

# The Church Guardian

— EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR: —

L. H. DAVIDSON, D.C.L., MONTREAL.

— ASSOCIATE EDITORS: —

REV. H. W. NYE, M.A., Rector, Bedford, P.Q. REV. EDWYN S. W. PENTREATH, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Address Correspondence and Communications to the Editor, P.O. Box 504. Exchanges to P.O. Box 1956. For Business announcements See page 14.

## SPECIAL NOTICE.

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## CALENDAR FOR AUGUST.

August 2nd—9th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 6th—Transfiguration.  
 " 9th—10th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 11th—12th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 13th—14th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 16th—17th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 19th—20th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 22nd—23rd Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 25th—26th Sunday after Trinity.  
 " 28th—29th Sunday after Trinity.

## TEXTS IN PREACHING.

Texts are either a cause of weakness or of strength to a sermon. A purely negative text is a detriment, for people expect a connection between it and the sermon. Better no text than one that does not aid the sermon. Let us speak, therefore, of the use and abuse of texts. 1. *Obscure or difficult texts* should neither be avoided nor constantly sought after. The skilled exegete may pick them out to display his skill; another preacher wisely avoids them because he has little exegetical skill. No text, however, should be taken that the preacher cannot grasp and explain. The more difficult the text, the clearer should be the exposition. A difficult text at once startles the hearer into asking, "What does it mean? How will it be treated?" When an obscure text can be clearly applied, so as to give strength or interest to a sermon, it is most desirable to use it. 2. *Inappropriate or misapplied texts* are quite as bad as obscure texts, more obscured. To preach on knowledge hereafter from the words, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," ignores who said this. Belittling adjustment is a form of misapplication; such, for example, as a funeral sermon of a man named Ezra from a text taken from the Book of Ezra. A text without adjustment is like a gun fired without regard to sighting and range. How can either hit the mark? A text is sometimes badly strained, as when Dean Swift took for his text, before an association of tailors, "A remnant shall be saved." 3. *Startling texts* are usually employed to create a sensation. A Brooklyn preacher received a merited rebuke when, after a sensational sermon from the words, "Let her drive," (Acts xxvii, 15,) a gentleman suggested to him the more timely phrase, "Let her rip." A startling text, however, is often just suited to a topic or time, and is like the voice crying in the wilderness. 4. *Exaggerated texts* usually find their level to the serious heart. Rhetorical and emotional preachers sometimes make their

texts a kind of "Magnificat" to their flights. For doctrinal purposes, exaggeration is perversion. Due allowance can be made for earnest belief in the explanation of texts,—not quite after Luther's way, when, after a logical exposition, he told his hearers that they would be damned if they did not accept his proofs. The most textual exaggeration is for personal or party ends; such as Macaulay relates of a sermon preached by a bishop in the reign of James II. Taking a text from Chronicles, he made James to be Solomon, Monmouth to be Adonijah, a Whig to be Thienel, a Rye-house conspirator to be Joab, and a Cavalier to be Abiathar. 5. *What shall we say of shorn texts?*—those so abbreviated as to express neither grammatical sense nor definite action. "Remember that by the space of three years," e.g., falls in both, although a young minister who had been settled that space of time probably did not think so when he sheared the full text for his benefit. Shorn texts are often undignified or ludicrous; such as, "How! ye," "Happy am I," "Greater things than these," etc. 6. *Ingenious texts*, when there is no distortion of sense or application, often have a freshness that acts as a fore-runner in the interest of the audience. Their exposition promotes scriptural study, and often causes a person to look up the text, who seldom turns the leaves of the Bible. And a fresh turn to an unexpected text is doubly stimulating; then the keen interest is likely to be sustained to the end of the sermon. A learned doctor speaks of the "fantastic period, when a strange text fascinates the preacher." If such text be taken because it is novelty, it is "fantastic," but if it can interest people and help them to understand a sensible subject, let it be taken. "Gashma saith it" (Neh. 6, 6.) was skilfully used by a noted preacher as a text on the evils of gossip. Fresh turns to texts are Dr. Brooks' special expository talent; so Dr. Bushnell's ingenious application of texts stimulated a deep interest to know what was coming.

No general or pointed rule can improve on the old one—"Stick to your text"; vary its application, vivify it, but never lose sight of it. Doctrine, ethics, or work can at least touch the text as the sermon gets on; or else take another text. There is danger in taking too much or too little time in its exposition. There is a right medium between twenty seconds and ten minutes in the textual exposition to a sermon of twenty or twenty-five minutes. Says a distinguished Professor: "One will pare and peel and slice and scrape a text, as if it were an apple. Another will crack it as if it were a nut." Let us vary his figures of speech a little, and say: Get to the core of a text neatly and readily; do not crush the shell as to endanger the kernel.

## THE CHURCH AND THE WESLEYANS.

Proposals have been made at various times for the corporate reconciliation of "the people called Methodists," or, as they prefer to be designated in the old country, Wesleyans. Theoretically, nothing should be easier than such an enterprise; for people who claim John Wesley for their founder, and who profess to reverence his writings as of almost apostolic authority, ought, above all things, to strive for the realization of his views; and the famous Korah sermon makes it clear that nothing

could have given him more pain than the thought of having called into being, not a handmaid of the Church of England, but a foe. The Rev. G. W. Danks, Vicar of Mortonby, Gainsborough, England, accordingly proposed, not long since, to the representatives of both the Wesleyan and the Primitive Methodists in his parish, that they should retain their preachers, their chapels, their class-meetings, their prayer-meetings, their Sunday-schools, and everything else that was characteristic of their system. He further proposed that the children of their schools should be included in the annual feast of the Church schools; and he offered, as his was the richest congregation, to help the two bodies pecuniarily to the utmost of his power. All that he asked in return was that they should declare themselves in unity with the Church of England, and communicate at the Parish Church. In other words, he offered them everything that John Wesley contemplated, or ever gave his personal followers. Unhappily, the Methodist authorities outside the Parish interposed and stopped the movement. We hope, however, that the attempt has not been in vain, but that the proposal having once been made, it will bear fruit; that first one or two, and then many Wesleyans will feel that they are bound by the very name they bear to clear themselves from the stain of a schism that would have been most odious to their founder. Unhappily, the formation of a sect always creates vested interests which offer enormous, if not insuperable difficulties to those who, the cause of separation having been removed, would fain retrace their steps. The line which the official advocates of modern Methodism take, though veiled in respectful language, really comes to this—"When John Wesley preached the Korah Sermon he was in his dotage, and we need not trouble ourselves about what he said. He must have known all along that he was founding a new sect, or, if he did not, he ought to have known it." But, alas! for the seamless robe of Christ. Alas! for the contempt which His professed disciples cast upon His words. Alas! for the human pride which would rather reign in a human sect than serve in the glorious Kingdom of God upon earth.

## EDITORIAL NOTES.

We call attention to the Paper read by R. H. Buchanan, Esq., at the last regular monthly meeting of the Sunday School Association of the Diocese of Montreal, commenced on page 12.

The death of Sir Moses Montefiore, "full of years, riches and honor," has removed from this earthly scene, the noblest modern representative of the ancient Jewish race. He was born at Leghorn in October, 1784, and was, consequently, within three months of the completion of his one hundred and first year. His long and useful life was mainly devoted to the relief and succor of the oppressed and persecuted members of his race in various parts of the world; and, with this object, he spent vast sums of money, and made many long and perilous journeys. Russia, Egypt, Rome, the Holy Land, and other places were, in turn, the scenes of his personal intervention and beneficent ministrations, which won for him the respect, not