

The Church Guardian

—: EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

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

Address Correspondence and Communications to the
Editor, P. O. Box 304, Montreal. Exchanges to
P. O. Box 2186. For Business Announcements See page 15.

CALENDAR FOR MAY.

- MAY 1—ST. PHILIP and ST. JAMES. A. & M.
" 5—3rd Sunday after Easter.
" 12—4th Sunday after Easter.
" 19—5th Sunday after Easter. [Notice of
Rogation Days and Ascension Day.]
" 20—
" 21— } Rogation Days. Fast.
" 22— }
" 23—ASCENSION DAY. (Pr. Pss. M. 8, 15,
21. E. 24, 47, 108. Ath. Creed.
Prop. Pref. till 30th inclu.)
" 26—Sunday after Ascension.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

(From a Paper in the Church Eclectic for
March 95 by Rev. C. E. Edwards, jr.)

Here is an illustration of what I believe to be a fundamental principle, that while the Church and Society have subjects in common with which each must deal, yet each has its department and each is supreme in its department. The Gospel is the theme of the Church, the establishment of the Kingdom of God is its end. It must never allow any other message to supersede the Gospel on its lips, nor any lower end, however worthy, to direct its energies. Kingdoms and republics, empires and democracies are alike to Christianity. It may work in and through them all, its existence is bound up with none. They, however long they may flourish, however they may evoke the devotion of their citizens must at length perish, but against the Church the gates of Hell shall never prevail and her work will be accomplished only when the Kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdoms of God and His Christ.

The Church will perform its task most wisely and successfully when she recognizes that Society likewise is of Divine institution. The powers that be, are ordained of God. Magistrates and legislators are God's ministers. It is a fatal error—so the Papal rule over Kings and nations and Puritan attempts at government have taught us—for the Church to seek to constrain the temporal power of use aught but spiritual weapons. Let it be her aim to fill Society with the Spirit of Christ, and then all will be well.

But how when Church and Society differ in their views? How about moral questions in which each are equally interested? How about the application to special cases, individuals, seasons of the truths Religion set forth but which need practical exemplification in the moral sphere? Marriage and divorce for example. Is there any matter in which Religion is more concerned than marriage? Is there any act of human life which in all ages and under all beliefs, has been more closely or more necessarily associated with religious rites and hallowed by religious sanctions? Can the Church possibly remain silent on such a point, or relegate it to the list of those things which are solely the affair of the State? On the other hand can the State refrain from dealing with this subject? Shall it have no laws re-

straining, authorizing, regulating, guarding such unions? Can it, with safety to itself, with proper regard to the welfare of its citizens, with due care for rights of property and inheritance forego all requirements and statutes on this most important and practical of all matters? Certainly no State in ancient or modern times has been so minded, and Society as well as Religions has been strenuous in its opinions and jealous for its interests.

This alone illustrates sufficiently the inevitable meeting and mingling—the possible divergence and clashing—in the sphere of morals of Church and Society. But there are numerous other matters of only less importance. There is the liquor question—in its double form as regards its sale and its consumption. The State must recognise and seek to heal the evils connected therewith—is the Church to have nothing to say? There is the bribery and corruption of voters and of officials, the debauching of political morality, the misuse of places of trust for private gain—crimes in the first place against the state, but does not the Church regard them as sins and denounce the sinner? There is the delicate and perplexing problem of the relations of labor and capital, involving questions of justice and mercy—is not religion to lift her voice and utter her word of guidance for citizen, legislator, employer, workman? There are the questions as to the right of private ownership of land—as to the right of every man to some share in mother earth—questions brought under debate by recent economic discussions. The Church is eagerly appealed to—the defenders of private ownership urging the Scriptural injunction, "Thou shalt not steal," the advocates of common ownership urging the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man and hence the common heritage. Has the pulpit no word?

These are but a few of the countless points at which Church and Society meet. Here are others: The Bible in Public Schools—exemption of Churches from taxation—Closing of public buildings on Sundays—Chaplains for the Army and Navy—Prohibition of polygamy—Appropriations to sectarian institutions—Oaths in courts of justice. What are we to do? Is the Church to attempt to make Society carry out and enforce its views by the civil law? That was the Middle Age notion—it seems to be the notion of the Roman Church—it is the notion of many Protestants. What is the position of the Episcopal Church.

I take it to be this: She tries to speak out boldly all God's revealed word. She keeps back none of His Will as she finds it declared, she imposes it by spiritual sanctions on her members, she urges it on the world. She adheres to the plain teachings of Holy Writ and lays no other or heavier burden on men than aid Christ. When Society adopts a low standard she does not conform, nor again does she resort to political measures, but is content to await the silent influence of the Truth. On the subject of Marriage for example, in the face of a wicked and adulterous generation she repeats and affirms the word of her Master Christ: "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." . . . "Whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for the cause of fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and whoso marrieth her that is divorced committeth adultery. She forbids her priests to bless and her members to contract so-called marriages contrary to the Divine Law though they may be legal by the statutes of Utah or Connecticut, Dahomey or South Dakota. But, much as she would welcome more Christian legislation on this matter, she has no bills to propose and looks only to the education of the national conscience.

She condemns the sin of drunkenness, she teaches the wickedness of the defilement of the body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost by excessive indulgence in strong drink, she

urges temperance and self-control, she warns all of the iniquity of leading others into sin for gain. She endorses and promotes in her dioceses and parishes such agencies as the Church Temperance Society. But, whatever individuals may advocate, she has no theory of legislation, High License, Prohibition, Local option, or State sale.

She reminds those in places of public trust whose authority they bear she bids men be true and just in all their dealing, and to keep their hands from picking and stealing, and her pulpit does not neglect to declare that private virtue must be no cloak for public rascality; but she espouses no political party even though it march under the banner of reform, and her laity are not told the candidates for whom they must vote at the polls.

She is not silent concerning the relations of masters and servants, rich and poor, employers and employees. She is accustomed to speak more about duties than about rights, to remind masters that their Master also is heaven and workmen that they serve the Lord Christ, but she never allows that selfishness or anger are to determine conduct. Her sympathies, like her Lord's must always be with the poor, the oppressed, the toiling, the ignorant, the despised, but she lays great stress on obedience to law and right, and bids every man do his duty in that state of life into which it shall please God to call him—for she regards each calling as indeed a vocation. She has no scheme of social readjustment, no plan for the more even distribution of wealth.

She inculcates the great principles of righteousness—her members are accustomed to give them practical application. You will find them fighting in the front ranks of every "Reform Movement, whether it concerns municipal politics, excise legislation, tariff reduction, civil service office, the housing of the poor, or social reconstruction on the larger scale. One only has to be familiar with such names as Everett P. Wheeler, Elbridge Gerry, Henry George, Robt. Graham to recognize this fact.

If it be objected that the Gospel of Christ becomes very indefinite unless it be brought down into daily life—that even the Ten Commandments need to be applied to persons and transactions—and that it is not enough to preach against theft and murder, and to exhort to justice and benevolence without calling names—it may be answered that it is the duty of the Church to insist on the great principles concerning which there can be no doubt, while it is the duty of the individual conscience to give them their special application. Anything else would tend to erect an ecclesiastical tyranny and degrade the free man in Christ Jesus into a puppet. Christ Himself came preaching "general principles." He failed very much of being a practical reformer in the sense in which some would have the Church pose in the world. There were practical men then looking for an off-hand solution of their difficulties—politicians awaiting a hint. There were injustices and robbery—unequal distribution of wealth then. So one asked "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," but He who had laid down the social principles of the Sermon on the Mount, refused to give them application, saying, Man, who hath made Me a judge or divider over you?"

Judea groaned under a fearful tyranny. It was oppressed and robbed by a ring of publicans, proconsuls and other political heelers who were the creatures and tools of a worse "boss" than any Democrat or Republican, the Emperor. Political deliverance was looked for even by Christ's disciples. "We thought that it had been He who should have restored the kingdom to Israel." But yet to the practical question as to whether tribute should be paid or not Christ answered with a principle, "Render to Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's."