

The Church Guardian

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See page 14.

CALENDAR FOR JUNE.

- JUNE 3—1st Sunday after Trinity.
“ 10—2nd Sunday after Trinity. (*Notice of
St. Barnaba's Day*).
“ 11—ST. BARNABAS. A. & M.
“ 17—3rd Sunday after Trinity.
“ 24—4th Sunday after Trinity.
“ —Nativity of St. John Baptist. (*Notice
of St. Peter's Day*).
“ 29—ST. PETER. A. & M.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

On this day is gathered into a summary the teaching of the round of Christian seasons which has lasted half the year. In no one place in the Holy Scriptures is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity expressly stated or formulated, but the whole New Testament bears witness to it. There is but one God, yet each Person of the Holy Trinity is shown to be Almighty God. Each Person is distinctly stated to be God; each Person has His own particular office, and there are some works which are given us as being performed by each of the Three. God has revealed many things to our intellects as well as to our souls, so that we can grasp them with the mind as well as the soul, and understand them. But other truths are revealed to the soul alone, the intellect being incapable of receiving them, and these truths, which must be received, yet cannot be understood, are called “mysteries,” secret things, matters to the knowledge of which initiation is necessary. It is wonderful that God has revealed so much of Himself to man as He has done. Man cannot expect to understand all the “deep things of God,” but when a truth is revealed to him he should humbly receive it. There is a well-known story of St. Augustine of Hippo, who was walking by the sea-shore meditating on a sermon in which he had promised to explain fully to his people the mystery of the Holy Trinity. He saw a child at play with a shell, running constantly to a little hole in the sand, and emptying water into it from the sea. Being questioned, the little child said he was trying to empty all the sea into the little hole, and when the good Bishop smiled and said it was impossible, the child replied, “Not more impossible than it is for your human mind to contain the mystery of the Holy Trinity,” and vanished.

GOD THE FATHER.

The Jews knew nothing of the Holy Trinity, but simply believed in “One God.” That is to say, they knew only the unity of the Godhead, and not the Trinity of the Persons. This was a matter of gradual revelation. We may see it in the formula of the prophets. In the Old Testament the prophets professed their words with “Thus saith the Lord.” Their words were inspired directly by the Holy Spirit in Person (2 St. Peter i. 21), though they did not know this. But in the New Testament the formula becomes “Thus saith the Holy Ghost” (Acts

xxi. 11), for the Holy Spirit was now revealed, and men knew Him as the Inspirer (Collect V., Easter). God the Father is (1) the Author and (2) the Sustainer of all life. He is the Father of the only-begotten Son; He is also “Our Father,” as the Son Himself taught us to say. It is difficult to say in the Old Testament which acts are those of God the Father more especially than those of the other two blessed Persons, but in the New Testament the distinction is very clearly drawn, chiefly by St. John. Indeed, all through St. John's Gospel we see the clearest proofs of the Three Separate Persons. The Father wills His children by adoption to be reconciled to Him through the only-begotten Son. He is not, as some would have it, an angry God, whose wrath is with difficulty appeased by the one Great Sacrifice. He is the loving Father who alone can combine perfect justice with mercy. His very perfection of justice calls for the punishment of every sin; His mercy allows that punishment to be borne by the Son for us. Our inheritance in Heaven was lost to us by the fall, it is regained by the atoning sacrifice—our sonship is restored, and our inheritance with it.

GOD THE SON.

The ideas of the Jews respecting God the Son were necessarily vague and unformed. They knew that there had been certain manifestations by God of Himself in different forms—to Hagar (Genesis xvi.), to Abraham (Genesis xviii. and xxii.), to Jacob (Genesis xxxii.), to Balaam (Numbers xxii.), to Joshua (Joshua v.), and that in each case the “Angel” spoke, not in the name of God, but in the first person: “I will”; “thy way is perverse before Me”—that He accepted worship as God, which no angel ever allowed. It is the general belief of theologians that this “Angel” was God the Son. But with the Incarnation came the beginning of a clear and distinct revelation, the personalities of the Father and the Son being perfectly distinct. The Apostles, especially Nathaniel (who was probably Bartholomew) and St. Peter, distinctly owned that Christ was the Son of God (St. John i. 49, St. Matthew xiv. 33, xvi. 16); but from their subsequent words and conduct it may be doubted if they fully realised the meaning of their own words. The revelation of God the Son by Himself did not take anything like its full effect until after the Resurrection, when the slowness of belief, followed by the fervent exclamation of St. Thomas (St. John xx. 28), indicates that at last they had received the full truth. St. Thomas's slowness of belief seems to show that he fully realized what the Resurrection, if true, must mean, and he was afraid to receive so tremendous a truth except upon undeniable evidence. The Ascension completed the revelation. The Apostles no longer grieved for the absence of the Son of God in the flesh, for they knew now that He was God. Again, the appearance of our Lord to St. Paul instantly produced in him the most profound and intense conviction. Finally, the appearance of Christ as told in the Revelation is given us, that we may know that the Son of God in the flesh sits at the right hand of the Father until He shall come again to judge the living and dead.

GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

Article V. gives us briefly the truth of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit—that He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and that He is “of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.” His name is joined inseparably with those of the Father and the Son by our Lord Himself (St. Matthew xxviii. 19). St. Peter plainly says He is God (Acts v. 4), for after rebuking Ananias for lying to the Holy Ghost, he says, “Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” He has the attributes and offices of God—thus, He is the Comforter (or Strengtheners), the

Guide, the Inspirer, the Indweller, the Sanctifier, the Revealer. He is spoken of as striving with man (Genesis vi. 3), and as being grieved with men's sins (Ephesians iv. 30). His work is always going on within us. In the answer to the question in the Catechism, “What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy belief?” we say God the Father “hath made” us, and God the Son “hath redeemed” us, but in speaking of the Holy Spirit the past tense is exchanged for the present, and we say He “sanctifieth” us. The Father's great work was to create us and give us our life: that of the Son was our Redemption, finished on the Cross; but the chief work of the Holy Ghost is our Sanctification, which must always go on through this life. It seems as if the personality of the Holy Spirit is hardly recognized clearly enough, or more prayers would be addressed to Him personally. We ask God to send His Holy Spirit into our hearts, but it would surely be well to personally address the Holy Spirit Himself, recognising Him as God, and praying that He will more and more take possession of our hearts. The gift of the Holy Ghost was from the time of His descent considered the most precious of gifts, and was solemnly administered by the laying on of hands. The general gift of the in-dwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in all believers, and the more special gift to ordained ministers, was often accompanied by miraculous powers, such as the power of healing the sick and raising the dead, speaking with tongues, &c., but these were minor gifts of less importance, granted to a few persons for a special object, and suspended when that object was gained. The main gift is just the same now as then, and will be until the end of the world.

THE “DOUBLE PROCESSION.”

In the Nicene Creed we speak of the Holy Ghost “Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,” but the words “and the Son” are not found in the earliest versions of the Creed. This Creed, which was drawn up at the Council of Nicæa (A.D. 325), stopped short at the words, “And I (or we) believe in the Holy Ghost.” It was confirmed at the Councils of Constantinople (A.D. 381) and Ephesus (A.D. 431), though it seems probable that by this time the latter clauses were added. Certainly the words “and the Son” (the “Filioque” clause) were not then contained in it. At the Council of Ephesus the Creed was declared inviolate, incapable of addition, and for some time remained untouched. But about 150 years later the famous clause “and the Son” was inserted, probably by the provincial council of Toledo (A.D. 589), which of course had no right to do it. But all through the West it was felt that the words stated a Divine truth, and they were thus retained. From this arose the great division between the Eastern and Western branches of the Church, which unhappily continues to this day, although there have lately been some signs of awakening brotherly feeling between the Church of England and the Eastern Church. The question seems to be less one of belief than of the right to add these words to the Creed. The real difference between East and West may be thus stated: the Western Church holds that the Holy Spirit proceeds equally from the Father and the Son, while the Eastern holds that He proceeds from the Father through the Son. This is not the only cause of division between these two branches of the Church, but it is the chief.

HERESIES AND MISTAKES.

Men have constantly endeavoured to understand the nature of the Holy Trinity, and tried to explain it, and thus have fallen into vital error. As the Apostles' Creed was attacked—not the actual form of it which we have now, but the simple belief it expresses—it was found necessary to guard against prevailing errors