

# The Church Guardian

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## CALENDAR FOR JULY.

JULY 6th—5th Sunday after Trinity.

" 13th—6th Sunday after Trinity.

" 20th—7th Sunday after Trinity. Notice of St. James.

" 25th—ST. JAMES. A. & M. (Athan. Creed).

" 27th—6th Sunday after Trinity.

## UNITY.

By REV. W. E. HEYGATE, M. A.

When our Lord was upon earth He attended the temple services, and no other. Although He praised the Samaritans, He never entered their synagogues, never sanctioned their worship.

The New Testament contains exhortations to unity, and censures division.

### 1. EXHORTATIONS TO UNITY, *e. g.*

'The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded, one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' [Rom. xv. 5. 6.]

'Endeavoring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all' [Eph. iv. 3-6.]

'Fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind' [Phil. ii. 2: also 1. 27, iii. 16.]

But nothing can be more forcible than St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, which contains too much for me to quote. I refer particularly to chapter i. 10-15, iii. 1-8, x. 17, and the whole of chapter xii. and xiii., in the first of which the Church is compared to the body which admits not of schism. In the second the Apostle gives that heavenly picture of charity which, if it rules in our hearts, division could never continue, nor indeed ever begin, but would be simply impossible, for schism is the result, expression and perpetuation of a want of charity evidenced by tempers and actions exactly contrary to hers; by being puffed up, by seeking our own, by thinking (or imputing) evil. He that 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth

all things, endureth all things,' will never be the cause of a schism.

### 2. CENSURES OF DIVISION OR SCHISM:

You will observe that in the passages referred to in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle, while he commends unity, severely blames those who disturb it.

In the Epistle to the Romans he says: 'Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them' [Rom. xvi. 17].

In this Epistle to the Galatians he classes 'divisions and heresies,' or parties, amongst the works of the flesh, associates them with the most fearful crimes, and declares that those who are guilty of them shall not inherit the kingdom of God (ch. v. 19-21). I know that it has been argued that the divisions thus condemned are internal divisions, divisions in the Church, and not from it. But this is a very strange argument. If a crack is dangerous to a building, how much worse is the case when the wall rends asunder and parts! If a family quarrel arises, how much more grievous it becomes when the contention is so great that the brethren will no longer consent to dwell together, and the family breaks up! However, I am sure you will not try to escape the conclusion derived from these passages by such an evasion.

Bear with me, then, if I try to point out why schism is so great an evil; why a proceeding which—alas! is so common, which is carried on without grief or misgiving, which is boldly justified, as if the power to commit it were part of the rights of man, or, at any rate, of an Anglo-Saxon—is for all this a sin. I must summon up my courage to say this much. In these days it is almost a crime against society merely to imply such a thing. Partly from timidity, partly because they think they can get a hearing no other way, Churchmen softly suggest that the Church has such and such excellencies, and dissent perhaps such and such comparative defects; but to say openly that schism is sin, is a grievous offence; yet for truth's sake, aye, and for love's sake, I must be bold enough to assert this unpopular truth.

I do not mean that you, my friend, are a greater sinner than I am, or even so great. You have probably come to your error naturally and innocently, and have a hundred good excuses for your position, whilst too many of my faults have no palliation. Nevertheless, my duty bids me to say that schism of itself is a sin.

There are, indeed, some evils in dissent which I might here mention without violating the rule I laid down, viz., to avoid speaking of accidental and remediable defects; and with your leave I will state them before I proceed to the rest of the matter, as, for example, the following:

### 1. THE DANGER OF HERESY,

to which I alluded before.—Those who separate from the Church lose those securities against error which are supplied by the Apostolic ministry and sacraments. The Creed, also, and Liturgies lose their authority with them, and so their chief power for good. If a man is free to disown the Church, he can do what he will; he is left to his own weakness and imperfect knowledge. Whatever is human in its origin does not acquire the divine, but, on the contrary, the human element gradually obtains the ascendancy. Grace may be given to individuals, and not to the system. Thus the system deteriorates; the peculiarities of the founders develop themselves, and weeds choke whatever good seed was at first taken from the granary of the Church, when the field was new sown with mixed seed. Hence the Calvinists of Geneva have fallen away from the Gospel faith, and the English Presbyterians become too often Socinian. There was nothing to prevent them from doing so.

In England, however, just as dissent lowers the doctrinal tone of the Church, and makes many Churchmen half Dissenters in principle, so the Church keeps dissent straight to some extent and exalts it, making Dissenters half Churchmen. Were it not for the presence of the Church, and her constant preaching of the faith through the land, English dissent would probably fall away from the faith. Germs of heresy, if not more than germs, often appear in its ranks.

### 2. As a rule,

#### SECTS DETERIORATE;

and as a rule, they do not revive.—The Church has a vitality in her from above, and after periods of deadness she is quickened into marvellous life by the indwelling Spirit acting through principles which she has always retained, and an organization which survived her temporary decay.

Thus the Church of England revived at the Reformation. She did not begin to exist then, but recovered herself; revived again after the evils connected with the convulsion of the Reformation, and resumed her Catholic tone and practice in the seventeenth century, as is witnessed by her divines, beginning with Hooker and ending—if I must take a landmark—with Ken; revived not only in her divines, but in her public service of God; recovered again from great deadness by the evangelical movement, a revival which culminated in that Catholic Reformation which we have witnessed in our days, and which seems like life from the dead; but the Church was not dead meanwhile. She slumbered for a time and awoke. But this is not the case with sects.

### 3. There is

#### NO LIMIT TO SCHISM.

—Those who form a new sect make it as perfect as they can: but it is perfect only in their own opinion. Others see defects and form subdivisions. Why should they not? They have as much right to separate as their predecessors possessed. So schisms multiply. I would fain not be invidious. I mention no names. You know perfectly well that schisms are counted not by tens, nor by twenties, nor by fifties; they are in principle endless.

4. Once more, consider the effect of these divisions upon unbelievers in Christendom. Consider the effect

#### UPON THE HEATHEN.

'Will they not say that ye are mad? Do they not say so?' Is it not a fact, not only that one Christian mission thwarts another, but that the heathen have been known to say: 'When you have made up your minds yourselves what is the truth, we will hear you; but we will wait until then?'

Pardon me for what I have said, and bear with me a little longer whilst I proceed to state, as well as I may, the everlasting and unchangeable grounds of Church unity.

They are to be found—let us approach the thought with all reverence—in the

#### NATURE OF THE GODHEAD

itself.

'Three heavenly unities exceed all natural unities—the unity of three persons in the Godhead; the unity of God and man in Christ; and the unity of Christ and the Church.'

'The man who is not in unity answers not to Him. For He is one—the Church is unity. Only unity answers to One.'

If there were no other reason for unity than the prayer of our dear Lord for His Church, offered immediately before He entered Gethsemane, surely this were enough, and more than enough. What Christian can consider His words and have the heart to divide His Church?

But there is something besides our Lord's wishes, and its power over our best affections,