

# The Church Guardian

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## Special Notice.

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## CALENDAR FOR AUGUST.

AUG. 6th—TRANSFIGURATION.

" 7th—9th Sunday after Trinity.

" 14th—10th Sunday after Trinity.

" 21st—11th Sunday after Trinity.

" 24th—ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

" 28th—12th Sunday after Trinity.

## BISHOP SPALDING, (OF COLORADO) ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

(From Lecture No. 2 of the Church and its  
Apostolic Ministry.)

The Church of Christ is a visible Society, divine in origin and character, One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. Its founder is Jesus Christ. He is its Head. His Spirit is its life and sanctification. He gave it its Scriptures, instituted its Sacraments, appointed and qualifies its Ministers. The final cause or end of the Church is the regeneration and salvation of mankind. It is Holy, because endowed with the instrumentalities for making men holy. It is Apostolic, because built on the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone. And other foundation, in doctrine, polity, organization, can no man lay, or any body of men, however excellent their character or their objects, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ in His Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. It is Catholic, because not intended for a single nation or people, but for all; because it is the conservator and teacher of the whole Faith, which is adequate for the salvation of all; because it is comprehensive in character, not narrow and sectarian, and intended to embrace the whole family of God's elect children. It is One, because it is Christ's Body; because it was founded as One, with one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. iv, 5, 6), and "one hope," one end, one object in the world; because all its branches have the same essential organization, the same union with Christ, and the same life.

Of all the notes of the Church none present any peculiar difficulty except that of Catholic unity. The facts seem to contradict the only theory that it is possible to deduce from the Scriptures, or that is at all compatible with their teachings.

An illustration may, however, make the real unity of the Church clear to us: To understand how the visible Church is One, represent it to yourself as a goodly tree, "the goodly cedar of Apostolic and Catholic" Christianity embodied in its Apostolic form and organiza-

tion. The grain of seed planted by Christ has germinated. It has grown. It is firmly rooted in the soil. Its single trunk rises majestically towards the heavens. On every side its divergent branches spread abroad. Each multiplies into innumerable boughs, with branchlets, twigs, leaves and foliage, budding and bearing fruit. The root is the Faith of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Its trunk is Jesus Christ, God-man. Its main branches are represented in the twelve, in the results of their teaching and Apostolic labors, and St. Paul and his Apostolic associates and companions. It spreads forth in their successors and the Churches they founded. On one side are Greece, Rome, Spain, Britain. On another are Egypt, Alexandria, Carthage. On another are Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople. In every direction branches shoot forth, all deriving their life from the root, all from the same great trunk. You will perceive that the tree is one, however many be the branches. They may grow far apart. There may be no direct interchange or immediate actual fellowship of branch with branch, and bough with bough. Yet all live by the same life. The same root bears and sustains them. They are all parts of one and the same tree. There may be limbs on the tree, of which one side is dead or decaying. Whole branches may lose their vitality. The life sap from the root may no longer circulate in them. Their foliage falls. Their fruit withers. They cease to be parts of the tree. They will fall off, if they are not pruned away. On another side parasite plants may gather. They live upon the tree, but their life comes not from it. They represent the Corruptions which cling to parts of the Church which are otherwise Catholic and Apostolic. Yet even here, so far as these branches live and flourish, they are true branches of the one Tree. Again, there may be branches widely different in their character. Some are large, some small, some gnarled and crooked, and without external grace; and others are thrifty, graceful and beautiful. They are one in the life by which they grow and flourish.

The life of the branches is chiefly in the doctrines that relate to the person and work of Jesus Christ and in the Holy Ghost. It is but in small measure in usages or rituals, and only as these have life in them as being grounded in or conformable to Holy Scripture; it is not even in polity, except as it is Apostolic and so conserves the Apostolic Faith. I greatly doubt whether there was ever a necessity which would justify even a temporary abandonment of Episcopacy. And yet loyal members of the English Church and even the most strenuous asserters of the divine origin and authority of Episcopal Government, acknowledged the Continental Churches to be true branches of the Catholic Church, albeit in a measure defective, and cherished them as Christian Churches, and held for a time occasional communion with them. But this was on the ground of the belief that the loss of Episcopacy was temporarily unavoidable, but that it would be secured again in less troublous times, according to the hope and purpose more or less distinctly avowed, of the best of the reformers. It is different, however, when the abandonment of Episcopacy has been wilful; when it is justified by no apparent necessity, when separation involves a gratuitous rending of the one Church of Christ. If you cut off a branch from the Apostolic Tree and plant it in the soil, it may live and flourish for a time, it may grow and bear fruit, but it is no part of the original Tree. Such are man-made Churches for the conserving and propagating of, it may be godly and true, opinions.

So much by way of recapitulation, and to show more clearly the nature of that unity which is a necessary mark or note of the Church. We are now prepared to advance to the next topic which belongs to our general subject. We are to speak now of the Authority of the Church. Among those who take a low view of the

Church, who look upon it as human and in no way divine, who regard it as only a voluntary society, of which Christians may or may not, in their own discretion, become members, its authority is seldom thought of. It would, however, even then, have a human authority which would be real and binding. It would decide upon its own principles and their application. It would admit and exclude members. Every one joining it must accept its obligations, and be called to account for any violation of its principles and rules. Every member, in a question of doubt, must yield his opinion to the decision of the Society. Its Constitution and principles must rule with all who have accepted them. The majority must govern the individual.

But the Church is not a voluntary Society, formed by men like-minded in opinion and agreeing in Faith. It stands on no earthly basis. It is for no temporal or earthly purposes. It is Christ's Institution. It is His Incarnate Life extended; His divine Humanity on earth. It is His Body. Or otherwise stated, it is the Association of men born into His Kingdom, chosen by Him, bound to Him and to each other in a covenant which he procured and of which He is the Mediator, having heavenly relationships, for ends which look forwards into eternity. It must, therefore, have an authority above that which it would have as a mere social organization—an authority which, like itself is Divine. It must have powers vested in it for the purposes for which it exists. Otherwise it could not act. Its attempts at action, according to its principles, would be nugatory.

This point is of very great importance. I desire to make it perfectly clear. If it were merely a voluntary and secular institution, its action would be limited to the things of earth. Its powers would be only such as could be instructed by those agreeing in its establishment; only such as belonged to its members as individuals, but which they consented to give up to the exercise of the body. It could govern only by previous consent. Every act looking beyond what was involved in the Compact would be attempted usurpation and would fail of its effect. It would have no right to proclaim the message: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not (disbelieveth) shall be damned" (St. Mark, xvi, 16). It would have no right, neither could it without profanity pretend, to offer eternal rewards nor threaten eternal penalties. It could not claim to be the absolute, exclusive teacher of the Truth. It could not say: This Gospel of ours is the only Gospel. Every other Gospel is false. He who teaches any other is a deceiver. Let him be Anathema Maranatha (1 Cor. xvi, 22). If the Church be not Christ's own Church, if its authority be not from Him, an antagonistic Church with an antagonistic Gospel to His, might be conceived of, as having equal claim upon the reverence and submission of mankind.

No such impotent organization as could be made by man is the Church of the living God. When He chose and appointed His human instruments for the establishment of His Institution, He empowered them fully for their work. He addressed them in terms which on the lips of a man only would be nothing less than blasphemy. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth," (St. Matt. xxviii, 18). "As my Father hath sent me even so send I you." (St. John xx, 21). Go ye, disciple all nations, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you, and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (St. Matt. xxviii, 20). Never before were powers so magnificent, so general, so all-comprehending, so Divine, conferred upon mortal men. You will observe that these powers were given to the Apostles in their official capacity, to the Apostolic office as continuous. They were given to them as officers of the Church. They were