

The Sabbath **Watchman**

November-December 2016

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Twixt Two Trees

Adam and Eve stood between two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The following paragraph implies several important reasons why God placed them there. "It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous." —*Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

(1) The test for the first pair was a test of faith. That is why Jesus said in John 16:8, 9: "And when He [the Holy Spirit] is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on Me...." For the very same reason, the apostle James, the great expounder of "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26), wrote: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. And to exercise faith, everyone has been given "free will," the gift of God purchased by Jesus on the cross.

(2) The exercise of "free will" is necessary for the formation of a holy character. Before the fall, man could "form a righteous character by obedience...." That means that although he was created like an "innocent" child, he was full grown and had received the knowledge of right and wrong along with the power of "choice." As he exercised his "free will" with love, he would be forming a righteous character by choosing not to sin—not eating that which God said was not his to eat. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:16, 17.

Unfortunately, as we know, Adam and Eve misused their "free will," and "sin entered into the world, and death by sin...." Romans 8:12. "After their sin Adam and Eve were no longer to dwell in Eden. They earnestly entreated that they might remain in the home of their innocence and joy.... But they were told that their nature had become depraved by sin;... and now, in a state of conscious guilt, they would have less power to maintain their integrity." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 61.

While their world changed, two trees remained: (1) "To those who obey, the word of God is the tree of life." —*The Upward Look*, p. 125. (2) "The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist." —*Education*, p. 29.

So, today we still stand between two trees: (1) the sacred word and (2) our sinful human nature. Our test is the same as that of Adam and Eve, but with one huge difference: In their innocence, they had the power to form righteous characters; but we, of ourselves, do not have that power. We need the constant support of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, His angels, and each other. Whether or not we receive that support is up to us. God gives us the power if we want it, but we must ask for it. That is the heart of the gospel—"free will." At the heart of Babylon is force. Which of these two do we want? Which tree will we choose to eat of? The simple answer is another question: What do we value? What we value determines what we choose to believe.

Let us earnestly examine our values and use our God-purchased free will to practice choosing the right tree to eat from, for signs all around us proclaim that there is little time left to make our choices. May this issue motivate every reader to eat freely from the tree of life. Maranatha!

"The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience."

Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God's Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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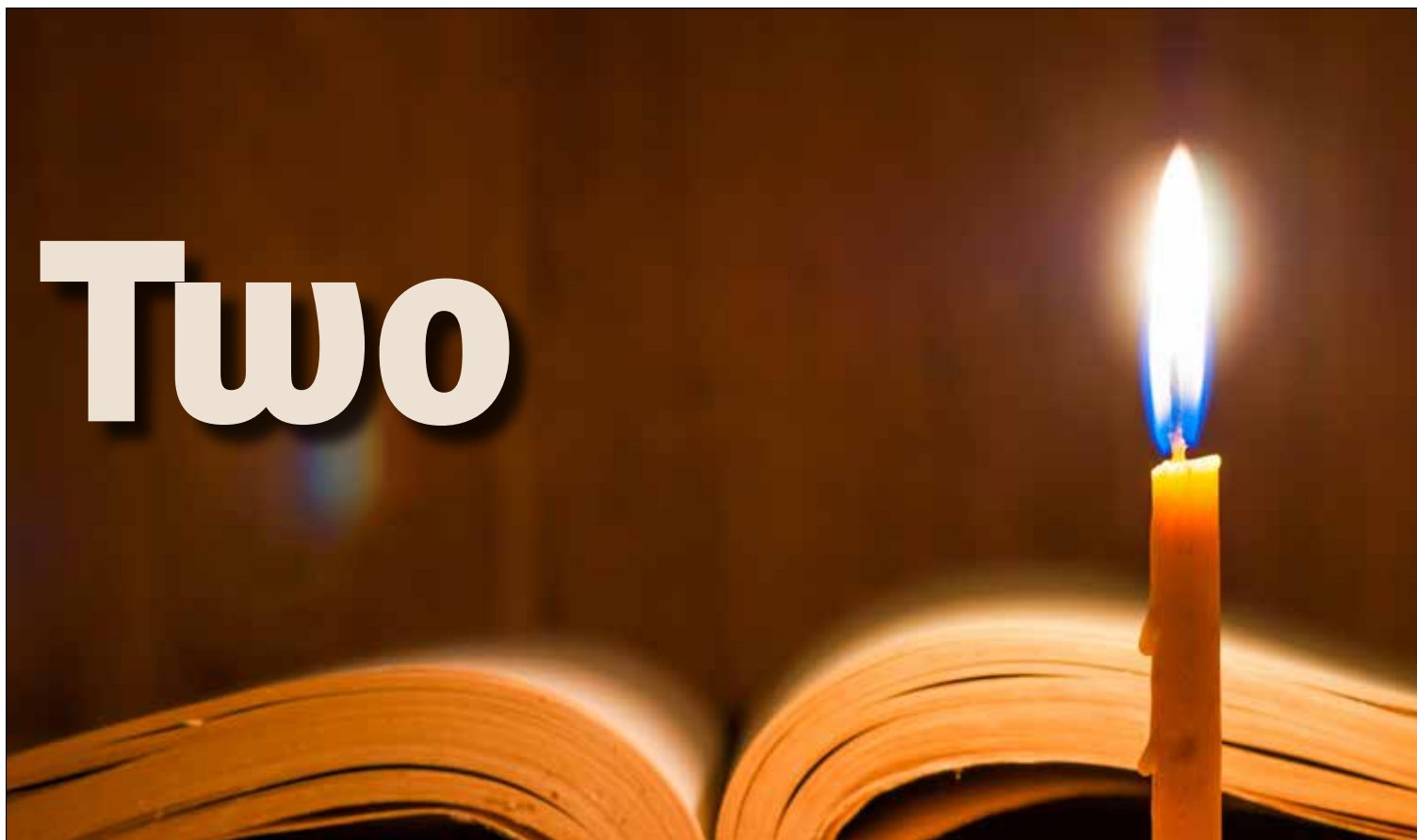
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Two



By José Giner

Numbers in the Bible all matter and give us messages that are important for us to understand.

In the Bible, numbers frequently appear in a spiritual context without reference to just mathematics. For example, every Bible student knows that 7 is a number symbolizing completeness and perfection, 666 represents the antichrist, and 12 refers to election, government, power, authority, and so on. In addition, the number 2 appears many times in the context of opposition and antagonism. These numbers in the Bible all matter and give us messages that are important for us to understand.

We could talk for many hours about the number seven and what it means—its spiritual and prophetic applications. But here we want to look at the number two, give it a spiritual context, and apply it to the church and every individual.

At the beginning there were two

The first reference to two is found in Genesis. What is it? The first human couple—**Adam and Eve**. Notice that they were not a man and another man or a woman and another woman, but a couple with distinct characteristics—man and woman, who were psychologically distinct but united in love.

After showing Adam and Eve's fall into sin, the Bible speaks of **two gods**—the true God and the god of this world, the devil. 2 Corinthians 4:4. One is true and unique, with exclusive attributes; He is the Creator, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, etc. The other has none of these attributes; he is full of hatred and evil, a created being, lacking in knowledge, limited, and condemned to die.

Furthermore, the Scriptures show humanity being divided into **two classes of people**—the children of God and the children of men. The former recognized the true God, while the latter were atheists, defiant, disobedient, and rebellious. Because of them, God destroyed the ancient world by a worldwide flood.

We also find in the Bible **two kinds of spirits**—the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit, who is also God) and the spirit of the devil, the enemy of God.

- The Spirit of God guides man to the truth.
- The spirit of the devil leads man to lies.
- The Spirit of God leads man to obedience.
- The spirit of the devil leads man to sin.
- The Spirit of God encourages and comforts man.

- The spirit of the devil discourages and saddens man and causes him to despair.
- The Spirit of God gives man repentance, confession, and conversion.
- The spirit of the devil hardens man's heart.
- The Spirit of God gives man power to overcome.
- The spirit of the devil gives man power to do every evil thing.



Luke says: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Luke 13:24. The word "strive" comes from the Greek verb *agonizomai* (agonize), meaning to fight hard, to give everything in the fight, to be engaged with the whole body, mind, and spirit, to be ready for anything.

The narrow door, the narrow road, that which is good, and blessing represent the *absolute submission* of the Christian to God. The Christian chooses what God desires, not what he desires. The Christian is committed to doing what God presents in His word, not what his emotions and desires tell him to do. We must submit to the law of God, but we cannot count on the help of God and do nothing. Colossians 1:29.

To submit one's sinful nature to God is the most complicated work that exists. Paul said that a Christian runs a race like an athlete; but our race is spiritual, bringing one's body into subjection. 1 Corinthians 9:27. When Paul speaks of hitting his body and bringing it into subjection, he is not talking about torture, like that of the ascetics who think that the body is the source of sin. This is not so, for the word teaches us that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. What Paul means is that there is an ongoing battle, an *agonizomai*, a struggle, a fight, a giving, a determined effort to do good (the will of God), a renunciation of self. That is what is meant by entering through the narrow door, choosing the heavenly blessing and life, walking on the narrow road.

Two houses

The Bible also tells us about **two kinds of houses** that human beings build. Some build on the sand, and others build on the rock. Matthew 7:24-27. There is no such thing as a house built

Two doors, two ways

The Bible shows that there are **two ways**—the broad road and the narrow road. To access these roads there are **two doors**—the wide door and the narrow door. These two ways and these two doors are related to **two destinies**—life and death, good and evil, blessing and curse.

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Deuteronomy 30:15, 19.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Matthew 7:13.



To submit one's sinful nature to God is the most complicated work that exists.



between the two types of ground—sand and rock. We build either for the salvation of our souls or for perdition.

The decisions we make in life determine our destiny. When we decide to serve God and submit our passions to His will, we build on the rock; when we let go, we abandon ourselves to sin, build on sand.

In the parable, the Lord Jesus Christ said that the things that prove the kind of foundation our house is built on are the rains, the floods, and the winds that come to us—the tests of life. Building on the rock means building on Christ; that is, accepting His gospel, His teachings, and His holy law. John 14:15. Then, when there are strong winds and earthquakes, our foundation, rooted in Jesus, will stand unmoved.

Two types of people

We also find **two groups** in the Bible at the end of time. One group is presented in Revelation 14:12 as those who keep the commandments and the faith of Jesus. The other group is described under the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-17 as those who will be filled with fear when they see Christ coming in the clouds: “And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” Revelation 6:16.

The gospel shows that either we fall upon Christ, the Rock, or the Rock will fall on us. Matthew 21:44. God’s breaking us, transforming us, and causing our self-centeredness to die as we fall into His arms are altogether different from His falling on us as a rock, crushing or pulverizing us. The first has the hope of life eternal; the second is eternal death. Being broken or being destroyed. What will we decide?

“In the issue of the contest, all Christendom will be divided into two great classes—those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 450 (1888).

Conclusion

Two kinds of gods, the true God and the false god—one is God for ever, and the other is a being

who is going to be destroyed. Which one will you connect to?

We have also seen that in ancient times there were two classes of people—the children of God and the children of men. The first group recognized God as their Creator and Lord of their lives, while the others denied Him and rebelled against Him. In which class are we? As what do we consider ourselves?

We also saw that there are two kinds of spirits—the Spirit of God and the spirit of the devil. One inspires, builds, helps, guides, transforms, comforts, and empowers man to overcome evil. The other leads to error, sin, discouragement, grief, despair, hardness of heart, and power to do evil. What kind of spirit do we want to be filled with?

There are two paths, one broad and one narrow. The broad road leads to death; the strait (narrow) one, to salvation. Connected with that are two doors, one wide and one narrow. The first one leads to the broad road; and the second, to the narrow road. They lead to either blessing or curses, life or death. Which door have we decided to go through? In what way do we want to walk?

Everyone builds a spiritual house on either rock or sand. On what type of foundation is your house built? And then we saw that at the end of time there will be only two groups—those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus and those who disobey and unite with the great liar. What does this mean? On the global level, religious laws will be forced on every citizen. These laws will require the observance of a false day of worship in place of the Biblical Sabbath under penalty of persecution, imprisonment, and death. What group will we choose to belong to? With whom do we want to identify?

One of two decisions will be made by everyone. One will choose that which is good, and the other will choose that which is evil. Thus, we choose to build or destroy, to love or to hate, to follow Jesus or to be His enemy, to obey His holy law or to transgress it. May the Lord help us to choose by His grace to walk in the right way and always to stay on the side of the truth. God bless you! **SW**

We build either
for the salvation
of our souls or for
perdition.



Watch!

A man was visiting a friend who lived in a very dangerous place where there were many thieves. As they were about to retire for the night, the owner said, "If you need to go out to use the toilet, wake me up. Don't go out of the house without me, please."

During the night the visitor awoke but found his host sleeping soundly, so he went to the outhouse by himself. In the morning, the owner asked him, "How was your night?"

The visitor said it was good but that he had used the facilities once. "You were sleeping so soundly that I didn't want to wake you."

"How did you manage to survive?" the host exclaimed. "My place is guarded at night by cobras!"

A dangerous time

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41. There are different

kinds of dangers; one is our own way of thinking. But the Lord tells us to watch and pray, because the enemy is on our track like a roaring lion. "There is a feverish love of pleasure at this time, a fearful increase of licentiousness, a contempt for all authority. Not only worldlings but professed Christians also are governed by inclination rather than duty. The words of Christ are sounding down through the ages, 'Watch and pray.' Matthew 26:41." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 267.

Pleasure seeking is taking hold of society, and we must be very careful, so that it does not affect us. "Watchfulness and vigilance are needed now as never before in the history of the race. The eye must be turned off from beholding vanity. Lawlessness, the prevailing spirit of the age, must be met with a decided rebuke. Let none feel that they are in no danger. As long as Satan lives, his efforts will be constant and untiring to make the world as wicked as before the Flood and as licentious as were the inhabitants of

By Pablo Hunger

"As long as Satan lives, his efforts will be constant and untiring to make the world as wicked as before the Flood and as licentious as were the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah."

“All who do not feel the importance of resolutely guarding their affections will be captivated by those who practice their arts to ensnare and lead astray the unwary.”

Sodom and Gomorrah. The prayer may well be offered daily by those who have the fear of God before them, that He will preserve their hearts from evil desires and strengthen their souls to resist temptation. Those who in their self-confidence feel no need of watchfulness and unceasing prayer are near some humiliating fall. All who do not feel the importance of resolutely guarding their affections will be captivated by those who practice their arts to ensnare and lead astray the unwary. Men may have a knowledge of divine things and an ability to fill an important place in the work of God, yet, unless they cherish a simple faith in their Redeemer, they will be ensnared and overcome by the enemy.”

—*That I May Know Him*, p. 267.

Example and parable

“For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

Mark 13:34-37.



A few years ago, I visited Bangladesh and was impressed by all the security measures—multiple gates, dogs, and watchmen were all around many buildings, including our hotel. This is a very dangerous country, and we are so grateful that the Lord protected us and we were even able to baptize some souls. We had to perform the ordinance very quickly, because it is against the law to perform a Christian baptism there. We set up watchmen to warn us of danger.

“Watch the stealthy approach of the enemy, watch against old habits and natural inclinations lest they exert themselves; force them back, and watch; force them back if need be a hundred times. Watch the thoughts, watch the plans, lest they become selfish and self-centered. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Watch over the souls whom Christ has purchased with His own blood. Watch for opportunities to do them good.”

—*That I May Know Him*, p. 351.

The enemy is not only around us on the outside, but he also forces his way inside us. There is a struggle going on within each of us, and the Lord’s counsel is to force the enemy back—even if it is a hundred times. Don’t get tired and fall asleep. That was what the Lord told His disciples in His last hours with them. “And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?”

Mark 14:37.

Everyone needs to watch

Sister White was once aboard the mission ship *Pitcairn* and faced many dangers. She wrote: “Every soul is precious in the sight of God. It is a wonderful thing to be remembered and cared for every hour by God.”

—(Letter 65, January 6, 1894, to the ship’s crew on board the *Pitcairn*)

The Upward Look, p. 20.

Just as she was in danger on that trip, we are also on a trip and in danger of losing our connection with Jesus and fainting. We have to take time for prayer. Very soon Jesus is going to come, and we don’t know when our names will be brought up for review in the judgment.

“Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are

the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour's admonition: 'Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.' Mark 13:33. 'If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.' Revelation 3:3." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 490.

Are you ready for your case to be presented at the judgment bar of God? We go to conferences and make commitments to the Lord to be faithful, but that is no guarantee that we will arrive safely in the heavenly home. We don't know what tomorrow will bring. We don't know when we will pass into eternity. We need to watch and be ready, because Christians must face many different kinds of dangers today. We can be ensnared by our own misplaced desires. We are living in a world in which religious events are giving us clear warnings!

Clear signs

On October 21, 2016, Pope Francis attended a Lutheran conference in Sweden to join in commemorating 500 years since the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. In a country that once called for reform in religious matters, the pope is now being called to join the people in prayer.

"During the celebration, after the songs and readings and after the sermon of the General Secretary of the LWF [Lutheran World Federation], Rev. Martin Junge, the Holy Father gave the following homily which is shown below:

"As Catholics and Lutherans, we have undertaken a common journey of reconciliation. Now, in the context of the commemoration of the Reformation of 1517, we have a new opportunity to accept a common path, one that has taken shape over the past fifty years in the ecumenical dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. Nor can we be resigned to the division and distance that the separation has created between us. We have the

opportunity to mend a critical moment of our history by moving beyond the controversies and disagreements that have often prevented us from understanding one another."

This is a direct fulfillment of prophecy. A few days later, on November 3, 2016, Pope Francis received the representatives of different religions at the hearing. There were about 200 members of different religions (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and others), engaged in the field of charity and works of mercy. The hearing was held in the context of the Jubilee Year."

Here is a portion of the speech that the Pope delivered: "For us Catholics, among the most meaningful rites of the Holy Year is that of walking with humility and trust through the door—the Holy Door—to find ourselves fully reconciled by the mercy of God, who forgives our trespasses. But this demands that we too forgive those who trespass against us (cf. Mt 6:12), the brothers and sisters who have offended us. We receive God's forgiveness in order to share it with others. Forgiveness is surely the greatest gift we can give to others, because it is the most costly. Yet at the same time, it is what makes us most like God." —Ecumenical Prayer Service in the Lutheran Cathedral of Lund, October 31, 2016.

What is he saying? What is he talking about? First of all, he is talking about a way of receiving indulgences, because the pope declared 2016 the Year of Indulgences, the year of mercy and of Jubilee. And one way of getting indulgences is to go through the Holy Door. He was inviting all the religious organizations to go through the Holy Door to receive indulgences. But he is also saying that he considers that they have offended him, that he should forgive them, and that he is encouraging the Catholics to forgive the Protestants and the other religions.

Late in 2015, the pope introduced the Year of Indulgences, and earlier he paved the way for the above comments by saying, "My very first thought goes to all the faithful who, whether in individual Dioceses or as pilgrims to Rome, will experience the grace of the Jubilee. I wish that the Jubilee Indulgence may reach each one as a genuine experience of God's mercy, which

He (the pope) is also saying that he considers that they have offended him, that he should forgive them, and that he is encouraging the Catholics to forgive the Protestants and the other religions.

comes to meet each person in the Face of the Father who welcomes and forgives, forgetting completely the sin committed. To experience and obtain the Indulgence, the faithful are called to make a brief pilgrimage to the Holy Door.” Luther nailed his charges against the Catholic Church to a door. But the Bible says that there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, and it is has nothing to do with what the pope is presenting.

Perpetuation of apostasy

Was not this a continuation of the very apostasy that caused Martin Luther to nail the 95 Theses to the Wittenberg chapel door, thus impelling the Reformation forward? People are sleeping! They are welcoming exactly what Luther condemned. They are listening to the friendly words of the pope. And there is more.

The pope also talked about the sacraments and indulgences offered for healing and the intercession of Mary. And that was the main point of the Year of Jubilee. And do you know when the door for those indulgences closed? He closed the door on Thursday, November 13, but the system is not changing. This was the end of the Jubilee year. The whole thing is part of the effort to bring all religions under a false system.

A couple of days before, on November 11, the Pope addressed an audience on the theme of unity of Christians as a complete model—the communion. Here is an excerpt from his address: “Over the course of this year, I had the opportunity to experience so many meaningful ecumenical encounters, both here in Rome and on the road. Each of these meetings has been a source of comfort for me, because I could see that the desire for communion is alive and intense. As Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter, aware of the responsibility entrusted to me by the Lord, I wish to repeat that the unity of Christians is one of my main concerns, and I pray that it is increasingly shared by all the baptized.

“Ecumenism is true when you are able to change the focus from yourselves, your arguments and formulations, to the word of God that demands to be heard, accepted, and seen in the

world. For this, the various Christian communities are called not to ‘compete,’ but to cooperate. In my recent visit to Lund, I mentioned today’s ecumenical principle, formulated by the World Council of Churches in 1952, which urges Christians to ‘do all things together, except in those cases where their deep convictions require that they act separately.’”

Basis of ecumenical unity

As you can see from all this, the pope considers himself the leader of the Ecumenical Movement as the representative of God, as he mentioned in his statement; and he is calling all people everywhere to come under his leadership. He also mentioned that this has been an activity of the Council of Churches since 1952, that it has been a long time, and that the religions should not compete with each other. He also mentioned that he has had meetings with many religious leaders. A month earlier, on October 16, he met Asian Christian Catholics and Daoist leaders in the Taipei Baoan Temple. There the Pope laid out some guidelines for ecumenical discussions: “Encouraged by the success of this encounter, we commit ourselves to share the fruit of our dialogue:

“I) expressing deepest respect for one another’s tradition and agreeing to engage in sincere dialogue at local, national, and international levels;

“II) emphasizing the need to seek the truth together for greater understanding, mutual enrichment, and cooperation especially through compassionate service without distinction.”

His stated basis for unity here is not the word of God but all religions learning to accept the traditions of everyone else. In this regard, we can see that the people are asleep. They do not see what is happening because of the nice words. They do not realize that they are under the spell of a promise of peace.

Furthermore, in seeking influence in the U.S.A., the pope sent congratulations to the President-elect. Some months ago, a headline declaring, “Donald Trump Vows to Close the Gap Between Church and State,” showed that we could be very close to the end.

The whole thing is part of the effort to bring all religions under a false system.

"Trump promised that one of his first efforts as President would be to dismantle laws that keep Christian churches from spending tax-exempt money on political advocacy. He promised to vigorously attack a law established in the 1950s—from legislation sponsored by then-Senator Lyndon Johnson amending the U.S. tax code—that prevents tax-exempt organizations such as churches or educational institutions from endorsing political candidates. The ban on 501(c)(3) charitable organizations' engaging in political advocacy has come to be known as the 'Johnson Amendment.'

"Trump promised the evangelical pastors that, by abolishing the prohibition on churches' spending tax-exempt money on political advocacy, it would reverse the slow, steady decline in church attendance and public attitudes toward Christian beliefs in the United States." —*Time Magazine*, August 15, 2016.

A correct view

What is the meaning of this? The U.S. Constitution guarantees that church and state are separate from each other. But the President-elect wants to change those founding principles and allow the church to be involved in politics. That will bring changes. Things are coming close to the end. We do not know how everything will happen, but we are convinced that it will go quickly.

In Sierra Leone, robbers broke into our church in the middle of the night and took the chairs and some other things while the family staying there watched them. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." "But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten." 1 Corinthians 16:13; Jeremiah 20:11.

The Lord is by your side. In the midst of the struggle, the promise is that God's people will have the victory. And the above experience in Sierra Leone shows that. After several days, almost everything that the robbers took was recovered, but it was a very hard experience.

And we, too, will have difficult experiences; however, the Lord will be by our side. His promise is that we are not alone. Watch and contemplate what the Lord is doing; our security is only in Him.

A man went to visit a wonderfully beautiful garden. While walking through it with the caretaker, the man asked about the garden. Then he asked when the owner had last visited the place. The caretaker replied, "It has been more than 20 years, and I don't know when he will return, so I need to be ready when he does."

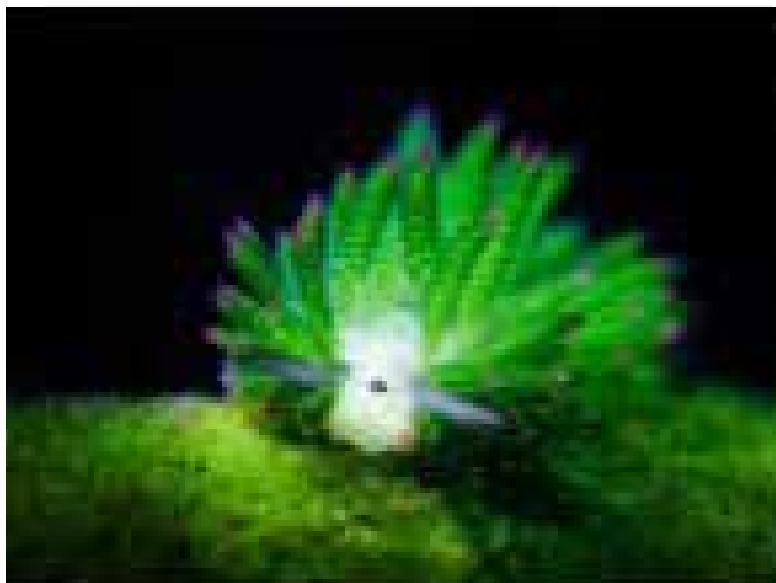
It is the same for you and me. Our lives should be like wonderful gardens, full of flowers; those are our characters. We all need to shine, because we are watching, waiting, and hoping for the Lord's coming. "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." Luke 12:37.

The Lord is coming soon. This is not only the judgment, but also His literal coming. Let us watch and be ready. Do not lose Jesus from your thoughts. Do not neglect prayer. Let us give encouragement. The promise is for those who draw close to the Lord. Be firm in faith so He will find you waiting for Him when He returns. The time is very near when you will enter and enjoy the heavenly garden. **SW**

Our lives should be like wonderful gardens, full of flowers; those are our characters.



Little Things



By Damaris Hunger

Too often life keeps us busy with big things—big projects, high goals, seemingly insurmountable problems, and major distractions. These big things tend to keep us from taking the time to focus on little things. But small things often have valuable lessons for us. We just have to take the time to look!

Have you ever looked closely at a flower? Have you noticed how intricate its design is? There is beauty in little things, especially in nature. I was fascinated when I read recently about a tiny, beautiful animal—the leaf sheep sea slug (*costasiella kuroshimae*). “This beautiful little creature, found near Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines, only grows to be a maximum of 5mm in length. Furthermore, it is one of the only animals to use photosynthesis! The leaf sheep sea slug extracts the chloroplast from the algae it eats and then processes it for energy through kleptoplasty.”¹

God created this little animal with great care and detail to make sure all of its necessities are provided for. This reminds me of what Jesus said in Matthew 6:25: “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”

“Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spear of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub,

testifies of God. These little things, so common around us, teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing is too small for His attention.” —*Healthful Living*, p. 294.

Little things also teach us humility when we realize that an amazing Creator is in control of our lives. This semester at college I have had the opportunity to take classes in Anatomy and Physiology and Medical Microbiology, and I am amazed by how small things can be and how dependent we are on the tiny parts of our body that God controls.

In one class, I was in awe when I was able to see one of my own cells in detail, especially when I spotted the nucleus (see picture below). There are approximately 37.2 trillion cells in our bodies. Each one has its own blueprint, the chromosomes in the nucleus that determine



“Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spear of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God.”

the function of that particular cell. Among its primary functions, the cell controls the transport of molecules, moves energy (ATP), produces proteins and lipids, recycles and digests substances, and reproduces.

What is even more amazing is that God has given us specialized cells, white blood cells, that have the primary function of fighting against illness. Then we also have to remember that everything is made up of atoms, and our bodies have seven billion billion billion (7×10^{27}) of them! God reminds us in Isaiah 55:8, 9 that His thoughts and ways are much, much higher than our understanding. Our existence is truly dependent upon Him who created us.

“The same power that upholds nature is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart’s action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds. Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same—a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator’s will. To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place oneself out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin.”
—*Medical Ministry*, p. 10.

Little things can also be very powerful. In Matthew 17:20, Jesus reminded the disciples that if they had faith only the size of a mustard seed, they would be able to move mountains! Do we, like the disciples, sometimes lack faith? Remember the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel, found in 1 Kings 18, and how attentive God was, especially after Elijah’s prayer of faith. God demonstrated His mighty power to all those who were on the mountain that day by sending fire from heaven that consumed the offering, the altar itself, and the water around it. The people of Israel had fallen away from worshiping God, but Elijah’s faith helped the multitude realize who God really is. “Work in faith, and leave results with God. Pray in faith, and the mystery of His providence will bring its answer.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 245.

Our words and examples can also be powerful. Even though we may share only a short phrase of encouragement, Proverbs 16:24 says: “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.” Let us carefully choose our words so they may be a healing power to those around us! There are many things in our Christian lives that have the potential to grow and become powerful. One act, repeated, forms a habit; and habits form our characters.

Daniel vowed to stay true to God in every detail of his life, including his diet; and his decision resulted in both health and wisdom. And beyond that, his commitment also served as a testimony to King Nebuchadnezzar and all the Babylonians around him. It is extremely important that we always act according to Christian principles so we reflect Christ, because our example can be a light that leads others to Him.

Another example is the moon. Even though it is small, it is a powerful light at night. Yet it has no light in itself. Its power comes from reflecting the sun’s light, so we can say that the sun is what makes the moon powerful. We are like the moon; in and of ourselves, we have no power. It is only when we allow Christ to shine through us that we can be a light in the dark world. Although we are each just one in the midst of seven billion people on the planet, the light we reflect from Jesus can brighten someone’s day and lead him or her to the fountain of light.

So, do not underestimate little things. The next time you go outside, take time to look at the tiny parts of creation, notice the details and the design, and let these valuable lessons become part of you. Stay humble as you realize that the same God who watches over every little thing cares for you. Have faith in God, and determine that your every action will reflect Him. Stay true to God in every detail in the same way that Daniel obeyed God, even in matters of diet. Every little deed you do has an influence on your destiny and the destiny of those around you. **SW**

The next time you go outside, take time to look at the tiny parts of creation.

¹ www.boredpanda.com/leaf-sheep-sea-slug-costasiella-kuroshimae/
Image of leaf sheep sea slug by Lynn Wu, www.ndawards.net/winners-gallery/nd-awards-2014/macro/hm/802.

Summer Youth Conference in Holland



By Ixzelt Aldana

Finally the time arrived for the long-awaited Summer Youth Conference conducted by the German Union, which took place from July 29 to August 7, 2016, in Ellecom, Netherlands. Some of the participants began arriving on Thursday, July 28, at Rehoboth, Ellecom, where a spirit of joy and harmony could immediately be felt. The week before, a Health Week was held by the Dutch Field, so those activities ended the next morning, and the Youth Conference began in the afternoon.

The young people came from the United States, Spain, Portugal, Italy, England, Poland, Romania, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands, among others. Regular translation was provided in Spanish, English, and German; and on Sabbath Dutch was also provided.

The conference theme was “The Way I Feel, I Am,” with numerous presentations about the roller coaster of emotions. Every day different

emotions were considered in the morning and evening worship services, presentations, and workshops, led mostly by young people.

The conference began Friday afternoon with the beginning of the Sabbath as Paola Dinev gave an “Introduction to Human Emotions.” While most of the attendees were present at the beginning, other young people continued to arrive in the following days; and others who were unable to be present for the activities during the week came for the weekends. About forty youth were present during the week; and about eighty, on the first weekend.

Brothers and sisters from the Netherlands joined us on the Sabbath. Elder Adolfo Gessner presented the topic of “Emotions in the Garden of Eden.” The activities ended early, in preparation for the next day’s excursion. That Sunday, we visited Giethoorn, which is located in the province of Overijssel, known as the Venice of the North. It is one of the towns in the Netherlands in which automobiles are prohibited. This is an internationally known tourist attraction. In the older part of the town, there are no roads; there are paths for cyclists and pedestrians, but all other transportation is by boat on the water of the many canals. Although it was a rainy day, there were moments of sunshine, and we took a boat ride on the canals.

On Sunday afternoon and Monday, we continued as Manuela Di Franca presented the topic of “Emotions and Body Language.” This workshop was both interesting and enjoyable as we were divided into groups to practice communicating without the usual verbal means, using motions and body language. Another presentation, “Emotions and Health,” was coordinated by Madlene Barath and Sandra Gessner. During the workshop, we learned about exercises and means that help relieve tension and stress. The day ended with a bonfire.

On Tuesday, we discussed “Emotions and Gender Differences” under the leadership of Johannes and Susanne Barath, who divided us into two teams, one made up of men, and the other composed of women. An emotional concept was written on a white sheet, and we were asked to describe the behaviors of the opposite sex that aroused that emotion in us. The same

exercise was done with a number of different emotions. This very interesting exercise ended with a beautiful spiritual reflection. On Tuesday afternoon, we went on an outing by skates and bicycles to the Posbank Hill in a national park.

On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, themes about emotions, such as "Pain/Sadness," "Anger," and "Fear," were presented. There was also a workshop on communication, and we spent one morning playing social games. On Thursday, we were able to tour Amsterdam by bicycle and walk around the city. The recreational activities on Friday ended with most of the group visiting the Burger Zoo, and the rest visiting an open-air museum. After that, Sabbath preparation began, and weekend visitors arrived. To end the day, Gabriel Stuparu shared a beautiful reflection titled "There Is No Fear in Love."

The emotions considered on the Sabbath day were "Happiness" and "Love," which were truly felt by the people who were present, numbering about 120. The service was presented by Elder Francesco Caputo, who spoke about "Emotions in the Life of Jesus" and called the young people to give their hearts to Jesus. In the afternoon, Elder Yapci Trujillo, President of the Netherlands Field, presented the theme "Living Beyond Your Emotions." In the after-

noon, there was another event that was expected and desired by many as Deborah Guldemeester made her covenant with the Lord in baptism. There was great joy and harmony as Elder Caputo performed the baptism in the midst of nature and in the company of Deborah's family, and many tears of joy were shed. During the reception and acceptance into the church, some relatives and friends spoke a few words, sang songs, and shared their happiness. The beautiful celebration ended with a group photo and a piece of cake for everyone. A praise service with songs and experiences followed.

The Sabbath day ended with a bonfire and games as well as an invitation from Esteban Hunger, German Union Youth Leader, and his team to attend the Winter Youth Conference to be held in Austria on December 23-30, 2016. Everyone was urged to make his or her reservation in September, because the space is limited.

The morning worship on Sunday was about "Compassion." With that wonderful message in our hearts, we packed our luggage and left for home. May the Lord bless the German Union and keep the wonderful messages that were heard in the hearts of all the young people who attended this conference. Let these meetings lead to more and more young people making their decisions for Jesus. **SW**



Wake up!

The Return of Xerxes the Great?



By Idel Suarez, Jr.

On the cover of *Time Magazine*, November 14, 2016,¹ is a picture of two smiling U.S. presidential candidates holding a sign that reads: “The End is Near.” I know that the publishers of *Time* intended this to mean the end of the election campaign, but to me this sign carried another meaning—a spiritual meaning that referred to end-time prophecy.

It was the wise Solomon who wrote that history repeats itself. He was right. Others have continued this thought by adding that those who ignore history are condemned to repeat it. “All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 1:9, 10.

We need only lift the veil of history to see how closely the events of today parallel those of the past. Let us examine the life of one powerful ancient emperor—Xerxes the Great.

Who was Xerxes the Great?

Xerxes is called *Ahasuerus* in Esther 1:1. Doctor Wilhelm Gesenius, a seventeenth century professor of theology at the University of Halle in Germany, says that in Persian, *Ahasuerus* is *Khashwerosh*, meaning “lion king.” The Greeks abbreviated that name into *Xerxes*.²

Historians title him Xerxes the Great, and he descended from greatness. His father was Darius the Great; and his mother, Atossa, was the daughter of Cyrus the Great. Xerxes reigned from B.C. 486 until he was assassinated in B.C. 465. Besides being an unabashed womanizer, Xerxes was rich, powerful, and proud, christening himself “King of Kings.”

I believe we may soon be repeating the days of Xerxes the Great, as told in the Biblical book of Esther. Many of the hallmarks of his reign and character are being displayed before all the world.

Revolts

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* tells that when Xerxes became king, revolts sprang up immediately in his kingdom. In Egypt and in Babylon, leaders and people protested and sought to separate themselves from the Persian Empire. They wanted to be independent. But Xerxes quelled their rebellion.³

A real estate mogul

William Shakespeare wrote: “Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.” Xerxes was born great. Although he inherited a lot of real estate in many different countries, he preferred to spend the majority of his time at his palace in Persepolis or his summer palace in Susa. Both cities were metropolitan areas of renown. These palaces were grand edifices with magnificent porticos, luxurious pools, many servants, advisors, and security agents.

“Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces).” Esther 1:1.

Xerxes the Great was obsessed with planning and executing great building projects. He launched a “vast construction program” and invested heavily in the infrastructure of the empire. He was into great building projects, including “colossal,” “pretentious” buildings that he ordered to be erected in Persepolis and Susa.⁴

A very rich ruler

Xerxes became the most powerful man in the world, the most powerful ruler, and the richest ruler ever to occupy the throne of the Persian Empire. His wealth was so great that he was able to fully fund a banquet lasting for 180 days (six months) for many prestigious guests of his kingdom.

“In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him: When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.” Esther 1:3, 4.

These verses show that Xerxes loved to brag about how rich he was, how much he owned, and what a great businessman he was. When given the opportunity, he could go on and on about his success in business and government.

Xerxes mail or ancient mass media

Xerxes the Great had a remarkable communications system. Anything he said or decreed was immediately dispatched throughout the Empire. His words were broadcast everywhere as daily news. All the people were remarkably interested in knowing what Xerxes said, did, or dictated. He loved the universal attention. The Scriptures describe a day when the people of Susa became perplexed with a command Xerxes issued, and there was commotion everywhere. We’ll learn more about that shortly.

“The posts went out, being hastened by the king’s commandment, and the decree was given



in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.” Esther 3:15.

Fond of beautiful women

According to Herodotus, an ancient historian, Xerxes had a passion for beautiful women. He bragged not only about his wealth but also about his stunningly beautiful wife. Vashti was a woman of exquisite beauty, and Xerxes was very proud to show her off to his guests. Interestingly, according to Gesenius, *Vashti* is a Persian name meaning “beautiful woman.”⁵

“To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.” Esther 1:11.

Over time, Xerxes had several wives. As they aged, he would dismiss an older one for another younger one. Vashti would be dismissed, and Xerxes would choose another prettier, younger woman to be his wife.

Xerxes the Great held at least one beauty pageant that we know of—after he dismissed his wife Vashti for refusing to come before his guests at the banquet. He, the Master of Ceremonies, interviewed and selected the most beautiful women of his kingdom.

“Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought

for the king: And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them." Esther 2:2, 3.

The winner would become rich and famous and serve as queen of the empire. Xerxes came to favor *Hadassah*, also known as *Esther*. This name means "star" in the Persian language,⁶ and the Syrians use it to refer to the planet Venus, the brightest object in the night sky.

Xerxes' temperament

Xerxes was a powerful choleric with a terrible temper. He would get so angry that his face would turn red, as if he were burning from within.

"But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him." Esther 1:12.

A black book

Xerxes kept a scroll in which the names were written of those who had opposed him and would be punished. He also kept a record of

those who had been loyal to him so he could reward them. Like most leaders, Xerxes valued loyalty. He rewarded those who protected and honored him, but he was quick to remove advisors and terminate servants and even ministers of government if they fell from his graces.

"On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him." Esther 6:1-3.

On one critical night, the king discovered providentially that the faithful, loyal Mordecai had never been rewarded for informing the king of the assassination plotted by Bigthana and Teresh. Since Xerxes was a man of action, he immediately proceeded to implement a plan to honorably reward Mordecai before the people. At the unwitting suggestion of Mordecai's enemy, Haman, Mordecai was dressed in royal clothes, with the king's royal crown on his head, placed on the king's own royal steed, and escorted through the streets of the city by a nobleman of Persia who publicly sounded his praises.

His war

Xerxes was also a man of war who harbored a special hatred for the Greeks. He despised them for what they had done to his father Darius and to others. A close family member and the head of his military encouraged him to suppress and conquer them. Xerxes agreed. A massive international army was assembled. According to Herodotus, that was one of the largest armies in all antiquity. In fact the Bible prophesied this powerful attack against Greece.

"And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia." Daniel 11:2.



Zechariah's warning

It was in Xerxes' time that Sabbath keepers were brought under enormous pressure. God sent one of the last prophets of the Old Testament to warn His people. This was the prophet Zechariah, whose name means "Jehovah remembers" in Hebrew.⁷ Indeed, God remembered His people during the great trial of this time. He intervened in the affairs of men and women in power to save His people. The message was for all the Sabbath keepers living within the Persian Empire: "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon." Zechariah 2:6, 7.

The Jews were instructed to flee from the lands of the north—Babylon, Egypt, and Persia. They were told to return to their homeland and escape the wrath that would come upon all Sabbath keepers.

"Darius ... was succeeded by Xerxes the Great. It was during his reign that those of the Jews who had failed of heeding the message to flee were called upon to face a terrible crisis. Having refused to take advantage of the way of escape God had provided, now they were brought face to face with death."⁸

"Meanwhile conditions in the Medo-Persian realm were rapidly changing."⁹

Things changed rapidly under Xerxes the Great. Laws were enacted so quickly that many were taken by surprise. It will be just like this at the end of time when events parallel the times of Xerxes the Great.

"The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones."¹⁰

New laws

Although Xerxes relied on a close-knit circle of seven advisors, he valued his own opinion above all. He felt that he had a great head on his shoulders and was very confident in his own

decisions. He felt he was extremely smart and capable and could solve anything anywhere. Therefore, he did not give much thought to making decisions, even though the impending repercussions would greatly affect the lives of millions, sometimes adversely so.

"... Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king." Esther 1:10.

According to the narrative in the book of Esther, in addition to his chief advisors, or cabinet, Xerxes had a prime minister, or chief of staff, named Haman. This man used his influence to deceive the proud Xerxes and trick him into issuing a law against all Sabbath keepers—all the Jews in the Empire. Xerxes was misled, as Darius the Mede had been misled (and like the rulers at the end of time will be misled) into issuing decrees and laws bringing religious persecution upon God's faithful ones, who honored His ten holy precepts. In his self-conceit, Xerxes was ignorant of the consequences of this new law.

"Misled by the false statements of Haman, Xerxes was induced to issue a decree providing for the massacre of all the Jews 'scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces' of the Medo-Persian kingdom. Verse 8. A certain day was appointed on which the Jews were to be destroyed and their property confiscated. Little did the king realize the far-reaching results that would have accompanied the complete carrying out of this decree."¹¹

Xerxes did not value the life of perceived troublemakers. Haman, in a short dialogue with the rich and proud ruler, convinced him to issue a death decree against all the Jews—Sabbath keepers—in the attempt to get rid of Mordecai, who refused to bow down to Haman. Since Mordecai was a Sabbath-keeping Jew, Haman laid his wicked plan to kill not just Mordecai but also all his people. This new law was proclaimed in all corners of the Persian Empire via the ancient postal system.

"And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which

In his self-conceit, Xerxes was ignorant of the consequences of the new law.

is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey." Esther 3:13.

Similarly, in modern times, it can be expected that new laws will be broadcast in the news and on social media within minutes. Many will thus be brought to think and rethink their loyalty and patriotism. Then some will choose to exercise their religious right to civil disobedience.

Mordecai at the gate

Mordecai serves as a symbol of all last-day Sabbath keepers who will not do secular work on the holy Sabbath day, as the Fourth Commandment mandates. He is an example of standing up against state-imposed religious laws that go against the individual conscience and human rights. Last day Mordecais will not bow to coercion or be enticed by the promise of rich rewards to abandon obedience to God's law in times of peace, persecution, and even war. God's truth will not be negotiable for them.

"Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment [to bow to Haman]? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

"And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had showed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai." Esther 3:3-6.

The law referred to above is representative of laws that will be passed at the end of time infringing on religious liberty and countering the separation of church and state.

Prophecy foretells that America, the home of the brave and the land of the free, will become like ancient Persia. The Congress will change course, repudiate every just principle of the American Constitution, and be upheld by the majority of the Supreme Court justices. New advisors and counselors will surround the head

of state, as in the days of Xerxes. Extreme right religious leaders will wish to impose their beliefs by law upon the common man. Will we see the rise of one just like Xerxes the Great?

A century ago, a religious author, referring to the actions of Xerxes the Great, wrote: "The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews. Today the enemies of the true church see in the little **company keeping the Sabbath commandment, a Mordecai at the gate**. The reverence of God's people for His law is a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling on His Sabbath."¹²

"Satan will arouse indignation against the minority who refuse to accept popular customs and traditions. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. Wealth, genius, education, will combine to cover them with contempt.

"Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals, men will stir up the passions of the people. Not having a 'Thus saith the Scriptures' to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. To secure popularity and patronage, **legislators will yield to the demand for Sunday laws**. But those who fear God cannot accept an institution that violates a precept of the Decalogue. On this battlefield will be fought the last great conflict in the controversy between truth and error."¹³

These statements may seem far fetched and extreme, but American history states that this almost happened in 1888. Did you know that during the Fiftieth Congress, from 1888 to 1890, Senator Henry Blair introduced and promoted an amendment to the Constitution calling for a national Sunday law? It eventually died in Congress because it never made it out of the Senate Committee and was not voted upon by the Senate.

In 1888, A.T. Jones, an Adventist minister and historian, spoke in the congressional halls

God's truth will not
be negotiable for
them.

of Washington, DC, as a champion for religious liberty. He spoke to the congressmen about the vital issue of maintaining the separation of church and state. He spoke out against the proposed national Sunday law. A summary of his arguments was afterward published in his booklet titled *The National Sunday Law*.¹⁴

History will be repeated, as Solomon predicted. It can be expected that a series of new laws will be passed, by degrees, demanding obedience to human traditions and commandments. The leaders in power most likely will not recognize the remnant, as was the case in Mordecai's day, for he was not well known. But informants will tell on the Mordecais of the end time, just as occurred under King Xerxes. This also happened in the past two World Wars. Informants will accuse Sabbath keepers of being unpatriotic for refusing to obey national decrees that violate their consciences.

Queen Esther's role

In the household of Xerxes the Great there lived a great Sabbath keeper who was very close to him—Esther. After the decree condemning the Jews to death was passed, her cousin Mordecai challenged her to speak out. He said, "Perhaps God has brought you to the Persian kingdom for such a time as this." He told her to think seriously, see the signs of impending doom, and do something to halt the tide of danger.

"Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:13, 14.

Xerxes the Great yielded to the wisdom and beauty of Queen Esther by attempting to stay the law but could not.

Surprisingly, the events surrounding the decree against the Sabbath keepers caused many Gentiles in the Empire to choose to become Sabbath keepers. Their consciences were aroused



by the remnant people of God and what they endured at that time. These new converts embraced the Sabbath and the cause of the remnant. Likewise, in the time of the national apostasy, thousands will embrace the third angel's message of Revelation 14:9-12 and become Sabbath keepers. God will intervene miraculously after a short time of trouble.

Let us all wake up!

William Shakespeare wrote, "Time is the old justice which tries all." Time will tell. But we cannot afford to be silent. Who knows whether we have "come to the kingdom for such a time as this"?

The words of the apostle Paul ring in our ears as never before: "Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Ephesians 5:14-17.

We need to wake up from our spiritual sleep. We need to watch and pray. We need to cease to do evil and learn to do good. We need to plead for Christ our Saviour to come into our hearts, minds, lives, and homes. Seek Jesus first and foremost. Ask Him what He wants you to do. Let Him be the Daystar shining in your soul. Be wise, and redeem the time that is left, because the days are going to become increasingly evil.

Follow the example of Esther and Mordecai: Fast, pray, and speak the truth to those around

Be wise, and redeem the time that is left, because the days are going to become increasingly evil.



you. Use the postal service, the Internet, the phone, and your own voice to proclaim that Jesus is coming back very soon and we need to be ready. A phrase that one of my professors often repeated was, “This is a word to the wise.” We need to be wise. Pay attention to what is happening to the elected leader, his advisors, and his informants, and with their collective actions. Open your eyes to the signs that are fast fulfilling around us. Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst. Time may be running out. **SW**

¹ *Time Magazine*, “Front Cover,” November 14, 2016.

² Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1979), p. 34. Strong’s number 325.

³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 12, 15th ed., s.v. “Xerxes I,” p. 797.

⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 12, 15th ed., s.v. “Xerxes I,” p. 797.

⁵ Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 236. Strong’s number 2060.

⁶ Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, pp. 68, 69. Strong’s number 635.

⁷ Tregelles, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 245. Strong’s number 2148.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), p. 600.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), p. 11.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 600, 601.

¹² Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 605, 606.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Alonzo T. Jones, *The National Sunday Law* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Publishing Association, 1889).

Behind the scenes ...

“In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.

“The Bible reveals the true philosophy of history. In those words of matchless beauty and tenderness spoken by the apostle Paul to the sages of Athens is set forth God’s purpose in the creation and distribution of races and nations: He ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him.’ Acts 17:26, 27. God declares that whosoever will may come ‘into the bond of the covenant.’ Ezekiel 20:37....

“The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted; and upon his use of the power thus bestowed, his success depends. To each the word of the divine Watcher is, ‘I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me.’ Isaiah 45:5. And to each the words spoken to Nebuchadnezzar of old are the lesson of life: ‘Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.’ Daniel 4:27.

“To understand these things—to understand that ‘righteousness exalteth a nation;’ that ‘the throne is established by righteousness’ and ‘upholden by mercy’ (Proverbs 14:34; 16:12; Proverbs 20:28); to recognize the outworking of these principles in the manifestation of His power who ‘removeth kings, and setteth up kings’ (Daniel 2:21)—this is to understand the philosophy of history.

“In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, is not found in the opportunities or facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God’s purpose.” —*Education*, pp. 173-175.



Primary School for the Benin Mission Field

Brother Simon Satsi Agbey and the Benin Mission Field Committee saw the need for a good English and French school and put their hearts, minds, and resources together to set up such a primary school at the main church office. Plans were laid to obtain a building for the school. Brother Agbey stated that most of the international schools in Benin are from Nigeria, and they teach in English. However, many people wanted to learn two languages simultaneously—English and French. French is the national language.

According to the website unseenbenin.wordpress.com, "Benin, a country with about 12 million habitants, is home to 54 living languages. According to research made by the Ethnologue, 'The number of individual languages listed for Benin is 54. Of these, 9 are institutional, 18 are developing, 25 are vigorous, 1 is in trouble, and 1 is dying.'"

Initially, financial assistance was provided by the General Conference for a temporary building, tables and chairs, white board, and materials. The Good Samaritan Department supported this project. When the school opened on September 7, 2016, there were fifteen children in attendance.

Other necessary costs included registration, paint and materials for the rooms, furniture, teaching materials, and teachers' remuneration until the school is self supporting. God bless the students and teachers! **SW**

"And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it." Exodus 36:2.



Visits in the East Congo Field

Brother Victor Shumbusho, Secretary of the Congo Union, was commissioned by Elder Sevith Moyo, Union President, to visit the East Congo Field, which has 111 members, under



Brother Victor Shumbusho traveled for four days on this bus.

the leadership of Brother C. Mukendi. Beginning on August 23, 2016, Brother Shumbusho traveled by bus from Lubumbashi to Bukavu/Goma, the first leg being a trip of four days on the bus. When difficulties were encountered, such as a bad bridge, a steep hill, or bad roads, the passengers had to

leave the bus and walk, sometimes for long distances.

The brother visited churches, different churches came together for seminars, baptisms



During the bus trip, the passengers sometimes had to walk.

were conducted, questions were answered, problems were prayed over and addressed, isolated members were visited, the believers were comforted and encouraged, and some who had left returned to the church with joy.

In Katoyi, on Sabbath, September 3, believers from different places, some as far as 310 kilometers away, came together for services and Bible studies. A brother and his family in Rubaya wanted to go to the meetings, which were held 167 kilometers

away. They said they could walk there, and they did. The church in Katoyi has no building, so the meetings are held outside. This is not too difficult when the weather is good, but it will be much better and also attract more souls when a humble house of worship can be built. This is one of many places where chapels are needed.

Also, the director of a high school nearby was contacted by Brother Shumbusho; the man accepted an invitation to walk the more than 14 kilometers to attend the meetings, because he wanted to know about the Reform Movement. Brother

Department motto of “Let One Win One”). Discussions were held about how to advance the development of the church.

Traveling on, Brother Shumbusho visited Rubaya, Muheto, and Kahira. There was no road to the latter town, so he and another brother walked five hours, enduring two hours of rain on the way, with no place to find shelter. Souls were ministered to, and the needs of the various congregations were assessed.

In Goma, there is a well-organized little church, as well as interested souls. On September



Meetings were held with the believers at the Panz, Bukavu church. Brother Shumbusho is at the far left; and Brother C. Mukendi, at the right.

Shumbusho writes, “After all his findings, questions, and answers, he promised to follow all the truth he discovered and to teach it in his Protestant church. Let us pray for this soul. We will be in touch, and the brothers will help him locally. His name is Twagira.”

The next day, a short seminar was conducted for the members and interested souls. The topics included the church in prophecy, alone but not alone (an appeal to stand firm on the platform of truth), love and unity in the family and the church, gospel work, and missionary activities (including the GC Evangelism

9, the small group rejoiced to spend an inspiring Sabbath together, followed by a seminar the following day, which included the topics presented elsewhere and adapted to the needs of the attendees. Time was spent in encouraging the believers and planning for missionary outreach. Also in Goma, there is a piece of land on which a chapel can be built when the resources are available. Generally such land remains available to the church for only a certain amount of time; if the land is not utilized, it is taken away.

The next stop was Nyabibwe, where the work was started in



Sabbath services and a seminar on Sunday were a blessing for the members and visitors in Katoyi, Congo.



These two souls signaled their commitment to the heavenly kingdom before they were baptized at Kivu Lake in Nyabibwe, Congo.

2015. A number of difficulties were encountered in the past, but now the work is going forward. In addition to meeting with some leaders of the Field, the brethren did missionary work from house to house and conducted Bible studies. Two souls were baptized, followed by the Lord's Supper.

Traveling to Mudaka/Bukavu, Brother Shumbusho fellow-shipped with the members and interested souls and visited a primary school and a secondary school. A meeting was held with the teachers and director. Brother C. Mukendi, the Field President, was also in this place,

counseling and comforting those in sorrow. Prayer and plans for the advancement of God's cause were made, with all glory being given to God, whose hand was seen guiding in the work in this part of His vineyard. Brother Shumbusho's missionary trip finished on September 22, after which he returned to Lubumbashi.

May great spiritual blessings from Heaven be poured upon all who labor in this large country. In addition, may those who have received goods hear the call and use their gifts now for the Master's service wherever they are impressed to do so. There

are only a few more days left to do service for the Master, so let us all be about our Father's business diligently every day.

Baptism in Swaziland

Greetings from Swaziland. May the peace of God be with you always.

By God's grace we were blessed with the baptism of ten souls in August 2016—nine women and one man. We hope to have more baptisms soon, as more than twenty people are preparing to make their covenant with the Lord Jesus. Please pray for us.

—Alfred Ngwenya
GC Evangelism
Department Leader

comforted of God." 2 Corinthians 1:2-4.

First of all, Brother Tung invited me to go with him to Cambodia because my brother is not yet in Vietnam. The purpose of the visit is to follow up his contacts in one place. However, the people we had contacted did not want to go any further once they discovered that I was a Sabbath keeper.

Concerning the house here in Thailand, I have not been able to find a suitable place for our office, my home, and the place of worship. I found many houses but cannot afford the rent because our budget is only US \$250. We have a place here that suits our budget, but it is a small house and not large enough for a place of worship and office. I did not proceed with renting this



Baptism in Swaziland.

News from Thailand and Cambodia

"Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are

house, because I am still alone here. We have members in Thailand already, but they are quite a distance away. I will continue looking for a place that will fit our budget.

We have a new interested soul, and hopefully by the grace of God he will become a member. He is helping us to reach the people. Let's pray for this former Seventh-day Adventist pastor. He is a vegan and a promoter of the Reformation message. He is



Believers in one of the chapels in Cuba..



Studying with an interested minister in Thailand.

very disappointed with the SDA Church here, because they are not following the third angel's message. He asked me why the Lord hid from him the truth about the Reform Movement for forty years. He is my guide now, helping me meet people he knows, especially those who are sick. He is very happy when I visit with him, for the Lord answered the longing of his heart. He is willing to work and help develop God's church here. He also wants to look for a place of worship, because if he decides to join us openly, his former church will be against him.

I am doing medical missionary work here, focusing on studying with this pastor and his family while trying to help some of our new members here.

—Nestor Manago



Participants at the Kalomo Field Conference, Zambia.

Conferences in Zambia

Elder Sevith Moyo spent time in Zambia in August and September 2016 before going to



Guitarists and singers supported the crusade in Lusaka, Zambia.

his next assignment in Congo or Ghana. He sent pictures from four different events, but

unfortunately, only two can be included here.

In Mazabuka, a conference from August 22 to 28 was attended by more than three hundred people, including many Seventh-day Adventists. The theme was "The Time Is at Hand," Revelation 1:1-3, which was the same theme for a conference in Monze. Opportunity was given for questions and answers, which was a great blessing.

The Winterfield church crusade in Lusaka was held under a tent and was blessed by presentations by evangelist Brother Mutakila from Mukushi. Guitarists and singers from Kalomo were there to support the evangelistic

egates' meetings and election of officers, led by Elder Anton Salavyov, from the Oceania Division, Elder Adrie Kalengkongan, Field President, and Brother Hens Karinda, Field Secretary, reported on the dedication of a new chapel in Pananaru, attended also by religious leaders from other churches in the area; ordination of two new pastors (Brothers Jimmy Maramis and Gerson Keni); Sabbath worship services; the baptism of four souls by Elder Salavyov; the Lord's Supper; and presentation of and prayer for the new Indonesian Field officers.

New interest in Nepal

I visited a few groups of people in the western part of Nepal. In one community, the mothers sell their daughters, forcing them into prostitution. I have been working to help this community for a few years. I had the opportunity to tell them about Jesus, and many people are interested to know about Him.

This time we had a good meeting with them. The women are especially interested to know more about Jesus Christ. I spent three days here, and more people are interested to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. They asked me to stay longer and tell them more. I talked with the community leader about reading the Bible to the others. I had only one Bible, but I gave that one to him for all of them. According to their request, I need to stay at least a week to prepare them for baptism. Please pray for me so I will be able to spend more time with them. This is a very, very poor community. They want to get out of prostitution, sin no more in their lives, and not hurt their family members.

efforts and inspire the participants.

About 1,200 people attended a conference in the Kalomo Field, and 30 souls were baptized on a Friday by Elder Sialwindi, the current Zambian Union President.

Indonesian Field Conference

August 24-28, 2016, the Indonesian Field combined several activities for a very rich convocation in Pananaru Village, Tamako District, Sangihe Islands Regency, North Sulawesi. In addition to Indonesian Field del-



Baptism in Indonesia.

In another place is a Chaudhary community. These people were slaves until just a few years ago. Some of them are still working as slaves, and they want to get out of this situation. There are a few people from one of these communities, and I am talking with their leader. One man with his family was baptized by the Seventh-day Adventists when I was SDA. He is very interested in the Reform Movement. I spent two days there. When I talked about how Jesus gave freedom to people who had problems, some of them believed in Jesus, and they want to have more studies about the Bible. They asked me to stay longer, but I could not because of my financial situation. About ten people are getting ready for

baptism. I especially focused on them and gave them more time. They are convinced after the studies I gave them; and when they read the Reformation Study Course book, they found the truth.

We had a wonderful meeting with our local church leaders. Attending the meetings were sixteen people who are interested in working together and carrying the gospel through IMSSDARM. When I presented the news about the IMS that I experienced in the Philippines, all the leaders became happy. We shared good questions and answers, which made things even clearer to them. It is a joy for me that people are interested in the IMS.

I need your prayers. It used to be easy to spread the gospel in Nepal, but now it is very, very difficult because of the Hindu people. When Nepal became a secular country, the Hindus became angrier at the local level, and the government now supports them. They are asking the government to become Hindu again. I am praying that God will give us a safe place for baptism. Many pastors of other denominations have been imprisoned

Outreach in Argentina

In September 2016, a campaign was held with posters at the Independence Plaza in Mendoza, Argentina. Four churches participated in the outreach from 4 to 8 pm.

Contacts and addresses were received for seventeen Bible studies. In addition, there are others who want to go directly



Interested people of the Chaudhary community, Nepal.

for teaching about the Bible. Please pray about this problem.

I need your prayers, especially at this time. What I am doing can be reported to the Hindus. But everything is in God's hand, and He will protect me.

—Elder Daniel

to church, besides receiving studies.

Some young people from the church orchestra brought their instruments and played music of praise nearby. We thank the Lord for this opportunity!

—Rodolfo Murua



This chapel was dedicated in Pananaru, Indonesia.



Missionary outreach with posters in Mendoza, Argentina.



Draw from the Source of Power

“In America we have the fresh water lilies. These beautiful lilies come up pure, spotless, perfect, without a single mar. They come up through a mass of debris. I said to my son, ‘I want you to make an effort to get me the stem of that lily as near the root as possible. I want you to understand something about it.’

“He drew up a handful of lilies, and I looked at them. They were all full of open channels, and the stems were gathering the properties from the pure sands beneath, and these were being developed into the pure and spotless lily. It refused all the debris. It refused every unsightly thing, but there it was developed in its purity.

“Now this is exactly the way that we are to educate our youth in this world. Let their minds and hearts be instructed who God is, who Jesus Christ is, and the sacrifice that He has made in our behalf. Let them draw the purity, the virtue, the grace, the courtesy, the love, the forbearance; let them draw it from the Source of all power.

“‘Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: . . . and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.’ ‘Go to the ant; . . . consider her ways.’ ‘Behold the birds.’ ‘Consider the ravens.’ Job 12:7, 8; Proverbs 6:6; Matthew 6:26, *American Standard Version*; Luke 12:24.

“We are not merely to tell the child about these creatures of God’s. The animals themselves are to be his teachers. The ants teach lessons of patient industry, of perseverance in surmounting obstacles, of providence for the future. And the birds are teachers of the sweet lesson of trust. Our heavenly Father provides for them; but they must gather the food, they must build their nests and rear their young. Every moment they are exposed to enemies that seek to destroy them. Yet how cheerily they go about their work! How full of joy are their little songs!” —*Child Guidance*, pp. 58, 59.