

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR MARCH.

MARCH 3rd—Quinquagesima. (Notice of Ash Wednesday).

" 6th—ASH-WEDNESDAY; Pr. Pss. M. 6, 32, 38, Communion Service. Evening, Pss. 102, 130, 138.

" 10th—1st Sunday in Lent. (Notice of Ember Days).

" 13th } EMBER DAYS.
" 15th }
" 16th }

" 17th—2nd Sunday in Lent.

" 24th—3rd Sunday in Lent. (Notice of Annunciation.

" 25th—Annunciation of Virgin Mary.

THE UNITY OF CHRISTENDOM.

It was said of the Oxford Movement of 1833 that 'it was not so much a movement as a "spirit afloat;" it was within us, rising up in hearts where it was least suspected.....the result of causes far deeper than political or other visible agencies, the spiritual awakening of spiritual wants.' Such it was, and, like the other remarkable movement of our time—the progress of Physical Science, it is associated in our minds with one or two great names. So that yearning after the Unity of Christendom, which is just now stirring the hearts of men in so many different quarters, has, at least in England, become associated with the honoured name of Lord Nelson. Week after week with steady persistency, with undaunted faith, and with a spirit as rare perhaps as it is certainly admirable, he has sought and is seeking to shift, adjust, support, or repair, first one piece and then another of that great mass of Christian teaching which has suffered so terribly from shipping, paring, shaking, and cracking in its passage through time. How convenient it is to be able to shift our responsibilities on the shoulders of 'time!' And yet time is, at least, 'an important element in all growth'—growth of evil as well as growth of good.

1. Now if a man drinks deeply of the spirit of Our Lord's High Priestly Prayer, 'That they may be one as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee' (St. John, xvii.), what an awful, ineffable Unity! if he understands the celebrated passage in the Ephesians; 'There is one body, and one spirit,.....one Lord, one faith,

one baptism'—if he stands under that thought until 'he feels its pressure;' if he confronts himself with his own deliberate and explicit profession in the presence of God and in the face of the congregation, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church;' if he hears the voice of the great Apostle sounding out, loud and clear, 'I exhort you by the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be not divisions among you;' if he hovers over these plain, serious words, decends upon them, moves in and out of them until they have become part of himself, and then looks out upon the Christian world as it is in truth and in fact; what a growth of time does he witness here! His must be a strangely inconsequent mind if the reality of the contrast do not strike him. 'Look on this picture,' he will say, 'and then on that.' Look at the Christian Church of the first age, and then at the Church of to-day. 'Broadcast over this land,' writes Mr. Cartes, 'are scattered no less than 30,000 dissenting places of worship'—an oblique way surely of obeying the apostolic exhortation that we should all speak the same thing and all be of the same mind. Time, to be sure, is not a very substantial figure when we try to grasp it; but if it has somehow brought us to this no one can feel astonished that we should at length take our stand and refuse any further advance:

'Whither wilt thou lead me, speak;
I'll go no further.'

'Speak!' Now that is precisely what Lord Nelson has helped us all to do; and the voice of Re-union is making itself heard more and more every day. 'No further.' We cannot go on like this with the Apostles and Prophets, and our Lord Himself, all against us. 'On this Rock I will build My Church,' were Our Lord's words; not 'Churches.' 'The Pillar and Ground of the Truth,' is St. Paul's description of the Church. And again he says, 'We are all baptized by one spirit into one body.' 'If then,' says a great writer, 'the New Testament is to be our guide in matters ecclesiastical, one thing at least is certain. We may doubt whether Bishops are of obligation, whether there is an Apostolical Succession, whether Presbyters are Priests, whether St. Stephen and his associates were the first Deacons, whether the Sacraments are seven or two; but of one thing we cannot doubt, that all Christians were in that first age bound together in one body, with an actual intercommunion and mutual relations between them, with ranks and offices and a central authority; and that this organized association was "the body of Christ," and that in it, considered as one, dwelt the "One Spirit." * We are not here entering into any question as to whether change of circumstance and time has compelled a modification of this order. We are merely contemplating the Church in its *very beginning*, and the passage we have quoted does seem to give a true account of it. Here then we have the first and all-important lesson in our study of this great subject. To be saturated with the obvious but terrible contrast between what Our Lord meant us to be and what we are in fact. Not to regard Unity as a beautiful idea of our own making, but to submit to it absolutely and unreservedly as a *creation of God*. 'His hand is not shortened, but our iniquities have divided between us and our God.' None of us can escape this indictment. We look with dismay upon the work of our own hands.

2. And this leads us to our second lesson. A deep sense of the contrast between our Lord's idea of His Church and what we are forced to see around us, must be followed up by an unreserved confession that each one of us has had a hand in the mischief. And surely to us Anglicans this is just now the easiest lesson of all. The prosecution of the Bishop of Lincoln is a shame and rebuke to us, take what view

of it we will. No room now for picking holes in our neighbours. No time either, for every moment requires attention to ourselves. 'First cast out the beam out of thine own eye,' applies as truly to sections of the Church as to individuals who compose them. Humility, indeed, is the lesson written all over the present situation, for we must remember that our divisions are watched and scorned by grave thinkers outside the Church, however complacently we may view them from within. Only last September, in the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. Leslie Stephen reminded us that 'Christianity has broken up into numerous and utterly discordant sections,' and drew from this the inference that it was 'hopeless to assert that morality is caused by a belief in it.'

We hope after this that none of us will languidly acquiesce in a state of things so threatening and disastrous. It will not be Lord Nelson's fault if we do. Meantime, it is certain that many excellent and well-meaning persons recognize neither the *danger* nor the *duty*. 'People differ,' they say, 'on other subjects, why not also on religion?' a remark which is all the more dangerous because of the element of truth that lies hidden in it. No, truth is one, and must really be consistent with itself. Thus it is that the seriousness with which the duty of unity is urged upon us by Our Lord and His Apostles finds its ample justification in the dangerous confusion resulting from its neglect.

Here then we have two introductory lessons in the study of this question, which must be burnt into the mind and heart of every Christian. The divisions we see around us are one and all evidences of *grave disobedience to the Divine Head of the Church*, and each one of us is in some measure responsible for them.—*Spencer Jones, in Church Bells.*

'THE CIVIL WAR OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.'

We cannot refrain from saying a few words about the painful spectacle, now presented to Christendom, of the prosecution of the Bishop of Lincoln. It is now more than fifteen centuries since the Emperor Constantine, at the Council of Nicaea, told the assembled bishops, that to his mind 'far worse than any war or battle, was the *civil war of the Church of God*.' In the fifteen centuries which have since elapsed, the Church, alas! has not learnt wisdom. Over and over again has she been rent with internal dissensions. And once again, after eighteen hundred years of Christian teaching, of which not the least important precept is 'Love one another,' the same sad spectacle is presented. The Church of England, the broadest and most liberal Church in all the world—the Church whose basis is surely wide enough to include all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, the Church which welcomes alike within her fold the Ritualist and the Evangelical, and which holds in reverence the names of Maurice and Kingsley, of Stanley and Robertson—is at this moment divided against itself! not on essentials but on unessentials! not on points of doctrine but on disputed points of ritual and law.

Without attempting to enter into the merits of the case, or to apportion the blame to the one side or the other, we may say that we are simply amazed that any loyal Churchmen should be found who are thus willing, for the sake of the points at issue, to destroy the peace of the Church, and to give an occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. To those personally concerned, the points in dispute appear no doubt of the highest religious importance; but is not this a case in which the famous rebuke of Dr. Tillotson is eminently applicable, when, as Dean of St. Paul's he said to

*Essays, Critical and Historical, Newman, vol. II., p. 25 (7th edition).