

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR APRIL.

- APRIL 7th—5th Sunday in Lent.
 " 17th—6th Sunday in Lent.
 " 15th—Monday before Easter.
 " 16th—Tuesday before Easter.
 " 17th—Wednesday before Easter.
 " 18th—Thursday before Easter.
 " 19th—GOOD FRIDAY. Pr. Psalm M. 22, 40, 54. E. 69, 88.
 " 20th—Easter Even.
 " 21st—EASTER. Pr. Pss. M. 2, 57, 111. E. 113, 114, 116; Pr. Anthem instead of *Venite*. Athan. Creed. Pr. Preface in Communion Service till April 28th inclu. (*Notice of Monday and Tuesday, and of St. Mark.*)
 " 22nd—Monday in Easter week.
 " 23rd—Tuesday in Easter week.
 " 25th—St. Mark, Evangelist and Mar.
 " 26th—1st Sunday after Easter. (*Notice of St. Phillip and St. James.*)

THE BISHOP OF GRAHAMSTOWN ON SISTERHOOD LIFE.

[CONTINUED.]

Two things must be remembered, as to Women's Work in the dedicated life. There must be.

1. Reverence for Nature.
2. Trustful loyalty to the Revelation of God.

Without holding fast these two principles, Community work will be sure to be found defective, somewhere.

1. We must *respect Nature*; not annihilate it, not destroy it, but incorporate and transfigure all that is truly natural. Our Blessed Lord came 'not to destroy, but to fulfil' (S. Matt. v. 17.) the law of Nature, the law of Creation. This is constantly brought out in the New Testament. "I am come that they might have Life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (St. John x. 10.) He is come to bring more abundant "Life" to every part of His dominion.

Now, among the primal Laws of Woman's

Nature, we see, in the charter of her creation, that she is called.

1. To be a help-meet for Man.
2. To replenish the earth: to fill it full of the riches and wealth of Life.

(1) *She is to be a Help meet for Man.*

All Sisterhoods work, to be perfect, ought, if possible, to be carried on with its real central power vested in the Bishop; or in the Warden, representing him and working with him. In the Christian organization, the Bishop represents the Great Head of the Church; he is the earthly Head—although he is the constitutional and not the autocratic Head—of the Divine Society, in that particular Diocese. Therefore, the work must be under his personal control and rule; not under the irresponsible rule of any woman.

In insisting upon this as a principle, I feel strongly that we are resting upon a revealed Law of Creation. All our Sisters and other workers are "help-meets" to their Bishop, who represents the special office of Man, as "the image and Glory of God," (I Cor. xi. 7) in the care and conduct of the Church on earth, under the supreme rule of Christ our Lord, as Head. A Bishop is said, in old metaphorical language, to be "married" to his Diocese. He must not be a mere ornamental "figure-head" of a Community; a mere "Visitor," in a general, abstract sort of way. He must have real power; though of course, his rule over the Community must be constitutional, not arbitrary; the Clergy acting with him.

(2) There is another side of Woman's calling, corresponding to that in the *natural order*, of *replenishing the earth*. "Instead of thy fathers thou shalt have children, whom thou mayest make princes in all lands." (Ps. xlv. 17.) This natural vocation has its counterpart in the spiritual sphere,—in the order of the Church of God,—through the spiritual offspring brought forth by means of her influence. Not indeed originating, but receiving an idea, she intangibly and almost insensibly communicates it to others and extends the force of it, through this far-reaching *influence* of hers, which is the true power of Woman. So, as it was said of old, "The desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband." (Gal. iv. 27.)

We feel that, however feebly realized as yet, God gives us great ideas;—visions of Truth: but we trust very much to our Sisters and their Associates to *develop* them; to work them out, and live them out; to diffuse them through the length and breadth of the land, with intelligent co-operation.

Woman's nature is *receptive* and *communicative*. She first receives, and then communicates, through her power of influence: not by going about fussily to "do good" to this or that person,—not by preaching and talking, but by *living* in the Church, quietly and simply, after apprehending intellectually the true idea of her own place and work in the Church, whether in the "dedicated" life, or in any other.

There is a great *power of intellectual apprehension* in the mind of women; a great power of *receiving* an idea, to be spoken out, or lived out, afterwards.

Even if it be true that she does not, as a rule, originate great ideas, yet she is able to receive them and ponder them in her heart; and then, by her great gift of sympathetic feeling and silent influence,—through what is *felt*, rather than by what is spoken,—she can communicate the force and power of those ideas to many more than the voice of the Teacher and Pastor could personally reach. Thoughts and principles may thus be assimilated, by members of a Community and their Associates; and then, without any mere verba repetition; germinate and bear fruit in many hearts and lives, outside. Thus the "alabaster box" is, as it were, broken at the feet of the Lord, and the house is filled with the odour of the ointment.

11 There must be *truth and humility towards the Revelation of God*. Now, what does Revelation teach us, about Woman's Nature?

There are two great thoughts,—two mysteries or revealed facts,—of which Woman is made a symbol or representative, in the Bible; and we are not to suppose that anything is stated in Holy Scripture, without a purpose.

1. Woman is taken as the embodiment, the type and symbol, of the Divine attribute of "Wisdom,"—the expression of God's Will.

2. She is the type and symbol of the *Church of God*.

1. *Wisdom*. In that wonderful eighth chapter of Proverbs, this attribute of God is personified. "Wisdom" is portrayed and exhibited under the figure and symbol of a woman, who "crieth in the place of concourse." She has a message to utter; expostulating with the world on account of its folly; seeing the true aim and purpose of human life, and desiring that all should follow it. The influence of Woman is the true corrective of Man's fault, selfishness. Yet, if she do not rise to the height of her great calling, none more faulty than she in this matter, "*Corruptio optimi, pessima est.*" Her special temptation and fault is a liability to foolishness; to a want of sound judgment, to credulity,—to religious credulity not the least;—which renders her too easily the dupe of falsehood and imposture, which hurries her into premature and ill-considered action, and which may have, and often does have, disastrous consequences. It is not needful that she should be, as the term is, "strong-minded," but she must have *common sense*: which indeed is one of the best qualifications of a woman for any work in the Church, whether in this country, or in any other.

Man, who is the "glory of God," if we may judge by the Divine ideal, is to express and show forth Love; brotherly love, fatherly love: Love, the great spring and cause of action, in the spiritual order; without which no plan is devised, no course of action determined on; in one word, the *originating faculty*, which chalks out the great lines of action, broad and bold and unhesitating. That is Man's special function.

But he does not stand alone. Here, as everywhere in the world, Woman is Man's "help-meet." For the "Wisdom" of which Woman is the representative, what is it but the *organizing faculty*, the *executive power*; the ability to oversee work and workers, to proportion the task to the hand that is to do it; a power conspicuous in the mistress of a well-ordered household, such as we see in the picture of the "virtuous woman," given to us in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs. Personified as a woman, "Wisdom" is said to be "with the Most High: by her Kings reign, and Princes decree justice." She "finds out knowledge of witty inventions." Even her natural "motherwit" may be enlisted in the service of the Kingdom of God. But she must be ever, and above all, wise with the true Wisdom that comes from the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from Christ, "the Wisdom of God."

Woman, then, is to exhibit the attribute of "Wisdom";—good sense and tact, in practical details; working ably on the lines laid down for her as the true handmaid of the Church; not *reasoning* out an idea, but working it out, by her own "womanly intuition."

And what is Sisterhood life, but the embodying of the soul's highest intuitions? In no other way can the Sister's life be explained. She has seen the Vision of Celestial Beauty. In Him, she finds her All in All, her life-long Love: her exceeding great reward,—the smile that He gives, when "she hath done what she could."

Sir Bartle Frere, at our "Conversazione," referred to the Sisters as bringing a sanctified presence, even to the Diamond Fields! As a rule, nobody goes to or stays at such a scene, unless with the hope of finding diamonds, and