attend to what I say to you. When we come to the enemy's pa, if we kill any people, you are not to eat them; neither must you wantonly break up canoes which you do not care to carry away, nor destroy food which you do not wish to eat." Arrived at the pa, Taumatakura led the assault with musket in one hand and Testament in the other; and though the bullets fell thick as hail around him, he was not hit.

When tidings of the successful efforts of this humble Maori to improve his people had reached the ear of the Church at the Bay of Islands they chose six volunteers from among their Christian natives, five of them being connected with that part of the island, to be stationed in that neighbourhood and, towards the end of October 1838 these six were taken by sea to the East Coast by the Rev. Henry Williams and three of them were placed at Waiapu and three at Turanga (Gisborne) on Poverty Bay.

These men were visited in the following April by Rev. Wm. Williams and Rev. R. Taylor and both were struck with the result of their six months labours. After this visit the work by the grace of God, prospered yet more, and it was soon seen necessary that a missionary should be stationed in this neighbourhood. Wm. Williams was selected for the post and Mr Taylor was appointed to take up his work at Waimate. It was in December 1839 that Mr Williams removed his family to Poverty Bay. At that time there were about 1500 natives in the habit of meeting regularly for Christian worship in that district, the fruits of the unassuming efforts of the

faithful Taumatakura. The removal of the Rev. Wm. Williams thither forms another epoch in the history of the New Zealand mission. No other European could at that time be spared to assist him in what he himself described as "his parish of two degrees and half in length and containing 36,000 souls" but he had the help of zealous native teachers, now amounting to 20 in number, and in a little more than a year-and-a-half the number of regular worshippers in the districts of Waiapu and Turanga, to which the six teachers had been sent in 1838 had risen to about 8,600; upwards of 800 adults and about 340 children had been baptised, and there were upwards of 1300 catechumens. Moreover at Turanga, the natives, at their own expense, built a spacious church 90 feet long by 44 in width "so mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed."

2. Wm. Williams

One-and-a-half years later on 1st July 1841 Wm. Williams wrote from Turanga the following letter to the C.M.S.

"In the month of May before I left home 140 adults were admitted to baptism at this place, 280 being left on the list of candidates. In visiting the various places at which native teachers are stationed on the coast as far as Hicks Bay I found that people are generally attendant to Christian worship and that a very large proportion are under special instruction in the prospect of baptism so that wherever I went there was constant occupation in the examination of candidates. These, amounting to about 1300 persons, were closely questioned in classes of ten individually, and from among them 622 were admitted to the rite of Christian baptism, besides 306 children under six years of age, the elder being left to take their course for adult baptism should the grace of God dispose their hearts to seek after Him. From among their number was a goodly portion of grey-bearded old men, who had grown old in native superstition but who now at the 11th hour of life have cast off their allegiance to Satan and are become the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus.

It may perhaps be thought by some that an injudicious haste has been shown in admitting so large a number at one period into the church of Christ that better would it have been to test the sincerity of their profession by longer trial. But none who know my past proceedings will find occasion of complaint on the score of hasty measures with regard to candidates for this sacred ordinance. It has been my universal practice to keep back as much as possible and allow time for proof to appear that the profession made is not merely that of the lips. The fact in the present case

is that the seed had been sown, and being in goodly soil and watered by the showers of heavenly grace, the field had become white. Who then could forbid water that these should not be baptised? I passed none, not even the hoary one of three generations who did not appear to profess a clear understanding of the ground truths of salvation; and of the people generally I can safely affirm that I never baptised any party of natives who professed in the whole, more information. This may be in some measure accounted for by the fact that the natives of the East Cape have, if I may use the expression quite a propensity for attending school, and having committed to memory the catechisms which contain a concise summary of Christian doctrine, it is seldom that a plain question can be put without being answered, so that it becomes necessary to vary the interrogatories in every way to ascertain that the truth was really understood. The sincerity of the profession made, as in every other case is yet to be seen, but the blessing of God appears to rest upon the work.—————

I did not leave Waimate because I lacked a sphere of usefulness and, were my brethren to speak on this matter they could tell you that every opposition was made to my removal. But by God's Providence I am now placed here to shame others to follow but as yet no movement is made. There are indeed three individual volunteers in the southern district but you will perceive from the minutes of their committee that in the case of Wm. Morgan they considered the southern district was too weak with its ten members to allow of the removal of one of the Eastern District at which there is one labourer, and when the congregations amount to about one third of those of the whole mission. Do not suppose that I have for one moment regretted that I came as I did, and when I did but I do wish for help because I require it and because the natives need it. I have much reason to bless God that he has granted me health up to this time both to myself and family and that my wife was mercifully preserved through her confinement in April last though she had no European friend to attend upon her necessities, and during my long seasons of absence among the natives, when she has been of necessity left to the care of the children she has suffered no inconvenience, but I must say that when more labourers are sent to gather in the harvest I shall abundantly rejoice.

I remain dear Sirs,

Yours most truly,
W W."

Shortly after the despatch of this letter Williams received communication from C.M.S. that no help for the mission was forthcoming. He was

naturally disappointed and frustrated as the following letter written from Turanga on the 26th July 1841, just a little over three weeks after his previous plea for help.

3. Wm. Williams

“My dear Sirs,

Since writing my letter of July 1st I have had opportunity of reading yours of August 15, 1840 from which I gather that there is no prospect of further help being sent for the New Zealand mission. It becomes, therefore, of importance that I should again resort to a subject which I have often brought before you, the necessities of this part of the missionary field. We have no Bishop Wilson to plead our cause ———. We are not even visited by the casual traveller as other parts of New Zealand are who might give the world his opinion of things as they are, so that the simple facts of the case must be our only argument which may afford material for a brief to be handled by some able advocate.

The facts are these:

1. The geographical extent of this district, which is 180 miles on the map, but in consequence of the difficulties of the road it requires 12 to 14 days hard travelling to pass through the whole length of it.

2. The idols are already cast to the moles and to the bats, the swords are beat into ploughshares and the spears into pruning hooks, that is, the whole fabric of native superstition is gone, whether relating to the living or to the dead, the old priests (tohungas) being as forward to take this step as any others. Their weapons of warfare are laid by, their animosities with distant tribes are given up, and their petty quarrels are settled by arbitration.

3. The disposition to receive instruction shewn by the fact that more than 8000 persons assemble every Lord's day to worship the God of Christians, for the most part in chapels neatly built.

4. The desire to possess Prayer books and Testaments, for the purpose of obtaining which they come from the extreme point of Hawkes Bay and for which they are always ready to pay, when the distance does not prevent them from doing so. Numbers have brought a payment beforehand, to make sure of early possession on the arrival of a supply and since the Testaments printed in New Zealand are expended, they are perfectly satisfied to leave their payment hearing that others are on their way from England.

5. The number of candidates for baptism, upwards of 1400 who are under weekly instruction.

6. The number of native Christians. Eight hundred and seventy-eight adults have been received into the church of Christ after careful examination which together with 363 children make a total of 1241. Among the adults are included a large proportion of the leading chiefs.

7. The general consistency of conduct in those who profess Christianity.

. . .

8. A large community of Christians being now formed it becomes necessary that instruction should be regularly given of a character which is beyond the knowledge and ability of the native teachers. Their diligence in the work and consistency of conduct call for much thankfulness to him who has made them what they are; but they are themselves babes in Christ, and with their flocks require to be fed with the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby. Without this mode of instruction, unfolding in succession the precepts of the gospel, error of a serious nature must necessarily arise.

9. From the great transition which has taken place in so short a space of time, there must be difficulties of continual occurrence which require the judgement of persons possessing more maturity of thought than the natives can be supposed to have. I allude to their petty quarrels from various causes, and particularly from damage done to their crops by the pigs of their neighbours. These are no longer to be settled in the summary manner they were in former times, but are now to be regulated on Christian principles.

10. The increasing activity of Satan. I know not how many Popish Priests were in New Zealand previously, but last month there was an arrival of four Priests and eight Catechists.

11. This request for help is not made with a view to the occupation of new ground, but that what is already in possession may be kept. We have not now to say, Let us go up at once and possess it for we are able to overcome it — it is already subdued.

12. A great work has been accomplished in which the hand of the Lord has been signally manifest. It has not been by might nor by power but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts. It has not been through the labours of your missionaries, for the word has only been preached by native teachers. We have literally stood still unto the salvation of God. A goodly vine is now planted in this portion of the garden of the Lord, yea the fruit is ripe and is already pressed into the cup, leave it not on your parts for the boar of the wood to waste it or the wild beast of the field to devour it."

Williams was joined by Rev. James Stack in 1842 and the work prospered. But it was not long lasting. Satan comes in various guises to destroy.

Civilisation in the form of colonial settlement of Europeans caused many to take on the loose morality of the settlers. And false religion in the form of 'pai maire' or 'hauhauism', a fanatical warlike cult exhibiting both christian and pagan elements, eventually caused Williams to retreat to Napier in 1865. He had been consecrated Bishop of the newly created Waiapu Diocese in 1859. Most of his clergy and flock were Maori, and for a number of years the Synod proceedings of his diocese were conducted in the Maori Language.

— Contributed by P. Best

One Day in Seven

by Rev. K. D. Macleod, BSc.

For the vast majority of people today Sabbath-keeping is a thing of the past. Attempt after attempt has been made in Parliament to loosen even further those legal restraints on Sabbath-breaking which still remain. Some of these have been successful and some, thankfully, have been unsuccessful, but it is, of course, all in keeping with the general tide of godlessness which has swept so remorselessly through the twentieth century. It seems, however, worthwhile to remind ourselves of the prominence that God has given to the Sabbath in the Bible and, in the face of so many claims that the Sabbath institution was purely for Old Testament times, to draw attention to the Scriptural evidence that assures us that the Sabbath is just as binding on us today as ever it was. And it is particularly necessary to remind ourselves of this when large numbers, even among evangelicals, join with the world to deny the continuing authority of the Sabbath.

It is a remarkable fact that the Fourth Commandment is one for which we have God's own example. We read that He "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made" (Gen. 2: 2f). Thus God set apart the seventh day in every week as a day for man to rest from his ordinary toils and to have the opportunity of thinking on the ways and works of God, the work of creation among them.

We should therefore not be surprised to find, when God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel on Mount Sinai, that the Fourth Commandment was not given as something completely new, but was given in the form of a reminder, "*Remember* the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. . . ." And we should be very much on our guard against any attempt to make out that the Sabbath was purely a Jewish institution. Indeed, we are shown

how God made clear in Israel that Sabbath-breaking was a sin, even before the Ten Commandments were given. When manna was first given for food to Israel, before the crossing of the Red Sea, they were told, "Six days shall ye gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none" (Ex. 16: 26). And, after some people went out to gather manna on the Sabbath, there came a rebuke from God Himself, "How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws? See, for the Lord hath given you the Sabbath; therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day" (Ex. 16: 28,29).

At this point it might be asked, Does the New Testament not make clear that Christians are free from all such restrictions? Does not Paul say, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day or of the new moon *or of the Sabbath days*; which are a shadow of things to come?" (Col. 2: 16, 17). Of course he does — and he speaks in a similar vein in other places also — but the question is, what does he mean in these passages by *days* and, in particular, by *Sabbath days*?

We must remember that a change had taken place, and that was the substitution of the first day of the week for the seventh day as the day to be kept holy to God. But when God instituted the Christian Sabbath — or the Lord's Day, as John calls it in Rev. 1: 10, echoing the expression "My holy day," in Is. 58: 13 — how were believers to treat the seventh day of the week? The answer was that while first-generation Christians were free to keep the seventh day of the week holy, in addition to the first day, no one had any right to judge those who did not also keep the seventh day. The day to be kept holy had changed, but the Sabbath institution remained absolutely unchanged. The principle remained the same, that "a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so . . . He hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him" (Westminster Confession, Chap. 20: 7).

There can be no doubt that the first day of the week was the day set apart in the early New Testament Church for the worship of God. It was "upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread" in Troas, "and Paul preached unto them" (Acts 20: 7). It was on the first day of the week also that the collection for the poor saints of Jerusalem was to be taken in the Corinthian Church. (See 1 Cor. 16: 1,2). The change of day took place in order that the Christian Sabbath might be a memorial of the resurrection, which, of course, took place on the first day of the week. So that it need be no surprise to find the disciples meeting, not only on the evening of the Resurrection Day, but also eight

days later (that is, exactly one week later, for the Jews included both the first and the last days of any period as full days in their counting). What is more, the Saviour honoured their gathering with His presence, as He has honoured many other such Sabbath gatherings since then with His spiritual presence. How wonderfully He honoured the preaching of the gospel on the Day of Pentecost (which always fell on the first day of the week), with 3000 souls being brought into His kingdom!

How then is the Sabbath to be kept in New Testament times? We cannot give a better reply than by quoting again from the Westminster Confession of Faith, "The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord when men, after a due preparing of their hearts and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe a holy rest all the day from their own works, words and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of His worship and in the duties of necessity and mercy" (Chap. 21: 8). We should note how not only our outward activities, including our conversations, are regulated, but even our thoughts, which no one else can possibly know about — except God Himself. And, after all, these are the regulations of God, not those of men. The whole of our time, we should note also, is to be given up to worshipping God, except when we must turn aside to activities which are genuinely necessary or merciful.

We are not to think of the Fourth Commandment as simply imposing restrictions on our freedom, for, in the words of the Saviour, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2: 27). What He is telling us is, that the Sabbath is given as a benefit to man, and an inestimable benefit it is. It is an opportunity for us to lay aside, as far as possible, our worldly duties and give our attention to our spiritual needs in a way that is not normally possible on a weekday. If we have any sense of the value of our souls, and of our need to learn of God and to worship Him, then we will value the Sabbath as God's provision so that we may give ourselves to the Word of God and prayer and whatever else we believe will contribute to our spiritual well-being. A proper outlook will bring us to concentrate, not on what we are held back from doing if we keep the Sabbath as God has ordained, but on the freedom we can then have to attend our spiritual needs.

Surely a well-kept Sabbath is the closest we can get to heaven in this world. In the world of spirits temporal needs and blessings will have lost their relevance, and the glorified saints will be continuously occupied with spiritual activities as they serve God "day and night in His temple". Our willingness to keep the Sabbath, not only outwardly but inwardly also,

is surely a test of our spiritual state, for the natural heart has no love for spiritual things. But how can we expect to feel at home in heaven unless we feel at home on a Sabbath which is consecrated to the worship of God?

Is there a blessing to be had in keeping the Sabbath? We can be sure that there is a blessing in keeping any of God's commandments, but He specially assures us of the blessing that there is in keeping the Sabbath, "Blessed is the man that doeth this and the son of man that layeth hold on it, that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it" (Is. 56: 2). It is interesting to note that the previous verse states, "My salvation is near to come and my righteousness to be revealed", and Matthew Poole comments, "*My salvation*: that eminent salvation by the Messiah . . . *My righteousness*: the same thing which He now called salvation and here calleth His righteousness, because it is an evident demonstration of God's righteousness . . . in the salvation of sinners upon just and honourable terms." Could it possibly be that the Sabbath could be so spoken of if it was not to survive into New Testament times?

And God says again through Isaiah, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (58: 13, 14). The heritage of Jacob included the promise, "I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest" (Gen. 28: 15), and it is therefore a promise which forms part of the blessing that belongs to us all who have a heart-love to the Sabbath. This promise of God's continual presence is all the richer a blessing because it will never come to an end. Those who love the Sabbath are those who have been given a new heart, and each one of them is assured of a safe entry to heaven, where with perfect heart they will relish the opportunity of worshipping God with all the fulness of their being, and absolutely without interruption.

Jane Mackay of Armidale

by Rev. Angus MacGillivray

Jane Mackay lived at Armidale, in what is now the parish of Strathy. The death of her first husband, when she was very young, was the means of awakening her; and after a severe conflict she was brought to know

the Saviour. When I became acquainted with her, she was an old woman, and I a very young minister; and being a member of my congregation, I had much intercourse with her. One of the first things which struck me was a simple, incident, which showed her exquisite tenderness. Calling for her on Monday, I found her seriously ill, and I discovered that she had got ill in church the previous day, in consequence of the crowd and the heat. And on my asking, "Why did you not at once go out?" her answer was: "My dear, had you been an older minister, I would have gone out; but foolish people might have said that I left the church because I disliked something in the sermon, and I thought it a far higher duty to remain in the church, sick as I was, than do what might in the very least injure your usefulness, or even hurt your feelings." She was indeed tender-hearted. With a strong masculine understanding, her heart was one of the warmest I ever knew. I never knew a Christian in whom the warmth of youthful impressions, and the solidity of one long exercised to godliness, were so combined, and combined to the last. At eighty years of age, if you read to her the account of the crucifixion, or her favourite chapter, the fifty-third of Isaiah, the big tears instantly ran down her face, showing the love that was felt within. Christ was to her a living, present person, who was always with her, and with whom she held the closest fellowship. And yet her religion was eminently practical. A young woman, one of my people, who was under deep convictions of sin, called for her. The young woman was married, and had a family. After drawing her out, Jane at last said to her: "I hope you are active in looking after your household." The poor woman replied: "I am in that state of mind I can attend to nothing." Upon which Jane said: "That will never do: don't expect to get peace while you are neglecting duty. I have often been on a harvest day in a state of deep mental suffering, yet there was not a woman on the harvest-field cut down more corn than I did. I felt that whatever came of me, I must not give the world occasion to dishonour Christ, by saying that my religion made me idle and thriftless." Her confidence in God was that of the little child. She had passed through very severe afflictions, and in describing these to me, she said: "You have heard of my last trial — my two lovely sons both drowned in one night; their bodies are still in the Pentland Firth." On my remarking that that must have been a fearful trial, she said: "Yes, greatly more fearful than my neighbours had any thought of. I felt it my duty to conceal my feelings, and to make my sufferings known only to my gracious Father; and yet I had my consolations too. The first time I crossed the hill, and saw the Pentland Firth, where my sons were lost, I began to weep bitterly, and to rebel

against the providence of God. And then, as if the voice had come from heaven, I heard Him say to me: 'I gave my Son for thee, and thou grudgest thy sons to me.' The effect was perfect: I was brought in a moment to cheerful submission: I exclaimed with joy, 'O Lord, not my will, but Thine be done'." I never almost knew any one who seemed so much to make God's will her rule in everything. One evening she sent for me, and on my arrival I found her dangerously ill, and suffering excruciating pain. In those days, being more than twenty miles from the nearest medical aid, I had to prescribe for my people, and to supply them with medicine; and though in this case I dreaded the worst, I resolved to make the trial. I brought her the medicine in a cup, and when I asked her to take it, she at once refused. Her words were: "I am more than eighty years of age: during all that time I have never taken medicine of any kind, and I really cannot take it." I reasoned with her, but she was firm. At last I remembered there was an argument which was almost sure to prevail. I said: "Jane, what is required in the sixth commandment? You know the sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavours to preserve *our own* life as well as life of others." The effect was instantaneous. She said immediately: "I did not think of that. His will is precious; there must be no disobedience to it: give me the cup." After holding it in her hands for more than two minutes, evidently engaged in prayer, she turned round to see that there was none in the room but myself, and then she said, with a smile: "I shall tell you something which I would not tell every one; but it may do you good, and help to encourage you. It is very likely that this is my last night on earth, and that I am just entering the eternal world; but what you have put into that cup gives me more terror than all the innumerable sins of a long life, for I know that they are all blotted out in the blood of the Lamb." She recovered from that illness, and lived for years after, her Christian graces shining forth more brightly than ever. She had an intense thirst for the salvation of her fellow-creatures. In her own meek, cheerful, engaging way, she sought to win to Christ all who came in contact with her. A young lady, who was on a visit to the parish, called to take leave of her before returning home. The old woman was at the time, and had been for some years, completely bed-ridden. When about to take her leave, the young girl said: "I shall soon be back, to see you again." Jane's reply was: "No, my dear — don't expect to see me again. It is sinful to wish that my life should be prolonged. I long to be home; and above all, bed-ridden as I am, I am utterly useless." The lady replied: "Nonsense; you are not useless. How do you know but that beautiful, cheerful religion of yours may be the means of alluring and

drawing to Christ young persons like me." The old woman started up in her bed, her eyes kindled, and she said with deep feeling: "My dear, if I thought that by remaining here I could be the instrument of bringing a single soul to Christ, I'd cheerfully lie here till I withered." When disabled from active work, she spent much of her time in intercessory prayer. On her telling me that she never could sleep at night — that any sleep she got was during the day, I remarked that she must feel the night very long. Her answer was: "No, I often find it too short. I spend it in prayer for my friends. I begin with my own family; I then leave home, and I pay you a visit, when you are probably sleeping; and I always visit Mr Munro at Halkirk. I then go to Edinburgh and Glasgow, and I next cross the Atlantic, for I have Christian friends in America; and before I get through all my friends, the night has passed, and the daylight is come." I cannot describe the circumstances of her death. When I left that country she was still spared; but I have the full assurance that her end was peace, and that she is now before the throne.

Book Reviews

ECUMENISM. Where is it leading us? by Michael de Semlyn. Copies to be had from Dorchester House, Marsham Lane, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire. Price 50p + postage.

This booklet is a brief survey of the activities of the Church of Rome in the recent past — and at the present time — in the Ecumenical Movement. We read of the manipulation of history and the media to the advantage of Romanism, of Rome's involvement in politics worldwide, and of the close association which some crusade leaders i.e. Billy Graham, Luis Palau, have had with prominent men in the Roman hierarchy. The author believes — rightly in our view — that the Ecumenical movement will bring us as a nation under the heel of Romanism with all that this implies for our civil and religious freedom, unless The Most High will intervene in Divine providence to preserve us from this evil system. Part of one paragraph is worth reproducing — "In appearing alongside prominent Roman Catholics at conferences and in ecumenical enterprises, even merely as a name on the notepaper, evangelical leaders are effectively endorsing unscriptural beliefs." The New Testament is as clear as the Old about separation "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" Ephesians 5: 11.

Ecumenism at a local level is also a matter of concern to ourselves as

a denomination. We disapprove of the practice of exchange of pulpits with ministers of other denominations. It is worthy of note that according to the press, at least one Church of Scotland minister has occupied an A.P.C. pulpit. One must therefore pose the question — Where is it leading **them**?

R.K.M.

STRANGER THAN FICTION, The Life of William Kiffin by B. A. Ramsbottom. Gospel Standard Trust Publications. 117 pages, paperback £2.00.

This is indeed a remarkable life. Kiffin, who lived from 1616 to 1701, was orphaned at the age of nine, but he made his fortune in the woollen trade in early life. More importantly, he was converted under the preaching of the Puritans, of whom there were many in the London of his time. He himself became a Baptist and was pastor of a church in London for the greater part of his long life. He was imprisoned on more than one occasion because of malicious charges made against him. Amazingly he was able to continue preaching throughout the period of persecution under Charles II and James II, a blessing which very few good men were able to enjoy. This appears to have been because his knowledge of the woollen trade brought him to the attention of King Charles and members of his government, and because of the value they placed on his advice. He was also able to use his influence to prevent the execution of ten men and two women whose only crime was that they had been caught attending an illegal Baptist service and had afterwards refused to attend worship in the Church of England.

The book is interestingly written but is perhaps on the short side for the reader to feel that he has really got to know Kiffin. And in a book of this size there seems to be a disproportionate emphasis on the subject of Baptism. It is a pity that good men like Kiffin should move away from the Scriptural position, which is, that the infants of believing parents should be baptised and that it is certainly not necessary that Baptism should be by immersion. It is good that the life of this godly man should be rescued from the oblivion into which it had more or less fallen.

K.D.M.

Notes and Comments

Ecumenical Wedding

Rev. Stuart MacQuarrie, a Church of Scotland minister and Glasgow District Councillor for Toryglen invited the local R.C. priest to assist at

his wedding along with a Church of Scotland minister. Mr MacQuarrie said that it must be the first time in the history of the West of Scotland that a priest has married a minister in the Church of Scotland. Rev. Ron Ferguson who shared the wedding with the priest was once the leader of the Iona Community. Such events as the above come as no surprise in view of the Romeward movement of the Church of Scotland. A Church, once Protestant, has now largely abandoned all pretence of being Protestant, and is ripe for absorption in the Romanist fold.

Soviet Leader and Pope Meet

President Gorbachov and the Pope met in Rome at the beginning of December. This meeting has opened the way to diplomatic relations being established between the Soviet Union and the Vatican. It is also expected that the Pope will visit the Soviet Union some time in the future. An agreement has also been reached in which the Ukrainian Uniate Catholic Communities will be allowed to register. This was denied them since the Second World War because of their German sympathies. The Concord established in this way between the Soviet Union and the Vatican may have far reaching consequences. A union of any kind between these two powers is fraught with great dangers for the Protestant Churches. The Roman Catholic Church is willing to ride to power on the back of any power, even a totalitarian and atheistic one. The events in Poland show the power that the Church of Rome is wielding at the present time in Eastern Europe which may well pave the way for a united Europe under Roman Catholic domination. If this were to happen open persecution would soon be the lot of those who refused to conform to the tenets of the system of the Anti-Christ. What need there is to plead that the Lord would overthrow all the machinations of this evil system.

Church Notes

Presbytery Meetings (D.V.)

Australia and New Zealand: At Auckland on 26th January at 2.30 p.m.

Skye: At Portree on 6th February at 11 a.m.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway on 13th February at 12 noon.

Northern: At Dingwall on 20th February at 2 p.m.

Southern: At Glasgow on 20th February at 6 p.m.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo on 13th March at 2 p.m.

Western: At Laide 13th March at 6 p.m.

Financial Year End — 31st December, 1989

Will Congregational Treasurers please note that all funds in respect of 1989 should be in the General Treasurer's hands by **Tuesday, 9th January, 1990**. Funds received after that date will be credited to 1990.

Binding of Volumes of F.P. and Y.P. Magazines

Anyone wishing to have volumes of the Magazines bound should send them to Mr Neil MacLean, c/o F.P. Church Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE. The cost per volume is £5.

Acknowledgment of Donations

The General Treasurer, Mr Donald MacDonald, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow G3 6LE, acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:-

Foreign Mission Fund: Grafton Deacon's Court A\$500.00 (Sterling equivalent £245.20); D.K.C. £50 for Insiza Church, Zimbabwe.

Dominions and Overseas Fund: Chesley Deacon's Court Can.\$1000.00; Donation Can.\$70 towards Deputy's fare to Canada; D.K.C. £50 for literature for Eastern Europe.

Leverburgh Home of Rest: D.K.C. £100.

Chesley Congregation: The Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:- Mrs Sutherland and daughter £100; Mr R. & M. Hardy, Vancouver \$200.00.

The Treasurers of the following Congregations wish to acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:-

Breasclete: Anon., £40 for Sust. Fund and £30 for door collection; Anon., £10; Anon., £35; both for door collection.

Dingwall: Mrs C., Invergordon £30; Mrs M., Strathpeffer £15; Mrs MacK., Alness £25, all per Rev. D. B. M. and all for Church Funds.

Edinburgh: Anon., £100 for Sust. Fund; J. L. £20 both by envelope in plate; Anon., £20 last two for Comm. Exps.

Gairloch: Friend of Congregation £20; Friend of Congregation £40; both for Comm. Exps; envelope in plate £100 for Sust. Fd.

Glasgow: Envelope in plate £45; Anon., £50 per K.G.; Anon., Glendale — S/S awards £10 for Congr. Fund per R.A.C.; Anon., Glendale £35 for Tape Fund; Anon., £35 for Bibles for Russia etc.; Anon., £5; J. C. £30; both for Bus. Fund; Anon., £3; Anon., £5; Postal Order £10; Mrs R. G. £10; per Rev. D. M., all for Sust. Fd; In memory of a beloved brother £40 for T.B.S.

Kames: Anon., Kyles of Bute £70 for Church and Manse Fund.

Laide: Tolsta Congr. £100 for Bibles for Russia and £100 for Laide Congregational Funds.

North Harris: Friend, Stockinish £10; Friend, Stockinish £5; Stockinish Friend £5, all for door coll., all per R.M.C.; C.M.D., Finsbay £5 for Church Funds by envelope in plate; K.M., Harris House £3 for door collection per J.M.L.

Portree: Anon., £10; P.R. £30 for Church door coll. and £5 for T.B.S., all by envelope in plate; Friend £100 "where most needed"; Friend £8 for Sust. Fd., both per F.M.

South Harris: Kintulavig Friend £50; £50 Seilibost Friend; Geocrab Friend £10 all per Rev. K. MacLeod; Rodel Friend £50.

Stornoway: Friend, Glasgow £50 for Sust. Fund; Friend, Edinburgh £15 for Car Exps., both per Rev. J. MacLeod.