

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR JANUARY.

- JAN. 1st—Circumcision.
 " 6th—Epiphany.
 " 13th—1st Sunday after Epiphany.
 " 20th—2nd Sunday after Epiphany.
 (Notice of Conversion of St. Paul)
 " 25th—Conversion of St. Paul.
 " 27th—3rd Sunday after Epiphany.
 (Notice of Purification)

THE BISHOP OF EAST CAROLINA, U.S. ON UNITY.

From the Pacific Churchman.

I fear, that at this time an exaggerated—and therefore, so far, a false, because *unregulated*—yearning for *Unity* is doing much mischief in this direction, by removing—or at least obscuring—old landmarks of Faith and Action. I believe in *Unity*—in the duty of *Unity*—in the importance of *Unity*. Our Lord would not have offered His great prayer for *Unity*, if *Unity* were not His will. And it is sometimes wonderful how, all over our parts of Christendom, where, within our own recollection—the constant maxim used to be, that it was better that Christians should be divided—since thus they would be more watchful of one another and of each other's doctrines, and so would guard the faith on every side—where again, men used to think it a Christian solution of theological controversy to *agree to disagree*—it is simply wonderful how all this has changed within the last few years. It is God's Providence, bringing about what a few years since seemed hopeless? Is it the great groundswell of God's spirit, like a mighty sea, breaking up our frozen and settled and self-satisfied Sectarianism, that out of the chaos might come forth a new and harmonious world? What blessed signs and premonitions have come to pass of late! Hand reached forth to hand, to grasp in friendship, where before was the armed fist to strike! Whatever the cause, let us devoutly thank God for this much of the effect, and with sincere and loving hearts salute our kinsmen of other names who beckon to us. Let us seek to unite

with them in the loving embrace of brethren in one household. But let us beware, lest in order to reach them, we *meddle with the arrangements of the Master of the Household*.

Unity is a duty. Organic unity is a duty. But it must be reached by *lawful* roads. And so long as men conscientiously think and reason, the only road to an effective organic unity must be found, not in arbitrary leagues or covenants, but in drawing near from every side to God, and to God's truth, and, therefore, in the resolute maintenance of the Truth. And the only reliable and permanent basis of unity will be found in "*Unity of the Faith once delivered*," (Eph. iv. 13 St. Jude, 3) It is only by this unity of the Faith—by being no longer blown about by every wind and doctrine—that St. Paul teaches us we can come into the one perfect man in Christ.

A temporary and hollow fraternization may result from sinking out of sight obstructing convictions, but no permanent unity so long as men think and reason.

God has placed neither His Truth nor His Kingdom at our disposal, to modify or put them in exchange, as we will. Both are precise and of obligation; and pertain to His supreme prerogative. And our plain duty, with respect to both—as humble creatures, atoms of dust that we are—as pardoned sinners, for whom to be presumptuous in monstrous—as returned prodigals, expected modestly to conform ourselves to the laws of our Father's house—our plain duty is to abide by God's appointments; let men proclaim what doctrine they may—let the world sneer at our precision as it may, or call it bigotry. While we may not imagine ourselves infallible, yet must we recognize the duty of definite convictions, which respect the faith once delivered, and the Church established by our Master as His Kingdom. Nor may we as Christian Soldiers fail of the courage of our convictions.

And what if God, in His absolute sovereignty, should chose to bless others than ourselves, or those who so far as we can see, have not yet altogether found the old paths; let us thank Him for His enlarged mercy, and for their sakes rejoice. But is that to justify us in departing from the path He has assigned us?

Inexpressibly valuable as *Unity* is, it is not so valuable as *Obedience* and *Truth*. All Christians and Christendom should be one; but should not become one by trampling upon the lines of division between truth and error.

I spoke, in the outset, of the tendency to new habits of thought and action. There is in the world of religious thought (and it creeps sometimes into the ministry) a tendency to *individualism* and novelty which is fraught with danger. Whence is this? By what side-wind has it invaded the garden of God? Can it be the insidious, unsuspecting work of him who taught our first parents—after His own fashion—to think for themselves in Eden? We should not be the slaves of others' thoughts, but neither should we be selfishly ambitious to distinguish ourselves by inventing or proclaiming novelties. This has been, through all past generations, the fruitful mother of the sins of heresy and schism. It is not the true freedom of the child of God, who, though no longer a servant but a son, should yet be "humble as a little child," finally willing to accept all that God's spirit has revealed. Nor is it in harmony with the spirit of the Church. Rather is it the genius of the Church to love the *old paths*, to desire to be at one with the generations which have gone by, so far as we can be so without sacrifice or truth, not to seek the new because of its freshness—because it is new—but rather to "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and to walk therein," as said the prophet; nay, rather God, by His prophet.

Willfulness of thought often takes effect in wilful action. Departure from the faith of God's Church is almost sure to result in vio-

lation or careless observance of her laws. But brethren of the Clergy and Laity, we have no more right to violate, or in any degree to contravene, the Law of the Church, than we have to contravene the Law of the State. Less right, indeed, if there be any difference. In addition to the obligation of all duly enacted law, whether in the Church or in the State, we of the clergy by our ordination vows, and you of the Laity by the vows in baptism, are *especially pledged* to observe the Church's law. And let us remember that wilful disobedience of any law, duly enacted by the proper authority, is sin.

"Sin (saith St. John, 1 Ep. iii, 4) is the transgression of the law, and sin is inconsistent with righteousness, with holiness, with true spirituality, with all genuine religion. God governs us by His Church, as he governs the citizen by the State, and the child by the parent; and so the Church's law, so far as it does not contravene the proclaimed will of God, becomes, within its sphere, God's law for us; and the man be he clergyman or layman, who lives in wilful violation of the Church's Canons, or her Rubrics (which are her laws), is, to say the least, an imperfectly sanctified man; and is not wisely preparing for the tests of the judgment or for the perfect obedience of Heaven.

Let us lay these things to heart; and while learning the lesson of love for those who differ from us—while we pray for unity and yearn with all our hearts—with the great heart of Christendom—for unity, let us not dare lay hand on God's Truth, or God's ordinances, or the fences of God's Kingdom, to pull down what He has set up; remembering that true Holiness, without which it is written "no man shall see the Lord," is not to be found in error or in disobedience. Remembering that our blessed Lord, just before His petition that His disciples all might be one, had prayed that they might be sanctified through the truth. Remembering, too, that having said "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." He then commanded through His Apostle (Heb. xiii, 17), "Obey them that have the rule over you and, submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls;" and that during His earthly life He had ordained of the man who should refuse to hear the Church, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." (St. Matt. xviii, 17.)

HOME REUNION.

The following extract from the *Parkstone Reminder* for December 1st, 1888, and from the pen of the Rev. E. E. Dagmore, Vicar of Parkstone, and was furnished to *Church Bells* by Earl Nelson.

'For our own part we look upon those baptized Christians who dissent from the National branch of the Catholic Church—if they hold, as the majority of English Nonconformists do, to the great primary and fundamental truths of Christ's Revelation—not only as fellow-Christians, but on their part a wilful determination to separate themselves, not from us, but from it, which we hope to be a rare case indeed.

'At the same time we must avow our belief that there is not now—whatever there may have been somewhere—any just cause for their state of *continued separation* from the *visible unity* of the historic Church of this land. We recognize their claim to be, as baptized Christians, fellow members with us of Christ's Universal Church. We respect the labours of their ministers for the salvation of souls. We acknowledge the validity of their baptisms. We need not deny that their ministers may be really called of God to preach His Gospel, nor even that they may have been designed by Him to the office and work of the Apostolic Ministry and Priesthood. But, believing as we do that