

# The Church Times.

"Evangelical Truth--Apostolic Order."

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## Calendar.

### CALENDAR WITH LESSONS.

Day	Date	MORNING.	EVENING.
S.	Dec. 20	4 Sun. in Adv. Isaiah 30 Acts 20	Isaiah 22 Pet. 3
M.	21	St. Thomas Ap. Prov. 28 21	Prov. 24 John 1
T.	22	Isaiah 55	Isaiah 56
W.	23	Isaiah 67	Isaiah 68
T.	24	Isaiah 69	Isaiah 70
F.	25	Christmas D. Luke 4 21	Titus 2
S.	26	St. Stephen. Acts 6	Eccl. 4

\* Proper Psalms--Morn. 19, 45, 85--Evening, 89, 110, 134--The Athanasian Creed to be used.  
c To verse 8. d To verse 15. e Verse 10 to verse 17. f Verse 4 to verse 9. g Begin verse 5 and chapter 7 to verse 30. A Verse 30 to verse 55.

## Poetry.

### ADVENT.

#### THE COMING OF CHRIST.

"And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven: . . . and He shall send His angels, . . . and they shall gather together his elect." St. MATTHEW, xxiv. 30, 31.

The Son of man will come, but when,  
Not one of us can say;  
Good spirit make us ready then,  
To meet that Advent Day.

He will not be a child again,  
Of poor and humble birth;  
Living a life of grief and pain,  
On the ungrateful earth;

But riding on the wind and cloud,  
While the sea flees away,  
And all the darkened heaven is bowed,  
Jesus comes down that day.

The sun burns out, the moon retreats,  
And the torn clouds are whirled  
Like dust adown the azure streets  
Of the far upper world.

The wakened dead, and living rife,  
No lingering soul can stay,  
To stand before His searching eyes,  
On that great Advent Day.

—From "The Children's Hymns."

## Religious Miscellany.

### FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

We have been lately taught to pray for a blessing upon God's gift of Holy Scripture and the Christian Ministry, that both these gifts may be profitably used. But now our prayer rises upon bolder wings; now it takes a higher flight; now we press past these gifts of God, good, and excellent, and needful as they are, and pray Him to give us, not Scripture only, nor the Ministry, but Himself; even His own presence. This is the very highest flight of Christian prayer, "O Lord, raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power, and come among us." We now want God Himself, nothing less than this; we mount even to such a request as this, and make it known unto God; we desire Him straightway to come among us. What! dare we to desire the great, most pure, most holy Lord God, to come down from heaven and be present amongst us sinners! It were doubtless an over-bold and daring prayer unless the Lord Himself had invited and encouraged us so to pray. He Himself has pressed us to seek His Presence, and to crave the gift of His Spirit. Then will He come among us, not as a terrible God, with thundering and great wrath, and dreadful Majesty, which would only cause us to fall on our faces as dead men, to lose all heart and powers of speech; but if we pray Him to come, that He may purify us by His presence, enlighten us by His light, pardon us by His mercy, and with His great might succour us, then He will not shake the earth terribly, nor cause the mountains to quake, but He will descend softly and gently, as on the gentle wings of a dove, to bless us and succour us, and raise us up from our sins by His strength.

If He comes, then all will be well; we shall "have all and abound;" our sins will be cleared away by His presence, as thick clouds by the strength of the summer sun; our weakness will become strength; our eyes will be opened to see the wondrous things of His law; our love of the world and of worldly things will drop like scales and film from our eyes; we shall be strengthened

to walk in His ways, and to love His law; all His gifts which He has bestowed upon us, Holy Scripture, the Ministry, the Sacraments, all will be effectual, all will do their work, all will have energy and life, if the Giver of them be in the midst of us; then the words of Scripture will glow with life, and that body of truth will be warmed with the Spirit of life; then the counsels of ministers, and the Sacraments they administer, and the godly powers they exercise, and the ordinances of religion which they dispense, will all be endued with living strength, and will not be as dead words or dead things, neither as fruitless exhortations, nor lifeless forms.

And if we ask, nothing doubting, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall have this gift, even the presence of our God. "Whatsoever ye ask the Father," says our Saviour, "in My Name, He will give it you." He makes no exception; "whatsoever ye ask," this is the width and height of the promise. In spiritual things at least the promise takes a narrower range; He pledges Himself to give, in answer to our prayer for earthly things, no more than food and raiment, just enough to support our life; He does not say "whatsoever ye ask" of worldly things ye shall have; for it is not expedient for us to have what we wish; we should often wish, like foolish children, for poisonous berries, and deadly fruit; but in heavenly things He puts no bounds to our prayers, or to His gifts. Though it comes to this, that we ask the Lord Himself to come among us, we shall have what we ask; even that will be granted, and He will come; beyond that we cannot go; we have all then; for then "the kingdom of God is come upon" us; then the kingdom of God is within us; "I will come to you," is His own sure word.

If then our God come among us, we shall be able to prepare ourselves for His second coming to judge the world. If He is with us before the judgment, He in us and we in Him, we shall be able to bear His face on the judgment-seat, and we shall look up to Him as one whom we already seem to know, though we have never seen Him; we shall have a reverent boldness on that day; for we shall feel ourselves as with a friend, though He be God; we shall remember His words, "ye are My friends;" we shall rejoice in His glorious presence; for through all His glory and all His amazing majesty we shall discern Him who loved us. In the face of "the King of Glory" we shall also see the face of "the Prince of peace."

We do not want more or greater means of grace; we want God to be present with the means possessed, that they may have life; we have medicine enough and physicians too, for our sick and weakly souls; we want virtue to be given to the medicine and the physician's skill, we have "the milk of the Word," and "strong meat," in the Church; but we want the blessing of God upon our spiritual food, and upon the souls that feed thereon, that we may thrive. We have wisdom enough to make us "wise unto salvation," and godly knowledge is ever sounding in our ears; but we want the presence of God to quicken and warm our knowledge that it may bear fruit.

"The way ye know," does our Lord say; the heart and strength for the way are lacking. With all our means of grace, all our knowledge, all the provision offered us in the Church for the purifying of our souls, we still want spiritual energy, spiritual heartiness, spiritual devotedness. Holy Scripture is ever crying out to us with inspired threatenings to turn from sin; Christian ministers are ever beseeching us in like strains of solemn warning to prepare for judgment to come; yet see how unprepared we are; see what a host of sins is suffered not only to exist, but to reign amongst us, to reign in our mortal bodies; see how many forms of sin meet us at every turn, though Scripture and the Ministry lift up their voice together to stay the course of sin. Neglect of the Lord's Day, evil words, and oaths, overcarefulness for earthly things, selfishness, enmities, and divisions, drunkenness and rioting, lusts of the flesh, and love of vain pleasures—are sins such as these gone from among us, and no more to be seen? Far otherwise; they hang about us and leaven us; and taint us more or

less; we must needs confess it. With all this hearing of Scripture, all this feasting of the ear with the sound of godliness, all the sermons for which men hunt with such greedy ears, alas, how far we are from sanctity of heart and life! We have not profited enough by the means of grace; either we have failed to use the means within our reach, or we have used them with cold hearts, or we have exalted the lesser means above the greater, and so have missed the greater grace; the air is not cleared; the weight of sin is not gone; the atmosphere is thick and close, and charged with sin; so we had better go to God for help; we had better pray to Him that He may give us the hearing ear, the hearing heart; for the surfeiting of the ear is dangerous to the spiritual health, unless the soul digest what the ear receives. The Bible is but a word of condemnation unless it is obeyed as well as heard; the Ministry is but a witness against our sale, if the word of exhortation is practically refused; the Sacraments are but instruments of death, not life, if they be taken without repentant hearts or altogether spurned.

What then must be done? We must fall to praying; and the prayer we need is this, which we this week offer, "O Lord, raise up, we pray Thee, Thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us," this is the request which we should make known unto God; for herein we confess, not only our desire for God's presence, for His coming among us; but we also confess that we so need "as not to be able to march heavenward without it, that "through our sins and wickedness" we are so "let and hindered" as not to be able to run "the race that is set before us." We make confession of sin in such a prayer; and what more likely to move God to come among us, what more likely to bring down Him who descends like a dove upon self-abased, self-distrusting souls, than this confession of weakness and insufficiency? He knows us to be weak. If we walk proudly, He resisteth the proud, but if we come down to the dust, He will come down too; "for thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."—From Tracts for the Christian Seasons.

### WHAT THE MISSOURI VALLEY SAYS.

Hugh Miller, in his last very interesting work, tells us:—

"Let me remind you, in passing, that the antiquity of type which characterizes the recent productions of North America is one of many wonders, not absolutely geological in themselves, but which, save for the revelations of geology, would have forever remained unnoted and unknown, which have been pressed, during the past half century, on the notice of naturalists. "It is a circumstance quite extraordinary and unexpected," says Agassiz, in his profoundly interesting work on Lake Superior, "that the fossil plants of the Tertiary bed of Oeningen, resemble more closely the trees and shrubs which grow at present in the eastern part of North America than those of any other parts of the world; thus allowing us to express correctly the difference between the opposite coasts of Europe and America, by saying that the present Eastern American flora, and, I may add, the fauna also, have a more ancient character than those of Europe. The plants, especially the trees and shrubs, growing in our days in the United States, are, as it were, old fashioned; and the characteristic genera *Lagomys*, *Chelydra*, and the large Salamander with permanent gills, that remind us of the fossils of Oeningen, are at least equally so; they bear the mark of former ages."

How strange a fact! Not only are we accustomed to speak of the Eastern continents as the Old World in contradistinction to the great continent of the West, but to speak also of the world before the flood as the Old World, in contradistinction to the post-diluvian world which succeeded it. And yet equally, if we receive the term in either of its acceptations, is America an older world still; an older world than that of the eastern continents; an older world; in the fashion and type of its productions, than the world before the flood. And when the immigrant settler takes the axe, amid the deep