

The Church Guardian

—: EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

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CALENDAR FOR SEPTEMBER.

SEPT. 2—15th Sunday after Trinity.
" 7—Friday.—Fast.
" 9—16th Sunday after Trinity.
" 14—Friday.—Fast.
" 16—17th Sunday after Trinity.
" 19—Ember Day.—Fast.
" 21—{ St. MATTHEW.
Ember Day.—Fast.
" 22—Ember Day.—Fast.
" 23—18th Sunday after Trinity.
" 28—Friday.—Fast.
" 29—St. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.
" 30—19th Sunday after Trinity.

"STRENGTH AND PEACE."

A SERMON Preached before the Diocesan Synod of Nova Scotia, in St. Luke's Cathedral, Halifax, June 22nd, 1894, by REV. FRANCIS PART-
RIDGE, D.D., Rector of St. George's Church,
Halifax; Canon of St. Luke's; and
Secretary of the Diocese.

THE LORD sitteth above the water flood;
AND THE LORD remaineth a King for ever:
THE LORD shall give strength unto His people;
THE LORD shall give His people the blessing of
peace.—*Psalms xxix. 10, 11.*

The Psalm is a magnificent description of the Rule of God over nature. From the rolling thunders of the storm to the birthpangs of the lower creation; in the primeval forest and the mighty ocean; o'er the sandy wastes of wilderness and in the recesses of the sanctuary where He is to be worshipped in the beauty of holiness: the voice of the Lord claims and exerts the pre-eminence and controlling power. Waters may rage and swell; trees of the forest be broken in pieces; lightnings may flash; the tender sound be heard of the gentle hind moaning over her young; and the sweet accents of supplication be offered in the temple courts. Yet all is in God's hand. He ruleth His whole creation. He knoweth His own. And upon the people of His loving care He in the midst of trial and danger bestows the blessing of *Strength and Peace*.

From the world of nature to the realm of the intellectual and spiritual the transition of thought is easy. And it is no small comfort to God's people now, as it has ever been in the history of the Church and the world, in the midst of all things which can arouse anxiety and create alarm, to have the abiding consciousness that the Lord sitteth upon the flood. There is no greater source of assurance for the perplexed mind, and the soul that is sore troubled about public events, than the study of history. The intelligent and prayerful student of the centuries that are past can place himself in imagination among the scenes and catastrophes of the world, and can feel with the actors in them the full significance of the problems pressing upon them for solution, and the gloomy forecast of the future. He can then survey the dawn arising out of darkness, the glory that

succeeds the gloom; and, watching the hand and the voice of God guiding, controlling and bringing mighty things to pass, sinks to his knees at once for pardon of his faithlessness and in adoring acknowledgement of the Sovereignty of His God.

The temptation to many is to feel and declare that the present is a crisis in the history of the Church; and that never before were there so many difficulties in her path and hindrances to her progress as now. The fact is that the Church of Christ is *always at a crisis*. The closing and sealing of the stone over the dead body of the world's Redeemer; the meeting of St. Paul with the keenness and subtlety of Greek thought on Mars' Hill; the blood of virgin martyrs staining the sand in the Roman amphitheatre; the conflict of revelation with man's uncurbed reasonings when Athanasius stood against the world; the awesome yielding of a Christianity enervated by worldliness before the swift sword of Islam; the subtle disputations of the schoolmen in the realm of metaphysics in which truth swayed back and forth like a bending reed which never broke; the gradual arousing of the conscience by the spirit of God and the rising of the spiritual over the carnal in the struggles preceding the Reformation; the appalling division, the burnings and torturings, the unworthy motives and base passions which accompanied that greatest revolution since the planting of the Christian Church; the deadly somnolence and timeserving of the eighteenth century ending as it did with the human hell of the French Revolution; and in this century the startling, and in many cases probably the abiding, changes of thought consequent upon the discoveries of science and the progress of archaeological and critical investigation: *at what time and under what circumstances* can it be said that the Church has not been in a crisis? No more so at one time than at another. And always by the good hand of her God upon her, developing arguments, evolving champions, setting up barriers, and passing the crisis. Sometimes crippled and wounded and with her best and purest at rest forever. Not always in ways expected or foreseen. Seldom with progressive results quite clearly perceived by herself. Yet ever over the waterflood the Lord sitteth. Yet in the midst of apparent confusion; amid all the conflict, the dust, and the blood; unholy schemes shattered, ungodly combinations rent in pieces, the world, the flesh and the devil routed and Truth and Righteousness triumphant, the Lord remaineth a King!

And can this ever on earth be otherwise?

The Church of God is set for the defence, maintenance, and advance of certain divine principles, entrusted to her by her great Head. These principles must always be from the nature of the case opposed to the principles of the world. She must not expect the world to favor her. The more she is in favor with the world the more she will fail in her Divine Mission. Social improvement, the regeneration of society by the reform of social wrongs, is not her chief aim. She may recognize the fact that certain social conditions are more or less favorable to the right discharge of the obligations of religion. There may be forms of social or sanitary improvement with which her members may associate themselves. Temperance reform, the better housing of the poor, the improvement of workshops; the reclaiming of the drunkard and the vicious, the encouragement of true education, the provision for wholesome recreation and such like objects may secondarily engage her attention and become her suitable labors of love. And she is by no means careless of them. But her great commission is to preach the Gospel, and to maintain inviolate the laws of its Founder and Lord. Her great business is with the soul. To convey God's message of love and mercy to a world that lieth in wickedness; to be the channel of God's grace to souls conscious of sin and craving for a Sa-

viour; to raise up them that fall; to comfort those that mourn; to rouse men dead in trespasses and sins, and bid them flee from the wrath to come; to bear steadfast and unswerving testimony both by word and deed to the unchanging and unchangeable deposit of the Faith once for all delivered to the saints; to "bind the whole world in golden chains around the feet of God"; this, this, is her glorious mission! Her business is, not to choke investigation and thought, but to sift and examine them by her immutable standards; not to denounce true science but to welcome and test it; not to abuse gainsayers, but to lovingly convince and win them; and above all to shew in life and conduct the sternness of Christ against sin and His yearning love for the sinner; to exhibit in the dread pressure and grim struggle of life the consistent meekness of the Master; to turn the other cheek to the fierce blow; and never from angry passion or wounded self-love, by recrimination and violence of language or action, to show that the love of Christ does not constrain her, and that the principles she professes do not guide her children in practice.

But is the Church of God doing this to-day? Is not the state of things such that thinking men ask whether there is any guidance at all? Do not men enquire whether the Church of God exists? And if so where? Is it God's directing hand or man's weakness that has brought about the present complexity? One church claims to be the sole repository of God's truth; another so-called Church denies that there is a personal God at all. One Christian body falls down and worships the Queen of Heaven, another declares that neither the mother nor her Divine Son is to be so regarded, for that they were but mere ordinary people. One denomination asserts the essential necessity of Christian Baptism as the entrance into God's visible kingdom, another proclaims the Gospel and never mentions baptism at all, except to pour scorn and contempt upon those who conscientiously hold and teach that a soul is made one with God, an adopted child of God, by means of that Holy Sacrament. The other great Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord is by one section of Christendom ignored, its frequent attendance deemed a superstition, and its pretended powers a fraud; to others it is the central act of worship, and the great means of union with Christ the Lord. One body declares that membership in the Visible Church is a necessity to salvation; another cries loudly that there is no visible Church, but that the true Church consists of all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and that the signs of membership are invisible. One branch of Christendom maintains that there is an actual visible head of Christ's realm on earth, and calls upon all to obey his infallible judgments. Another answers that there is no visible head, no sacraments, no ministry, no outward laws, no such thing as infallible decisions, no creed, no forms, and no binding terms of union! To one Christian the Word of God and his own interpretation of it are his only guide. To another the Bible is nothing more than a fortuitous assemblage of heterogeneous writings, much of which is false, some immoral, and of which he will take only what suits him and becomes true through his patronage and adoption. In the midst of this chaos of opinion is it not an unspeakable relief to remember, that the Lord sitteth a King for ever?

But if He is, then is He not a King of order? If He remaineth a King, must it not be over a Kingdom?

The Lord Jesus Christ ere he ascended into Heaven founded a society which was to be world wide. Against the inertia of an effete but still powerful heathen philosophy the new teaching of the law of love forced its gentle way. No sword devoured all its enemies before its face. No crimson tide of foemen's blood stained the passage of the Religion of the Divine Fatherhood. Slowly, steadily, working upwards from