

# 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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## ALL APOSTLES ARE WITNESSES FOR CHRISTIANITY.

All Society rests on testimony. There is not a science, not a collective undertaking, that can be founded and sustained without confidence in the words of men. Every day man deceives his fellow men, but nevertheless man continues to put faith in man. Look at the business world. Every hour gigantic sums are risked on merely a signature, or after the exchange of a few words. Look at the world of science, the number of affirmations which we accept on the authority of others, is much greater than we suppose; of how many scientific axioms could we give a clear explanation if some one took a fancy to call upon us for it? Belief in authority exists in the camp of free thought as well as elsewhere. Many people think they have said everything when they have quoted the critic. "The critic has spoken," they say, with the same quiet, confident tone which others employ when they say, "The Church has decided." They believe themselves to be exercising their personal judgment, when they are really professing their faith in their Master. As it is the will of God that no one should live to himself, it follows that no one is sufficient to himself. Doubtless God could have enlightened every man individually, and has done so to a certain extent, in imprinting on the conscience in indelible characters the natural law. He could do it still more by shedding in the soul a supernatural light, but that would be the exception, not the rule. It is His purpose that revealed truth should come to man through man, that the Church should be founded on testimony, that it should not be free from the conditions of all human society, that it should be exposed to doubts, discussions, attacks, and struggles of all kinds, even as he permitted His Son, full and perfect expression of His divinity, to be "spoken against" (Luke ii, 34), but while apparently giving up revealed truth to all the chances of history, God has taken care to keep it pure, unaltered and authentic, so that it continues the same in every age, and offers itself to all who earnestly seek it. It could not be that the personality of Jesus, His words, His works, everything that constitutes the foundation and essence of Christianity, should be always called in question, or left to conjecture, therefore the testimony of the Apostles have provided against in. Men were chosen who followed Christ from the day John pointed Him out, until he left the world; they saw Him on the hills, on the borders of the Lake of Galilee, in public places and in the Temple, as well as in the quiet gardens of Bethany, in the plains of Cesarea or the country of Sidon; they heard Him when He addressed the multitude, and when He spoke to them in the upper chamber; they were there when the people cried hosannah, and when the cry of crucify Him announced His approaching death; they witnessed His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the agony in Gethsemane; they saw Him submit to the kiss of the traitor, and led away by the soldiers. One followed Him at a distance, and three times denied Him; another was present at his death, and received from Him His mother as a sacred legacy. They were all witnesses of His resurrection, they were not willing to believe it, they did believe it. They saw Him and conversed with Him after He was risen. The words which they re-

corded they did not invent. Peter and Thomas held with Him two conversations of a sublime nature. Thomas saw His wounds, and refused to believe until he had seen them. They had accompanied Him to the Mount of Olives, from His lips they had received the command to go and conquer the world, and on this command they had gone. Do you now understand the value of the Apostleship? There never was an age when their part was more necessary than now. To what do all the efforts of co-temporary critics tend, if it is not to put the person of Christ into the region of legends, to accord to Him the purest and most glorious apparition which the mind of man has ever conceived, provided, that in return we concede that His life was a marvellous collection of parables, under which we must renounce the hope of finding the firm and solid ground of history, provided, that we admit that the miracles of Christ are but symbols, and His resurrection and ascension but poetic myths of a moral victory, provided that the Gospel should never take its place in the rank of facts, and cease to trouble with its supernatural character, the immutable laws. We can estimate the value of the testimony of these Galileans, when in reply to these specious assertions they stand up and say, "This Christ we have seen, our ears have heard His divine words, His face we have seen on Tabor, and in the garden of the Mount of Olives. That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled—declare we unto you." Shall we say with the critic that the Gospel is the most sublime dream, or with the Apostles, that it is the most certain fact?

## THE CHURCH AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

AMONG the Church principles which, in our opinion, ought to be brought more prominently forward, so as to provide the masses of Church-goers with more tangible reasons for preferring the Church to any sect, there are two which are closely connected with the New Testament, and which are not only very important in themselves, but also, when fully grasped, give a new interest to Churchmanship in general.

The first of these is the fact—so seldom insisted upon in the pulpit—that the Church is considerably *older than the New Testament Scriptures*. There is, happily, in these days, a very great reverence for the Bible among Christians; but it is hardly too much to say that this reverence degenerates into idolatry in some quarters. The New Testament is treated almost as though it had been given openly by a Divine hand to men, much as the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai. The fact that for *nineteen years* the Church had no New Testament is forgotten or ignored. Hence, also, the fact, that Church doctrines do not derive *origin* from the New Testament, but from the inspiration of the Apostles at Pentecost, and from oral instruction in Apostolic times, is little realized. "To the law and to the testimony" is a favourite shibboleth with many, who argue from it that unless a thing is plainly ordered, and, so to say, *originated* in the New Testament, it cannot be of any importance—nay, rather, rests on no authority. Thus, Infant Baptism, the observance of Sunday, and, to a considerable extent, Confirmation, are Church principles whose strength is largely lost by the very fact of their great

antiquity—viz., that they are older than the New Testament itself. Apostolical succession is another Church principle which is extensively ignored, or even repudiated, from the same cause, no great stress being, as is supposed, laid upon it in the Bible. In short, the enormous mass of Church doctrine and discipline which was in full vigour before St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, is apt to be forgotten altogether, and the tacit assumption that a Church without the New Testament was an impossibility, is probably widespread.

The other principle, or rather fact in the history of the New Testament, which we said was too much forgotten, is this—that the New Testament is, in reality, the *Church's* book. Probably there are many persons who imagine that from the very beginning there were always numerous sects of Christians, and that the New Testament was, somehow, given equally to all. But what are the facts? Why, in the first place, the very existence of our Scriptures is a standing witness that at some very early period the vast body of Christians did agree together as to what particular Greek books were, or were not, inspired by the Holy Spirit—an agreement, be it remembered, which would be totally impossible in these days of "unsectarian" teaching; and, in the second place, it is a fact that the whole Church of Christ, which in England is now represented by the Church of England only, as an historical fact, was *not* divided into a number of denominations, like the Christians of the nineteenth century, but, on the contrary, was, in spite of tiny schisms at times, so completely of one heart and mind that it was able to accomplish that great work, which, as we have said, would be utterly out of the question now, of deciding on the canon of Scripture, and obtaining for its decision what may be considered as the universal acceptance of Christendom.—*Church Bells*.

## DECLINE OF RELIGION IN SPAIN.

MR. BERNARD O'REILLY, a Romish Priest of New York, writes to the *New York Sun* as follows:—"The Church of Rome has yet to learn that Christ's Kingdom is not of this world, either in its origin or its weapons; and that 'all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'" He says:—"The three past years of travel and study among the Latin nations of Europe have made me feel as if I were the attentive observer of one of those great convulsions which engulf an old world in the ocean depths, and lift up new continents from amid the destroying waters. . . . Of Spain—carefully as I have endeavoured during the last thirteen months to study her condition—I fear to write what I think. The love of this great country and her people was born with me, and I would fain prophesy of her all prosperity, glory, and happiness. But when I see that the Spaniard of to-day even when he professes outwardly to be a Christian, will not permit one of his children to receive religious instruction in Sunday school or secular school, and that religion to him is but a dead and empty form, I cannot help foreseeing that in the very near future the Church of Spain will be in a worse plight than is now the Church in France.

This is certainly extraordinary language to come from the lips of a Romish Priest. How serious an indictment against his own Church is contained in it, and all too true, alas!