

# The Church Guardian.

Upholds the Doctrines and Rubrics of the Prayer Book.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—Eph. vi. 24.  
 "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3.

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## A Few Thoughts FOR Good Friday.

The singular title by which this day is known, is only more appropriate than it would have been, were it called *Bad Friday*; for viewed from the side of humanity, it is signalised by the *worst act* that ever was perpetrated. But because the act has another side, and the goodness that results from the Divine Will in it, surpasses the evil consequences of the diabolical intention, it is better called *Good Friday*.

I.—This day is marked by the *greatest sin* ever committed, for upon it, the civil authorities of the known world aided the spiritual rulers of the Jewish Church, in breaking their own laws by shedding for them the Innocent Blood flowing in the veins of their Messiah the Lord of Glory.

There was neither right form nor fairness of judicature in this condemnation. The Rulers did not mistake Christ's claim, but their decision expressed the rejection of it by the nation. They had determined to put Him to death, and they endeavored to do so formally; but not succeeding, they forced the Jewish law to their own ends.

Christ was led before Annas probably to find a pretext for His condemnation. He was led before Caiaphas privately for the same end. The Sanhedrim interrogated Him for the like purpose. False witnesses were sought, but in vain. Caiaphas at last stands up and adjures the Accused, as if He had been a witness, (Lev. v, i) to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Our Lord, on this appeal, declares Himself the Christ, the Son of God, and quoting Daniel vii, 13-14, predicts His second coming.

Upon this He is at once condemned; though His trial was illegal according to Jewish law, in five points.

1. The process began, continued and ended, in *one night*.
2. The witnesses against the Accused were *obtained by the judges*.
3. The *evidence was not sustained* even by them.
4. It commenced with *interrogations*, which the Hebrew law does not sanction; and ended with a demand for *confession*, which its doctors expressly forbid.
5. It was followed *twenty-four hours too soon by a sentence*, which described a claim to be Fulfiller of the hopes of Israel, as blasphemy.

The consideration of the Claim itself they never once entertained.

Condemned without the common justice which any malefactor might demand, we see the Messiah fulfilling the prediction:

"In His humiliation His judgment was taken away."

The Roman Governor Pilate, was exceedingly afraid of the Person of Christ he acquitted

Him of one charge after another, employing many expedients to release Him, but yielded at last to the fear that he might himself be misrepresented to Caesar. Thus, the officer of the greatest civil power the world has ever known, deliberately and against his conscience, perverted justice, judgment and truth, in delivering the Holy and Innocent Jesus to His enemies.

These enemies themselves, consciously or not, testify to His Innocence.

1. Caiaphas. "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people." St. John xi, 50.
2. The Pharisees, one to another: "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him." St. John xii, 19.
3. Pilate. "I find no fault in this Man." St. Luke xxiii, 4-14.
4. Pilate's wife. "Have thou nothing to do with that just Man." St. Matt. xxvii, 19.
5. Herod. "No, nor yet Herod." St. Luke xxiii, 15.
6. Judas. "I have betrayed the Innocent Blood." St. Matt. xxvii, 4.
7. The Chief Priests. "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." St. Matt. xxvii, 42; St. Luke xxiii, 35.

What does this crime teach us?  
 It is the fashion now-a-days to speak as if the sin and evil of the human race were in process of remedy by civilisation, culture and extended science. As if sin and ignorance were convertible terms, and that the one would disappear, as the other fades before the light of extended knowledge.

This act, contrived, planned and executed by the cultured, the intellectual and the most highly civilised of their age, convicts the world of Sin. This act is what the human heart is capable of, when God does not govern it.

Christianity declares that this laying down of His life by the Son of God, was the culminating act of His taking our nature upon Him; and that since, and by virtue of His Incarnation, a new power of victory over evil has been infused into Humanity. Nothing shows us more strongly the need of this new power, than the awful wickedness of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. It lays bare depths of malice, hatred, injustice and cruelty, intensified by intellectual cultivation, which must make the most thoughtless turn from the mere sharpening of the mind, to the training of the moral and spiritual side of our nature, as the real means of progress. As a revelation to us of the possible outcome of our own passions, we might well call this day *Bad Friday*.

II.—Yet, after all, the "Good" of the Friday immeasurably exceeds the "Bad," for to-day is sanctified by the GREATEST MORAL ACT the world has ever witnessed.

In what does a good deed consist?  
 There are four conditions for the perfection of a virtuous action:—

1. It must be done (1) with a *full knowledge of the deed*.
  2. It must be done (2) *after free moral choice*.
  3. It must be done (3) *disinterestedly and not selfishly*.
  4. It must be done (4) *upon principle and not by haphazard*.
- Our Lord fulfilled these four conditions in His death.

1. *With the full knowledge of the deed, He Himself thrice prophesies His crucifixion.*

- (a) Six months before. St. Matt. xvi, 21.
- (b) St. Matt. xvii, 22.
- (c) Three months before the end. St. Matt. xx, 17, 18, 19.

2. *After free moral choice.* "No man taketh (My life) from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." St. John x, 18.

3. *Disinterestedly and unselfishly.* St. Peter's testimony—1 Peter ii, 24 "Who His Own Self bare our sins in His Own Body on the tree." There are seven pronouns in the 24th verse referring to our Lord, and for all of us.

The Lord's own words are, that He gave "His life a ransom for many." St. Matt. xx, 28.

There is an old saying of Indian wisdom, about 200 B.C., "A good man who thinks only of benefitting his enemy, has no feeling of hostility towards him, even at the time of being destroyed by him: the sandal tree at the moment of being cut down, sheds perfume on the edge of the axe."

This beautiful thought became a fact, when the first word was spoken from the Cross.

4. *Upon principle and not by haphazard.*  
 Christ's death was prefigured and fore-ordained. It was prophesied of by Moses, and in the Psalms, and by the Prophots. Typified in the law and by the sacrifices. "Thus it must be," He Himself said. St. Matt. xxvi, 54. Therefore He is called, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. xiii, 8.

The Person of Christ renders this propitiation INFINITE.

The HUMAN NATURE of Christ renders it APPLICABLE TO EVERY MAN.

The world has set up many idols only to dash them down and trample them under foot as it finds out their impotency. The human mind has put forth many ideals, only to fall back from them into the darkness, baffled and weary. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ endures unshaken amid the throes of minds and nations, because by His life and death He has restored to the human race the *idea of God*, the *government of God* and the *power of God*, lost to them by sin.

When a key is found that fits into the intricacies of a hitherto closed lock, we recognise the hand of the master maker, and in like manner we own in Jesus Christ the true Way back to God when we find that only in Him can our nature find its rest and its perfection.

The intellect is enlightened by His Teaching.  
 The will is stirred by His Example.  
 The heart is touched by His Love.

This is true, incontestably true, but the lifted-up cross of Good Friday touches a still deeper need of humanity, the need of PARDON FOR SIN. It is not enough for me that He who hangs there reconciles the alienated race to its God. I want to find *personal deliverance*; *personal redemption*; *personal peace*. The testimony of thousands of pardoned souls cries out from amongst the living, to the great white robed multitude whom no man can number—"He hath redeemed us by His Blood." What I need is found, and found only before that cross and sacrifice, which marks this day above all days as *Good*. *Good*, as it leads me through the knowledge of my own sin, to the Sin-bearer. *Good*, as it brings me to the Feet of the true