

The Church Guardian

—: EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

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CALENDAR FOR MAY.

- MAY 1—St. Philip and St. James—Apostles.
 “ 7—5th Sunday after Easter. (Rogation.)
(Notice of Rogation Days and Ascension.)
 “ 8—
 “ 9— } ROGATION DAYS.
 “ 10— }
 “ 11—ASCENSION DAY. (Holy Thursday.)
(Athanasian Creed.)
 “ 14—Sunday after The Ascension. (Expectation Sunday).
 “ 21—WHITSUN-DAY. (Notice of Ember Days.)
Athanasian Creed.
 “ 22—Whitsun Monday.
 “ 23—Whitsun Tuesday.
 “ 24—
 “ 25— } EMBER DAYS.
 “ 27— }
 “ 28—TRINITY SUNDAY. *(Athanasian Creed)*

CONVOCAION OF CANTERBURY.

Both Houses of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury met for business on the 2nd of May. Amongst other matters which were considered and passed upon by both Houses was the question of Fasting and of Evening Communion, upon both of which matters a *gravamen*, was presented by the Lower House and agreed to by the Upper. The *gravamen* as to

FASTING COMMUNION.

was in the following terms:

“(1) That in the Apostolic age the Holy Communion was administered in connexion with the gathering together of Christians to share in an appointed evening meal. (2) That the practice of communicating in the early morning appears to have arisen before the close

of the first century, probably in order to secure a safer as well as a more reverent celebration, and, by the time of St. Cyprian, to have become so fully established that it was regarded not only as the preferable but as the proper practice and as commemorative of the Lord's Resurrection. (3) That the practice of communicating in the early morning, together with the common association of fasting and prayer, led to the practice of communicating only when fasting, and that fasting reception of the Communion became the regular and recognised usage of the Church before the end of the fourth century. (4) That from the close of the fourth century this regular and recognized usage was formulated in rules for the clergy in canons of local and provincial Councils. (5) That fasting reception of the Communion was the prescribed rule of the Church of England during the Anglo-Saxon period, and continued to be so to the time of the Reformation. (6) That these strict rules were nevertheless subject to relaxation in cases of sickness or other necessity. (7) That at the Reformation, the Church of England, in accordance with the principle of liberty laid down in Article xxxiv., ceased to require the Communion to be received fasting, though the practice was observed by many as a reverent and ancient custom, and as such is commended by several of her eminent writers and divines down to the present time. (8) That, regard being had to the practice of the Apostolic Church in this matter, to teach that it is a sin to communicate otherwise than fasting is contrary to the teaching and spirit of the Church of England.”

The Bishop of London moved the adoption of the report.

The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol seconded the proposal, and said he had only to add that every historical statement to every one of the clauses of the report, and especially in the second and third clauses, had been considered, not only by the committee, but by the members of the House, who had given special attention to the subject. The original authors had been read by the committee and by those who had kindly assisted them.

The Bishop of Worcester said he was unable to accept as quite historically accurate clauses 2 and 3. After examining the authorities carefully, his honest conviction was that there was not evidence to show that the practice of communicating in the early morning arose before the close of the first century. Then the report said that “the practice of communicating in the early morning, together with the common association of fasting with prayer, led to the practice of communicating only when fasting, and that fasting reception of the Communion became the regular and recognised usage of the Church before the end of the fourth century.” He did not forget that portion of St. Augustine's letter to Januarius, which said that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Church throughout the whole world did receive the Holy Communion fasting, with no other food entering the body before the Holy Body of our Lord; but he was afraid that St. Augustine spoke as many persons had spoken since the days of St. Augustine, and claimed that to be the usage of the Catholic Church which was the usage of his own Church, and that he stated a great deal more than the actual fact. He did not think there was a single passage in the writings of St. Chrysostom in which he said anything like what St. Augustine said.

The Archbishop of Canterbury remarked that the committee which presented the report was composed of the Bishops of London, Gloucester and Bristol, Exeter, Oxford, Lincoln, Salisbury, Rochester, and Southwell, and the Chairman of the committee wished him to mention that the report was unanimously presented. He had listened with interest to the remarks of the Bishop of Worcester, and was unable to agree with him except in the one small

point, that he thought the language of the report would be more precisely accurate if words “about the close of the first century” were used instead of the words “before the close of the first century.” He believed it would be found that the eighth clause of the report really did represent the facts upon which all members of the House agreed; but he should like to call special attention to what, in his own mind, was exceedingly important—the effect of the Reformation. He believed it was of immense importance, and never more so than now, to recognise that the Reformation of the Church of England was one of the greatest—the greatest—historical events in the history of the Church of England, and that it was conducted by persons of the very highest capacity and the very highest knowledge; who, if they had not taken their great stand as reformers, would have been accounted among the greatest schoolmen that the Church had ever known. These reformers were content, in certain matters connected with individual practice, to leave people to act for themselves. For instance, they prescribed things that were important, but might be disputable, with regard to preparation for the Holy Communion. They did not, however, mention fasting; and he took it to be a clear indication of their mind that the practice would be of little use if it were adopted as a charm or a mere obligation, but that it would be of great benefit if it was adopted by themselves as a matter of self-discipline and on the ground that it assisted in their devotion. Fasting before Communion was just one of the things upon which these reformers did not prescribe anything like a rigid rule. He thought it highly important that their lordships should lay down the principle of liberty.

The Bishop of Southwell sympathized to some extent with the views of the Bishop of Worcester as to the evidence respecting the second and third clauses of the report.

It was agreed that the word “about” should be inserted in place of the word “before” in the second paragraph, and, with this alteration, the report was adopted, the Bishop of Worcester alone dissenting.

EVENING COMMUNIONS.

The Bishop of London presented the report of the committee on the *gravamen* of the Lower House, respecting Evening Communion, and moved its adoption. It was in the following terms:

“(1) That in the Apostolic age the Holy Communion was administered in connexion with the gathering together of Christians to share in an appointed evening meal. (2) That the celebration of the Holy Communion in the evening was thus apparently the practice of the Church during a large part, at least, of the first century. (3) That about the close of the first century the celebration of the Holy Communion is found separated from the Agape or appointed evening meal, and transferred to an early hour in the morning; and, except on certain special occasions, evening celebrations of the Holy Communion ceased in course of time throughout the Church. (4) That at the Reformation the Church of England made no express regulation concerning the hour of celebrating the Holy Communion, the only apparent rule being that it should be celebrated in the earlier portion of the day and in connexion with Matins. (5) That evening Communion was introduced into the Church of England in the present century on account of alleged necessity, it being maintained that many would not be able to receive the Holy Communion unless it was occasionally administered in the evening. (6) That, regard being had to the continuous custom of the Church, as well as to the necessity now alleged to exist, it is the bounden duty of every man who publicly administers the Holy Communion in the evening to assure himself of the reality of