

# The Church Guardian

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## Special Notice.

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### CALENDAR FOR NOVEMBER.

NOV. 1st—ALL SAINTS' DAY.  
 " 7th—20th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 14th—21st Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 21st—22nd Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 28th—1st Sunday in ADVENT.—Notice of St. Andrew.  
 " 30th—ST. ANDREW, A. & M.

### THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND NO SEPARATIST.

BY THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWELL.

The Church of England stands the one Church which has never separated from any Church or person. I speak of this, because, while many points of our Church's position have been cleared up to her people by better information lately, their answers on this point seem still uncertain. *The Church of England has never separated from any one.* Some people say this is not true; others say so much the worse for her. The first mean, she separated from Rome, and she drove out Nonconformists; the second mean, some that schism is glorious. Dissent for Dissent's sake is noble, every man is his own Church; others, that Christians ought to form a perfect Church of saints on earth, and come out from the unclean thing and be separate from the world. Now I fancy that I observe some weakness in Churchmen's replies to such positions. The history of Church endowments is a little better understood than it was and the relations to Church and State. Men will be able to deal with cavillers about the word *established*, though, indeed, had the Church been established by Legislature, I see no discredit that would attach to that form of national acceptance, any more than to its acceptance by chieftains, kings, and Witenagemots. It would still mean, not *making*, but *accepting* the Church doctrines and system. Still, as a fact, the word was first introduced in documents as a big word, not to express "set up by law," but to express "fully settled, recognised, and existing." Recent discussions seem to have cleared up fogs from these questions of temporalities. But when the Church is called only *one sect* among many, or is said to have taken the place of a Romanist Church, or is said to have itself seceded from Rome, or is said to have been the creation of Henry VIII., or of Acts of Parliament, these statements are rarely met on the

historical facts as fully and directly as they should be. They touch another set of minds from those which harp on titles to property; but the minds which they perplex derive perhaps the most help to their conscience and knowledge. And yet the case of the English Church is as plain and complete in this respect as in respect to its property. We have got used now to old historic references, and when flaws are alleged in our title-deeds we have learnt not to surrender to opponents' claims without examining them. The strange thing is that popular delusions have been so far allowed to be created and pass current, that it seems incredible that they have been delusions.

There are six delusions with respect to the Church:

1. It is a *delusion* that the Church of England was *ever Roman*, or ever acknowledged, as a Church, any subjection to the Pope, or any other relation but that of an *independent English Church* (or Churches) established by the preaching of missionaries from Rome, accepted by kings and people of what we call England.

2. It is a *delusion* that the Church of England *seceded or separated from Rome*, as indeed she could not if she was always independent of her. She was, in fact, so insular that she had no occasion even to protest, as the German Protestants at Spire. She renounced certain mediæval errors promulgated from Rome, and at a certain stage in her reform the Pope desired all English who would follow him to withdraw from attending English Church services, and so the Pope made a (not very large) *Roman schism* in England, which remains till this day in our English Roman Catholic bodies.

3. It is a *delusion* that the Church of England was a *different Church after the Reformation* from before, any more than England is a different country because she has abrogated the slave trade, or had a Reform Bill, or than a drunkard's personal identity is lost if he reforms.

4. It is a *delusion* that King, Queen, and Parliament either *reformed* the Church or *ordered* that the Pope should no longer be her head. THE CHURCH DECLARED, what she has repeatedly testified on occasions of encroachment, that the Pope never had any more authority over her than any other foreign Bishop. Civil enactments maintained that declaration, at home and abroad, in secular action upon it.

5. It is a *delusion* that the recognition of the Royal supremacy meant or means any *spiritual headship*, or anything else than what had always been asserted—that the clergy of England, as well as the laity, are subject to English law, without appeal against it to a foreigner like the Pope; that the last appeal of all alike is to the Sovereign. It is strange, in the face of the very strong words of Henry and Elizabeth, that any delusion on this exists.

6. It is a *delusion* that *Parliament* settled the Church of England, or even that the Church is *subject to Parliament* now, except in matters affecting personal or property rights. The Church reformed her errors *herself*; her Prayer Book and her Articles are her own work. The Act of Submission, which is the limitation of her action, is in theory no more for her than for Parliament itself. It requires Convocation, as the Conqueror required, to be summoned by the Sovereign, as Parliament itself must be, and it requires that canons must have Royal assent for their enactments, just as Acts of Parliament themselves must have it. That has been the relation of councils and princes since Christianity was a recognised religion. Personal and property rights cover a great deal of ground, and civil compulsion in such matters can only be derived from Acts of Parliament, but Church authority is often of as much importance as civil force for obtaining action in Church matters, and the limitation upon that is not Parliament, but the Crown, as it has always been in England, at least since the Conquest.

In these six statements of delusions have I been repeating stale and elementary facts of Church history? To such a body they ought to be familiar, and I hope they are. But I repeat and repeat—the Church of England was *never Roman, but always national—has never changed, but been always herself; has never made any schism from any one; but every schism from her has been made by others.*

The Church of England made no schism from Rome, though Rome did from England, nor has the Church of England made any schism from Nonconformists. Her principle is reform, or, if you can't, secede. They form sects and advocate schism, and whether they are right or wrong in doing so is the question with them, not whether they do so. For one moment let me speak of the word "sect." Words are dreadful things—like the tongue itself, a little member, but a world of iniquity. You will hear people say the Church of England is only one among many sects, not meaning that the Church is one and the sects many, but that the Church is a sect like the others—with no intention to disparage her thereby—which shows an instinct that she ought not to be a sect. Probably the phrase is due to pure misuse of an obscure word, as if sect meant quite a different word, section—i.e., part or division—whereas *sect* means "following," the followers of some individual teacher *against received thought* usually upon some particular question. The sting of the word lies in this meaning, which does not apply to the Church, which *represented the received thought*, from which followers of individual teachers separated upon particular questions—the Brownists, on Mr. Browne's idea of congregations; the Quakers, on Mr. Fox's idea of externals in religion; the Wesleyans, on Mr. Wesley's idea of Methodist spirituality; and so with the long list of "ites" and "ists" and "ans" affixed to proper names, all separated from the Church, which held the common truth, as followers of some one man or some one question. So they are sects in the true meaning of the word, which the Church is not. There ought to be no offense in this. It is unnecessary to be always talking pedigrees: but on the occasions where a pedigree is the question, it must be talked about. Sects are sects, and, whether rightly or wrongly, *have made schisms*, which is not true of the Church. Churchmen ought to be quite distinct that the Church of England does, as a matter of historical fact, stand on an *absolutely different level from the sects which have separated from it.*

I do not propose to discuss this level as if reunion were possible; the uncompromising spirit of Baxter at the Savoy Conference is a spirit in Britons still. But I will offer two remarks, one historical, the other practical, and I offer them for our own consideration rather than for others. I put aside the stock recriminations as to the causes of Dissent, whatever truth there be on each side, one imputing all blame to Church apathy and unspirituality, the other to vanity, pique, self-will, love of power, or quarrel. Let us hope that each may rise above these faults now. But I observe that the argument "it is primitive" is put in the place of the more undesirable argument "I choose," for both the chief aims which have led to Dissent—i.e., both for the Puritan aim at perfection in a church of canonised saints, and for the Independents' aim at liberty from authority in Independent congregations. On this historical issue I offer this consideration to you. The test of a custom's existence must be its recognition when first asserted, argued, and decided. Now these two aims were, if not the very first two, among the very first issues raised and settled by the early Christians. As soon as Christians arose who desired to separate into a body of more perfect saints than the whole Church, that question was discussed. As soon as Christians arose who claimed to associate independently as they liked in a place where a *paroikia* was organized, that question was dis-