

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR JULY.

- JULY 5th—6th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 12th—7th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 19th—8th Sunday after Trinity.
 [Notice of St. James]
 " 25th—St. JAMES, Ap.
 " 26th—9th Sunday after Trinity.

NOTICE.

—TO—

Subscribers & Advertisers

—TO:—

"THE GUARDIAN" will not be issued on the 8th and 15th JULY. It is urgently requested, however, that Subscribers in arrears may send in amounts due. The total sum owing is very large: and this seriously interferes with our progress.

MARRIAGE.

It is far better that a great deal of misery should be endured in certain cases, and that individuals here and there should lose all the joy of married life, than that the Church or the State should consent to any relaxing of the indissolubility of the marriage tie. It would be fatal to every high and sacred estimate of the dignity and sanctity of human life and relationships, from birth to death, if ever the feeling prevailed that marriage might be undertaken as binding only for a time, and as capable of being dissolved at the will of both or either. And if the marriage tie is always to be made for life, 'for better for worse, till death us do part,' there must be certain conditions upon which it is to be undertaken. It is of the very nature of a bond, which is to be life-long, that it cannot start from the free and independent stipulation—'I shall do what I like, and you shall do what you like.' And so the Church requires those who undertake holy matrimony to make certain vows each towards the other. The man is made to say to the woman, as he takes her hand, 'I take thee to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy

ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.' And the woman is made to take the man's hand and say the same words, with the addition of the promise 'to obey' after 'to love and to cherish.' But if the woman is thus made by the Church to promise to obey, the man is further made, as he puts the ring on her finger, to add, 'with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

It is sometimes spoken of as relic of barbarism to compel the woman to promise to obey the man. Of course, it must be understood that this promise to obey is, as St. Paul expresses it, 'in the Lord.' Obedience ceases to be obedience if it is merely compliance with any bidding felt to be contrary to the command of God. The real question to be settled is, whether, in joining together in these life-long bonds, it is right that at starting there shall be a promise that, in matters as to which two opposite courses may legitimately be taken, one of the two parties shall promise beforehand to yield to the wish of the other; and, if such a promise is to be made beforehand, which of the two shall promise to yield: whether there shall be any fixed rule on the subject? The tendency of modern life has been to remove more and more the legal inequalities between man and woman which were once thought to be of almost divine ordinance. And this tendency, as far as it has in it any good, has been the result of Christian thought. For it has been a tender regard for the weakness and suffering of womanhood which has made us give woman more and more power to take an equal part with man in the administering of some departments of local government. And certainly any improvements in the married woman's position with regard to legal rights in property are in furtherance of the view of the Church in the Marriage Service where the man is made to say, 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow.'

The drift of all modern thought and practice is towards equality of right as between one party and another, and what has happened in the change of estimate as to woman's rights is an instance of what has happened in all the social, educational, and industrial relationships between man and man and child. It is all a part of what is called the democratic tendency which has more or less saturated the minds and actions of those who most hate the word. The most old-fashioned amongst us are unable to frame their thoughts as to mutual relationships now, as a quarter or half a century ago it seemed perfectly natural to frame them. The talk of absolute equality between man and wife is but the most searching outcome of that modern idea of liberty which has seized all minds and parties. And it must be remembered that this idea of freedom has grown and spread with the growth and spread of our Christian faith; and, rightly regarded, it is part of a growing reverence for the rights of weakness. And what the Church has to do, which the State cannot do, is to infuse into the relationships of life that spirit of Christ which shall prevent new tyrannies from arising through the new strengths which are being thus created. The State can do much to assist the easily accepted idea in every man that he has the same rights as his neighbour. But it is not so easy to propagate the correlative idea, without which the idea of liberty is self-destructive, viz: that every man has responsibilities and duties towards all others. It is for the Church rather than the State to infuse this much more slowly growing conviction.

The modern idea of liberty will end in awful destruction unless it is seen that the glory of perfect liberty is in that it alone makes perfect obedience possible. Perfect freedom is no freedom to do just what you please at the moment, though that is an awful concomitant of the capacity for perfect freedom. Perfect freedom is

freedom to do what is best, to obey what is seen to be most high. Self-service is the destruction of freedom for some one; for some one else first, perhaps, and afterwards for your own self. God's service is the only perfect freedom, the only protection from the tyranny of sinful use of that gift by which alone we are enabled truly to do what is best.

Thus the matrimonial promise of obedience does not imply that the woman is naturally inferior to the man. Like all obedience owed by one human being to another, it is founded upon the fact that both are bound by the law of the Most High, and undertake to recognise the higher law in their fulfilment of their mutual duties.

At the same time, it would seem that the ideal set forth by the Church in the Marriage Service does unmistakably imply that a woman should not consent to betroth herself to a man to whom she feels that she cannot with perfect self-respect, promise obedience as to the Lord Jesus Christ. The natural shrinking of one grown up person to promise obedience to another should not be disregarded. And the Church surely pays regard alike to this difficulty in promising obedience, and to the solemnity of incurring a life-long bond, when she encourages woman to betroth only in case she feels herself able safely to promise obedience to her husband as is fit in the Lord Christ.

The time may be looked forward to with eagerness by some when the family shall not be regarded as the divinely intended unit and basis of life. In discussing revolutionary ideas as to marriage, or in making light of the Church's ideal that the woman should only betroth herself to one to whom she can promise obedience, this elementary question should be faced, 'Is the ideal society a society which is built up in families? Or is the oneness and sacredness of the family life the last remaining superstition, not yet quite undermined to the satisfaction of our most advanced improvers of society? This is a fundamental question in settling all questions as to matrimony. If we have made up our minds that society can only be healthily built up out of families, then society is right in providing beforehand that marriage shall be undertaken with promise and provision for the unity and sanctity of the family life. The betrothed must start, in all their thoughts and ways, from the belief that the family is a sacred organism, and that living for God is living for it. The marriage tie must be undertaken in this conviction, and with preparation for self-sacrifice in order to fidelity to this sacredness. It may be a sacrifice of a great deal for many a woman to make the promise of obedience. The Church calls upon her to regard it as preliminary to marriage because of the far reaching issues involved in marriage, and because these issues demand preparedness for sacrifice. There is no ignoring of the woman's sacred rights; but there is a looking forward to something larger than the procuring of the utmost happiness and freedom in each particular case. The supreme view of some marriage reformers is to provide in each case against all preventable suffering and curtailment of future freedom. Therefore they want to allow the married parties to be free to drop their relationships if these become distasteful. The supreme view of the Church in marriage is, the building up of a strong and holy nation. Therefore she provides that individuals shall declare beforehand their preparedness to suffer, rather than to sin against the sacred roots and foundations of family and national life.—G. S. in Church Bells.

BISHOP COXE ON CHRISTIAN UNITY.

In a sermon at St. Paul's, Buffalo, recently, the Bishop of Western New York said: At this moment, when God has enlarged the Anglican Communion throughout the world and made her testimony to be heard and felt among Romanists and Protestants alike, God