

# The Church Guardian

— EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR —

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## SPECIAL NOTICE.

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## CALENDAR FOR APRIL.

- APRIL 2.—Thursday before Easter.  
3.—Good Friday.  
4.—Easter Even.  
5.—Easter Day.  
6.—Monday in Easter Week.  
7.—Tuesday in Easter Week.  
12.—First Sunday after Easter.  
19.—Second " " "  
25.—ST. MARK.  
26.—Third Sunday after Easter.

## Third Sunday After Easter.

"So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may  
put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."—1 Peter  
ii. 15.

The Church, in this collect, offers up a prayer  
for the well-being of the universal Church, and in  
the portions of Scripture she appoints for the  
services, shows how this may be most effectually  
promoted. Having in the preceding collects based  
all her requests and all our considerations on the  
sacrifice made for sin, and the resurrection of our  
Lord, she proceeds to show how these may be  
applied practically to the advancement of holiness,  
and the establishment of truth,—the great ends  
for which the Church is established on the earth—  
for to them that are in error the light of His truth  
is to this intent shown, that they may return unto  
the way of righteousness. The collect then prays  
that all those who are admitted into the fellowship  
of Christ's religion by baptism, may eschew those  
things that are contrary to their profession, and  
follow all such as are agreeable to the same. In  
accordance with this, the passage selected for the  
epistle sets before us the dangers by which our  
progress through the world is assailed. It reminds  
us of the spiritual journey we are taking, and that  
this is not our home. We are strangers and  
pilgrims in the world, and should keep ourselves  
unspotted in our transit through it. Above all  
must we recollect, that as Christians, we must  
walk circumspectly, the eyes of the world are upon  
us, and it is greatly influenced in following our  
example, by the effect that our professions produce  
upon our own lives. We must, for this purpose,  
be scrupulous in the performance of the several  
duties of our station, that the enemies of our holy  
faith may have nothing to scoff at; ever ready to  
speak against us as evil doers, let them be com-  
pelled by our good works which they shall behold,  
to glorify the God whom we serve. To all  
authorities, therefore, whether temporal or spiritual,  
we shall render obedience in all things honest.  
Remembering always, that the powers that be

are ordained of God, we shall thus by well-doing  
put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, whose  
worldly views, or prejudices, or interests, often  
lead them to arraign the wisdom of the followers  
of the Gospel. The portion selected from St.  
John's Gospel for the gospel of the day, would ap-  
pear to set before us the certainty of that promised  
assistance, by which the Christian is to be supported  
in his course. As he went to his Father, and re-  
turned again from thence to comfort his disciples,  
so may we be assured that all his other promises  
will be fulfilled;—that he will send to us the  
Comforter, and then, in the completion of the  
whole council of God for man's redemption, may  
our hearts so rejoice, that our joy no man can  
take from us. If, with the Apostles, we are sorrow-  
ful, when we contemplate the sufferings endured  
by our Redeemer, let us remember that it was for  
our sins he so suffered, and hence learn their enor-  
mity in the sight of God. Sorrow will be turned  
into joy in the heart of every faithful Christian,  
when he fully understands the purposes of mercy  
for which they were undergone, and feels the appli-  
cation of their efficacious merits to his own sal-  
vation. The practical truth these considerations  
teach us is, that we must walk through the world  
and its corruptions in faith, and under the guidance  
of the Holy Spirit. Having put on Christ, we  
must walk worthy of our calling, as strangers and  
pilgrims, looking to Jesus the author and finisher  
of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before  
him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and  
is for ever set down at the right hand of God,  
from whence he sends the sanctifying influence of  
the Holy Spirit, to enable us to follow all such  
things as are agreeable to our Christian calling.

## Prayer and Modern Thought.

Of all the attacks which the pseudo-philosophy  
of the present day has made upon the citadel of  
Christianity, none is more deadly in intention or  
more destructive in results than the attack upon  
Prayer as a means of communication between man  
and God. We refer not so much to the atheistic  
argument that prayer is useless because there is  
no God to pray to, as to the more plausible ob-  
jections which are really embarrassing to many  
earnest minds.

One of these is that for God to answer the  
prayers of men would be to interfere with the laws  
of nature. The universe, it is said, is a collection  
of forces and of the laws of those forces. In the  
mote of the sunbeam and in the flaming constella-  
tion, you trace the unvarying operation of these  
laws—laws of gravitation, of cohesion, of chemical  
affinities and repulsions, of light, of heat. Nothing  
that happens but is a link in this endless chain of  
cause and effect. For man to expect that his  
prayer will avail is to expect that this uniformity  
will be broken in upon, and this, says our scientist,  
is impossible—is contrary to all experience. This  
we deny. For to our certain knowledge, there is  
one power which is continually making free with  
the laws of nature, and that is the power of spirit as  
we see it in man. We take up a book. We say it  
obeys the laws of nature—the law of gravitation,  
which draws it to the earth—the law of cohesion  
of its particles, which holds them together. But  
our free will can interfere with these laws. Spite  
of gravitation, we can lift the book up; spite of the  
law of cohesion, we can, if we please, tear its  
leaves in pieces. What is this but our free spirit

moving in floridly fashion amongst the laws of  
matter, making them the instruments of our will?  
And if this is so with the spirit of man, shall it not  
be so with the Infinite Spirit, of which this is the  
ray and emanation? If man, with all his limita-  
tions, moves thus freely amongst the natural laws,  
shall God be denied the same liberty? Away  
with a theory which makes the Eternal a prisoner  
within the universe, as a spider enveloped in a web  
of his own spinning!

But granting, in the name of freedom of spirit,  
both human and Divine, the possibility of prayer  
being answered, the question arises, Is it desirable  
that it *should* be answered? Does not God know  
what is best without our asking? If we move  
Him by our supplications, are we not to that  
extent taking the reins out of His hands into our  
own, and allowing the car of the universe for the  
time, to be driven by blind ignorance, which knows  
not what it would be at, instead of by the wisdom  
which cannot err? That, indeed, looks like a  
formidable objection, and so it is until we come to  
the Bible and get its theory of prayer. The diffi-  
culty then vanishes at once. Here is the Biblical  
doctrine: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our  
infirmities, for we know not [without such aid]  
what we should pray for as we ought." We see  
from this that God is the Inspirer of true prayer  
—of the prayer He answers. He is moved by it  
because He Himself has brooded over the soul,  
and brought the prayer to birth. When the sun  
smiles upon the ocean and woos its waters, until  
they rise and seek him, floating as vapors in the  
upper air, until, dissolving in rain, they fall again  
in blessing upon the earth, we have a perpetual  
parable of God's relation to the soul in prayer.  
When the knee is bent in prevailing supplication,  
it is not man in his weakness and folly authorita-  
tively ordering God and compelling Him out of  
His pre-ordained course; but it is first of all God  
Himself bending over the soul He has made,  
quickening by the breath of His Spirit its desires  
into life, giving them their direction, and then  
completing the circuit of blessing by sending upon  
that soul the good it has sought.

But, says the objector, what a roundabout method  
is this! If prayer has the will of God in it from  
beginning to end, why bring man in at all? Why  
should not the Divine purpose be executed at once,  
going by straight lines, instead of by these cir-  
cuitous routes, which are ever dipping into and  
passing through the soul of man? Propose such  
an objection to any number of spiritually-  
minded persons, and we think one and the same  
answer would immediately leap to the surface  
of the consciousness. That answer is, that God  
seeks man's companionship in thought and pur-  
pose, and man needs God's. Do we not feel in  
ordinary society that one of life's deepest aims is  
being secured, and one of its sweetest delights  
being tasted, when intelligent minds are brought  
together for converse? The universe is built upon  
Divine thought, and its final aim seems to be that  
the minds in it, from the lowliest to the loftiest,  
may converse one with another. A man may as  
well exclaim against the circulation of the blood,  
and say that it is a waste of time and force for its  
fluid atoms to come into the lungs and meet the  
upper air, as to deny the need of the soul's con-  
tinual contact with its source.

In considering this subject we have hitherto been  
on the defensive, simply parrying assaults and  
replying to objections. We are now, perhaps, in