

*He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

For he hath satisfied the empty soul; and hath filled the hungry soul with good things. (Ps. 106.)

The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good. (Ps. 33.)

The poor shall eat and be filled; and they shall praise the Lord that seek him. (Ps. 21.)

*He hath received Israel his servant being mindful of his mercy—*

He hath chosen for us his inheritance, the beauty of Jacob which he hath loved. (Ps. 46.)

He chose the tribe of Juda, Mount Sion which he loved. (Ps. 113.)

Juda was made his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. (Ps. 113.)

For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself: Israel for his own possession. (Ps. 134.)

*As he spoke to our father Abraham and to his seed for ever—*

He hath remembered his covenant for ever: the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Which he made to Abraham and his oath to Isaac. (Ps. 104.)

He remembered his holy word, which he had spoken to his servant Abraham. And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness. . . . Until the time that HIS WORD CAME. (Ps. 104.)

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH—

The Lord hath sworn truth to David, and he will not make it void: OF THE FRUIT OF THY WOMB I WILL SET UPON THY THRONE. (Ps. 131.)

Let these things be written unto another generation; and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord. (Ps. 101.)

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; the people whom he hath chosen for his inheritance. (Ps. 32.)

How good is God to Israel; to them that are of a right heart. (Ps. 72.)



## CORRESPONDENCE

### 'THE FOOT OF THE LADDER'

*To the Editor,*

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

Sir,—May I be permitted a few words of clarification for your correspondent, Augustine, over the important points he has raised.

First, I must repeat, the article *The Foot of the Ladder* was not a series of pious recommendations but a record of fact and

experience—admittedly very experimental and limited, but nevertheless experience. Nobody is asked to cram his day with spiritual exercises; those that were mentioned are made during leisure at the expense of such activities as going to the pictures, watching football matches and dog races, reading evening papers, listening to the radio and such like. Each gives up some portion of that kind of life—not necessarily all—for that purpose. Whatever these exercises are, and how much they are, they are done in an endeavour to come closer to Christ. They are not allowed to interfere with our professional and family responsibilities; but the aim is to try and combine the two, as I hoped I had made clear in my sample days.

I don't remember making out a case for anything, so I don't see what I have 'given away' by saying that people who are obviously not so far advanced in the spiritual life have no idea of contemplation. They would not presume to suggest that they had, but they *do* work on the principle, which your correspondent so rightly commends, that all their action must—and it does—proceed from the closest possible union with our Lord, which they attempt to achieve by prayer, frequent Communion, study of our Lord's life, penance, and similar 'multiplicity of exercises'.

As to fasting, I don't want to bandy texts or saints, because really they all seem to me to agree, but I recall a phrase of St Alphonsus Liguori: 'Woe to him that loves health more than sanctity'. However, the people I mentioned in connection with extreme fasting and voluntary penances have not suffered in health or strength from these practices, in fact the contrary is true; their mental and physical energy is impressive. They did not happen to be married men with families. I mentioned, too, that they were under directors, to whose care they can safely be left.

I would like also, if I may, to clarify our position about voluntary penance and the sacrament of the present moment. We certainly do not know more than the Holy Father, but we do know that he has asked repeatedly for the faithful to do voluntary penances in reparation for all the sins against our Lord and his blessed Mother, that he has said: 'Nor would even the stimulus of a Christian life lived according to conventional standards be efficacious. Today there is a need for the greatness of a Christian life lived in its fullness with persevering constancy.' I am sure your correspondent is living this kind of life, so surely he will allow us to do so too.

Of course our efforts are trivial and stumbling, but what we have found is that without some preliminary positive effort the words 'sacrament of the present moment' remained just words. I am talking of ordinary people, the subject of my article, who cannot begin to practise abandonment and true active obedience to the Will of God unless we, as it were, go into training by the practice of voluntary penance, even if it is at first nothing more than giving up something—or even fasting—on Friday, or getting up a few

minutes earlier every day to say an extra prayer. Otherwise we feel we would be like a man going into the boxing ring after a bottle of beer and a week in bed! We do not know whether we are right to feel like this, but it is our experience.

Finally, I congratulate your correspondent on his resolve to pass on the results of his studies to others. We too in our 'freak' societies—LOCK, KSC, CYMS, SOS, etc. (we number tertiaries and oblates among us too)—are doing the same thing. We are catechising, selling Catholic papers, helping parish priests, taking part in local housing problems, fighting local authorities about birth control and schools, bearding Communists in our unions, badgering the press and politicians, doing whatever comes to our hand, and have been for some time. This is the first time we have heard all this called 'futile'.—Yours, etc.,

THE AUTHOR OF *The Foot of the Ladder*.



## REVIEWS

THE CHURCH IS ONE. By Alexei Stepanovich Khomiakov. With an introduction by Nicolas Zernov, D.Phil. (S.P.C.K.; 1s.3d.)

It is a little difficult for a Western Catholic to understand how it was that this little treatise by a layman, written just over a hundred years ago, should have acted as a catalyst on Russian Orthodox theology. Dr Zernov, in his informative introduction, points to the history of the Russian Church as the explanation of why that church had to wait until the middle of the nineteenth century for a statement of its ecclesiology; but the reason why Khomiakov's treatise had such effect is revealed, perhaps unwittingly, in this passage: 'The most controversial part of his teaching is connected with the question of the supreme authority in the Orthodox Church. Khomiakov ascribed it to the entire body of the faithful, and he subjected the decisions of the bishops to the final approval or disapproval of the whole Church. The majority of Eastern theologians, especially since the seventeenth century, considered that the Episcopate gathered at the Oecumenical Councils possessed the charisma of the Apostles, and was entitled therefore to define the Faith without further reference to the Church. The disagreement between these two points of view has not yet come to an end.' (p. 9.) At the same time and given the disunion among the Orthodox Patriarchs themselves, it is not altogether surprising that Khomiakov should have sought another source for the authority of the Church. Having rejected the Papacy and the episcopate, he had to fall back on what Catholic theologians call the *sensus communis fidelium*, and there is at least that point of contact between his thought and the classical Catholic theology. But it is surprising he did not see that not only is that source of authority