

# 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.

## AUTHORITY.

One of the most thought inspiring books that we have met with for many a day is a volume published by Macmillan & Co., N.Y.; Dawson Bros. Montreal, \$1.50, under the title *SOCIAL ASPECTS OF CHRISTIANITY*, containing 14 sermons preached at Westminster Abbey by Rev Brooke Foss Westcott, D.D., D.C.L., Canon of Westminster, and Regius Professor of Divinity Cambridge. From it we take the following sermon under the above heading, preached on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24th, 1886), from the text in St. Luke xxii, 25: The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors—But ye shall not be so; but he that is greater among you let him become as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve."

These words from the Gospel of the day indicate a fundamental difference between heathen and Christian morality. On the one side there is the supreme authority of *force*: on the other side the supreme authority of *service*. The force may be intellectual or physical, but he that exercises it provides that his superiority shall be felt and acknowledged. The service may be rendered by one who has the unquestioned prerogative of years or place—by one who is older or by one who is called to lead—but he who renders it merges every claim to preeminence in the unaffected naturalness of his ministry. In the one case the individual himself asserts and claims homage as he stands alone: in the other case the body enjoys the vital office of the member, and the joy of the member is the consciousness of the common life.

The conception of life which is expressed in this contrast is characteristic of our Faith. It is the glory of Christianity that it has given dignity to weakness. The first benediction—*Blessed are the poor*—is indeed a moral Gospel: the truth which the Life and Work of Christ has made intelligible and attainable. Yes: we dare to say *Blessed are the poor, the poor in spirit*, not the poor-spirited, but they who in their inmost souls recognise the nobility of those traits which we habitually connect with the poor, the sense of reverence, the necessity of labour, the condition of dependence, the continuity of service. Reverence, labour, dependence, service, these are

marks of that social life which is founded in Christ, and which draws from Him its benediction and its strength.

But here let us not be mistaken. In hallowing this ideal Christianity has not lowered the standard of humanity. It has raised the standard immeasurably, while it has shewn that the highest is within the reach of all. It has opened our eyes to see a glory on the earth, a divine Presence everywhere about us, while it has written the sentence of transitoriness and corruption over all the objects of sense. It has emphasised the obligation of toil, while it has shewn that its painfulness is due to the disorder of our nature. It has revealed the reality of the one life by which we all live and to which we can all contribute, while it has made clear that isolation, the proud self-containment of the soul which dwells alone, is death. It has disclosed the true secret of power while it has defined the manner of its exercise.

In the light of the Gospel (to sum up all), and, may I not say, in the deep consciousness of the heart which it illuminates, reverence is the acknowledgment of a transforming grace, labour is the glad return for healthy vigour, dependence is the joy of fellowship, service is the secret of prevailing authority.

This whole ideal is absolutely fulfilled and exhibited and vindicated in the Person of Christ; and so specially is the last thought, that of the authority of service, which is brought before us to-day; *He that is the greater among you, the Lord says, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve*, and then He enforces the command, as you will notice, by His own action, for He continues: *I am in the midst of you, as he that doth serve*.

This is indeed the meaning for us—the essential meaning—of the example of the Lord. The example of Christ, so far as it is proposed for our imitation, is always the example of patience, of self-surrender, of serving, of suffering. The voice which calms and strengthens us is that voice of prevailing love which establishes its power on tenderness, and its right to teach on humility. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me* Christ said—not because I am irresistible with the plenitude of divine might; nor because I am omniscient with the fulness of divine vision, but—*because I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls*.

This teaching was strange to those who first heard it. It is not surprising therefore that it should have been repeated again and again like the corresponding revelation of life through death. Each of the first three Evangelists records the substance of the text as spoken twice; and from a comparison of their narratives we can distinguish three occasions, all in the latest stage of the Lord's ministry, when He pressed upon His disciples the authority of service, once immediately after the Transfiguration, again on the last journey to Jerusalem, and a third time in the Holy City. On each occasion the circumstances naturally gave rise to the hope of an immediate outward triumph, the hope of sovereignty for the Lord and of honours for His followers. On each occasion the prospects of success stirred in the twelve thoughts of ambition and rivalry. On each occasion the Lord's words make clear beyond doubt that the blessing of power is 'the blessing of great cares,' that the sign of authority is the readiness to serve.

The lesson was strange, I said, when it was first given; and if we have now grown familiar with its form we can hardly claim to have mastered its spirit. But none the less when we calmly look on the face of things we shall see that the principle of the authority of service is universally true. It is true in regard to nature, to society, to self; it is proved true by the power of insight, of sympathy, of freedom which springs from service. And in spite of our habitual unwillingness to follow the judgments of our hearts we ourselves gladly acknowledge its truth. In the region of thought our highest praise is given to the devotion of patient study:

in the region of action to the devotion of self-forgetful labour.

1. The principle is true, I repeat, in regard to Nature. It is an old maxim that we can rule Nature only by obeying her. And exact knowledge is the first requisite for right obedience, a knowledge not of the superficial phenomena, of the appearances of things, but of the laws which the phenomena half hide and half reveal. Such knowledge comes only through watchful, self-repressing search. He who carries his own prejudices and prepossessions to the enquiry into physical truth will certainly find them confirmed. For there is a strange irony in Nature. She speaks in parables; and we must yield ourselves to her spirit before we can apprehend their meaning. If we are self-willed or hasty or confident, still more if we are imperious or arrogant, she will betray us, though she 'never did betray the soul that loved her'. But that condition is indispensable. Her disguises, her seeming contradictions, are only to be resolved by the loving patience of an unwearied ministry. Insight which is the inspiration of science comes from service.

2. So it is in regard to Government. The true ruler is not he who enforces his will by the bayonets of strong battalions, but he who divines the worthiest desires of his people and claims their homage by shewing that he has entered into their hearts. It lies in our nature that we should respond to the voice which interprets us to ourselves. We cannot but rejoice to obey him who proposes to us that ideal as our own which often we have not the courage to confess, though we inwardly strive towards it. Christ Himself confirms the law in its widest application. He shews that His sovereignty is established on His individual knowledge of His servants. *He calleth His own sheep by name and then, not till then, not till He has realized this personal relationship, He leadeth them out*. His many sheep are not to Him a mere flock. His eye discerns in each that which modifies the common features. For us such individual knowledge can only be gained by the most reverent and untiring observation. We must serve in order that we may understand. We must not overpower by our own force the character which we wish to appreciate and guide in its mature vigour. He is no true leader who drills his subjects into mechanical instruments of his designs. The true leader gains the devotion of the soul and the spirit. Sympathy, which is the strength of government, comes by service.

3. The same principle holds good in our personal discipline. It is by serving that we learn the value and the proportion of our own endowments. The consciousness of a divine presence about us, issuing in continual worship, sustains us under the pressure of distracting anxieties. Out of this rises the spirit of reverence, which becomes the perennial source of dutiful attention. For such offices of thoughtful ministry do not abase but exalt us. Christian service is indeed a germ of new power. It is not the inconsiderate scattering of our gifts, but the deliberate bestowal of them in such a way that *we may take them again*. If the terrible saying of the Roman historian is true that 'it is characteristic of human nature that we should hate those whom we have injured,' it is no less true that we love those whom we have helped. In this way then by serving God in man and man in God we bring ourselves into harmony with all about us. We ascertain the limits of our ability and the right direction of our work. We gain the fulness of our own nature and bring ourselves into obedience to its laws. We become, that is, free in the true sense of the word, untroubled by the waywardness of caprice and the gusts of restless ambition. Freedom which is the soul of individual life comes through service.

In every direction the *authority of service* is seen to be supreme. To find the purpose of God about us, in the world and in me, and to offer ourselves without reserve for its accomplish-