

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER.

- SEPT. 6th—15th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 13th—16th Sunday after Trinity. [Notice
of Ember Days: Ember Collects
daily this week.]
 " 16th—
 " 18th— } EMBER DAYS.
 " 19th— }
 " 20th—17th Sunday after Trinity. [Notice
of St. Matthew]
 " 21st—St. Matthew. Ap. Ev. Mor. (Atha-
nasian Creed.)
 " 27th—18th Sunday after Trinity. [Notice
of St. Michael and All Angels.]
 " 29th—St. Michael and All Angels.

INDIRECT LIBELS.

Libelling is an expensive amusement, as many evil-disposed persons have found to their cost. But, with a perverse ingenuity, many of such have discovered ways of evading the letter of the law while violating its spirit, and have contrived to eat their cake and have it by libelling their neighbours indirectly. In an amusing paper entitled *Balbus: a Biography*, the writer points out how the historian of Balbus, wishing to convey the fact of his hero's infidelity without directly stating it, delicately insinuates it by means of the premises of a syllogism—'A Christian does not fear death; Balbus does fear death'; leaving the reader to form his own conclusion. In like manner, where there is a wicked will to break the Ninth Commandment, they who fear the consequences of doing so directly will not have much difficulty in doing it, Balaam-like, by indirect means. Now, there is far too much libelling, both direct and indirect, among various parties of those who profess and call themselves Christians. False accusations of heresy are often brought against Churchmen of particular schools, with very little real inquiry into their actual tenets; as, for example, that those who hold Baptismal Regeneration are Antinomians, or the ool statement made in a sermon in London, and published: 'Such, my brethren, is the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which the Romanists believe, and which the Ritualists believe.' Such sweeping 'false witness,' uttered, probably in the same haste as the Psalmist's, 'All men are liars,' is perhaps too much exaggerated to be very injurious: 'Mole ruit sua.' But the indirect fashion of libelling one's neighbour by labelling oneself has undoubtedly done great mischief. Just as one political party, by assuming the name of Liberals, virtually brings a charge of illiberality against its adversaries, so that very astute body, the Romanists, by assuming to themselves the exclusive title of Catholics, intend, unquestionably, to 'unchurch' us, the Church of England, and declare that we do not form a branch of the Holy Catholic Church. They accuse us, in fact, by the use, or rather the abuse, of this title, of the sin of schism.

It seems very strange now that Churchmen should have allowed themselves to be, as it were, robbed of the honourable title of Catholics; but the fact is, that during the eighteenth century Churchmanship, as we understand the

term, was almost extinguished, owing largely to the suppression of Convocation in the reign of George I., whereby the Church lost her voice; and also to the gross Erastianism of the Bishops. And the party which first emerged out of the general spiritual deadness was that which was led by such men as Newton, Cecil, the Venus, &c., who were well nigh blind to the Catholic side of the Church, and were willing to allow the Romanists to monopolise that designation. The phrase, 'Catholic Emancipation,' which was in everybody's mouth in the reign of George IV., no doubt did much to confirm the popular idea that the Church of England was not Catholic; and, though sounder principles soon began to be spread by means of the Oxford Movement, the general notion that Protestants cannot be also Catholics has by no means been eradicated.

No true-hearted Churchman will permit this implied libel—this charge of schism—to pass unchallenged. If every reader of *Church Bells* were to make a point of never allowing the Romanists to be called 'the Catholics' without a distinct protest, the way would be paved towards a wider recognition of our Church's true status as the purest branch of the Holy Catholic Church.

Another libel is committed by the employment of the honourable title of 'Evangelical' in a partial sense. They who claim to be, *par excellence*, Evangelicals are indirectly accusing large numbers of clergyman of the heinous crime of not preaching the Gospel, and large numbers of faithful members of the Church of England of not believing the Gospel. It is a most barefaced and impudent piece of false accusation, which has brought the beautiful word 'evangelical' into contempt, so that to many minds the first idea conveyed by hearing that a person is so designated is, not that he is one who delights in the good news of salvation, but rather one who depreciates the Sacraments, and is ready to persecute such of his brethren as do not agree with him. The libel implied by this misuse of a good word ought to be persistently resented by all true Church folk, who should be careful never themselves to restrict, nor to allow others without protest to restrict, to any one party in the Church a term which belongs equally to all. A person who is not really 'Evangelical' or who is not really 'Catholic' is simply out of the pale of the Church of England, which has a stronger claim to both those glorious titles than any other body of Christians in this land.—A. M. W. in *Church Bells*.

THE "INVISIBLE" CHURCH.

The ordinary Protestant idea of the Christian Church is that it is, first of all, and in its most essential aspect, a community of souls not bound together by any outward organism, and therefore invisible to the eye of sense—a democracy of spirits capable of being recognized only by the all seeing One. The organization of any portion of these into a community, having a place in time and space, is a secondary idea, and results in a 'denomination,' which may exist or cease to exist without any effect upon the integrity of the 'invisible' Church.

The nineteenth article of that formulary, known as the 'Thirty-nine Articles,' speaks of 'the visible Church of Christ,' but it does not thereby lead us to infer that the invisible Church is other than that portion of the visible Church which has passed out of our sight, 'through the grave and gate of death.' If it be objected that the article seems to infer the idea of particular bodies, less than a Catholic organism, the objection is admitted; but it is contended that the smaller organizations or 'congregations' are not 'denominational' in the modern sense of the word. The language of the article, in its second clause, where it speaks of 'the Church of Jerusalem, the Church of Alex-

andria, and Antioch,' 'also the Church of Rome,' shows that the only divisions contemplated by the articles are such as exercise their functions under national or patriarchal limits, within the pale of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

But suppose we concede the 'invisible' theory as describing the state of things at the outstart of Christianity, let us contemplate it as a purely spiritual order, without power or outward expression, realising, though in a different sense from that which our Lord designed to convey by the words, that 'the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.'

Nevertheless it was inevitable that this invisible entity should eventually manifest itself in a visible form—a proposition which no one will be disposed to gainsay. Moreover, this development into historic objectivity must have been conducted under the influence of the same mighty Agent by whom the spiritual life of individual members of Christ was begun, by the Holy Ghost. A Lutheran theologian (Van Oosterzee) says:—'Prepared for by the theocracy of the Old Covenant, and more especially by the coming and work of Christ, it (the Church) dates from the first Christian Pentecost, and is in the full sense of the word a creation of the Holy Ghost.'

But what was the law or method which the Spirit guided his creative energies by, when He thus gave external form to the invisible Church? Was that law of a nature to produce in the earliest age such a condition of things, with respect to outward organization, as is presented by modern Protestant Christianity? Were there as many denominations? Was the idea of unity regarded as sufficiently illustrated by professed agreement respecting a few things and sectarian controversy and division respecting many other things? Did Antioch contain two or three kinds of Presbyterians, five or six kinds of Baptists, four or five kinds of Methodists, one kind of Swedenborgians, and four kinds of Reformed Episcopalians?

We would that it might be deeply impressed upon the minds and conscience of Christian people in this age of division and consequent disbelief, that the law of the Spirit's Pentecostal power was unto organic unity. The Church of the Holy Ghost was visibly one. 'When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were ALL with ONE accord in ONE place.' 'The same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.' 'And the Lord added to *The Church* daily such as should be saved.'

That was not denominationalism, certainly! On the contrary, the invisibility which we just now conceded, for the sake of argument, seems to have passed out of existence, and the spiritual organism is identical with the Church of the Holy Ghost, visible, capable of numerical measurement, having a creed and communion ('the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship') sacraments (baptism and the 'breaking of bread'), a form of worship (the 'prayers'), and a place to meet in (continuing daily with *one accord* in the temple).

Visible unity, then, was the character stamped upon the Church of the Holy Ghost. The 'invisible' theory is untrue. Denominationalism is a blunder and a sin, contrary to the mind of the Spirit, to the rational mind of man, to the teaching of the Scriptures, and to the better instincts of the Christian conscience when it is permitted to speak its real convictions.

The visible unity of Christ's disciples is the most spiritual conception of the Church. Denominationalism is carnality. It is a surrender to the lower motives, the divisive and disintegrating forces, which assert themselves when 'the fruits of the Spirit' begin to disappear from the Church. St. Paul could not speak to the Christians of Corinth 'as unto spiritual,' and why? 'For ye are yet carnal.' That was St. Paul's indictment, and he follows it up by specific testimony. 'For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye