

# The Church Guardian

UPHOLDS THE DOCTRINES AND RUBRICS OF THE PRAYER BOOK.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—Eph. vi., 24.  
Earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3.

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## Pastoral Letter of House of Bishops.

The undersigned set forth this Pastoral Letter in accordance with authority committed to them by their Brethren of the Episcopate assembled in Council in the City of New York on the eighteenth day of October, being the festival of St. Luke the Evangelist, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-four.

J. WILLIAMS,

*Bishop of Connecticut and Presiding Bishop.*

WM. CROSWELL DOANE,

*Bishop of Albany.*

F. D. HUNTINGDON,

*Bishop of Central New York.*

WM. E. McLAREN,

*Bishop of Chicago.*

GEORGE E. SEYMOUR,

*Bishop of Springfield.*

HENRY C. POTTER,

*Bishop of New York.*

### PASTORAL LETTER.

*To our well-beloved Clergy and Laity :*

We, your Bishops, having been assembled to take order, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, for the extension of the Kingdom of God, have availed ourselves of the opportunity to meet in Council to consider our duty in view of certain novelties of opinion and expression, which have seemed to us to be subversive of the fundamental verities of Christ's Religion. It has come to our knowledge that the minds of many of the faithful Clergy and Laity are disturbed and distressed by these things; and we desire to comfort them by a firm assurance that the Episcopate of the Church, to which, in a peculiar manner, the deposit of Faith has been entrusted, is not unfaithful to that sacred charge, but will guard and keep it with all diligence, as men who shall hereafter give account to God. In the discharge of that pre eminently sacred obligation of our office, we find ourselves constrained to address you on two cardinal truths of our holy Religion, not for the purpose of vindicating them, nor even to make an exhaustive exposition of them; but simply and plainly to set before you the truth of God which every minister of this Church has pledged himself to hold, teach, and defend, and to hand on unimpaired to those who shall come after us. It is a conviction of solemn duty which constrains us thus to address you at this time, and particularly to state what the Church requires all who minister in holy things to hold and teach, first, concerning the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and secondly, concerning the Holy Scriptures, by sure and certain warrant of which the Catholic Faith is proved.

#### 1. THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And first, touching the Incarnation, and the Person and Natures of our Blessed Lord, this Church teaches and requires her ministers to teach, (1) in the words of the Creed commonly called the Apostles' Creed, that Jesus Christ is

the 'Only Son' of God; in the words of the Creed commonly called the Nicene Creed, that Jesus Christ is the 'Only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father'; in the words of the proper Preface for Trinity-Sunday, in the Order for the Holy Communion that 'that which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality'; and in the words of the second Article of Religion, that 'the Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father,' is 'the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father'; (2) that this, the Second Person in the adorable Trinity, God from all eternity, was, in the words of the Creed commonly called the Apostles' Creed, 'conceived by the Holy Ghost,' and 'born of the Virgin Mary'; in the words of the Creed commonly called the Nicene Creed, that He 'came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man'; in the words of the *Te Deum*, that He did 'humble' Himself 'to be born of a Virgin'; in the words of the Collect for Christmas Day, that He 'was born of a pure Virgin'; in the words of the proper Preface for Christmas-day, in the Order for the Holy Communion, that He was 'by the operation of the Holy Ghost, made very man, of the substance of the Virgin Mary His mother, and that without spot of sin'; and in the words of the second Article of Religion, affirming the decrees of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, that He 'took Man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin of her substance; so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man.'

This doctrine, held by the Church from the earliest ages as revealed and taught in Holy Scripture, witnessed to and defined against all attacks of error by the four great general Councils of the undivided Church, is held by this Church as the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. It has been well said that "this was the real contribution of the General Councils to human history; the more and more explicit re-assertion of the Incarnation as a mystery indeed, but as a fact. The various heresies which attempted to make the Incarnation more intelligible, in reality explained it away; while Council after Council, though freely adopting new phraseology, never claimed to do more than give explicit expression to that which the Church from the beginning had implicitly believed. Their undoubted purpose, as viewed by themselves, was to define and guard, and to define only in order to guard, what they conceived to be the essence of Christianity." It is never to be forgotten that the doctrinal statements of the undivided Church are in no sense an enlargement of, or addition to, the domain of the Faith, but only a defence and definition of the same.

This is in strict accordance with the teaching of Holy Scripture. When the Apostle, writing to the Ephesians, would designate the final

authority in matters of the Faith, he said, "Ye have not so learned Christ;" and when St. John wrote to the elect lady his burning appeal for steadfastness in the Faith, he summed it up in these words: "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath the Father and the Son." It is not enough to learn about Christ; it is not enough to know what Christ taught or what is taught about Him; it is Christ that is to be learned; it is the Christ in whom we are to abide; Christ as revealed in Holy Scripture; Christ as the act of experience; Christ as the hinge of human history; Christ as the central and cardinal point of the Creed, which must be read backward and forward from Him; backward to reveal "God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," and forward to teach us and to give us "the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life everlasting."

Unless our Lord Jesus Christ is firmly held to be God's own true and proper son, equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and to be also the true Son of the Blessed Virgin, by miraculous conception and birth, taking our very manhood of her substance, we sinners have no true and adequate Mediator; our nature has no restored union with God; we have no sacrifice for our sins in full atonement and propitiation, holy and acceptable to God; for our moral weakness and incapacity there is no fountain of cleansing, renewal, and recreation after the measure and pattern of a perfect manhood. The assertion of the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation—the one indivisible Personality of the Son of God Incarnate, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us—is the antidote of the false teaching of our day, which is simply the revival of the old heresy of the self-perfection of man. For the miraculous Virgin birth, while it is alone befitting to God, in assuming our nature into personal union with Himself, marks off and separates the whole of our humanity as tainted by that very corruption of original sin, which had no place in human nature as that nature was assumed by our Blessed Lord in His Incarnation.

We are moved to impress upon the minds of the people committed to our charge, and of the teachers commissioned by our authority to teach them, that these plain statements of Holy Scripture and of the authoritative Formularies of the Church require a plain and full acceptance of the facts that the human conception and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ was accomplished by the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost, and that the Humanity in His one Person is wholly derived from the substance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His mother. Only so could He be the "Seed of the woman" that was to bruise the serpent's head; only so could He fulfil the prophecies, "A woman shall compass a man," and "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son;" only so can the angelic annunciation be understood, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God;" only thus can we accept the statement of St. Matthew, "She was found