

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR JANUARY.

JAN. 1st—Circumcision.

" 6th—Epiphany.

" 13th—1st Sunday after Epiphany.

" 20th—2nd Sunday after Epiphany.

(Notice of Conversion of St. Paul)

" 25th—Conversion of St. Paul.

" 27th—3rd Sunday after Epiphany.

(Notice of Purification.)

FANATICISM.

Fanaticism is excessive enthusiasm in regard to any subject and which vents itself in immoderate and extravagant words respecting it. It is the result of feeling and not of intelligence; it is the product of a mind pre-occupied with one idea; it is the result of rushing to a conclusion without due consideration, and of looking at things through distorting spectacles. A man is therefore fanatical, self-opinioned, illiterate, self-assertive and egotistic in the proportion that he lacks intelligence. I venture to believe that it would be labour in vain to try to reason with a fanatic; that would be as unavailing as holding a farthing candle to the sun! Indeed to reason with an unreasonable and unreasoning man, to try to arrive at a right judgment with a man who misjudges and pre-judges everything; to criticise, to estimate, to call passed events into review, to investigate calmly and to look upon a subject equarely and dispassionately; to hold the scales and carefully weigh all evidence for and against; in short to look upon a subject from every standpoint in order to ascertain all the facts in connection with it and to enable one to make up his mind as to what course to take in regard to the matter! such a course as that would be utterly impracticable with a violent, infatuated, partial, narrow-minded, superficial, one-sided fanatic, who is probably "wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason"! We do not mean by this that the fanatic is necessarily a bad man; on the contrary, he may be a good and earnest man, and the cause which he so unreasonably advocates may be an excellent cause, one that would commend itself to the favorable consideration of thoughtful and well

informed men; but he is necessarily a man of limited intelligence: a man who has not read much and who has not the mental capacity for understanding more than one side of any subject brought under his notice; but his chief sin lies in this fact that he insists on the exclusive possession of truth, that he over-values and over-rates his own opinions, and that he depreciates and sets at naught the opinions of other people. It is interesting to observe how fanatics by their excessive enthusiasm in advocating any virtue are led to commit its antithetical vice; for we are told that excess in virtue is vice. Thus: truth exaggerated becomes falsehood; self-respect is commendable; but self-respect carried to an extreme is vanity and pride; humility is not only good but essential for we are expressly told that unless we become as little children we cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven; but you must couple self-respect and moderation with it or else it will degenerate into servility; respect for the opinions of others is an excellent quality, and is a sign of magnanimity; but it is a virtue that must be exercised with reserve and self-control or else it will soon reduce the person who exercises it into a parasitical, abject and cringing sycophant.

Moderation, or self-control is therefore anti-fanatical and is the crowning achievement of life. Without it a man is driven violently by his feelings to and fro, like a ship before the wind; but with it a man is able to preserve an undisturbed equanimity amidst the most trying circumstances; with it a man can be brave without being presumptuous, humble without being servile; true and sincere without being harsh; diffident and modest and yet preserve his own manly individuality. In our relation with our fellow-men fanaticism should be carefully avoided and moderation studiously maintained. Fanatics magnify the virtues of and give unequalled praise to their favorites; and they under-estimate and unjustly depreciate their adversaries; for prejudice has caused a film to grow on their mind's eye so that they cannot see clearly and squarely. But moderation enables a man to justly estimate and respect those with whom he agrees, and also to treat those from whom he differs with courtesy and due consideration. In controversial matters we should cling to and defend what we consider to be right, but we must not think that we have a monopoly of truth. In politics fanaticism should be also equally avoided. Who but a simpleton would suppose that the government of this or any other country would be safe in the hands of one political party without the wholesome counteracting influence of the opposition to counterpoise its extravagance? There are noble and patriotic men in all political parties, men of self-sacrificing devotion, who are anxious to advance the best interest of their country, and who only differ from their compatriots in regard to the means or methods by which they would accomplish their purpose. And yet to read the partisan press of this, or any other country, and to see the amount of detraction, scurrility, low personality and vituperation it contains a person would be inclined to think that truth, virtue, honor and patriotism were all on one side. What a powerful influence for good the press of this country would wield if it refrained from making acrimonious and personal remarks, and if it discussed matters of public importance on their merit! How much bitter resentment and wrathful indignation would be spared if men would exercise self-control and moderation and be strictly fair and accurate in representing the views of their opponents? But, above all, fanaticism should be especially avoided in discussing religious subjects; for mis-statements, or misrepresentations, or inaccuracies of any kind are sure to hinder the cause of the party who make them; for opponents are sure to take advantage of immoderate and extravagant utterances. Take the subject of temperance, for instance. What subject so calculated to enlist the sympathy and co-operation of every law-abiding citizen as the

sublime subject of temperance? And yet what hinders the development of true and healthful temperance sentiment as much as the intemperate and fanatical utterances of so-called temperance men? For instance not long since a Methodist preacher in the United States was quoted in the *Toronto Week* as having said: "If Christ turned water into wine at the wedding of Cana of Galilee then He must be put on His trial; for He was only saved from becoming a sot by being crucified in early life." Did ever an intoxicated sot utter words more fearfully blasphemous than these? Did ever a man whilst advocating any virtue more glaringly commit its antithetical vice? A short time ago, a clergyman in the Diocese of Fredericton delivered a lecture on "Intemperance, its cause and cure," in which he demonstrated that the cause of intemperance was inward and spiritual degradation. He also said that the only rational cure for intemperance was for the sinner to fall before the throne of the eternal propitiator and cry: "Create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me." If a man sustained a right relationship to Christ; if he made use of the means of grace placed within his reach, then, he would be temperate and pure; for temperance is one of the twelve-fold fruits of the Holy Spirit.

But in regard to total abstinence he advocated it, not on Scriptural grounds,—for he did not regard the drinking of a glass of wine in itself a sin; for the Word of God sanctioned the use of wine; but he advocated it on the ground of expediency, practical experience and safety. A few fanatics who happened to be present were horrified. "What, no sin to drink a glass of liquor!" Is it possible for a man who takes a glass of liquor to be a follower of Christ? We do indeed think it possible; but it seems almost impossible to believe that men could be found in this enlightened age so intemperate and fanatical as to hold the contrary opinion. Such men are doing untold injury to the cause of true Temperance Reform. They are too narrow minded and fanatical to take God's Word, humbly and sincerely, as it is; but they want to override and force Scripture to say what pleases them. Accordingly they have invented what is known as the two-wine theory, viz.: "Wherever wine is spoken of as dangerous in Scripture it is fermented wine, and wherever it is praised or commended it is unfermented." This was indeed a well-kept secret until the fanaticism of the nineteenth century divulged it. See how lucidly they interpret Scripture. "The wine which Noah drank was fermented; but the wine, (same words) that Melchizedek brought to Abraham (only five chapters after) was unfermented."

"The wine that Nadab and Abihu drank was fermented, but that which in the same book is ordered to be used in Divine service was unfermented. So, in the New Testament, the wine which the Corinthian Christians became intoxicated upon was fermented; but the wine that was used at Cana at the wedding was unfermented." What the wine was that the deacons (1 Tim. iii, 8), and the aged women (Tit. ii, 3) must not drink much of they are not decided upon. A person would think that such a misinterpretation, such distorting, twisting and wresting of the plain meaning of Holy Scripture would be too much for their common sense; but the fact that it is not speaks volumes for their intellectual capacity! The fact is, fanatics approach the Bible with a mind pre-occupied with one idea; if they can find a verse to suit them—well; but if not so much the worse for the verse; for they will distort, twist and turn it until it does! And they go even further than this; for one of those kind of people came to me, not long since, and seriously advocated the substitution of water for wine in the Holy Communion! Thus they not only misinterpret Scripture; but they want to override our blessed Lord's explicit command. From such fanaticism and intemperance "Good Lord deliver us"!