

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR AUGUST.

- AUG. 5th—10th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 6th—TRANSFIGURATION.
 " 12th—11th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 19th—12th Sunday after Trinity.
 (Notice of St. Bartholomew)
 " 24th—ST. BARTHOLOMEW. [A. & M.]
 Athanasian Creed.
 " 26th—13th Sunday after Trinity.

THE PRESS—AN ALLY OF THE CHURCH.

One of the most admirable and useful books that we have met with for many a day is that from the pen of Bishop Spalding, of Colorado, under the title *THE BEST MODE OF WORKING A PARISH*, lately issued by The Young Churchman Co., of Milwaukee. From beginning to end it is full of practical hints and instruction in relation to all departments of Parish work, and it ought to be very welcome and useful to Clergy and Laity alike. In the second chapter on "Lay Help in Religious Teaching" the Bishop thus refers to the Press and to Church Literature—(the italics throughout are ours):—

I must first call your attention to an agency of great efficiency and value; the publication and generous distribution of Bibles and Prayer Books, and of religious books and tracts specially prepared for popular effect. The press has become a mighty engine both of good and evil, and I believe the good predominates. It is a means of diffusing ever kind and variety of information, assisting thoughtful opinions upon every conceivable topic of human interest. It promotes the habit of general reading, excites inquiry, advances the general intelligence. We must grant, indeed, that its multitudinous issues; its books of every description, of which it would take more time

than most could command, to keep up a knowledge even of the titles; its periodical literature, annual, semi-annual, quarterly, monthly, weekly and daily, which form the sole reading of most intelligent men, must inevitably tend to produce narrow, superficial, ill-formed minds and crude intellectual character. Still, the facilities it gives to the masses of the people of gaining information, the facts and truths it communicates, the thought it quickens, the intellectual culture it subserves, are more than a compensation. As an instance of its importance, which will be most readily appreciated: What an absurdity without it, would not universal suffrage become in a federated Republic like ours? There are, indeed, multitudes who exercise this high prerogative of citizens without the slightest qualification. But how vastly greater would be the number, were not the facilities of gaining knowledge and forming accurate opinions so abundant. Every politician well knows the power of the press. It is wielded with success not only by the high-principled and patriotic, but also by the ambitious demagogue and the unscrupulous political charlatan. Its best uses have become indispensable to the safety of our institutions. Its demoralization and abuse will too surely help on their destruction.

Surely, religion is justified in making large use of the press for its purpose of instruction. *Sectaries* of all descriptions have shown how effectually their tenets may be propagated through this agency. There is scarcely an intelligent person in the country who is not constantly receiving pamphlets and periodicals advocating the restoration of the Jewish Sabbath, giving information concerning the prophecies of the Lord's Second Advent, or the peculiar doctrines of Spiritualism or of Swedenborgianism. The extent and the volume of literature of these sorts is indeed surprising. It should teach us a lesson. *It is the imperative duty of our Church people to sustain with like generosity our Bible and Prayer-Book societies, and the publication of Church books, and tracts, and periodicals, and to be at least equally zealous in their circulation.* By liberal support, by generous contributions, by all possible efforts to promote their wide distribution, we might vastly increase their usefulness.

There are few families in which there is no Bible, though it be dust-covered and seldom read. The Prayer-Book is to us the best and indispensable companion to the Bible, for it is the authoritative guide in its interpretation, embodying all doctrine and teaching all duty, and turning both into prayer, thus securing the entrance into the heart of all truth, and building up the Spiritual life. Let every Churchman keep on hand a good supply of Prayer-Books. Sell them to those who can purchase. Give them to those who cannot buy. Patiently and lovingly explain the services to those who will use them. It would be impossible to estimate the number of those whom the Prayer-Book has led to the Saviour, and instructed in saving knowledge. In many a dwelling in the wilderness it has gone before the Church and has fulfilled the offices of both Church and Ministry, until these could be solicited and obtained. No other book but the Bible has guided and trained so many souls for heaven.

Next in value are popular books and tracts on practical religion and the doctrine, polity and usages of the Church. How many have been taught by Thomas a Kempis to imitate Christ; by Jeremy Taylor to live holily, and to die happily; by Bunyan to overcome their spiritual enemies in life's pilgrimage; by Keble to follow our Lord's life in the observances of the Christian year, and walk in His blessed footsteps. He who writes a good book, or a good hymn, is among the world's greatest benefactors. The precious treasures of Christian literature should be placed within reach of all. They who have understanding will spare no trouble or expense in this effort to instruct the people.

The great obstacle to the extension of the Church among the masses is ignorance and prejudice. Never was there a controversy with those who oppose us that did not greatly further our progress. Never was there a book or tract written with a high Christian motive and circulated and read in a dispassionate and prayerful spirit, that has not brought multitudes to rally beneath the standard of the Church. Chapman's "Sermons on the Church," Richardson's "Churchman's Reasons for His Faith and Practice," Kip's "Double Witness," Randall's "Why I Am a Churchman," Onderdonk's "Episcopacy Tested by Scripture," Timlow's "Plain Footprints," Little's "Reasons," and other like works should be in every Churchman's hands for generous and wide circulation among all people who would desire or can be induced to read them. Let us make full use of this agency, by which so much has been done and is doing, and make it as efficient as possible for Christ and the Church. Let us avail ourselves of the general fondness for reading. Let us give to the people a Christian literature, full of fact and of truth, and of divine and holy unction, such as will instruct, purify, reform, and elevate the people. Infidelity is subsidizing the press to its own godless purposes. Every form of error and misbelief depends on the press for its advocacy. Let the truth have free course. Give it a fair field. Let it grapple with error and falsehood. The result can not be doubtful.

In this use of the press you must first become yourselves well instructed. Ignorance means indifference. With increasing knowledge there will be the growth of interest. *Every family in the Church should take the best of the Church papers and periodicals.* It is indispensable that you should be thoroughly conversant with the religious needs, with missionary intelligence at home and abroad, with all the various operations of the Church, Diocesan and General, and with the movements of thought and opinion in the Church and in the world about us. It is strange, indeed, that any intelligent Churchman should be content to remain in ignorance of the constitution of the Church; its polity, history and doctrine, and usages; its operations for human good; its progress; its wants; the instrumentalities employed in its extension. What is so indispensable to man individually and socially as Christianity? What institution is of such priceless value as the Church? Better that the government we love should fail, than that the Church of God should fall into decay and barrenness. If you are citizens of Christ's Kingdom, you will be sure of a heavenly country, though the earthly should perish. Why not give your interest to the more important? Why be indifferent to those things which are so intimately connected with the welfare of man here and forever? For your own good, as well as for the good you can do, you should acquire familiarity with all the facts and truths it behooves you to know in reference to Christianity and the Church of Christ. Then, knowing the truth, you must proclaim it. Have your Church books and pamphlets, and periodicals, as an armory from which to draw whatever arms and ammunition may be needed to repel assaults of unbelief and sectarianism, and to fight the battles of the Church.

But you must remember that after all, invaluable as it may be made, the press can only be an ally. Bibles and tracts alone can never convert and reform the world. Much practical harm has come from the common delusion that to secure the salvation of the sinner, it is only necessary to put a Bible and a few good tracts into his hands. It will not do to put a book in place of the Ministry, and reading in the place of direct personal teaching. If it has been thought by some that the Bible and a few good books of devotion and practical religion, translated and generally circulated in heathen lands, would disperse and scatter the old