

Dominion Churchman.

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THURSDAY, DEC. 7, 1876.

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The burden of the first Lesson appointed by the Church for this Sunday is that of judgment, and it begins with the beautiful song touching Christ and His Church, the care He had taken of the house of Israel, and the men of Judah, producing no better result than that when He looked for grapes, it brought forth wild grapes;—the Messiah being "well-beloved" in respect of His Father, and "beloved" as regards the Church, represented here as a vineyard. The prophet denounces the wickedness of the people of that age, declares God's anger against them, and represents the coming judgment as so overwhelming that if one look unto the land, nothing but darkness and sorrow should be spread out over it, while the aspect of the sky should be so black and gloomy that the very light in the heavens should be darkness itself.

The eleventh chapter contains one of the most illustrious prophecies we have—the coming of Christ, as the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and the Branch growing out of his roots. The peacefulness of His reign is graphically described; and the splendor of His kingdom abundantly set forth. The return of Israel and Judah to their own land, from all parts of the earth is unmistakably predicted, and also the gathering of the Gentiles to the ensign of Him who is emphatically the "root of Jesse."

The twenty fourth chapter again speaks of judgment, and contains the severest threatenings of God's indignation against the Jews, passing on from them to His great visitation at the end of the world when the Lord of hosts shall gloriously reign in Mount Zion, and the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, their light being eclipsed by the shining of a heavenly luminary of infinitely greater brightness.

Well does the COLLECT (also written in 1549,) as the voice of the Church at this season direct us to the Holy Scriptures, and fervently pray that they may be read attentively, carefully studied,

and become fully incorporated with the mind, so that the soul may be sustained with the full power of all the blessed hope of the Gospel. The coming of Christ in His Glory, as the great expectation of the Church is so closely connected with the attainment of everlasting life that a full reception of the teaching of the Divine Scriptures is essential to this fundamental truth of Christianity.

The EPISTLE selected is of the same character as the Collect, and the passage from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans was introduced by him with a special reference to the predictions and other allusions to Christ's appearance on earth, which are contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, especially that in the sixty-ninth Psalm. And as it is of Messiah that all the Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and to Christ crucified that the entire New Testament bears its testimony, the teaching of the Church as to the record we have of her Divine truths is most appropriately brought forward in the season of Advent. Our Church in her decisions on dogmatic questions, always goes back to Holy Scripture as the supreme authority on religious truth—Holy Scripture, the only infallible guide, as interpreted, not according to every man's whim or caprice, but as interpreted by the early Church; just as the Church of the third and fourth century appealed to Holy Scripture as the supreme authority in matters of doctrine; and in its interpretation, was guided by the constant practice and teaching of a still earlier age of the Church than its own.

In the GOSPEL for the Communion Office, taken from the twenty-first chapter of St. Luke, the Lord, as in other places, connects His coming to the destruction of Jerusalem with his coming in person at the end of the world, with great power and glory, seated on His great white throne in the heavens. Almost the entire Book of the Revelation is devoted to an account, in highly symbolical language, of the signs in the heavens and the mighty portents on the earth, which shall immediately precede the coming of Christ in His glory. These will be the throes of nature indicating the approach of the full redemption of the faithful, as well as the pouring out of the fiercest indignation of Almighty God, in its last and fullest development upon the despisers of His Anointed One. The Lord's prediction had its fulfilment also in the signs and strange portents which appeared before the destruction of Jerusalem, as recorded so fully by Josephus. He says that a star resembling a sword, and a comet, stood over the city for a whole year. At the ninth hour of the night, a light shone round the altar as bright as daylight, for half an hour.

A heifer led by the high priest to be sacrificed brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. The eastern gate of the temple, so vastly heavy that it required twenty men to shut it, was seen to be opened of its own accord at the sixth hour of the night. On the twenty-first day of the month, Artemisius, before sunset, figures as of chariots and troops of soldiers in armor were seen in the clouds and around the cities. At the feast of pentecost, as the priests were going into the inner court of the temple, they felt an earthquake, and heard a great noise, and after that a sound as of a multitude of voices, saying:—"Let us remove hence." Four years before the war began, when the city was in peace, one Jesus, son of Ananus, came to the feast of tabernacles in the temple, and suddenly cried out:—"A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people." Day and night this was his cry through all the streets of the city. He was whipped, but still went on with the same words. He was brought before the Roman procurator, by whose command he was again whipped till his bones were laid bare: but at every stroke of the whip, his exclamation was:—"Woe, woe to Jerusalem." He gave no ill words in reply, but still uttered the same thing; nor did he give good words to those who gave him food. His cry was loudest at the festivals; and he continued it for seven years and five months, including the time of the siege. And then as he was going round the wall, crying with his utmost force:—"Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house," he added:—"Woe, woe to myself also," when a stone from one of the Roman engines killed him immediately. The historian remarks that some of these portents might seem to be fabulous, were they not witnessed by multitudes of persons of credibility, and "were not the events that followed of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals." Nature has such sympathy indeed with the higher destinies of man, that in numberless instances she fails not to give her signs of woe, when "all is lost;" nor shall she be less ready to cover herself with beauty and to give forth the voice of joy when the highest aspirations of the Church of Christ shall be realized.

WINCHESTER DIOCESAN CONFERENCE.

At the recent conference assembled in the town hall, Farnham, Bishop Harold Browne referred in emphatic terms to the great want of the Church in the present day. And as it has been roused to a considerably increased action since 1832, his remarks have a more than usual value, and should be attentively

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