

# The Church Guardian

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## CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER.

- OCT. 5th—18th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 12th—19th Sunday after Trinity.  
     [Notice of St. Luke]  
 " 18th—St. Luke, Evangelist.  
 " 19th—20th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 26th—21st Sunday after Trinity. Notice  
     of St. Simon and St. Jude.  
     A. & M. Athan. Creed.

## THE RISE OF DENOMINATIONALISM AFTER THE REFORMATION.

(By the Rev J. B. Angell in the American Church S. S. Magazine for May)

[CONTINUED]

It was inevitable, as I have before stated, that in the great stirring of religious thought which characterized the early part of the 16th century, there should be some who promulgated new and strange theories as Gospel truth. Among the very earliest of Protestant denominations, and among the most unfortunate, were the

### BAPTISTS.

They were not only in opposition to the Church of Rome, but were universally opposed by all other Christian bodies—Zwingli and Calvin being particularly bitter in their opposition, the efforts of the latter causing their expulsion from Geneva. This antagonism may have been partly due to the fact that Munzer, one of their leaders, was also the head of the insurrection known in Germany as the Peasants' War. Their early history is very obscure. Their first confession of faith, which was severely criticized by Zwingli, was published in 1527. It consists of seven articles. The one on Baptism is as follows: "Baptism ought to be given to all those who have been taught repentance and change of life, and who in truth believe that through Christ their sins are blotted out, and the sins of all who are willing to walk in the Revelations of Jesus Christ. To all, therefore, who in this manner seek baptism, and of themselves ask it, we will give it. By this rule is excluded all baptism of infants, the great abomination of the Roman Pontiffs." In

1644 another confession was published in the name of the seven churches in London. The article respecting Baptism is as follows: "Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ to be dispensed only upon persons professing faith, or that are disciples who, upon profession of faith, ought to be baptized. The way and manner of dispensing this ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water." From the position taken in these two articles the churches in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, under the influence of Bunyan, seceded, as he maintained that difference of opinion in respect to water baptism was no bar to communion, thus giving up their only distinctive tenet as in a confession published at Amsterdam in 1611. They claimed "that churches constituted in any way than through adult baptism were not according to Christ's testament." In more recent years many Baptist churches have considered it right to admit to full membership persons professing faith in Christ who do not agree with them respecting baptism. This has caused a division, "Strict" Baptists adhering to their distinctive tenet, "Open" admitting to membership those who in their view are not baptized. The Scriptural foundation they claim for their views is based upon the fact that there is no distinct mention in Scripture of infants having been baptized. This seems carrying an argument too far. Leaving aside the fact of the parallelism between Baptism and Circumcision, the initiatory rites respectively of the old and new covenants, there is mention in the New Testament of the baptism of whole households. Besides, this Justin Martyr, writing in A.D. 148, speaks of persons, sixty or seventy years old, who had been made disciples to Christ in their infancy, that is during the lifetime of St. John, if not of other Apostles; and the unbroken testimony of all the Fathers of the Church is to the same effect that infant baptism was the Apostolic practice. There also seems to be a practical explanation of the non-mention of infant baptism, which is that the New Testament contains the history of the foundation of the Church. When a new doctrine is proclaimed it can be accepted only by those who can understand it; this, of course, means adults, and the first stage of the early Church must of necessity have been made up of adults. These on conviction of the truth of their profession would be baptized, as the instituted rite, recognizing the wide sweep of the Gospel message, would follow St. Peter's words, "The promise is to you and to your children." It is difficult to see how an opinion which though apparently consistent with the word of Scripture is yet so antagonistic to its spirit, and which, moreover, has against it the universal testimony of all the great writers of the first three centuries of the Church, can ever have formed a ground for the making of a schism, much less its perpetuation. It can only be explained, I think, by the fact that in the beginning of their history they were so persecuted that what at first might have been an opinion was made a matter of faith; for it is always true that the "blood of martyrs is the seed of a church." The peculiar views of property being common, against which our Thirty-eighth Article is directed, need not be mentioned, as they have long ceased to be a tenet of this body.

There is time for only a brief mention of the last of the three great denominational bodies of which I spoke in the beginning. I do not propose to trace the history of the various bodies into which

### METHODISM

is divided; my object being a practical one I shall deal only with the history of the great aggressive body round us known as the Methodist Episcopal Church, dating its foundation from John Wesley, though it has far departed from his original views. In this case there is no historical obscurity, arising from lapse of

time, no difficulty in tracing the gradual development of principles.

In the year 1729 a coterie of young Oxford undergraduates, headed by John and Charles Wesley, moved by the laxity of life and morals around them, formed themselves into a body to lead a stricter life of personal religion and to give help and instruction to the poor, the ignorant and the afflicted. They were all rigid Churchmen; they fasted on Friday, they communed every Sunday, and because of their pious life, so different from that around them, they gained the name, given in ridicule, of Methodists.

John Wesley after his graduation went to Georgia, where for some time he officiated as rector of Christ Church, Savannah. On his return to England he found London stirred to its centre by the preaching of Whitfield. Owing to some trouble the latter withdrew to Bristol, where he was soon followed by the Wesleys. It was in 1739 that John Wesley's sermons were marked in his hearers by the physical phenomena which more than anything else brought discredit on the movement. In Tyerman's life of Wesley, Wesley himself is reported as being unable to decide whether there were marks of the Spirit's influence or efforts of the Evil One to mar his work. In the same year he had built a chapel, but it was not till years later that the first Conference was held, which came to a resolution about discipline ominous of the future of the movement. "They would observe the canons so far as with a safe conscience they could. They would obey the Bishops in things indifferent. They did not desire a schism in the Church, but they must not neglect the present opportunity of saving souls." A further step soon followed. In the year 1760 three preachers at Norwich began to administer the Holy Communion in their chapels. Charles Wesley was grievously vexed at this. He writes: "If the other preachers follow this example, not only separation but general confusion will follow. My soul abhors the thought of separating from the Church of England. You and all the preachers know if my brother should ever leave it I should leave him, or rather he me." Mr. Gunisham, another clergyman, who had acted with the Wesleys, declared he must now withdraw from them, as he says, "The Methodists are no longer members of the Church of England. They are as real a body of dissenters as the Presbyterians, Baptists or Quakers." But though John Wesley could have prevented the schism he gave no signs; this is the more strange as some years after he uttered the following striking words in a sermon: "Did we ever appoint you

### TO ADMINISTER SACRAMENTS;

to exercise the priestly office? Such a design never entered our minds; it was the farthest from our thoughts. And if any preacher has taken such a step we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of the rule, and consequently as a recantation from our connection. And in doing it you renounce the first principle of Methodism, which is wholly and solely to preach the Gospel. I wish all of you who are vulgarly called Methodists would seriously consider what has been said, and particularly you whom God hath commissioned to call sinners to repentance. It does by no means follow from this that ye are commissioned to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Ye never dreamed of this for ten or twenty years after ye began to preach; ye did not then, like Korah, Dathan and Abiram, seek the priesthood also. Oh, contain yourselves within your own bounds; be content to preach the Gospel. Ye yourselves were at first called in the Church of England—the Church of England men still." But clear and plain as these words were, it was not long before he was carried away by the current himself. What he did I take from the Preface to the Book of Discipline: "Preferring the Episcopal mode of government