

bor of baptisms; the number of persons confirmed, of the congregation, and of the communicants; the attendance at the schools; the amount of the alms, and of the collections, &c.: in fact, full annual statistical returns from each parish as to all matters affecting the interests of the Church. These statistics are regularly obtained in the American Episcopal Church, and in some congregations of that Church are prepared with remarkable care and accuracy.

We cannot conclude our report without a deep sense of the importance of the subject which has been committed to our consideration; and, feeling most anxious for the Divine blessing upon our consultations, we would respectfully, but earnestly, implore the special prayers of all the members of this House, and of the faithful at large, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to make effectual any measures which may be set on foot, to the glory of God, in the extension of His kingdom, both in our own country and throughout the world.

(Signed)

EDWARD BICKERSTETH, Chairman.

OCCASIONAL SERVICES

Report of the Committee on Occasional Services.

The Committee are desired "to examine by what authority the services for November 5, January 30, and May 29 were drawn up, and are appointed to be read, and the legal force which they severally possess; to report thereupon to the House, and to make such recommendations relating to those services as they shall think desirable."

If by this resolution of the House be meant that the Committee should state whether the services can be enforced by law and on what particular statute or ordinance that enforcement can be grounded, it must decline to frame an answer.

It may possibly be that the use of the services, as now existing, is legally obligatory, and that it may be so on one or more of several grounds, but it would be to intrude on the provinces of the courts at law, and premature in the Committee, to give a positive opinion on a subject of so much difficulty and intricacy. They must likewise decline to express any judgment on the obligation of the clergy, as a question of conscience, to observe the days and to read the services. The general result of the investigation appears to be that the Legislature has enacted the observance of the days for which the services are appointed, and has fully acquiesced in the power exercised by the Crown to appoint specific services for those days.

Though in one or more of the three cases Convocation appears to have been consulted, and gave its sanction to certain services; yet the Crown, in adding those services, makes no reference to any co-ordinate authority, in this respect, of Convocation. The services, as they stand at present, with alterations, not unimportant, made from time to time, were certainly not submitted either to Convocation or to Parliament, but so far rest on the sole power of the Crown. Yet this constant compliance of the Church, for a considerable period, with the Royal proclamation, the interest of Convocation, as well as the concurrence of both branches of the Legislature, by their frequent attendance in the most formal way on such services, seem like a recognition of that authority.

The service for the Royal accession, it may be added, though this service may not be named in the resolution of the House, appeared to rest on different grounds. It is not commanded or recognised by the Legislative enactments, and certainly has not been observed with the same regularity; yet it seems with exceptions at certain periods, which admit of an easy explanation, from the reign of Elizabeth, to have been commanded by the Crown and acquiesced in by the State,

without doubt or difficulty. The Committee recommended the adoption of the following resolution:—"That measures of great importance affecting not only the property but the discipline of the Church, are proposed and enacted in Parliament without being previously communicated to the clergy in Convocation."

COUNSEL AND CO-OPERATION OF THE LAITY.

Report of the Committee of the Lower House on Lay Co-operation.

(Presented July 10, 1857.)

The Committee* of the Lower House of Convocation of the province of Canterbury appointed to consider "the best means of obtaining the counsel and co-operation of the laity of the Church in annual visitations or diocesan synods, or in other modes that may be deemed expedient," have to report as follows:—

They are unanimously of opinion that the well-being of the Church greatly depends, under Almighty God, on the mutual good will and cordial co-operation of its members, clergy and laity; and it is their earnest desire that the end proposed may be attained.

At the same time, they thankfully acknowledge that a spirit of harmonious action between the clergy and laity had long shown itself with excellent results, in the administration of the affairs of many religious and charitable societies in this country.

The special duty, however, of the present Committee is to suggest means for eliciting, strengthening, and consolidating such co-operation, by regular diocesan organization, particularly of a synodical character.

The Committee are of opinion that the means employed for obtaining such co-operation, should be regarded, in the first instance, as of a tentative and provisional kind.

It may also be anticipated, that no uniform plan can be devised, which, would be equally applicable at once to all dioceses.

I.—PARISH VESTRIES.

The primary elements of lay co-operation may be found in parochial vestries, in which the clergymen and his parishioners meet together for consultation on matters ecclesiastical as well as temporal.

II.—RURIDECANAL CHAPTERS OR MEETINGS.

The Committee would next advert to the ruridecanal chapters or meetings, which are of very ancient date.

They appreciate highly the benefits derived from them, and hope that such chapters or meetings may be generally revived.

The Committee suggest for consideration whether the ruridecanal division of dioceses might not afford facilities for lay co-operation, if churchwardens and sidesmen of parishes of the deanry, and perhaps other laymen of the Church, were, as occasion might require, invited by the rural dean, to confer with the clergy on subjects previously proposed.

Such meetings, it is supposed, would be preceded by common prayer in the church, and it is to be wished that an opportunity might also be offered for partaking of the Holy Communion.

III.—ARCHIDIACONAL VISITATIONS.

The next advance towards a fuller development of lay co-operation may be seen in the visitations held by the several archdeacons; fifty-five in number, in this province.

* Members of the Committee:—*Deans*—Canterbury, Norwich. *Archdeacons*—Berks, Bristol, Hereford, Lewes, Maidstone, Middlesex, Salop, Taunton, Worcester. *Doctors*—Jelf, Jeremie, Wordsworth (Chairman). *Chancellor*—Martin. *Messrs.*—Caswell (D. D. of Trinity College, Hartford, U.S.), Fendall, Mackenzie, Oxenden, Raddolph, Seymour, Thomas, Hon. S. Waldegrave.

The Committee are not unmindful that such visitations were originally of a disciplinarian and judicial character.

In course of time, however, and under the influence of various circumstances, these archidiaconal visitations took the place of the two yearly synods anciently held by the bishops of the several dioceses (Bishop Gibson, *Codex*, p. 968).

They are, in fact, the only constitutional assemblies of the clergy and laity of the archdeaconry, as such, which are at present known to the law.

The Committee do not enter on the question, whether the present organization of these assemblies is the best that could be devised; but they are of opinion that it is capable of improvement in its application.

They do not recommend that any attempts should be made at present to create new agency for lay co-operation in the archdeaconries; but that, in the first instance at least, resort should be had for that purpose to the constitutional organization already existing from time immemorial.

They feel persuaded that these visitations afford valuable opportunities for obtaining the co-operation of the clergy and laity, and for promoting the practical efficiency of the Church.

The churchwardens are legally the lay representatives of the several parishes of the archdeaconry, and are cited as such to the visitations. They are the guardians of the fabrics and goods of the parish churches; and are the trustees and dispensers of a large annual revenue, amounting to not less than £300,000, for the maintenance of the parish churches and of their religious services.

The sidesmen (or synodsmen) also are by the 90th canon recognized officers of the Church, whose duty it is to assist the churchwardens in the execution of their office, and are as such to be cited to the visitations.

Every thing, therefore, ought to be done to increase the efficiency of these officers, and to strengthen the bonds of union which connect the clergy with them.

It may be hoped that if the importance of these offices were more generally understood, and if the holders of them were fully recognized as persons charged from ancient times with solemn duties, and if, as occasion might require, they were called into consultation with the clergy at these visitations, they would be stimulated in their efforts to do their duty; and the office of churchwarden would be raised in public esteem, and would be sought by earnest and zealous laymen, to the benefit of religion and to the promotion of charity and unity.

The Committee take for granted that the conferences at these synodical visitations would be limited to questions concerning the practical efficiency of the Church, especially within the archdeaconry; and that no question of a purely doctrinal character would be submitted for discussion at them; and that the archdeacon, as president, would give previous notice to those who would be summoned, what the subject would be, on which he would request the opinions of those convened, and that sufficient time would be allowed for deliberation.

For the more intimate and hearty union of those who are convened to these visitations, and for the blessing of Almighty God on their joint deliberations, it is to be wished that an opportunity should be offered to all who are summoned to them of joining together in the participation of the Holy Communion.

IV.—EPISCOPAL VISITATIONS.

The Committee next proceed to consider the case of the visitations held by the bishops of the