

The Church Guardian

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

L. H. DAVIDSON, D.C.L., MONTREAL.

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:—

REV. H. W. NYE, M.A., Rector, Bedford, P.Q. REV. EDWYN S. W. PENTREATH, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Address Correspondence and Communications to the Editor, P.O. Box 504. Exchanges to P.O. Box 1950. For Business announcements See page 14.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

•• SUBSCRIBERS IN ARREARS are respectfully requested to remit at their earliest convenience. The very low price at which the paper is published renders necessary a rigid enforcement of the rule of payment in advance. The label gives the date of expiration.

Will Subscribers please examine Label, and REMIT PROMPTLY!

CALENDAR FOR JULY.

JULY 5th—5th Sunday after Trinity.
12th—6th Sunday after Trinity.
19th—7th Sunday after Trinity.
25th—St. JAMES. A. & M.
26th—8th Sunday after Trinity.

PUBLICATIONS OF CONVOCATION.

Those who desire to follow with intelligent interest the growing activities in all departments of Church work, at home and abroad, will thank us for calling their attention to the papers issued by Committees of Convocation. We shall speak only of the Convocation of Canterbury, for although valuable reports have from time to time been put forth by the York Convocation—notably one on Intemperance—the conditions under which the Northern Convocation has hitherto met have not been favorable to the development of the system of Committees, which has assumed a very valuable form in the Convocation of Canterbury, especially in the Lower House. Indeed, it would be difficult to devise a better system for securing full and careful consideration of Church questions. A subject is brought before the Lower House, which may consist of about 70 or 80 persons present; it is referred to a Committee, if there be one that can suitably take it up, or a Special Committee is appointed to deal with it. For such a Committee such persons are appointed as are known to have given attention to the question in hand. During the long recesses between the Sessions of Convocation the Committees meet, they hold communication with experts, they often have opportunities, from their connection with an ancient constitutional body like Convocation, of getting information which might be denied to private inquirers. They have, also, the special advantage of coming from many different parts of the country, and so of being acquainted with the wants of different classes, and the circumstances of the Church in town and country, among miners and artisans, laborers, sailors, and men of trade and commerce. The Reports are very fully considered before being presented; and even after presentation, an opportunity is sometimes given for reconsideration.

We believe that Convocation is most anxious that it should be understood how far it is responsible for opinions expressed in Reports. We not unfrequently read of something being

“authorised by Convocation,” when it turns out to have no “authority” from either Upper or Lower House, but to be recommended by a Committee. Thus it is to be understood that the Reports of Committees, however valuable, have no ecclesiastical authority. We say this to prevent misunderstanding, not with a view to depreciate the value of the Reports.

Until within the last four years, the Reports of Committees of Convocation were not, as a rule, published as separate papers; they were distributed amongst members of the two Houses, and a few were bound up with the Chronicle of Convocation, which no one thought of purchasing. In 1882 a new system was introduced; a member of the Lower House undertook the duty of editor, and the Reports and other papers issued by Convocation have been on sale at the depository of the National Society in Westminster at a low price, and have met with a rapidly increasing demand. These papers will be found to embrace all the subjects of current interest to Churchmen.

An exhaustive report on “The Present Condition of the Marriage Laws” (No. 152) was issued in 1883, which, while treating especially of the English law, contains much information that is valuable to readers here.

In special departments of Church work we have most helpful papers, such as “On the Hours of Divine Service” (No. 157), “Friendly Societies” (No. 158), “Recovery of Fallen Women” (No. 164), “Intemperance” (No. 165), “Day of Intercession for Missions” (No. 168).

Of the publications put forth by Convocation this year, we must call special attention to a “Book of Private Prayer” (No. 1661), approved by the Lower House—the first instalment of what should prove a great boon to English Churchmen; and a report on “Church Music and Choristers” (No. 167).

We have reserved to the last the mention of a paper of singular value and interest, the Report of a Joint Committee of the two Houses on the “Spiritual Needs of the Masses” (No. 182), which was considered of so much importance that it has been determined to print it in a handy form, and to place it on the catalogue of the S. P. C. K. It was drawn up by a strong Committee, consisting of the Bishops of London (Temple), Winchester, Norwich, Rochester and Lichfield; the Deans of Worcester and St. Paul's; Archdeacons Bishop Trollope, Hannah, Bathurst, Pott and Sumner; Canons Butler (now Dean of Lincoln), Hopkins and Ainslie. The Committee got information from all parts of the Province, and with great labor summarized it, and founded upon it certain practical suggestions which indicate, as we think, the true methods of the Church's evangelistic efforts.

If any of our readers wish to be well up in any subject that is likely to come before a Clerical Conference or Church Congress, they will do well to provide themselves with a supply of these interesting and instructive papers, which can be procured with little trouble and expense.

Ora et Labora.—“Working is praying” said one of the holiest of men. And he spoke the truth, if a man will but do his work from a sense of duty, which is for the sake of God.—(Kingsley.)

THE CONSERVATISM OF THE PRAYER-BOOK.

BY REV. W. H. PLATT, D.D., LL.D.

The conservatism of the Prayer-book is as evident as its antiquity and scripturalness.

Ancient ideas and customs have in them the conservatism of deliberation and patience. There is wisdom in adhering to principles and observances approved by the experiences of most people, in most parts of the world, and in its most enlightened ages. We claim this sanction of the teachings of the Prayer-book, as embodied in its creeds, prayers, and praises. The doctrines of the Prayer-book have passed under the severest scrutiny of many centuries. Men have died rather than recant them.

But let us consider a moment longer the character and peculiar liabilities of extemporaneous prayers. As all complete acts of prayer require the four elements of invocation, supplication, intercession, and thanksgivings, extemporaneous public prayer, repeated to the same congregation, is most sure either to omit some one or more of these elements or to fall into the same expressions or form of prayer, without method or scriptural accuracy. Unless short, like that of the publican, they must wander into much inconsiderateness of thought and opinion. The minister is liable to give expression to his crudest and most unstable thoughts and temper. He is but too apt to give utterance to the last sensation of his locality or of the times, whether it be religious, social, or political. However well some well-trained minds may manage them, they are often extravagant in ideas and irreverent in expression. Often they are but mere speeches to the congregation, rather than a worship to God. It was said of a brilliant New England preacher, that he pronounced the most eloquent prayer ever offered to a Boston audience. His ambition to excel in the presence of an assemblage of people, his warmth of thought, consideration of style, and pressure of outside influences made his utterances not a prayer, but an oration. He was conscious of the presence of man, not God. In spite of himself, he spoke to the former, not to the latter.

But in written prayers, especially like those of the Prayer-book—written in most instances as long as one thousand years ago—the people will escape the individual peculiarities of the minister and the inflammatory passions of the hour. Thank God, whatever heresies there may be in the theology of the times, or errors in the schools of philosophy, or fierce passions in secular affairs, none of these can be traced to the worship of our Church. On the contrary, the Prayer-book service has most constantly interposed between her people and all these evils the barrier of her ancient prescriptions of prayer and praise. In these there is nothing of the passing hour or of the individual man. At the door of the sanctuary man is warned: “The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

Nor can we admit that in extemporaneous prayers, however intellectual and beautiful and scholarly they may be, there can be the same clearness of style or scripturalness of sentiment as in the prayers of our Prayer-book. No other book is so Saxon. Its words are the simplest in the English language. There is nothing high-sounding in its phrases or confused in its petitions. Its sentences are short, clear, and simple as the rhetoric of centuries could make them. Indeed, it is not possible to be more plain and perspicuous. The distinguished Dr. Doddridge, a Congregational minister, says of the Prayer-book: “The language is so plain as to be level to the capacities of the meanest, and yet the sense is so noble as to raise the conceptions of the greatest.”

Thus it is pre-eminently the service for the uneducated. It suits the tastes, and ideas of order and reverence and scripturalness, of the

All Subscriptions Payable in Advance. Will Subscribers please Examine Label and remit?