

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER.

- SEPT. 2nd—14th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 9th—15th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 16th—16th Sunday after Trinity. (Notice of Ember Days and St. Matthew).
 " 19th—EMBER DAY.
 " 21st—St. Matthew. Ap. E. & M. (Athenasian Creed).
 " 21st } EMBER DAYS.
 " 22d }
 " 23rd—17th Sunday after Trinity. (Notice of St. Michael).
 " 29th—St. Michael and All Angels.
 " 30th—18th Sunday after Trinity.

WEEKLY COMMUNION.

Our inquiry thus far has shown that weekly Communion was the undoubted practice of the Apostolic and primitive ages, was clearly contemplated by the Anglican Church at the Reformation, is implied in the structure and purpose of our own Liturgy, and that the restoration of it is involved in any true and healthy development of spiritual life in the Church of the present generation. After such conclusive evidence it would hardly seem necessary to add anything further; but it may be of some

service to allude here to the testimony of a single writer in the early Church.

Justin Martyr, if not a contemporary, was at least an immediate successor, of the twelve Apostles. He speaks of himself as "a disciple of the Apostles," and is mentioned in the history of his time as "a man but little behind the Apostles either in time or virtue." He was born near the close of the first century, when S. John, the last of the apostles was approaching his end. His knowledge of the Christian Church and faith was unquestionably derived from Apostolic sources, and in harmony with the teaching and practice of the age of inspiration itself. His testimony on all matters affecting the constituted order, worship, and usage of Christ's kingdom must be regarded as standing next to, and sanctioned by, that of the apostles themselves, and bearing thus the official seal of inspired authority. This holy man, in an apology written in defence of the primitive Christians, tells the Roman Emperor that "on the day called Sunday all that live in town or country come together and hold a religious assembly, in which the writings of the prophets and apostles are read. A sermon is then preached in explanation and enforcement of some portion of holy Scripture; after which the whole concourse unite in prayer, and when the prayers are ended, bread and wine are brought to the presiding minister—the officiating bishop or priest—who consecrates them with prayer and thanksgiving. Then all the members present partake of the Eucharist, and it is also carried to the absent by the deacons." Now this account corresponds exactly with the custom which prevailed among "the apostles and brethren," who in all their weekly gatherings for worship and instruction are spoken of as coming together to "break bread" and for "prayers." There seems to be no question, then, that the original, inspired conception of Church worship, in obedience to the faith and purpose of Christ, not only included, but concentrated itself upon, the celebration and partaking of the Holy Communion as the one great office which gave its true meaning and significance to all else that entered into that worship.

Perhaps we shall be excused if we take occasion here to go a little out of our way, merely to add that, according to Justin Martyr's account, this holy feast, which entered into all Sunday worship, was always accompanied with the offerings of the people. No such thing was known in the early Church as worship without sacrifice and offerings, as religion without loving gifts to its great Founder, as a gospel which does not disturb the pocket, as any possible sanctification of life which grates its teeth when "the plate is passed" and the Church goes a "begging"!

But we must now have done with this part of our subject, merely remarking that the same testimony which Justin Martyr thus furnishes is to be found, in substance, in the writings of Ignatius, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and others of the primitive Catholic Church; showing clearly enough that weekly Communion was the universal rule and the established practice of the Church, for the first five hundred years after Christ. Our next inquiry concerns the Church's Eucharistic doctrine, which, we shall find, sets forth that any successful attempt to lead a devout and consistent Christian life in the Church of God must include frequent and constant communion at the altar of Christ.

The Church teaches us from our earliest childhood, from our baptism into Christ's Body, that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is "generally necessary to salvation"; that it is an outward and visible sign of divine appointment, for conveying spiritual grace and blessings to the soul, and that "the benefits, of which we are partakers thereby, are the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by

the bread and wine" (Church Catechism). Now what does this mean? It means that this is a Sacrament of the grace of Christ, and that it is spiritual food, strength, and life to the soul. It means that the soul is here subject to a mysterious, yet real and effectual, process of spiritual nourishment and invigoration, analogous to that which the body undergoes as the result of receiving natural food.

The XXV Article of Religion (see toward the end of the Prayer Book) says that the two Sacraments, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, are "not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession"—which is the ultra-protestant idea—"but rather sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's good-will towards us, by which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in Him." This great sacrament of the death and sacrifice of the Incarnate Son of God is no mere solemn spectacle, by the observance of which, amid devout meditations and moving influences, we are to enlarge the religious emotions and experiences within us; it is no sublime ceremony whose impressiveness and efficacy require that it should not be made too familiar to us by frequent repetition; it is the "Lord's Table"; it is a veritable heavenly "Feast"; it is the "living Bread which came down from heaven," of which our Saviour spake when He said, "The Bread that I will give you is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

In much the same strain the Communion office itself invites us to the Eucharistic altar, with the comforting assurance that we shall find "our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy sacrament." The Church, in fact, in various expressions in her liturgy, reiterates the truth that "Christ does as really nourish and sanctify the soul as the elements of the body" (Jeremy Taylor).

Here, then, is a fundamental idea of the Lord's Supper; it is a spiritual feast designed to nourish and strengthen the soul, through the visible agency of material emblems, which are themselves also nourishment and strength to the body. What should any reasonable and earnest Christian infer from this but that, in his spiritual services, devotions, and struggles amid the powers of this world, he needs, and therefore is invited, and ought, often and continually, to supply his soul with this spiritual food, for the same reason that he often and regularly renews his physical powers by natural food, for the successful accomplishment of his earthly work? The essential import and meaning of this sacrament may be assumed, therefore, to find its only rational interpretation in a celebration repeated as often as Christ's people come together for the worship, the holy rest, and the spiritual refreshment of "the First Day of the week."—R. N. P. in *North East*.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

From *Home Reunion Notes* by Earl Nelson in *Church Bells*.

The vision of our Blessed Lord sitting in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks with the seven stars symbolises His present rule over His Church on earth. And the Book of the Acts really reveals to us the way in which that Government was carried on 'from the time that He was taken up.' But as the Candlestick with the seven branches was One, so the Church is revealed to us as ever One—the Bride of Christ, the perfect City four-square, the Net gathering of every kind, the One Body under Christ the Head, the One Fold under One Shepherd.

There may have been, from the first, and very certainly as numbers increased, many different congregations of Christians in the same city, and we read of 'the Church which was