

# THE Present Truth

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth."—John xvii. 17.

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## The Present Truth.

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"O give thanks unto the Lord, for  
He is good; for His mercy endureth  
for ever." Ps. cxxxvi. 1.

THE mercy of God endures for ever, because it is an attribute of His being. As He is infinite in power and knowledge, majesty and justice, so also is He infinite in mercy. And having mercy as one of His attributes, He must show mercy; for otherwise He would deny Himself. He cannot deny His own character; He cannot go contrary to His nature.

It was necessary, therefore, that when Adam sinned he should be dealt with in mercy. It was necessary that the plan of salvation should be provided, whereby sin could be pardoned, and man escape the consequences of transgression. Had God at once smitten the offender and blotted him out of existence, the universe might have stood in awe and acknowledged the justice of the transaction, but they would not have seen Him as a God of mercy to the offender. They would not have known Him by His true name—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

EVERY act of God is an act of mercy; for He can not go contrary to one of His own attributes. He can never act in a way which is not consistent with His possessing infinite mercy. Every attribute of God is exercised in all that He does. We never read of an act of infinite power, which was not also one of infinite wisdom, or *vice versa*. We never see Him manifesting infinite goodness, without also showing His infinite wisdom and power. The exercise of one attribute in an infinite degree, demands the exercise of all.

IN being infinitely just to man, God must also be infinitely merciful, and in being infinitely merciful, He must also be infinitely just. And this is what we see in the wonderful plan of salvation. The death of Christ, which was the great central act of this plan, speaks in awful eloquence of both God's justice and His mercy; His mercy in that He gave His Son to die rather than that man should be lost; and His justice, in that He would not pass over sin, even though it would cost Him the life of His only begotten Son.

THE one hundred and thirty-sixth psalm, from which we have quoted, presents this idea clearly before us. It speaks of numerous acts of God, judgments as well as favours, and links each one with the thought of His goodness and mercy. "O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for His mercy endureth for ever. To Him who alone doeth great wonders; for His mercy endureth for ever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens; for His mercy endureth for ever. To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters; for His mercy endureth for ever. . . . To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born; for His mercy endureth for ever. . . . To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts; for His mercy endureth for ever. And made Israel to pass through the midst

of it; for His mercy endureth for ever. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the midst of it; for His mercy endureth for ever," etc. The whole psalm is a declaration that infinite justice and infinite mercy are consistent one with the other, and in the working of God are linked together.

INFINITE mercy to God's creatures demands the punishment of sin. It demands that sin be dealt with in infinite severity. Who would want a God who would not be severe with sin? How could pure and sinless beings be happy if sin were to be lightly regarded? Something so utterly contrary in its very essence to the nature of God and to that of all sinless beings, could not be suffered to exist without marring the peace of the universe, and bringing discord into the happiness and harmony which should be uninterrupted for ever.

JUSTICE to the sinner, is also justice to the saint. The smiting of the first-born of Egypt, the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, and the various other judgments mentioned in this psalm, were acts of mercy to the people of God, and to all who would thereby have opportunity to be admonished, and turn from their evil ways unto the Lord. The destruction of sinners is even a mercy to themselves, since it saves them from further unhappiness. For a sinner cannot endure the presence of God, and would be nowhere more miserable than in heaven itself. And since life to him would mean nothing but misery (for sin and misery are inseparable) it is only a mercy to him that it should terminate.

"THE mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." Ps. ciii. 17. It not only lasts to all eternity, but has existed from all eternity. This is why His

covenant with the righteous is called the "everlasting covenant." Heb. xiii. 20. From everlasting there existed in the mind of God the covenant of grace, whereby the one that should sin could be pardoned and restored to his position of favour. And when Adam fell, God simply brought forth this covenant and manifested to the universe that He possessed the attribute of mercy toward the offender. He proclaimed Himself not alone the God of justice, but the God of mercy. And by all His acts since then toward fallen man, He has proclaimed Himself in the same way, and will do so by all His dealings with both saints and sinners to the end of time.

"O GIVE thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever. Let Israel now say, that His mercy endureth for ever. . . . Let them now that fear the Lord say, that His mercy endureth for ever." Ps. cxviii. 1-4.

#### CHRIST IN EVERYTHING.

THE name of Jonathan Edwards is usually associated only with that which is stern, harsh, and unlovely in religion, and one is glad to learn from the following paragraph from some of his unprinted manuscript, that there was another side to him. The truth here expressed has been almost entirely overlooked, but it is the very soul of Christianity—Christ the Saviour by virtue of His creative power:—

"The beauties of nature are really emanations or shadows of the excellency of the Son of God. So that when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes, we may consider that we see only the emanations of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see His love and purity. So the green trees and fields, and the singing of birds are the emanations of His infinite joy and benignity. The easiness and naturalness of trees and vines are shadows of His beauty and loveliness. The crystal rivers and murmuring streams are the footsteps of His favour, grace and beauty. When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous bow, we behold the adumbrations of His glory and goodness; and in the blue sky, His mildness and gentleness. There are also many things wherein we may behold His awful majesty—in the sun in his strength, in comets, in thunder, in the hovering thunder clouds, in rugged rocks, and the brows of mountains. The beauteous light with which the

world is filled in a clear day is a lively shadow of His spotless holiness and happiness and delight in communicating Himself."

#### EXALTATION.

THERE is no more natural tendency of the human heart than to think highly of self. Yet this, like all other tendencies of the natural heart, stands in the way of all efforts to live the Christian life. The Apostle Paul wrote, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Rom. xii. 3.

How highly, then, ought a man to think of himself? The same apostle has answered this question in his epistle to the Galatians: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Gal. vi. 2, 3. A man who thinks truthfully of himself will know that he is nothing. And this places him upon a level with all his fellow-men, so that he may not disdain to bear their burdens, and to esteem others better than himself. Phil. ii. 3.

The way of the world is to seek to exalt self. The way of God is to abase self, and become the servant of others. But exaltation is attained by the latter way, and not by the way of the world. The wisdom of God is foolishness with men; but "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." There is no real wisdom in seeking exaltation by one's own efforts. It is far better to let others lift you up who have more power than you have yourself. The principle of service to others is therefore the true principle of exaltation, for it is service to others that secures their esteem and wins their efforts, and clears the pathway of the opposition and ill-will which pursues and drags down the individual who seeks his own aggrandisement at the expense of others.

But in reality no man has any power to exalt himself. It is righteousness that exalts, and no man has any power to accomplish anything toward making himself righteous. Sin, on the other hand, brings degradation. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into

heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell by the sides of the pit." Isa. xiv. 12-15. Thus did the sin of pride degrade the being who is addressed in these words, who was once the "son of the morning."

Sin promises exaltation, but has nothing but degradation to give. To Eve it promised an elevation to the position of gods, but it brought only shame and the loss of Paradise, and thus it has been with every one who has yielded to it. It has brought them all into bondage; for "whosoever committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin." John viii. 34. In this bondage all men are to-day who have not secured freedom by faith in Christ; and they can do nothing to free themselves from it. While they seek for exaltation among men, they are still in the position of slaves. They may gain worldly riches and honour, but this only fastens them the more securely to that which is fallen and is sinking ever lower into degradation; for the course of the world is downward, and will continue to be thus until it falls into the gulf of perdition, and disappears in consuming fire.

Sin, degradation, and slavery are inseparably connected. The highest position in slavery is lower than the lowest in freedom. The mightiest sinner on earth is less exalted than the humblest one whom Christ has made free.

Since exaltation comes only from righteousness, it must come from God; for God is the source of all righteousness. And as we have no righteousness in ourselves, but only sin, we can only obtain righteousness through the renunciation of self. We can only become exalted by self-abasement. When self is renounced we esteem others better than ourselves and count ourselves their servants; and then we are following the example of Christ Himself, for He "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Phil. ii. 7. The humblest position only is consistent with renunciation of self. And this explains the words of Christ to His disciples, "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." Mark x. 44. It was no arbitrary rule that Christ here stated, but the true and only way of becoming great,—of

attaining to the honour that is real and the exaltation that is enduring.

Therefore the exhortation is given, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." James iv. 10. God will exalt the humble "in due time." 1 Pet. v. 6. "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." Verse 5. "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in My throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Rev. iii. 21.

#### DEFENDING THE WORD OF GOD.

It is not an uncommon thing at the present time to see men undertake the task of defending the word of God. They do so doubtless, with the best of intentions, but they have a zeal which is not according to knowledge. They do not know the nature of that word and the purpose for which it was given.

The word of God is always capable of defending itself. More than this: it is not on the defensive, but is always aggressive. It is a weapon; it is nothing less than the sword of the Spirit. Eph. vi. 17. "Is not My word like as a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. xxiii. 29. And Paul in his letter to the Hebrews testifies that it "is quick [living] and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. iv. 12.

How evident, then, that the word of God does not need to be defended by the efforts of man. Rather is it a weapon of defence to man; for he is admonished to take this sword of the Spirit with him, as he goes out to engage in the Christian warfare. Nothing can prevail against the Word, but the Word can and will prevail against all things. Thus it becomes an invaluable weapon to finite man, who is compelled to meet foes that are stronger than himself.

All the efforts that man can make in defence of the Word of God are utterly useless. The Word has infinitely more power than man has, for it has the power of God. It is a weapon for the propagation of truth. If truth is to be vindicated, the best method is not by arguments made up from human reason, but by speaking

forth the living word, fresh from the pages of inspiration. Human reasoning, debating, speculation, and philosophy are the weapons employed (through his agents) by the devil; and he knows better how to use them than any man. The armory of God contains no such weapons, and the cause of truth can never be vindicated by their use. Our weapon is the word of God. By it we can overthrow all these, and successfully "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3.

Error cannot stand before the word of God. Though it will still be clung to by such as have chosen to make themselves its champions, because of their corrupt desires, it cannot keep its place in the honest heart before the sword of the Spirit. When argument and human reasoning cease to be substituted for the Word in the conflict with error, the cause of truth will make much faster progress.

#### THE LIGHT OF PROPHECY.

THE value of prophecy is but little understood by the people of the present day. Prophecy is history written in advance. It has to us the value that history would have if some period of the past were again to be lived through and we were to be actors in it. We can all of us be wise with regard to the past. We know just what course we should have taken in order to have identified ourselves with the right and have made our lives a success. We can see just where others made mistakes and know just what they should have done to have avoided them. Prophecy is designed to give us this advantage with respect to the future. It tells us what is coming even more surely than history tells us what has come, for history has in it the element of human fallibility; nor does it confuse us with a view of many things that are of secondary interest, in the midst of which the important things are liable to be undistinguished, but it points out the dangers and the calamities that are coming, thus giving us ample opportunity for preparation to meet them and when the crisis comes, to stand in a right position.

The spiritually great and wise men of the past have been students of prophecy; and by its light they took some of the most important steps of their lives. The prophet Daniel has recorded an instance in which he derived advantage in this way. "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahashuerus,

of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereby the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Dan. ix. 1, 2. This to Daniel was most important information. A stranger in the land of the Chaldeans, with his people captives and Jerusalem lying forsaken and in ruins, his mind must have turned often to the future with the anxious question whether there was to come a brighter day for His people and the city of his God; and there, in the book of the prophecy of Jeremiah, was the information for which he was seeking. By searching this prophecy he understood that the period of the desolation of Jerusalem was to be seventy years, and at the time of which the record speaks—"in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus"—this period was just about to terminate. Daniel therefore understood that it was a time for action; and he tells us that he set himself to seek the Lord. "I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek [Him] by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." Dan. ix. 3. He sought the Lord in behalf of his people and the city where he had worshipped in the land of his fathers, which was lying desolate; and his prayer was answered by a vision from God in which was contained a prophecy that was to be of the utmost importance to the people of God in after years. How much the efforts of Daniel, due to his understanding of the fact that the time had come for the termination of the captivity, contributed to the return of the Jews and the restoration of Jerusalem, we are not told; but in view of his high position in the realm of Darius and of Cyrus, we may conclude that the amount was not small.

In the record of the wise men from the East, who came to visit the infant Saviour at Bethlehem, we have another instance of the value of a knowledge of prophecy. These were "wise men" because they understood what it was that would indicate the arrival of the time for Christ's birth, and the place where the event would occur. In other words, they were wise in the understanding of the prophecies. See Matt. ii. 1-7. And they came to the infant Saviour and presented unto Him presents of gold and frankincense and myrrh, by which they rendered to Him a valuable service, in view of the ap-

proaching flight into Egypt which would be necessitated by the decree of Herod. If the Jews had understood the prophecy of Christ's birth in Bethlehem as did the wise men, they would have been ready to welcome Him and show Him the honour that was His due. But they had not searched the inspired utterances which foretold the time and place of the great event (see Dan. ix. 25; Micah v. 2), and when the world's Redeemer came, not the slightest preparation had been made for His reception. The royal Babe, the Son of the King of heaven, was left to lie in a manger! This was the result of their neglect of the prophecies. Such a neglect has never failed to work disaster.

God is the ruler over all things, and the prophecies are but the declarations of His purposes. Every great purpose of God in His work for the salvation of men has been made known before the time for its accomplishment. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." Amos iii. 7. He reveals them for the instruction of men, that they may be wise and may know what to do when the time for action arrives. God's great plan for the redemption of men has never from the first moment of its inauguration been standing still. It has been moving steadily forward, and is moving forward to-day. Satan at every step has been opposing the work, and as these opposing forces have met, a crisis has been the result. Then those who were zealous for the glory of God, and whose zeal was according to knowledge, have improved the opportunity to do an important work for God, and have made their names prominent among those who have been counted as His servants. But those who have not "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do," have thereby failed to relate themselves properly to the work of God, or have stood in opposition to it, and their lives have been dismal failures; for the great purposes of Omnipotence must move forward to their completion, and if a man will not fill the place and do the work which God has designed for him, the loss is his, and the honour that might have been his is given to someone else.

How few have known the day of their visitation! How few have understood how to relate themselves to the work of God so as to act in harmony with His purposes for their time. It is easy enough to look back upon the past and see how to have related

ourselves to the work of God in other times, but the past will not in this matter serve as a guide for the present. Here is where people have been ever prone to make a mistake. They have accepted the results worked out in some previous conflict of truth and error, as if that were all that they needed, forgetful of the fact that they must needs engage in a conflict themselves,—forgetful that the battle between truth and error is going on in their own day and must go on till the end of time, and that there is a battle for them to fight, just as truly as there was for the Reformers and the martyrs. And they flatter themselves that they, if they had lived in other times, would have been among those who stood for God and the right. Yes, they would have stood with Noah when he proclaimed a coming flood; they would have gone with Abraham when he separated himself from the worshippers of idols; they would not have made the mistakes and committed the sins of the Hebrews in the wilderness on their way to Canaan; they would not have been guilty of the deeds by which they committed apostasy in later times; they would not have stoned the prophets; they would not have been among those that rejected Christ; they would have received the preaching of His disciples; they would have stood with the Reformers when they separated from an apostate church, and so on. But those who built and garnished the tombs of the prophets were the very ones who rejected and crucified Christ! And those who accepted Moses were the ones who put the prophets to death. And the ones who accepted Christ and the apostles were the ones who put to death the Christian martyrs. Of course, they did not really accept Moses and the prophets and Christ and the apostles, but they professed to accept them, and to all appearance did accept them. If they had done so in reality, they would have known from their words what aspect the work of God would assume in their own day, and would have been saved from their fearful mistakes.

We take to ourselves the credit of the victories won by those who have preceded us. We fight over their battles, when there is no real opposition to be met, and think that by this we show ourselves to be soldiers of the cross. But their victories are not ours, any more than their circumstances are the ones that surround us. Our day is different from theirs, and the work of God has assumed a different aspect. Not that the plan of salvation ever

changes from one age of the world to another; but men and circumstances change, the opposition of Satan assumes new forms, the work of redemption is moving on to its completion, when the earth will be made new and become the abode of the righteous; and God adapts His work to the circumstances and needs of each age. As His work progresses, there is a continual unfolding of truth, and a continual call to men to accept it and be sanctified by obedience to it. The test comes to all men alike. No age has yet witnessed the final victory of truth over error, so as to leave no conflict and no test for those who should live afterwards. Nor has truth in its spiritual forms ever yet attained to popularity. When the battle is being fought, the defenders of truth are but a little company, helpless against the array of the forces of error, were it not for the God of truth who works with them, and against whom all opposition is in vain.

We cannot, if we neglect the study of prophecy, understand how to relate ourselves to the work of God for our time; for prophecy, as stated before, is but a declaration of what was to take place in connection with God's work in times which when the prophecy was written, were yet future, but which now, it may be, are past or present; and we can only understand what the events predicted are and discern them in their true character, as they are pointed out to us in the prophetic word. When Satan is transformed into an angel of light, when he inaugurates movements in the world which are clothed with an appearance of sanctity and claim to be of God, we must depend not upon our own wisdom to detect the imposture, but upon the revelation that has come down to us from above.

But some may ask, Is not prophecy something which belongs to the past? Are there prophecies to be fulfilled in our own day? The best answers to such questions can be obtained from a study of the prophecies themselves. They would never be raised by one who has made them a subject of prayerful study. Hear the testimony of Peter: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place; until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." 2 Pet. i. 19. Do we indeed do well to take heed unto the sure word of prophecy, until the day dawn? Then many of us may be admonished by this utterance of the apostle. The

day has not yet dawned. We are yet in the time when the word of prophecy is "a light that shineth in a dark place." If we take no heed to the light, we must walk in darkness, the result of which cannot fail to be disaster; "for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

There are, it is true, many vain and foolish interpretations of prophecy put forth before the world in our day, but we must not for this reason throw the prophecies aside. It is the devil who seeks by this means to throw discredit upon them and cause men to turn from them with the feeling that they afford no positive knowledge, but offer only a field for fanciful speculation. The counterfeit is but an evidence of the existence of the genuine. The devil would like to explain all the prophecies to suit himself and get men to accept them as the true explanations. He would like to discourage men in the study of prophecy, and thus cause them to be taken by surprise at the coming of that which it foretells. But God has given the prophecies to men that they may be wise concerning the time in which they live; and just as surely as God has a special work to be done in our day, as he has had for times past, just so surely has He given us prophecies which relate to it, and we can only slight them at our peril."

"Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your day, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 40, 41. Let us be of those who have understanding of the times, by taking heed, as did the wise men of old, to the word that God has spoken by His prophets.

HERE is an extract from a letter written by Ruskin to a young student of his, which touches the key note of Christian living:—

"I believe there is no means of preserving rectitude of conduct and nobleness of aim but the grace of God, obtained daily, almost hourly—waiting upon Him and continual faith in His immediate presence. Get into this habit of thought, and you need make no promises. Come short of this, and you will break them, and be more discouraged than if you had made none. The great lesson we have to learn in this world is to give it all up: it is not so much resolution as renunciation—not so much courage as resignation that we need. He that has once yielded thoroughly to God will yield to nothing but God."

"WHERE there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." Prov. xxix. 18.

**"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING."**

THE evangelist, L. W. Munhall, relates in the New York *Independent* the following of the inquiry room, which is but an illustration of the statement that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "Being justified by faith," not by feeling, "we have peace with God." But we have need to take heed how we hear. All of the difficulties that people experience in understanding the Bible, and all the conflicting theories that are said to be derived from it, arise from the fact that people do not take the word just as it says, but persist in reading their own doubts into it. Mr. Munhall was conducting a series of meetings, and during one of the inquiry services he was told that a man named John Ewing was in great distress of mind, and anxious to see him. He proceeds thus:—

I found Mr. Ewing in a corner of the room, behind a door, on his knees, before a chair. His hands were laid open upon the chair, palms downward. His face was turned upward, was ashened and covered with great drops of cold perspiration. He was the perfect picture of despair. I dropped upon my knees by his side and the following conversation took place:—

"I understand, Mr. Ewing, you wish to see me."

"Yes, sir!" he replied.

"What is your trouble?"

"Oh, sir, I am such a great sinner."

I said: "Praise the Lord!"

I can never forget the look he gave me as he said: "I see nothing for which to praise the Lord."

"Doubtless that is so," I responded; "but that is because 'the eyes of your understanding' are not 'enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His calling.' There is hope for the man who believes himself to be a great sinner. Jesus came not 'to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' 'They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.' Do you not know, Mr. Ewing, that we have a very great and gracious Saviour?"

"Yes," he said, "but my sins are heinous and very black."

"But," I responded, "Jesus 'is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.'"

"That may all be true," he replied; "but I am the vilest sinner in this city. I have sinned knowingly and with a high hand."

I opened my Bible to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and laid it upon the chair before him. I asked: "Do you believe the Bible is true?"

"I do," was the quick response.

I then said: "Will you notice care-

fully the three things stated in the sixth verse of this chapter. First: 'All we like sheep have gone astray.' Do you believe that?" I asked.

"Yes; I know I have wandered like a lost sheep."

"Second: 'We have turned every one to his own way.' Do you believe that?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I know I have not walked in God's way."

"Third: 'And the Lord hath laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all.' Do you believe that also?"

He responded, hesitatingly and evasively: "I have been the wickedest man upon earth."

"So, then," I said, "you believe the first and second statements of that verse, but not the third?"

"O, sir, I believe it all."

"Are you certain of it?"

"Yes, sir; but I am such a great sinner."

"Do you really believe God laid your iniquities on Jesus? It says that, does it not?"

"Yes, it says, 'And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' Well, I believe it."

"With your whole heart?"

"Yes, with my whole heart."

"Well," I then asked, "where are your iniquities?"

"On me, sir; and they are very great and heavy."

"And you say, Mr. Ewing, 'I believe the Bible is true;' and yet, when God says He 'hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all,' 'who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,' and thus hath 'put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,' you say, in effect: 'It is not so; my sins are yet on me.' In other words, God says He laid your sins on Jesus, and you say it is not so; and yet claim to believe the Bible."

"But, sir, he answered, 'I do believe God's word.'"

"Very well," I said; "let us look at it again. God says: 'And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all,' does He not?"

"Yes, that's how it reads."

"Well, then, where are your iniquities?"

With somewhat of hesitation, he said: "I suppose, sir, they must be upon Christ."

"You suppose so? don't you know so?"

"Well, but I'm such a very great sinner."

"Very well, then, I'll read it your way, and we'll see how it sounds. Will you listen?"

"Certainly."

Again I read: "'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all,' excepting John Ewing."

Springing to his feet, he shouted: "That's not there, sir! It doesn't say that!"

I replied: "I know it does not. But that's the way you have been reading it all the while, in spite of my every effort to get you to see what it really does say."

"I see it! I see it!" he said, vehemently and exultingly: "He did lay my sins on Jesus! He did! He did!" and he clapped his hands again and again in the ecstasy of his joy, and shouted aloud the praises of God.

#### WHERE IS THE TRUTH?

To what source among men can we look with confidence to find religious truth? Is it with the masses of mankind? Is it with the church that is largest in numbers and greatest in wealth and influence? Is worldly popularity and prosperity anywhere a sign of its presence? These are questions upon which very much depends, and which multitudes have answered unwisely, to the ruin of their souls. The following words from a sermon by the Rev. F. J. Hamilton are instructive upon this theme:—

"There are times, and the present is such a time, when the Christian warrior must make a special stand, and feel more keenly the pressure of the strife. Never should he, for a moment, shrink from loyalty to the truth through fear of man, never should he quail before the power of the world; never should he imagine that to please men's carnal fancies is the way to win their souls; never must he be deluded by the notion that the truth is with the multitude. Was the truth with the eight hundred and fifty prophets of idolatry, petted by royalty, applauded by the people, clad in their vestments, and leaping on their altar; or with Elijah, as he stood alone before his dripping sacrifice, strong only in his God? Let the fire from heaven testify, and the shout of the unwilling crowd declare it. Where was the truth? With the seven thousand obscure believers, or with the multitudes that kissed the images? Let all the after history proclaim it, and the witness of the Spirit confirm it. Where is the truth now? With those who multiply ceremonies, bring back unlawful rites, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men; with those who spin out the web of some sceptical argument, and assail the integrity and inspiration of the Scriptures by which they shall be judged; or with those who believe in Christ Jesus as their all-sufficient and only Saviour, who look for the sanctification of the Spirit, and simply trust the Divine Word? We confidently appeal from the flabby sentiment of a self-seeking age to the unerring verdict of eternity!"

Where, it might also have been said, was the truth in the days of Noah, when only eight souls in all the world believed his message and were saved from the flood? Where was it in the days of Abraham, when he was called to separate himself from his father's house and become a stranger in the earth? Where was it in the days of Christ and His little handful of disciples, scorned and persecuted by the sanctimonious Jews? Where was it in the days of Martin Luther, when he began his work amidst the opposition

of popes and prelates, emperors and kings? And where is it to-day? Has the tide at length turned, so that truth is now to be found on the side of the majority? or is it still fighting the battle with error under similar circumstances to those which have prevailed in ages past?

It is not necessary that these queries should be made and answered in uncertainty. There is one certain source of truth, accessible to all, and upon which all may rely with absolute certainty. It is the word of God. "Sanctify them through Thy truth," said Jesus; "Thy word is truth." John xvii. 17. This is the source which supplied Abraham, Noah, Elijah, the apostles, Luther, and all others in all ages who maintained the cause of truth against the opposition of the multitude; and it is the only reliable source in the world to-day. Let us come to it and take it as such, notwithstanding the opposition of men. Let us say with the apostle, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." Rom. iii. 4.

#### PRAYER.

PRAYER is the channel of the soul's communion with God. Through it our faith ascends to God, and His blessings descend to us. The prayers of the saints ascend as incense before God. They come actually into His presence. Ps. cxl. 2; Rev. v. 8; viii. 3, 4. Prayer is the index of the soul's spirituality. There is "the prayer of faith," spoken of by James, and there is also the wavering prayer, mentioned by the same writer. There is "the effectual, fervent prayer," which "availeth much," and there is also the cold, formal prayer, which avails nothing. Our prayers show the exact measure of our spirituality.

The effectual prayer takes hold by faith upon the word of God. Faith not only believes that God is, but that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Heb. xi. 6. It is offered not formally, but with a sense of need; not doubtfully nor despairingly, but with full confidence that it is heard, and will receive an answer in due time.

The effectual prayer is not argumentative, for it is not the province of man to argue with God. Its statements are not for the purpose of conveying information to God, or of persuading Him to do what He had not intended to do. God cannot be persuaded by man. The arguments and appeals of a finite mind cannot change the mind

of the Omniscient. The man of faith does not plead with God for any such purpose. He does not want to persuade God to work in man's way, for he believes God's statement that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than man's ways. His prayer is ever, Thy will, not mine, be done.

What then is prayer, and what the purpose for which it is offered? It is the expression of our assent to that which God is willing and waiting to do for us. It is expressing to God our willingness to let Him do for us what He wants to. It is not left for us to instruct the Lord in regard to what we need. "Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." He knows what we need much better than we know ourselves. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." Rom. viii. 26.

God knows every need that we have, and is ready and anxious to give us that which will supply them; but He waits for us to realise our need of Him. He cannot consistently with the infinitely wise principles by which He works, bestow upon men spiritual blessings of which they would have no appreciation. He cannot work for man without man's co-operation. The heart must be in a condition to receive and appropriate the gift before it can be bestowed. And when it is in that condition, it will feel an earnest longing which will naturally take the form of prayer. And when this longing is felt, when the soul feels an intense desire for the help that God alone can give, when the language of the soul is, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God,"—the effect is to open the channel between God and the soul and let in the flood of blessing which was already waiting to descend. And it is the intensity of the desire that determines how wide the door shall be opened.

We need to realise more the great truth that God sees and knows everything that we need and has every provision made for all our wants, before we have even considered those wants ourselves; and that our work is not to determine what must be done to relieve them, but to place ourselves in a position where God can relieve them by the means which He has provided; to connect ourselves with Him, to know His mind and thus to move ac-

according to His plans, and not set about the fruitless task of trying to make Him work for us according to some plans of our own.

**GOD AND GOVERNMENT.**

A RELIGIOUS journal argues that "as there is no future life for a nation in its corporate capacity, it must receive its rewards and punishments in this world."

This reasoning overlooks the relation sustained to the nation by the individual. The former is but an organised aggregation of the latter; and you cannot separate national responsibility from the responsibility of the people composing it. The sin of a nation is the sin of its component individuals.

It is *organisation* that distinguishes a government from a mere aggregation of individuals; and organisation is an abstract thing, not capable of being considered in any system of rewards and punishments. There is no sin that is not the sin of an individual; for "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John iii. 4), and the law speaks always to the individual,—"*Thou shalt not,*" etc.

The organisation which makes a government out of an aggregate of individuals, adds nothing to and takes nothing from the previous relation of the individuals to God. A nation cannot be rewarded or punished in its corporate capacity, but it can be rewarded or punished in its individual members. But each individual is rewarded according to *his own* works. He is not rewarded for any good deeds that *he* has not done, nor punished for any sins that *he* has not committed.

An abstract thing can have no sense of accountability, or of rewards and punishments. The highest punishment is death, and this can be inflicted on any corporation or form of government by simply taking away its organisation. But it is evident that this is not in any true sense a punishment to the corporation or to the government. Whatever arrangements may be entered into between governments to recognise governmental responsibility to each other, there can be no such thing as governmental responsibility to God. God deals only with sin, which is the accountability of the individual.

A government can fail; it can be found wanting in resources to meet the ends for which it was established; but it cannot sin. Otherwise it could repent, be converted, and have eternal life through Jesus Christ. It is well

to keep the distinction between government and individual, and the relation of one to the other, clearly in mind.

**A CHRISTIAN'S PORTION.**

"My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."—Phil. iv. 19.

Is thy life lonely?  
Jesus is near thee;  
Is thy heart burdened?  
Jesus can cheer thee.

Dost thou feel friendless?  
Jesus befriends thee;  
Helpless and hopeless?  
His grace attends thee,

Dost thou lack power?  
Jesus can give it;  
Grace for life-witness?  
From Him receive it.

Dost thou fear trial?  
He will shine through it;  
Fiery temptation?  
Jesus foreknew it.

Long'st thou to love Him?  
He notes thy sighing;  
Notes it—to give thee  
Soul-satisfying.

Would'st thou be faithful?  
Christ can uphold thee;  
Fear'st thou to falter?  
His grace will enfold thee.

Out of His riches  
Each need supplying,  
Trust Him for living,  
Trust Him for dying.  
—Eva Travers E. Poole.

**ABUNDANT LIFE.**

"I AM come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." John x. 10. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." John xiv. 6. "He that hath the Son hath the life." 1 John v. 12, R.V.

Christianity is a life. No mere theory nor intellectual knowledge of its truths is sufficient. Religion is nothing unless it embraces the life of Christ. To some Christianity is nothing more than good, sound principles of morality; but it is more than this—it is the result of the divine Son of God entering into living union with humanity, taking up His abode in mankind and living through them the same life that was manifested on a very small portion of this earth's surface nearly 1900 years ago.

Nothing short of this can be Christianity. Many have tried to imitate the life of Christ but the result has always been defeat and disaster. The children of Israel tried it when at the foot of Mount Sinai they declared "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," which was to keep the law of God and thus live the life of Christ Himself; but the succeeding wilderness journeyings demonstrated their inability to keep their promise. The next generation of the Israelites tried it when they were settled in their inheritance in the land of Canaan, saying, "The Lord our God will we serve and His voice will we obey:" but the succeeding record gives a sad statement of the facts of the case; James and John

tried it when they declared they could "drink of the cup" and "be baptized with the baptism" but they were among the number who "forsook Him and fled"; Peter also tried it, notwithstanding the word of Christ telling him of his inability to do so, with the same sad result; and many to-day are trying it—seeking to work out their own salvation without that salvation first being wrought in them—and failure and defeat always attend their efforts; until at last the soul sinks down on the verge of despair—having glimpses of the Divine life but lacking the power to live it, and vainly striving to attain to the ideal that rises before it.

But, thank God, we are not left in this condition. It is when we have reached the limits of our strength that the Saviour steps in and we find that all our needs are met in Him. Are we weak? "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. iv. 13. Do we hunger and thirst after righteousness? "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." John vi. 35. Are we ashamed of our nakedness and our own endeavours by which we have sought to clothe ourselves? "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Isa. lxi. 10. Nothing that we need but that we can find in Him. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him." Col. ii. 9, 10.

In Him there is "abundant life." "As the Father hath life in Himself so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." John v. 26. He came to this earth for the very purpose of giving this life to men. Yet it is not something separate from Himself for He is "the Life" and therefore He gives Himself to all who will receive Him. To the woman of Samaria at the well He illustrated it by the similitude of water: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." John iv. 14, R.V. With Him is the "fountain of life" and that spring shall never become dry so long as He is the occupant of the soul. He came not only that we might have life but that we might "have abundance" (R.V., margin). Do we know what the abundant life is? Is the spring within us ever rising up in its abundance and flowing out to others in "rivers of living water" (John vii. 38) or is the current stopped by various hindrances that imperceptibly creep into our lives? The "abundant life" is within the reach of all for it is stored in "*the man* Christ Jesus" and when

He is revealed in His followers they are filled with "all the fulness of God." Eph. iii. 17-19, R.V.

There is, however, one thing that must take place before we can have this abundant life manifested in us, and that is death. The Apostle Paul experienced this when he said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. ii. 20. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11. Death must always precede life. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." John xii. 24.

But how are we to die to the self-life? Must we like some of old wear out our bodies with incessant fastings? Must we shut ourselves away in monasteries or convents that the old nature may not have its liberty? Must we, in our own strength, seek to kill it? No, there is a more excellent way than this: "If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Rom. viii. 10. When the Spirit of Christ dwells in the heart the old nature cannot exist in that divine atmosphere and it is kept in a death-state by His indwelling presence just as long as we allow Him to control our bodies. But the old evil tendencies are ever ready to spring into life again when His restraining influence is gone.

The people of God in times past have had to learn this lesson of dying to self. Jacob experienced it at the fords of Jabbok, when the consciousness of his own sinfulness pressed heavy upon him and he pleaded for that divine blessing which alone can turn us away from our iniquities (Gen. xxxii. 26); Elijah experienced it after the scenes on Mount Carmel when he fled into the wilderness and as he sat under the juniper tree his own sins rose up before him "and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings xix. 4); Peter experienced it after his denial of his Lord when Jesus turned and looked upon him with those searching eyes that cannot countenance sin, "And Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Luke xxi. 62); and Paul experienced it when he cried out from the depths of his heart, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24); and these are but specimen pages from their lives and the lives of all the people of God. They have had to learn the

lesson of dying daily to self and so must we. There is no other way into life save through death. The offending hand must be cut off, and the stumbling foot must go, and the objectionable eye must be plucked out, that thus we may "enter into life maimed," rather than allow these things to drag us down to hell (Mark ix. 43-48). "If any man will come after Me let him deny *himself* and take up his cross *daily* and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke ix. 23, 24.

And the result of it all is "abundant life," for the abundance of His life will be manifested through His people in just exactly the proportion that they are willing to die to the self-life. Shall we not let Him have His own way with us? Too long we have lived in the narrow limits of our own self-lives. He now waits to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power of His own life in its abundance. Who would not deny self and shoulder the cross on which it is to be crucified if such a blessed result as this can be obtained? Who would not lose the narrow self-life for Christ's sake that the abundant life might take its place. Do you my reader, long for this richer deeper life? If so you may have it freely "without money and without price" and the very fact of your longing is evidence that Christ is knocking at the door of your heart. Open to Him and be willing to see yourself as He sees you and then know that the past shall be blotted out and you will be created anew in Christ Jesus to walk in those good works which God hath prepared for you (Eph. ii. 10). Then you will not be overcome by petty trials and difficulties that so often have had the mastery in the past, but you will overcome them, and as the days go by you will realise you have all that you need for every emergency, and you will learn to draw from the divine reservoir—"the fulness of the Godhead"—according to the measure of the demand.

We need to learn the art of appropriation. As the perplexing problems of life present themselves, let us remember that they are all answered in Him, and the greater our need the greater the supply. How much we have missed in the past because we have failed to appropriate His fulness! His supply is inexhaustible and He has sufficient to meet the demands of all; and as we thus learn to look to Him for our supply we shall ever be experiencing the truth of the apostle's words when he said, "My God shall supply *all your need*, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Phil. iv. 19.

H. C.

"HE that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished." Prov. xvii. 5.

#### THE PLAN OF SALVATION THE SAME IN ALL AGES.

WHEN the plan of salvation was revealed to the angels, joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. The glory and blessedness of a world redeemed, out-measured even the anguish of the Prince of Life. Through the celestial courts echoed the first strain of that song that angels sang above the hills of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And the lost pair in the garden of Eden, standing as criminals before the righteous Judge, waiting the sentence their transgression merited, heard the first notes of the Divine promise. Before the life of toil and sorrow which sin had brought upon them was depicted before them, before the decree that the wages of sin is death was pronounced, they heard the promise of redemption. Though they must suffer from the power of their mighty foe, still through the merits of Christ they could look forward to victory. The mystery of the gospel was spoken in Eden when God said to the serpent: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." If Satan could have touched the Head with his specious temptations, the human family would be lost; but the Lord had made known the purpose and plan of the mystery of grace, declaring that Christ should bruise the serpent under His feet.

Not only had man come under the power of the deceiver, but the earth itself, the dominion of man, was usurped by the enemy. Through the plan of salvation, through the sacrifice of Christ, not only man, but his dominion, was to be redeemed. Because of the merits of Christ, all that man lost through sin was to be restored. The time would come when there should be no more curse, but the throne of God should be in the earth renewed, and His servants should serve Him. The promise would be fulfilled, "the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever."

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the Divine government will be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan against God refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. Satan had declared that the law of God was faulty, and that the good of the universe demanded a change in its requirements. In attacking the law, he thought to overthrow the authority of its Author, and gain for himself the supreme allegiance. But through the plan of salvation, the precepts of the

law were to be proved perfect and immutable, that at last one tide of glory and love might go up throughout the universe, ascribing glory and honour and praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.

The inhabitants of all worlds will be convinced of the justice of the law in the overthrow of rebellion and the eradication of sin. When man, beguiled by Satan's power, disobeyed the Divine law, God could not, even to save the lost race, change that law. God is love, and to change the law would be to deny Himself, to overthrow those principles with which are bound up the good of the universe. The working out of the plan of salvation reveals not only to men, but to angels, the character of God, and through the ages of eternity the malignant character of sin will be understood by the cost to the Father and the Son of the redemption of a rebel race. In Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, all worlds will behold the marks of the curse, and angels as well as men will ascribe honour and glory to the Redeemer, through whom they are all made secure from apostasy. The efficiency of the cross guards the redeemed race from the danger of a second fall. The life and death of Christ effectually unveils the deceptions of Satan, and refutes his claims. The sacrifice of Christ for a fallen world draws not only men, but angels, unto Him in bonds of indissoluble union. Through the plan of salvation the justice and mercy of God are fully vindicated, and to all eternity rebellion will never again arise, affliction never again touch the universe of God.

To fallen man was revealed the plan of infinite sacrifice through which salvation was to be provided. Nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate man's sin, and Adam marvelled at the goodness of God in providing such a ransom for the sinner. Through the love of God, a star of hope illumined the terrible future that spread before the transgressor. Through the institution of the typical system of sacrifice, the death of Christ was ever to be kept before guilty man, that he might better comprehend the nature of sin, the results of transgression, and the merit of the Divine offering. Had there been no sin, man would never have known death. But in the innocent victim slain by his own hand, he beheld the fruits of sin,—the death of the Son of God in his behalf. He sees the immutable character of the law he has transgressed, and confessing his sin, relies upon the merits of the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

"The plan of saving sinners through Christ alone was the same in the days of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and in every successive generation living before the advent of Christ, as it is in our day. Patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs from

righteous Abel, looked forward to a coming Saviour, and they showed their faith in Him by sacrifices and offerings. The sacrifice of beasts shadowed forth the sinless offering of God's dear Son, and pointed forward to His death upon the cross. But at the crucifixion type met antitype, and the typical system ceased.

The Son of God is the centre of the great plan of redemption, which covers all dispensations. He is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." He is the Redeemer of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam in all ages of human probation. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Christ is the substance, or body, which casts its shadow back into former dispensations. When Christ died, the shadow ceased. At the death of Christ, the typical system was done away; but the law of God, whose violation had made the plan of salvation necessary, was magnified and made honourable. The gospel was good tidings of great joy to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses; for it presented to them a coming Saviour. A more clear and glorious light now shines upon the Christian. We look forward to an entrance into Eden, which Adam lost. Those who lived before the coming of Christ, looked forward by faith to His coming; but what had to be grasped by faith by them, is assurance to us; for we know that Christ has come, as foretold by the prophets. It is just as essential for us to have faith in our Redeemer who came to earth and died our sacrifice, as it was for the ancients to believe in a Redeemer to come, represented by their offerings and sacrifices.

MRS. E. G. WHITE.

#### "THE COMING OF THE LORD DRAWETH NIGH."

"Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James v. 6.

THE personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ is a doctrine so clearly set before us in the Scriptures, so often referred to and enjoined upon His followers as an object of hope and an incentive to duty and watchfulness, that few believers of the Bible will be disposed to dispute or even doubt this as a general statement of truth. But the object of that coming, and that it is near, and of immediate probability, is not so fully admitted; in many cases it is altogether denied, and to a large extent, alike neglected and misunderstood.

That the early Christians held and cherished the hope of the speedy return of their Lord is a fact that is freely admitted by all writers on church history. All the epistles teem with exhortations on this point, and it was only when this hope declined and

gradually disappeared, that the church forgot her high and heavenly calling,—became earthly and aggrandising in character, and thought to establish the kingdom without the presence of the King.

The aspect of the question to which I will more particularly direct your attention is the very important and momentous one—

IS IT NEAR? AND CAN WE SEE ANY SIGNS?

1. *As to its nearness.*—We have seen that the hope and expectation of the early disciples was that their Lord was coming back again, and that soon. This admits of no question. His own words of comfort to them on the eve of His departure were:—"If I go away, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also;" and His last message to the churches is:—"Behold, I come quickly." But an objector says—"But eighteen centuries have elapsed, how then can it be true that the Saviour would come quickly?" And one daring sceptic (Professor Tyndall) has said that the promise has been wrecked by non-fulfilment. In answer to this I will quote the words of an able writer who thus deals with this class of objections:—"The adverb is a relative term. The coach moves quickly in relation to the pedestrian, the train in relation to the coach, and light in relation to the train; and if we measure the interval between the promise and its fulfilment, and compare it with the unending cycles of eternity, we shall see that it is but 'a little while,' and were the Saviour's advent delayed during the six long millennia of human time, it would be swift as the lightning flash compared with the eternal blessedness—the everlasting now! . . . 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' Oh, then, let us bend a listening ear to catch the faintest echoes of the foot-falls of the coming Saviour; let us bid the watchman tell us of the night; and let us work, and wait, and watch, and pray, 'looking for that blessed hope.'"

2. *Can we see any signs of the approaching advent?*—In directing your attention to some of those signs which seem to me to indicate clearly that the coming of the Lord is at hand, I would at the same time deprecate the course which many have followed in attempting to fix upon some specific date. So far as I can see, there is no Scripture warrant or authority for such a course, and the repeated failures of all such predictions in the past have done much injury to the cause of truth; they have tended to discourage the study of prophecy, and perhaps have conduced, in no small degree, to that wide-spread discredit and contempt for the word of God which is so characteristic of our times.

But while we must be careful to avoid falling into errors of this kind,

there are yet abundant indications on every side that we are on the eve of some great crisis in human affairs. Men of the world, who are said to be wiser in their generation than the children of light, are well aware of this, and are troubled and perplexed as to what goal events are tending. A great statesman has said "that every aspect of the present age, viewed in the light of the past, warrants the belief that we are on the eve of a universal change." Another observer of the times has said "that the age of revolution is upon us."

When we consider this extraordinary aspect of things,—the condition of the nations with their innumerable hosts all mustered and prepared for war; the state of unrest and discontent which everywhere prevails; the dark plottings of anarchists and revolutionists, and the visionary schemes of the socialists and communists; all alike bent on the subversion of the present order of things, we need not be surprised, nor wonder, at the positive dismay with which men of the world contemplate the future; and if we are wise, and, like the scribes, well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, we can read these signs aright, and when other "men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth," we can "look up and lift up our heads," knowing that our "redemption draweth nigh."

If we turn our eyes from the condition of the nations to that of the professing church, a spectacle no less significant and appalling meets our view. Torn and divided into rival sects and parties, and striving with each other as to their respective claims, we see how miserably she has failed in witnessing for the truth, and how far she has departed from the faith and practice of apostolic times. The apostle Paul, in his letter to Timothy, gives special prominence to those perilous times which should characterise the last days. "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;" . . . "For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." We cannot fail, I think, to see that all these signs abound on every side, and that they are more applicable to the present than to any former period.

But there is another to which the apostle makes special reference. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in

hypocrisy," etc. This appears to me to be one of the most significant of all, and, in the rise and progress of what is called "modern spiritualism," we may see this prediction fulfilling before our eyes. So, at least, I judge, and I think we will search in vain for any other system which so fully corresponds to this express revelation by the Spirit. Its teachings are subversive of the very foundation doctrines of Christianity:—"there is no death," "no atonement," "no resurrection." They profess to hold communication with the spirits of the departed. Surely this can be nothing else than a revival of that witchcraft and seeking unto familiar spirits which under the law was to be punished with death.

This diabolical system, with its false teaching and delusions, like the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, is wholly based on the unscriptural dogma of man's natural immortality, which blinds the eyes of men to the true hope of the gospel, and to the coming again of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Verily, the world is not to be converted by preaching, as many vainly imagine, and these signs are clear and unmistakable indications that the perils and troubles of the last days are upon us, and that the present dispensation is rapidly drawing to a close. The apostle, in writing to the Thessalonians, says:—"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief, ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." 1 Thess. v. 1-6. Our Lord, in His day, rebuked the Pharisees for their blindness in this respect:—"Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Let it be ours to see that we are watchful and prepared, so that we fall not into the same condemnation.—*W. Dickson.*

#### TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD.

A LITTLE girl was asked one day to explain what was meant by "faith." "Faith," she replied, "is just taking God at His word." No better answer could have been given, even by a theological professor. Very probably the theological explanation would require explaining itself! But faith is really nothing more or less than this. And if you begin to-day to hunt through your Bible for all the things that God

has said about you, and all the promises He has given you, and if you believe them, what a chance there will be in your life!

You may say you can enjoy life very well as you are. I tell you you are groping about in Egyptian darkness compared to what you might have for the taking. Do you say you find it hard to believe God, to trust Him, to have faith in Him? Why, you are exercising faith, unconsciously it may be, every day of your life. Scarcely a day passes that you are not placing implicit confidence in some one or more of your sinful fellow-creatures. And yet you are afraid or unable to trust your own Maker in the matter of salvation?

Never say you cannot understand what faith is. It is one of the commonest commodities to be found in human society, but faith in the Faithful One is lamentably rare. Take God's word and believe it, and act upon your belief, and I promise you that you will begin to think you are the happiest man in all the wide world.—*W. M. Weir.*

#### EVIL THOUGHTS.

"THOUGHTS are the words of the mind, and as real in God's account as if they were expressed with the tongue." What crooked motives sometimes lie concealed within, whilst the tongue utters the smoothest words possible! The thoughts will be judged at the last day. Peter urged Simon Magus to pray for the pardon of the thoughts of his heart; the thought was first sinful, and the tongue expressed it. As thoughts may be pardoned, so they may be punished. Evil thoughts were mentioned first by the Lord Jesus in His catalogue of sins proceeding from the heart. How many sinful thoughts there are in connection with one evil action! As the thoughts are near to the seat of corruption, they derive more of the strength of it; and the more pleasure there is in contemplating a wicked plan, the deeper, and the more hateful is the sin in the sight of God.

Taking pleasure in the thought of any future event which is unlawful at the time, is iniquitous in God's sight, as were David's thoughts and plans about Uriah, and all connected with his terrible wickedness. All began in the thoughts of his heart, and the deeds, like a brood of vipers, were hatched there. Every plan and thought about them were so many sins. "Who can understand his errors; cleanse Thou me from secret faults. . . . Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."—*Sel.*

"It is an honour for a man to cease from strife." Prov. xx. 3.



#### WITNESSES FOR GOD.

I plucked a rose, a lovely rose,  
From off its mother stem;  
It was a rare and beauteous thing,  
Fit for a diadem.

I plucked a head of clover bright,  
That grew beside the way,  
And saw how perfectly it did  
It's Maker's power display.

I plucked a little spear of grass,  
All silvered o'er with dew,  
And though so common, yet it seemed  
Most pleasing to my view.

For wisdom, skill, and love Divine  
So sweetly mingled there  
That works of art, however great,  
Could not with these compare.

I saw a bird with wings so light  
Soar upward toward the sky,  
And joyously it seemed to say,  
"There is a God on high."

The beasts that roam the field and wood,  
So perfect in their frame,  
With voice that all may understand,  
The same great truths proclaim.

—Mrs. L. M. Ogden.

#### WHAT ONE LITTLE PLANT DID.

THE Master who formed His creatures, appointed each its place. There is a place for the weak as well as for the strong.

The "Arundo," or "Bentgrass" as it is commonly called, has nothing attractive about it, but as the oak has its work in the forest, this little plant has its work on the shifting sand. It has no blossoms, but is a hard and sturdy plant, being neither a true rush nor a true grass; but it has done a wonderful work for Britain. We may find how wonderful by going to the West country, to nooks about Morecombe and in Cheshire, to the sands of Anglesea, and to the wastes of Cornwall.

Crona Temple tells of a spot on the West coast "where the sand drifts had worked their work of destruction unchecked for generations. Yard by yard, good land had been swallowed up; cottage after cottage submerged by the sweeping tides of sand. Tall trees perished, choked by the throttling strength that was at the same time their murderer and their grave. There had once been here a small but safe harbour, where many a fishing smack had found shelter. The sand spoiled and choked it until not even a skiff could find anchorage."

But someone thought of the Arundo and planted its creeping roots in the sand. "It must be confessed that it made but little way that first year,

but by the end of the second summer it had got good grip of the enemy. The penetrating roots held together in firm elastic masses; the needle-like leaves let the sand fall between them, and so hard were they that even the bitter rattle of its sharp particles failed to cut into or destroy them. Months went by. The sand arose with its million grains, and hurled itself on the Arundo. Those running roots merely lifted their fresh growth higher through the drifts, leaving the old dry fibre as an extra strength below. As the sand settled upon them, banking itself against their gentle resistance, they just grew through it, catching more sand against their knotty corners, and, holding it tightly, making out of the sand a rampart against itself. The very means which had overcome all other obstacles only served to build it higher.

"Through the sand, and upon the sand, the sea-mat grew, binding and holding the drifting tide until it was a firm bulwark stretching from north to south, behind which the world began to dare to grow green again.

"Ever growing, ever working in its silent and most humble way, the Arundo had held its own. And not *only its own*, but England's against the onslaught of the sea! The best, the only bulwark which could have kept the coast."

#### THE USEFULNESS OF TREES.

THE trees are doing us good all the time in many ways. You know if you put some fish in an aquarium and don't have some plants growing in it the fish will die. The plants have the power of keeping the water pure, so that the fish can live in it. But our world is like a great aquarium. The air about us is like the water in the aquarium, and we are moving about in it just as the fish do in the aquarium. But if it were not for the trees and plants which God has made, we could not live in this world, the air would get so impure, so full of poisonous gas, that it would kill us. The trees prevent this. They keep the air about us pure, and fit for breathing; and this is one way in which the trees are doing us good all the time.

And then the trees do us good by the fruits they yield. Suppose the trees should stop bearing fruit. Then we should never see another apple, or pear, or peach, or orange, or lemon. How many nice articles of food, and how many valuable medicines, we should lose if it were not for the trees!

But besides yielding fruit, there are other ways in which some trees do good. A celebrated traveller, whose name was Humboldt, gives an account of a tree which he saw in South America, and which he calls "*the cow tree*." These trees are so called because they take the place of cows in

supplying the people with milk. How strange it seems to think of *wooden* cows, that yet can give real good, sweet milk! Humboldt describes one of these trees, which he saw growing out of a rock. He says: "It has large woody roots. Its leaves are dry and leathery. For several months in the year no rain falls to moisten its leaves. Its branches look dry and dead; yet as soon as the trunk is pierced a sweet and nourishing milk flows out. The best time for milking this cow is at sunrise. Then the natives may be seen going out, with their bowls and calabashes, to milk these wooden cows. They make slits in the branches of the trees, and soon have their bowls filled with nice fresh milk. Some drink it there on the spot, and others carry it home to their children." Mr. Humboldt says he drank some of this strange milk. The smell was pleasant, and the taste was sweet.

All trees are useful in some way or other; but then there are some trees every part of which is useful. The cocoa-nut tree is one of the most useful trees in the world. Its nuts afford oil, a kind of milk, and fruit. From the shell of the nut are made spoons, and cups, and bowls, and bottles. The bark of the tree is made into twine, and cordage, and cloth, and mats. The young buds are eaten as a vegetable. From the sap sugar is made. The leaves are used for sails, for boats, for sacks, for baskets, and thatch for their cottages; and when burned their ashes yield potash, which is useful for many things. The wood of the tree is used for water-troughs, canoes, and other purposes.

But the bamboo tree, which grows in China, is more useful even than the cocoa-nut tree. It grows to the height of about eighty feet, and bears neither blossom nor fruit. The leaves are small and narrow; but many of the stems are thicker than a man's arm. In building, its largest stems are used for pillars, rafters, and planks; its leaves for thatching the roof, and the smaller fibres for matting for the floor. In the homes of the Chinese it is made into bedsteads, tables, chairs, and other articles of furniture; also into umbrellas, hats, musical instruments, baskets, cups, brooms, soles of shoes, pipes, bows and arrows, sedan chairs, and wicks of candles. Its fine fibres are made into twine; its shavings serve for stuffing pillows; its leaves are used as a cloak in wet weather, called "a garment of leaves;" and the chop-sticks, which the Chinaman uses instead of a knife and fork, are made out of bamboo stems. The tender shoots of this tree are boiled and used as a vegetable; the pulp is formed into paper, and the pith into pickles and sweetmeats.

It is used on the water as well as on land. Boats, floats, sails, cable, rigging, fishing-rods, and fishing-baskets

are made of it. It is as useful to the farmer as it is to the sailor. He depends on it for carts, wheelbarrows, plows, water-pipes, wheels, and fences, and many other things. And yet the half is not told about this wonderful tree. It is used everywhere, for everything, in the houses, in the fields, on water and on land, in peace and in war. —“*Nature's Wonders.*”

#### HOW TO BE KEPT FROM SIN.

LAST week we talked of how to get rid of our past sins. Perhaps some of you followed the directions given, and gave all your sins to Jesus, and were very happy in the thought that the Saviour had taken all your sins, and now you might hope to have a home in His kingdom. I hope many of you did this. Perhaps some of you who did so, soon found your happiness darkened by the knowledge that you had again committed sin, and then were discouraged and knew not what to do.

First, you must give these sins to Jesus just as you did the others, asking Him to forgive them and cleanse you from them.

But, you will ask, “Must I keep on sinning all the time, and giving them to Jesus?”

No, Jesus came to save His people from their sins. He prayed that we might be kept from the evil of the world, and He says He is “able to keep you from falling.” Jude 24.

You cannot keep yourself from falling into sin. I have no doubt that you have honestly tried to do right. You have said, “Now Jesus has forgiven my sins, and I will not be naughty any more”; then the first thing you knew you have done something wrong. You will see from this that you cannot keep yourself from sin, but Jesus can keep you, if you truly want Him to.

If you were going over a steep, slippery place, and were afraid you would fall if you went alone, you would ask your father to help you. He would gladly take your hand and lead you, and he would keep you from falling.

This world is full of slippery places of temptation, and Jesus offers to take your hand and lead you over them, and keep you from falling. You must believe He can do this, then you must trust Him to do it, and not try to go by yourself.

Jesus will stay right with you, He says, “Lo I am with you always.” When the temptation comes, just think to yourself, “Jesus is here, He can keep me,” and send up a little prayer from your heart, “Jesus keep me from falling.” He will hear very quickly, even if you do not say it with your lips. You must then believe that Jesus will keep you and He will surely do so.

Jesus has been all over these slippery places. When He was here on the earth “He was tempted in all

points like as we are, yet without sin.” He says, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Why should we be encouraged by the fact that Christ overcame the world? We may say He was strong and we are weak. Yes, but we may have the same strength that He had, for He promises to come in and dwell in our hearts, and He tells us: “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

Christ having overcome every temptation when He was living in a body of flesh just like yours, can overcome in you and through you.

We may liken these temptations to battles. Satan knows we are not strong, and that he has conquered us many times, and he is sure he can do so again. But when we ask Jesus to live in our hearts, and fight our battles for us, Satan knows that Jesus is strong. He remembers how Christ gained the victory over every temptation when He was on earth, and so Satan does not even stop to fight a moment, but just hastens away, for he knows Jesus would gain the victory, let him fight as hard as he could.

So if you wish to be kept from sin, just call on Jesus quickly at the first approach of Satan with his temptation. Trust in Christ to gain the victory for you, and when He has done so, do not forget to thank Him for it, and go on rejoicing.

AUNT JENNIE.

#### GIVE THANKS.

“THANK the Lord for daily bread,  
Thank Him for home and friends,  
And thank Him for giving us health and strength,  
And for everything else He sends.

“Let's thank Him for sunshine and pleasant days,  
For making the world so fair,  
For trees and flowers, for brooks and birds,  
Blue skies, and balmy air.

“Oh let's give thanks and praise the Lord  
For the love that made Him give  
The best and dearest of all,—His Son,—  
That you and I might live.”

#### SEEDS.

“PLANTS commonly come up from seeds. After a seed has been in the ground a little while it swells, because the dampness of the earth gets into it. The covering of the seed breaks, and out comes a little root. This root pushes down into the ground. Pretty soon there comes out of the seed also a little stalk, growing from the upper part of the root. And you see the root, with its fine fibres, going down, while the stalk goes up. Now what makes the root go down and the stalk go up we do not know. Many very wise men have tried to find this out. But they cannot do it. The Creator knows, and He makes the root of every seed go down and the stalk go up.”

And what makes *anything* come out of the seed and grow? Nothing less than the power of God's life. A tiny bit of His life is hid away in the little brown seed.

“How wonderfully many of these seeds are scattered! The maples, ashes, lindens and sycamores have some simple contrivance of a wing which sends the fluttering seed in pretty spirals far from the parent stalk; lowlier forms of life as the vetch, or wild-pea, are provided with a well-coiled spring that shoots the ripened fruit from out its snapping pod. In geraniums is hidden in the ripening pod a secret bow that, when the right touch is given to set it free, shoots as from a catapult the precious germ.

“There is not a brook that flows but carries forward the tiny boats which convey the germs of future growths. There is not a summer breeze or autumn tempest, through which her kites, balloons and parachutes are not sailing in safety with their precious freights.

“October sun and November frosts both are busy opening for nature her pods and burrs, and then fingers of the rain pluck from branch and bough the ripened pomes. With such marvels of nature upon every hand, the rambler or the student finds each month in the calender with its own delights, and to the old-time miracle of the heavens he adds the new-found wonders of the field, in each beholding with an equal eye the wisdom and beneficence of God.”

#### BUSY WORKSHOPS.

ALL the plants and trees about you are busy workshops. In them we find the most wonderful industries carried on.

The sugar maple, sugar cane, and beet root are busy making sugar; grains, potatoes, and many roots gather and store up starch. Camphor is made in a certain tree, opium in the poppy, castor oil in the castor bean, quinine in the bark of a tree, and various other medicines are stored up in different plants. India rubber is a gum made by some trees in warm countries. Perfume factories are found in many plants, while other plants are colour-makers; our blue indigo and many other dyes are made by the plants.

#### CAN YOU TELL?

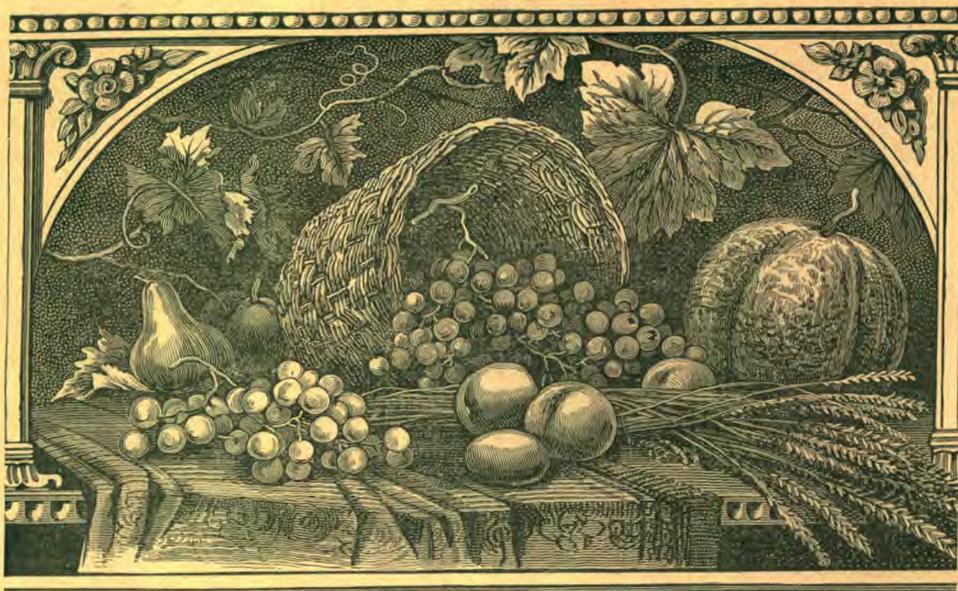
WHAT the roots of plants are for?  
What the leaves are for?  
What the sap is?  
Where the sap comes from and where it goes?

Why a flower or branch withers when cut off?

How the green leaves, the sturdy trunk, the white blossoms of the orange tree, and the bright yellow skin and delicious pulp of the orange are all made from the same sap?

The habits of those flowers and trees that are near you?

Why God placed so many beautiful and useful things all about you?



**THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD.**

THE earth at first was bare and brown,  
No grass, or tree, or flower;  
But God the great Creator spoke  
And in His word was power.

He said, Earth, bring forth herbs and grass  
And fruit trees yielding fruit,  
And in a moment all appeared  
Complete from leaf to root!

The smallest flower, the largest tree,  
Alike came at His call.  
And each one glorifies His name,  
For He has made them all.

J. E. O.

**GRASS, HERBS, AND TREES.**

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, whose seed is in itself; and it was so." Gen. i. 11.

How pleasant on a bright summer day to step on the soft green grass, to rest in the shade of the leafy trees, and to smell the fragrant flowers! How bright and pleasant the pansies look as they nod at us with their velvety heads! Oh, what a dreary place this earth would be without any grass, or plants, or trees! How thankful we should be that God did not leave it as it was at first.

You remember that on the third day, God gathered the waters together and caused the dry land to appear. But there was not yet a blade of grass nor a tree nor a flower,—just bare, dry land. Then a most wonderful thing occurred. God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, herbs, and trees;" and it did! All at once they began to come up everywhere out of the ground! And the hills, mountains, valleys, and plains, that a moment before were brown and bare, were suddenly covered with green plants, flowers, and tall, grand looking trees of every kind! The trees were much larger and more beautiful than trees now are, and there were no thorns on the trees and rosebushes, no thistles and weeds among the grass, for God

looked and saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good. How perfect and beautiful it must have been!

Even now our plants and trees are wonderful and beautiful. The trees and grass are not all alike, nor the flowers of one colour. You can find no two of them that are exactly alike; and yet nearly all are so pretty and useful that we can hardly tell which we like best. From them we get our wood, food, clothing, medicine, and many other useful things. Ask your mother from what your furniture, cotton and linen cloth, straw hats, flour, meal, sugar, corks, and India rubber are made. There are many strange things to be learned by studying roots, stalks, buds, leaves, flowers and seeds.

Just think; "how much is within a small acorn cup! When you hold an acorn in your hand, you hold not a small nut only. Folded within its tiny shell lie trees, and their children trees—even a whole forest. It is a great wonder to make a tree; but how much more wonderful to give to the tree the power to bring forth acorns that would make other trees, and they in turn to bring forth other acorns to make other trees for years and years!"

"A watch is, perhaps, one of the most beautiful and wonderful things ever made by man, but you might plant it in the ground again and again and it could never bring forth more watches. Does not this show us how much greater God's work is than man's?" Every tree, every plant, every flower, every blade of grass, and every tiny seed should cause us to think of the wisdom and goodness of the great Creator. And should they not fill our hearts with joy, and our songs with praise, when we remember that *He* is our best Friend?

1. What kind of carpets have you seen?

2. What kind of carpet is on the hills and fields, valleys and mountains, in the spring?

3. Were the grass and trees and flowers always here?

4. When did they first begin to grow?

5. Who caused them to grow?

6. How? Gen. i. 11, 12.

7. Can man make them grow in that way?—Man cannot make them grow in any way; he can plant the seed, or young tree or plant, but God alone can make it grow. Man cannot cause even one blade of grass to grow.

8. Would the earth be so pleasant if all the trees and grass were exactly alike?

9. Were the first trees and plants as good as ours?

10. Name some kinds of grass.—Wheat, oats, barley, and rice are grasses.

11. For what are the grasses good?

12. What flowers have you seen?

13. What are they good for?

14. Name some kinds of herbs or plants.

15. For what are they used?

16. Name a fruit tree; an evergreen tree; a flowering tree; a cone-bearing tree; a nut-bearing tree; a fruit-bearing tree.

17. Of what use are trees?

18. For whom did God make all of these good things? Gen. i. 29, 30.

19. How can we show our thankfulness?—By thanking God in our prayers, by giving thanks before we eat, and by using the things in a way that will please and glorify Him.

20. Does it please and glorify God when we use our fruits, grains, and plants in a way that will make us selfish, unhealthy, and unable to do good work for Jesus?

21. Then should we drink strong drinks? Smoke and chew tobacco? Smoke opium? Prepare our food in a way that will make us weak or ill?

22. What does God say about our eating and drinking? 1 Cor. x. 31.

23. About what should every tree, and plant, and tiny seed cause us to think?

24. And when we remember that this great Creator is our *Friend*, how should we feel? Why should we be glad?

**GOD IS GOOD.**

JESSIE and Ray stood looking at the lovely dish of fruit that stood upon the table. "Just think! God makes all the kinds of fruit! Mamma said so," said Ray.

"I'm glad He made peaches and plums and grapes and all the rest of 'em," said Jessie.

"May be He thought about the children when He made 'em," said Ray, softly. "What a good God He is."—*Sel.*

### THE STORY OF A FLOWER.

THERE is a beautiful story in French of a prisoner who became exceedingly attached to a flower. He was put in prison by Napoleon because he was supposed to be an enemy of the government.

One day as Charney (for that was his name) was walking in the yard adjoining his cell, he saw a plant pushing up from between the stones. How it came there he could not tell. He knew not what plant it was, but he felt a great interest in it. Shut in within those walls, away from all his friends, not permitted to interest himself with either reading or writing, he was glad to have this little living thing to watch over and love. Every day when he walked in the court he spent much time in looking at it. He soon saw some buds. He watched them as they grew larger and larger, and longed to see them open. And when the flowers at length came out he was filled with joy. They were very beautiful. They had three colours in them—white, purple, and rose-colour; and there was a delicate silvery fringe all round the edge. Their fragrance, too, was delicious.

Charney guarded his plant with great care from all harm. He made a framework out of such things as he could get, so that it should not be broken down by some careless foot or by the wind. One day there was a hail-storm; and to keep his tender plant from the pelting of the hail, he stood bending over it as long as the storm lasted.

The plant was something more than a pleasure and a comfort to the prisoner. It taught him some things that he had never known before, though he was a very wise man. When he went into the prison he was an atheist. He did not believe there was a God; and among his scribbles on the prison wall he had written, "All things come by chance." But as he watched his loved flower, its opening beauties told him that there is a God. He felt that none but God could make that flower. And he said that the flower had taught him more than he had ever learned from the wise men of earth.—*Book of Nature.*

### STRANGE COATS.

TREES and shrubs wear the most wonderful coats. Just stop and examine them. Some are smooth and others are rough; some are brown, others green, still others a silver colour; some are plain, a few spotted, others striped, and many trimmed with the daintiest velvet, and the softest draperies.

What a perfect fit! The trees are entirely protected from top to base, from trunk to the end of the smallest twig. And yet there are plenty of the tiniest openings for ventilation.

Those trees and shrubs living in

warm countries have thinner coats, and those living in cold places thicker ones.

Some trees get new coats once a year, and others wear the same ones all their lives.

"Well don't they wear out or get too small?" you say.

They would if they did not keep them so well repaired. As the trees grow larger they burst their coats open in different places but immediately fill up these rents with the cunningest patches set in so neatly that you cannot find a seam anywhere, no matter how closely you look. In this way they keep their coats in good order and large enough for their growing bodies.

In the winter the trees go to sleep and their buds are snugly tucked into their "winter cradles." Then they would freeze if it were not for the nice warm coats and softly-lined cradles which their Creator has given them and their buds. What are these wonderful coats called? How are the trees enabled to mend them? And what are the cradles for the buds? Why are the "winter cradles" in cold countries lined with a blanket of down, while those in warm countries are not lined at all? Do you wonder that God is called the loving Father of all His creatures?

A SMALL microscope is a never-ending source of delight to the children, and reveals to their wondering view still more and more of the wondrous works of God.

### Interesting Items.

- The health of Prince Bismarck is improving.
- There are 5,250,000 Catholics in the United Kingdom. Of this number over 3,500,000 are in Ireland.
- The finest business block in St. Joseph, Mo., U.S.A., has been burned, resulting in a loss of 1,000,000 dollars.
- By a railway collision in Indiana, U.S.A., Sept. 22, eleven persons were killed, including several residents of London.
- An International Congress for the suppression of bad literature was held recently in Lausanne. What the results of the session were we are not yet told.
- The town of Mochowa, in Poland, has been partially destroyed by fire. Eight persons perished in the flames, and hundreds of families are without shelter.
- President Cleveland in a recent letter expresses himself as in favour of the immediate and unconditional repeal of the purchase clause of the Sherman law.
- The Haytian warship "Alexandre Pétion" has been mysteriously wrecked with a number of Haytian diplomatists of high rank on board, all of whom were drowned.
- The Liberal Churchmen's Union has presented an address to Mr. Gladstone, congratulating him on having passed the Horae Rule Bill through the House of Commons.
- A former resident of Stanley Falls who has arrived at Brussels says that he is convinced that the power of the Arabs on the Upper Congo is completely broken after the sanguinary defeats inflicted upon them by the troops of the Congo Free State, under the command of Belgian officers.

—Strong measures are being demanded at Madrid for suppressing Anarchism. In Vienna the practices of the Anarchists were strongly denounced at a meeting of Socialists.

—The Church Missionary Society met recently at Exeter Hall, London, to bid God-speed to upwards of 100 missionaries who are to proceed to distant parts of the world under the auspices of the society.

—A Cape Town telegram reports that a dispatch from Mashonaland confirms the intelligence that the Matabeles are preparing for a big fight, the young warriors having broken away from Lobengula's authority.

—Prospects of a speedy termination of the coal dispute are not hopeful, the miners hesitating to meet the masters on the terms proposed. The men are determined not to accept, or even discuss, a reduction of wages.

The Russian ironclad "Rossalka" was lost in the Gulf of Finland during the recent gales, with twelve officers and 100 sailors. She was known to have been in a very unseaworthy condition, and generally unfitted to encounter heavy weather.

—Telegrams from the regions of the coal strike in Northern France and Belgium state that, except at Charleroi, there is an improvement in the situation, although in the Nord and Pas de Calais the miners are being urged by the union officials to continue the strike. At Mons there has been some rioting.

—The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society has addressed a memorial to Lord Rosebery urging upon her Majesty's Government the importance of proclaiming the abolition of the legal status of slavery in the British Protectorate of Zanzibar, which includes the island of Pemba, where thousands of slaves are engaged in the cultivation of cloves.

—During a military review at Barcelona two petards were thrown into the midst of a group of staff officers, wounding thirteen of them, among whom were Marshal Campos, General Castellvi, chief of the staff, and Generals Rustos and Molins, and several others. The Anarchists who threw the bombs have been arrested, and will be tried by court-martial.

—Advices from Argentina indicate the continued spread of the revolt against the Government of President Saenz Pena. The States in the northern part of the Republic are in open revolt, and doubt is expressed regarding the loyalty of many Government officials. Rosario is in the hands of the insurgents, and a division of the latter are marching upon Santa Fé.

—Great indignation has been caused among members of the Greek Church in Constantinople by the opposition offered to the Greek Patriarch in his endeavour to obtain the release of a priest of the orthodox Greek Church, named Photius, who was recently arrested and imprisoned by the Turkish authorities. The outcome of the incident may be serious.

—The cholera epidemic still continues in Europe, and is spreading in Asiatic ports along the Persian Gulf. The mail steamer "Carlo R.," which was not allowed to land her passengers or cargo at Brazilian ports, has arrived at the quarantine station of Asinara, on the Sardinian coast. During her voyage from Brazil 144 of her passengers and crew died of cholera on board.

—Intelligence received at Berlin states that the town of Brzeznicza, in the Government of Petrikau, has been completely destroyed by fire. There is evidence that the fire was the work of incendiaries, flames arising simultaneously from the four quarters of the town. Five hundred families are homeless, and are now camping out in the open fields, while several were burned to death.

—Intelligence has reached New York from Monte Video that the insurgent squadron had renewed the bombardment of Rio, killing many persons, although it ceased shelling the city when the forts opened fire. The damage done is said to exceed that of the first bombardment. Santos is still blockaded by the insurgent fleet. A proclamation has been issued by Admiral de Mello, the insurgent leader, accusing President Peixoto and the Cabinet of various malpractices and malversation of public funds. A Brazilian naval officer, who has been interviewed at Lisbon, expresses the view that in the event of the success of the insurrectionary movement an attempt will be made to bring about the restoration of the monarchy.

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LONDON, OCTOBER 5, 1893.

FOR TERMS, SEE FIRST PAGE.

It is now estimated that the recent hurricane which swept over the southern Atlantic coast of North America destroyed over 1,000 lives and damaged shipping to the extent of \$20,000,000.

THERE are 5,250,000 Catholics in the United Kingdom. Of this number over 3,500,000 are in Ireland. The Catholic power in the kingdom might however be less with even much greater numbers, if fewer positions of influence were filled by individuals of that faith.

A FRENCHMAN is said to have recently written a book of several hundred pages to prove that the effect of oysters when eaten is to rest the brain! If all the wasted human energy in the world were directed to useful ends, how much better off our race would be than it is.

THE "Cherokee Outlet" said to be the last remaining piece of the public domain in the United States, has just been thrown open to settlement. On the day of opening there was a mad rush on all sides by people of all classes and travelling by every sort of conveyance, to secure the choice localities in the territory; for it was a case of "first come first served." It was a representation on a large scale and in conspicuous form of the spirit that controls in the small individual transactions of those who are not ruled by the Spirit of Christ.

THE present may be not untruthfully spoken of as a time of universal trouble. Two wars in South America, financial ruin and starvation in North America, prostration from the same cause in Australia, pestilence in Europe, and the great coal strike with the attending paralysis of industries in our own land, make up a stupendous and awful picture for the mind's eye in this latest day of the world's progress and civilisation. It is better to look upon the bright side of a picture than the dark one, but it is well to be admonished by the situation which confronts us, and ask ourselves what it may portend in the purposes of Him who ruleth over all things.

TRANSATLANTIC journals are just now full of the proceedings of the great "World's Parliament of Religions," sitting in connection with the World's Fair. Nearly every prominent religion in the world is represented, and a vast fund of information—not all of it very valuable—is elicited by the various speakers who participate. Some effort is even made to discover a resemblance between the faiths of the Orient and the Occident; though none save the most deluded enthusiast can be blind to the fact that between these there is a hopeless divergence. There is one point of union, however,—one great doctrine upon which they all stand alike; they all believe that man has an immortal soul. This doctrine is the very foundation stone of all heathenism. It may be that with this as a common basis a considerable degree of advancement will be made toward a general union of apostate religious sects.

THE Mohammedan pilgrims who annually journey in such great numbers to Mecca drink from the "holy" well of Zem-Zem, which is within the city. A sample of the "holy" water taken from this well, on analysis by a correspondent of the *London Times*, was found to contain "in an equal volume, considerably more animal matter than is found in average London sewage," being full of dead and living microbes and the foulest refuse which filtered into it from soil which has never known any other drain than that provided by nature. Mecca is supplied with water of an excellent quality, but it is not "holy" like the solution contained in the well, and of course the pilgrims feel bound to drink of the latter. The relation of this to the fact that Mecca is a chief, if not the principal, cholera centre of the East, will be at once apparent.

WE must not however be too severe in our condemnation of the devotees whose unsanitary practices are so productive of evil; for wherein we would judge them we might also condemn ourselves. Our own forefathers, of times yet scarcely historic, were guilty of similar practices. The Christian people of Europe were a long time learning the truth that holiness and filth do not go together; and the Mohammedans are as yet only a century or two behind us. Any one familiar with the Middle Ages knows that uncleanliness was then regarded rather as

an aid to sanctity than as something incompatible with it. The "saints" were generally persons whose appearance amply testified to their contempt for ideas of personal sanitation. Long and unkempt hair, uncut nails, and unwashed bodies were considered in perfect keeping with, if not evidences of, the highest attainments in piety. Of course, the monastic dungeons and gloomy and solitary caves where such piety as they possessed was attained, were not especially conducive to habits of attention to the appearance and wants of the body; but the illustrious examples of "bodily mortification" which the world then saw can only be accounted for by the prevailing religious sentiment of the time, which made neglect of the body a positive virtue. And there was a reason for this sentiment; but this we will consider at another time.

EVEN to-day there are a great many civilised people who firmly believe in the holiness of ancient and mouldering pieces of bone,—the remains, real or supposed, of some departed "saint," revered by the Roman Catholic Church. If holiness can pertain to these relics, of which so much is made by the Church of Rome, certainly it is not unreasonable to suppose it may also belong to the cholera-producing well of Mecca, notwithstanding the conditions which render it so dangerous to human life.

IN the purposes of God, holiness and filth are incompatible. One has but to glance casually through the Old Testament Scriptures to observe the sharp line of separation drawn between the clean and the unclean, not only as pertaining to the character, but to the flesh as well. Nor are the New Testament Scripture less explicit. We are exhorted to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vii. 1. We are told that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that "if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." If people understood better what holiness is, there would be much less superstition pertaining to relics and "holy" places both among civilised people and others, and much fewer "pilgrimages" with their attendant evils undertaken both in Asia and Europe.

"THE rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all," Prov. xxii. 2.