

The Church Guardian

— : EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR : —

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CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER.

- SEPT. 3—14th Sunday after Trinity.
“ 8—Friday, Fast.
“ 10—15th Sunday after Trinity.
“ 15—Friday, Fast.
“ 17—16th Sunday after Trinity. (*Notice of Ember Days and St. Matthew.*)
“ 20—Ember Day, Fast.
“ 21—St. MATTHEW, Ap.
“ 22—
“ 23—} Ember Days Fast.
“ 24—17th Sunday after Trinity. (*Notice of St. Michael and All Angels.*)
“ 29—St. MICHAEL and All Angels.

NOTES ON THE EPISTLES.

By THE REV. H. W. LITTLE, RECTOR HOLY TRINITY, SUSSEX, N.B.

(Author of “*Arrows for the King's Archers*,” etc.)

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

“*One body.*”—Eph. 10, 4.

I.—The Epistle to the Ephesians is an exhortation to those who had left heathenism, and had put on Christ in Baptism, to make their lives conformable to their profession. The prominent point of the letter is Christian Revelation, as the foundation of the spiritual life. The Ephesian converts had been recipients of signal favours at the hands of God. From a condition of degradation and base superstition they had been called out to be partakers of the privileges of the Christian Church. The greater the favour, the greater the obligation to faithful service. As “the prisoner of the Lord,” the Apostle appeals to his spiritual children to let their light shine before men that God might be glorified by their faithfulness. The whole tone of this Epistle is lofty and majestic. Its words

are full of fervour and spirituality. The writer does not here directly assert his authority to speak as he found it necessary to do in writing to the rude and turbulent Galatians. He implies rather than asserts his right, a delicate tribute to the greater faithfulness and sympathy of the Ephesians who had not fallen away into errors of doctrine or scandalous living. To those whose consciences are alive and tender a hint is sufficient. Another instance of the matchless ability with which the Apostle dealt with the Churches or souls according to their condition and needs. “The prisoner of the Lord”—for the Lord’s sake, on account of the Gospel: See Acts xxiii, 11. Their “calling” in Christ carried with it the duty of preserving an outward unity in the Church, a visible oneness, which should be a witness to the world that they were of Christ. This oneness could only be secured and maintained by mutual concession not of truth, but of passion, self-will, self-assertion and pride of knowledge, and wisdom falsely so-called. Once these are given up, the truth has power to act upon the mind, and an essential and bodily oneness in the Church would be the result.

II.—The ideal Church in the mind of Christ, and the purpose of God was to be a visible body, mysterious and invincible and divine by reason of its “oneness.” For such a Church Christ prayed in the last hours of his earthly life. (See St. John xvii.) “That they may be one, as we are.” “That they all may be one.” “That they may be made perfect in one.” “That the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” Duty of all to pray and work for the restoration of the Church’s broken unity. The revival of interest in this great subject a token of the renewal of the spiritual life in our midst. To work for this oneness in the Church is to work directly for Christ. But to effect this unity in outward organization and polity as well as teaching (how there can be inward unity of faith without visible unity of practice is the enigma of the times) Christian individuals, as well as Churches, must cultivate a temper of lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearance in love. Obedience will then be accepted as the outward expression of the mind of Christ, and of that one spirit which dwells in the “one body.” The re-union of Christendom will be the doom of the Powers of Hell. Much has to be endured before this glorious consummation can be reached, but all must work and pray for it.

III.—Disunion hinders the advance of “the Kingdom of Heaven.” It weakens the grasp of the Church upon divine grace. Needless strife over matters of religion or Church government are too often the result of arrogance or ignorance, or a desire for pre-eminence, not of real zeal for holiness and the good of mankind. We must take no part with those who seek to break up the unity of the Church or to cause divisions over non-essentials. “Mark them which cause divisions,” says the Apostle “and avoid them,” Rom. xvi, 17. The unity of the God-head and of the Trinity is typified by the oneness of the Church, whose duty and privilege it is to bear witness to this blessed principle of unity in all her doctrine and ritual. Endeavoring to keep “the unity of the spirit,” the inward oneness by “the bond of peace,” the outward visible unity of Christian people under one divinely constituted system of Church government.

The word “endeavouring” very forcible in the original, and meaning rather “labouring to the utmost,” “earnestly desiring,” “be careful to keep it,” for “it is not so easy to keep unity in great bodies as it is thought,” (Ap. Land.) A salutary and reasonable admonition in our day when some men seem to be proud of diversity or singularity, or *anything* for that matter so long as it is not in tone and line with the teaching of the Church and Catholic traditions.

IV.—Unity is a gain, division is a loss. The common experiences of family and business life, as well as the works of Providence, teach us this; and history, civil as well as ecclesiastical, bears the same way. The unity of the Church must be spiritual, but it must also be visible. The Apostle does not write “one body, that is to say one spirit,” as the passage is too often read in our time; but “one body *and* one spirit.” The admission to the body is by the one baptism to the service of the “one Lord” in the “one Faith.” 1. Let us beware of thinking lightly of schism and divisions among Christians; we pray against this very sin in the Litany, but our acts too often war with our prayers. 2. Let us value the blessing of unity, and make every sacrifice as individuals to secure it in home, congregation, diocese, church. 3. Let us beware of new doctrines, new ceremonies, new notions of church polity which would dishonor the “one body.” 4. Bitterness of feeling, anger with those who are in error, vituperation, misrepresentation, all unfairness in controversy out of place. 5. Unity to be kept in the bond of peace. Let us welcome the signs of a drawing together of the Church, and of a return to the “old paths.” Let us rejoice that the classes are reaching out helping hands towards each other in matters social as well as spiritual, and that there appears to be a growing realization amongst men of the truth that “we are members one of another.”

THE OLD WAY.

An amazing ignorance of the Bible is often displayed by the rising generation, in spite of the question books and lesson papers. This ignorance frequently shows itself in surprising ways, even among young men who come forward as candidates for Holy Orders. It is to be feared that this ignorance is not always fully corrected by the curriculum of the theological school, if we are to judge by the expressions to be found in sermons, lectures, and even systematic treatises, from the hands of men who have been ordained and commissioned to teach the people. An instance is seen in such flippant assertions as the following: “One of the notable contrasts between the Apostles Peter and Paul, and their successors, the popes, the prelates, the presbyters, is their attitude toward the Church. The New Testament takes little account of Institutions. So indefinite is the New Testament record of the discipline, the worship and the government of the Apostolic company of Christians that the Romanist, the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, the Baptist, can each say, ‘My way is the old way,’ and each one can support his claim by excellent arguments out of the same Scriptures. The truth is, that nobody knows what the old way was. It is as lost as the old table and the old chairs in the upper room in which the Church began.”

These statements seem to us in direct opposition to the facts and misleading in the extreme. They are calculated to produce the impression that the Prayer Book is entirely wrong when it declares that “It is evident unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ’s Church—Bishops, Priests and Deacons;” or when it says that Christ has “promised to be with the Ministers of Apostolic Succession to the end of the world.” Is it true that our Lord and His Apostles laid so little stress upon the Church? Is it not assumed everywhere that the Gospel consists not only in the promulgation of new principles, moral and spiritual, but also in the erection of a new Institution through which these principles are to have per-