

The Church Guardian

—: EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY.

- FEBY. 2—Purification of St. Mary the Virgin.
 “ 3—4th Sunday after the Epiphany.
 “ 10—Septuagesima.
 “ 17—Sexagesima.
 “ 24— { Quinquagesima.
 { St. Matthias. A. & M. Athan. Cr.
 “ 27—Ash Wednesday. Pr. Pss. M. 632,
 38. E. 102, 130, 143. Commi-
 nation service.

(From the Parish Visitor, N. Y.)

THE short month of February gives us two Feast days—that of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple and that of St. Matthias. The first occurs on the second, the other on the twenty fourth day of the month.

The feast of the Presentation is popularly called Candlemas Day from the custom in the Roman Church of blessing candles on that day. It is kept in memory of our Lord's first visit to His earthly temple, whither He was carried by His parents to fulfill the Jewish law. This law required that the first-born son must be given to God, and redeemed by a small offering in money. The mother of the child was also obliged to present on her own part the sacrifice of a lamb if she could afford it, otherwise a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons. This offering was to be made when the babe was six weeks old, by which time the mother would be well enough to make a short journey in safety and comfort.

It was at this time that the aged Simeon, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, took the infant Jesus into his arms and blessed Him and uttered those words which we now sing in the Evening Service, beginning, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." The prophetess Anna, a widow of eighty four years, who we are told "served God with fasting and prayer day and night," also gave thanks to God for the Child, and "spoke of him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." St. Luke alone of the Evangelists has preserved the record of this scene and may probably have derived his knowledge of its particulars from the Virgin Mother herself.

ST. MATTHIAS was the man elected by the Apostles after their Lord's resurrection to fill the place of the apostate Judas. It is recorded that two men were appointed, and the choice between them referred to our Lord by means of the lot. We hear nothing of Matthias afterward, except by implication, but he was clearly numbered with the Apostles, as is shown by the accounts of the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 14) and of the appointment of the first seven deacons (Acts vi. 2).

THE first day of Lent (commonly called Ash Wednesday from the old custom of using ashes on that day as a sign of humiliation) occurs on the 27th day of February. With this day begins the great fast of the Church, kept originally in memory of our Lord's fast in the wilder-

ness, when He overcame the great tempter—not by any exertion of His miraculous powers, but by the use of those Holy Scriptures which are within reach of all His disciples.

I once asked a venerable clergyman to recommend to me a good book for Lenten reading. His answer was, "You cannot have a better book than the Bible. Take up some definite plan of study and pursue it with all the help you can find. I sometimes fear," he added, "that with all the multitude of religious books, the Bible will be crowded out entirely."

My old friend's advice was good. Almost all Christians read the Bible more or less, but it is to be feared that few study it. Let us during this Lenten season make a business of studying the Scriptures upon some definite plan. If we are privileged to be in Sunday-school either as teachers or learners (and what that privilege is worth none know but those who love the work and have been shut off from it), we have our plan ready to our hand. If not, a little consideration will easily suggest one. If we do no more than read a few verses, and carefully look out all the marginal references, we shall often find a light shed on the text which will amply pay for the pains taken.

Our Church wisely lays down no laws for fasting, but leaves the matter to the individual. If possible, let our self-denial have a definite object, such as the increase of our charitable funds, for instance. And above all, let us remember that the holy season will not leave us as it found us. We shall be either better or worse for the opportunities it gives us. Which shall it be?

READY.

There is one great blessing which confirmation brings to a soul, and that is, being able then to go to the "Supper of the Lord." In one place in our Prayer Book it is said, that none shall be "admitted" to the Communion, except such as have been confirmed, or are "ready and desirous" to be confirmed. This means, as we take it, that no pastor shall, by his instruction and authority, allow an unconfirmed person to regularly partake of the Holy Communion at his hands. It surely cannot mean that a devout person of another pastor's flock is to be driven away from the Lord's table, if he presents himself as a partaker of the holy feast. If two of us are shepherds, and one of the sheep of my neighbor should come to the fold at night to feed among my sheep—can I do better than let it stay, and eat, and find shelter for that occasion? But if it came the next and the next night, I must either buy it, or lead it home to its own shepherd. And how much greater is a human soul than a sheep! So I cannot drive away a member of a neighbor's flock, who strays in to eat and drink at our Lord's table, spread by me. But if he come again and again, *auf by right*, then I must ask him if he has been confirmed, or is ready and desirous to be, at the next opportunity.

But what we want now to say is to our pastors and catechists in the archdeaconry, who have laid upon them the duty of preparing persons to receive the Laying-on of Hands. And we want to ask our brethren to see that such persons are READY. The Prayer Book says "ready and desirous." They cannot be desirous unless they have truly been made "ready"?

1. In the beginning of the Confirmation office we read that "The Church hath thought good to order, that none shall be confirmed but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments; and can also answer to such other questions as in the short Catechism are contained." This is very plain. Take pains to explain these things to all who are to be confirmed, and see that they can "say

the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments," and have been carefully shown what the "other parts of the Church Catechism" mean, if they are grown persons, and cannot read. Children should always be required to learn it all, especially the part about the Sacraments.

2. Those to be confirmed should be taught what is in the Confirmation service itself, so they can understand just what they are to answer to, in all that it means to them.

3. Those admitted to Confirmation should be carefully taught that they must be ready, in their hearts and souls, to partake of the Holy Communion. If they are not prepared for that, then they cannot be "ready," or desirous, in the real sense, for "the Laying on of Hands" in confirmation.

Better that the confirmation class should be small, than that any be should misled, or a weakness to the Church, by not being ready and desirous."—*Church Messenger*.

HIGHER CRITICISM.

(Paper by Rev. J. Ker, D.D., continued.)

In connection with the 110th Psalm, there arises, as you know, a serious question. Dr. Driver says: "If we read the Psalm without prejudice it produces the irresistible impression of having been written not by a king, with reference to an invisible spiritual king, standing above him as a superior, but by a prophet with reference to the theocratic king. In the question addressed by our Lord to the Jews, St. Matthew xxii, 41-46, His object is not to instruct them as to the authorship of the Psalm, but to argue from its contents; and though He assumes the Davidic authorship generally accepted at the time, yet the cogency of His argument is unimpaired so long as it is recognized that the Psalm is Messianic, and that the august language used in it is not compatible with the position of one who was a mere human son of David."

Canon Gore, in his Essay on the Holy Spirit and Inspiration, follows Driver here, and has helped to force to the front of present day controversy, questions, the answers to which are deposited down deep in the mystery of the Incarnation. On the Human side, what limits were there to the Lord's knowledge? Could He make mistakes in matters of dates and authorship? Did He really believe the 110th Psalm to be the work of David? And other questions suggest themselves involving, if possible, graver consequences.

Such is an exceedingly imperfect outline of some of the conclusions reached and questions raised by the higher critics. What ought our attitude to be in the premises?

First of all: Let us Wait. God will give His own Word all needful vindication. It has stood assaults more terrible than the higher criticism. The old promise is still sure: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away."

Secondly. It is by no means demonstrated that the traditional authorship of the Pentateuch, and of various Psalms must be given up. It is certainly not established that David was not, in some sense, the author of the 110th Psalm.

Thirdly. Our Lord says: "David speaking in the Spirit (*en pneumati*) calleth him Lord." Do the critics fully comprehend all our Lord intended to convey by the words *en pneumati*? If the "Fairie Queens" were carefully put into nineteenth century English, say by Longfellow or Tennyson, it would still be Spencer's. Similarly: if the 110th Psalm, in its original form the work of David, were retouched in a later age, by a devout poet of the theocratic nation, the Psalm would still be David's and the Lord's use of it as David's entirely justified.

Fourthly. To those who have a firm grasp of