

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.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPARED WITH THE VARIOUS PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS.

(THEOCLASIA).—[Continued.]

Protestantism has attempted to appropriate to itself the name of Catholic on two grounds:

1. The broad ground of Universal Charity, on which it regards as so sacred the right of private judgment in the interpretation of Scripture, that it extends the hand of fellowship to all who sincerely profess to have derived their faith and order from the inspired books alone. On this ground it claims to be truly Catholic, i. e., liberal and charitable to all, of every variety and shade of doctrine or organization. Can any one be so demented as to suppose that when the primitive Christians repeated the Apostles' Creed, and said, "I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church," or the Nicene Creed, and said, "I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church," they embraced in that language the whole brood of sectaries that either then existed, or might at any future time arise, and at the present time flourish? If so, argument with such an one would be futile and vain. Surely such a confession meant an institution specific and definite both as to faith and order.

2. The general ground, that there are, among all sects and creeds, some few who, notwithstanding the errors of their systems, still love our Lord Jesus Christ, and so shall be finally saved, and that this number constitute that invisible Church which shall be gathered out of the visible, and be acknowledged at last as the redeemed from among men. This is the sense in which they understand the Ninth Ar-

ticle of the Apostles' Creed, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints.' They think it does not refer to any organized body in particular, but to 'that great multitude out of every nation,' 'everywhere scattered abroad,' 'who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.' In answer to this view, let it be observed that the Ninth Article in the Apostles' Creed, as explained in the Nicene Creed nearly 300 years later, reads thus: 'I believe One Catholic and Apostolic Church; which surely refers to an organized body established by the Apostles, and continuing in the faith and order they established, rather than to an unorganized body. And that this is the true meaning of the article is evident from the fact that the organized visible body was the only one that could perpetuate its existence, define the faith, preserve the Scriptures, administer the sacraments, condemn heresies, and spread the gospel throughout the earth. An invisible Church could not so act upon a visible world as to make itself seen and heard and be gathered into a visible fold. It was the Visible Church Catholic and Apostolic which, during the ten Pagan persecutions, resisted the powers of the world and triumphed at last. It was the Visible Church Catholic and Apostolic which, during the Six General Councils, combated the heresies which arose, and preserved the faith delivered to the saints. It was the Visible Church Catholic and Apostolic which, during the Papal domination, resisted the uncatholic dogmas which Rome had introduced, and finally shook them off, returning to primitive Christianity. It was the Visible Church Catholic and Apostolic which, during the Reformation, maintained the three Orders of the Ministry, the primitive Creeds and Ancient usages which Rome had corrupted by her numerous additions. And when a new class of innovators sprung up, who, under the name of Reformers, endeavored to remove the ancient landmarks, introduce new modes of worship, abolish ancient festivals and fasts, and establish a church without a Bishop, it was the Visible Church of old, which from the earliest period had been Catholic and Apostolic, which now became Protestant also, and denounced these movements as schismatical and tending to divisions and distractions without end. Protestantism, having separated itself from that Catholicism which was liberated from Romanism by the Church of England, has run wild in her pursuit of the primitive faith and order; and after numberless experiments to discover it, has arrived at the conclusion that no agreement can be come to, and that each one is right in his own eyes who has derived his faith and order from an honest examination of the Holy Scriptures.

The great maxim of Protestantism, *The Bible the only rule of Faith*, has been most effectually tried, and with what result let the numberless sects which are warring against each other, both with regard to doctrinal faith and ecclesiastical order, decide. If the testimony of antiquity goes for nothing, and a church which can trace her history back to the Apostles will not be admitted as a witness to testify to the various Christian bodies which have arisen since the Reformation what the primitive faith and order was then the much desired unity, so long prayed for and so frequently yet unsuccessfully attempted to be brought about, is a visionary dream, and the prophecy of the great Melancthon, which has been thus far accomplished, will be yet more remarkably fulfilled: 'I would to God (said he) it lay to me to restore the government of Bishops: for I see what manner of Church we shall have, the ecclesiastical polity being dissolved.'

It is not surprising that thoughtful men should sometimes inquire why, with the same sources of information open to all, no common agreement can be attained; and that, seeing organic unity is impossible (for that such is the fact is painfully manifest to all), they should

seek to accomplish the next best thing, namely, a spiritual unity. But this is found to be of no less difficult attainment than the former. It is not in human nature to maintain spiritual unity when questions both of faith and order, which are regarded as fundamental, are unsettled. Can the Trinitarian have spiritual unity with those who deny the Divinity and Atonement of his Saviour? Can the Presbyterian have spiritual unity with the Quaker, who rejects the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper? Can the Methodist or the Congregationalist have spiritual union with the Baptist, who denies that they have a right to the ordinance of the Holy Supper because they have not been immersed, &c., &c.? *Men believe their honesty* who make such pretences as these. Either they must hold their own opinions in indifference, or, if not, cannot regard with Christian affection those who openly denounce them as unscriptural. Reason and experience have long ago taught us that all charters and constitutions need an interpreter to decide what their meaning is when men disagree, and that the judicature which interprets must be coeval in its establishment with the instrument to be interpreted. * * * * *

Now the Apostolic Church was constituted several years before the New Testament Scriptures were written, and when written they were committed for safe custody to a body already in existence, known as the Catholic Church; because it was designed to be everywhere the same throughout the world. This body is referred to in those Scriptures [1 Tim. ii. 15], as 'the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth;' and its existence as the custodian of the Divine Word, and the perpetual and Living Witness for the truth of Christianity, was made an article of faith in that first form of sound words which the early disciples received, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church; i. e. an institution intrusted with Word and Sacraments of Christ, having living men duly authorized to explain and administer both.

Now this Church in General Council is the Supreme Judicature to interpret the written law or constitution which was given to her. The first session of this High Court was A. D. 51, at Jerusalem, when St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, presided and delivered the sentence of the court. (Vide Acts xv.) During the ten Pagan persecutions no General Council was convened; but after that period, the judgment of the Universal Church was invoked on six several occasions in which both the faith and order of the Church was declared, as may be seen by reference to Chap. III.

Now that the Church which was in existence when the New Testament Scriptures were written, which first received them, and has ever since preserved them, which has translated them, and, from the beginning, continually explained them, is better qualified to declare their true meaning on disputed points than any number of Christian bodies springing up 1500 years later; because she, having had a continuous existence from the beginning, knows the primitive interpretation they received, and is the only living witness to testify what it was. The denominations which separated from the Reformed Catholic Church during and after the Reformation, could not even prove the Scriptures to be the word of God except by her testimony. Who preserved them during the 1500 years in which they had no existence but that very body whose testimony to their import and integrity they then began to set aside? If denominations can be formed according to each one's private views of the meaning of Holy Scripture, they will necessarily be as numerous and various as the discordant fancies of men. Almost every heresy that was condemned by the Six General Councils, has been revived under some new form since the Reformation, and has claimed to be derived from Holy Scripture; and who, among all those who have re-