

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR JUNE.

- JUNE 7th—2nd Sunday after Trinity.
[Notice of St. Barnabas]
- " 11th—St. Barnabas. A. & M.
- " 14th—3rd Sunday after Trinity.
- " 21st—4th Sunday after Trinity.
[Notice of St. John Baptist]
- " 24th—Nativity of St. John Baptist.
[Athanasian Creed]
- " 28th—5th Sunday after Trinity.
[Notice of St. Peter.]
- " 29th—St. Peter. A. & M.

UNWESLEYAN METHODISM.

The observance of the hundredth anniversary of John Wesley's death suggests certain reflections which found no place in the speeches and the sermons delivered at the celebration referred to. It is obvious on such an occasion to wonder what John Wesley's own opinion would have been of the proceedings held to do honor to his memory, could he have been present at them. What, to begin with, would he have thought of the titles borne by the principal speakers? He would have heard of a President of a Wesleyan Methodist Conference, of a President of the Methodist New Connexion, of a President of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, of a President of the Bible Christian Connexion, of a President of the Wesleyan Reform Union, of a President of the United Methodist Free Churches. What would the Founder of Methodism have said to the state of things among people professing to be his followers which this list of officials reveals?

But whatever might be the feeling of amazement with which John Wesley would have witnessed the rending asunder of those calling themselves Methodists into at least six separate organizations, the venerable and saintly man's surprise would have been greater still if he had realised the relation in which they all stand to the Church of which he himself, to the day of his death, was a devoted son. No fact in history is better established than the loyalty of John Wesley to the Church of England. His system, as Mr. Umlin observes in the *Newbury House Magazine*, was designed to supplant, not to supplant, that of the Church. He called the buildings used for his devotional services

'preaching houses,' not 'chapels.' He was scrupulously careful to arrange that the service should be held at hours when they should not clash with the Church services. 'Only when a clergyman officiated,' says Mr. Umlin, 'as was the case in London, Bath and Dublin, would Wesley allow of services in Church hours.'

It is true that, towards the end of his life, Wesley found the movement he had started slipping out of his control. He could not ensure that the system should remain purely supplementary to the Church. But it is a remarkable fact that, in drawing up his Trust Deed of 1784, he expressly provided that the Methodist Society should be, at any rate, capable of *permanence* combination with the Church. To quote Mr. Umlin again: 'The body is perpetual, the trust is well-defined, and the property has become enormous. But the whole machine is legally capable of being worked within the enclosure of the English Church. The Conference would in such case, continue to be the patrons, as such nominating to all posts of duty; and having legal rights analogous to those of the Simeon Trustees or the Council of Keble College.' Yet, at the present day, we see six large religious denominations, all professing to follow John Wesley, though they are as separate from, if not as *antagonistic* to, the Church of England as are the Independents, or the Baptists, or any other sects of Dissenters. This, then, is the vast difference between the Methodism of Wesley and the Methodism of those who style themselves Wesleyans. It is the difference between loyal Churchmanship and Dissent pure and simple.

The time has gone by when we used to be told that Wesley and his disciples had been 'cast out' of the English Church. That unhistorical fiction has long since been exploded. The Church, in Wesley's time, had been forcibly and fraudulently deprived by the state of her Convocations, so that no formal action of the Church either for or against Wesleyanism was, at that period, possible. Nor was Wesley ever inhibited or formally censured by any Bishop or Ecclesiastical Court; so that such allegations as that the Church was hostile to Methodism, or that the Methodists were 'driven out' of the Church, are absolutely unfounded. And it is further to be noted that, although Wesley's death was almost immediately followed by the setting-up of a rival organisation to that of the Church, yet the Wesleyans did not professedly leave the Church. On Church principles their action was undoubtedly schismatical, but they themselves did not profess to have left the Church. As Mr. Umlin says, 'the Wesleyans, in their corporate character, have never formally seceded. Fifty years since, most of the Wesleyan families kept up a traditional tie, by resorting to their Parish Churches on occasions of Marriage and Baptism; and they often would deny that they were Nonconformists. When away from their homes they frequented Churches, and avoided Dissenting places of worship. Their political and social influence, although not great, was always exercised in the same direction.'

To a very great extent this was still true only a few years ago, and there are localities where it is true even now. But no one can watch the course of events at all closely without perceiving that what professes to be Wesleyanism is sharing the fate of the other Dissenting bodies. The various Dissenting denominations are steadily losing their distinctiveness of doctrine, and becoming assimilated to each other in a common type of theological Liberalism. The Downgrade of Dissent is, there is reason to think, to be witnessed in Wesleyanism as elsewhere. We have no desire to emphasise unduly the fact that, at the Wesley Centenary celebration, special prominence was accorded to 'a representative of the Unitarian Churches bearing an address signed by members of 200 Unitarian families.' At the same time, if this means what it certainly seems to mean, it

might well make John Wesley turn in his grave with horror at the thought that those who profess to be his followers should publicly associate themselves with a phase of religious belief which possesses no claim to be considered Christian in any sense.

It is to be feared that Wesleyanism, like other forms of Dissent, is becoming less and less of a religious movement, and more and more of a political organization. We refer, not so much to individual Wesleyans, as to the officials and wirepullers of the various Wesleyan denominations. Envy of the Church is forcing all forms of Dissent into the arms of Radicalism. It is long since Dissent was well described as 'the backbone of Radicalism.' Wesleyanism, once an exception to this rule, is so no longer. The rapid decay of its spiritual power could not be better exemplified than by the attitude recently adopted by the Wesleyan Methodists on the Education question. That attitude may be summed up in a single sentence:—Better the forcible establishment of universal compulsory non-religious education than that the Church should be allowed to keep her schools any longer.

We must frankly avow the opinion that for those who to-day call themselves Wesleyans to profess reverence for John Wesley's memory is an utterly hollow and unreal proceeding. They take his name but they repudiate all that he held dear. Who can doubt that, if Wesley were alive now, he would devote all his energies to working inside that old Church of England which, since his days, has so enlarged her borders and so fully realised the ideal he set before himself?—*The Church Eclectic.*

EDITORIAL NOTES.

WINNIPEG CONFERENCE.—At the opening of his Synod on the 2nd of June instant, the Lord Bishop of Ontario in his Address, referred to the report of the Winnipeg Conference and its recommendations. His Lordship is very outspoken in his opposition to the resolutions of the Conference, and declined to recommend to his Synod, "to pass resolutions for its adoption or otherwise" as he had been requested. On the contrary, he suggested the formation of a strong committee to take the whole matter into consideration and report at the next session of Synod. Speaking of the plan proposed by the Conference of a GENERAL SYNOD, his Lordship says: 'I know of no precedent for such Legislation. It is an innovation: one, too, of a most serious kind. The novelty of the proposal is not of necessity an objection, but I do distrust all modern systems of Church government. If a committee of this Synod is appointed, I wish them to consider whether there is any instance or any thing that makes it probable that the Provincial Synod can be worked harmoniously with the General Synod.' His Lordship then illustrated his position by reference to England, Scotland and the United States; and concludes this part of his remarks: 'I should prefer that this new system of a General Synod over-riding the Provincial Synods should be tried elsewhere than in Canada.'

HIS LORDSHIP touched upon that which several members of the Conference also claimed would be the case, namely, that the Provincial Synods would, under the assignments of powers made to the General Synod be shorn of all real power and deprived of authority and dignity. If, says he, 'It (the General Synod) assumes the most important items of legislation, now performed by the Provincial Synods, the latter will die of inanition, and by-and-bye will fall into contempt; because when the class of subjects suggested by the Conference as properly coming within jurisdiction of the General Synod is withdrawn from the Provincial Synods, the occupation of the latter is gone.'