

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

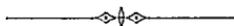
[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

there are diversities of gifts, so the Lord gives to everyone grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

And as the key of all, the crowning grace of Christian character, cultivate that self-suppression which is essential to deep and enduring work. Remember, too, that this self-suppression is not to be won by beating down or by curbing in violent fashion our thoughts and feelings, but rather by seeking to possess such love to Christ that our joy is found when Christ is all in all to others as well as to ourselves.

Ah! here is the secret of power and the secret of life. If Christ has been all in all to us; if His character, His name, His Person, His Presence have grown strong and sweet in our experience; if the child Christ has been the tenant of our hearts, the desire of our eye, the object of our devotion, the inspiration of our lowliest and lordliest service, then we shall be content that our people shall think less of us, if only they think more of Him. We shall be content to watch the way He leads them, and able to set aside our annoyance, even though that way should not be our way. If He becomes more in their lives, and more to their hearts; if He becomes to them their Lord and their Saviour as He is ours, we shall be glad. Our work will be achieved, our joy will be full; we may be ready to sing our *Nunc Dimittis* when our people have learnt to sing their *Magnificat*.

W. B. RIFON.



## ART. II.—THE LATE CANTERBURY HOUSE OF LAYMEN.

BY the dissolution of Convocation, concurrently with Parliament, in the summer of last year, the second House of Laymen for the Province of Canterbury came to an end after an existence of six years. Its predecessor, owing to the speedy collapse of the Parliament of 1885-86, enjoyed a life of barely as many months, and no conclusion as to the success of the experiment could be formed from its career. We are now, however, in a position to judge how far the scheme of an informal consultative lay body, which was adopted by both Houses of the Southern Convocation in July, 1885, has answered the purpose which it was designed to fulfil.

The House of Laymen, according to the original scheme, can sit only when Convocation is in session. This means, ordinarily, from Tuesday to Friday inclusive during one week in February, another in April or May, and a third in July. As a matter of fact, the House has usually only sat

during two of those weeks, and in some cases for only three out of the possible four days in the week. Its committees, however, have sat at other times, and much useful work has been done by them in threshing out matters of general interest to the Church.

The House consists of 109 representatives, elected by the lay members of the Diocesan Conferences of the different dioceses in the Province of Canterbury. There will, of course, always be a certain number of peers and members of the House of Commons who have seats in it, and these will naturally on other accounts be in London at the time of its sittings. But of the rest, many are called upon to travel a long distance and find temporary accommodation in the Metropolis for the express purpose of attending for three or four days the sittings of the House of Laymen, the duration of which is limited on each day to two hours and a half. It is not astonishing that, under these circumstances, and in view of the fact that the resolutions of the House carry no legal weight, and no direct practical effect can be given to them, there should be a difficulty in keeping up the attendance. When we find that in the later sessions the average number present has been about one-third of the whole House, the marvel is that the attendance should have been so well sustained, rather than that it should not have been greater.

The late House, as well as its predecessor, enjoyed the great advantage of having as its Chairman the Earl of Selborne. Besides keeping it straight on points of form, he often, by his prudent counsel, prevented it from passing an unwise or ill-considered resolution, which would have rendered it open to just criticism. When he was unable to be present, his place was filled by the Vice-Chairman, Mr. G. A. Spottiswoode, who was indefatigable in arranging the business of the House, and securing that all matters of current ecclesiastical interest should be brought before it. Under the original scheme it was proposed that the House might be consulted on all subjects which ordinarily occupy the attention of Convocation, except the definition or interpretation of the faith and doctrine of the Church. The Archbishop was to lay before the House subjects on which he desired its counsel. The scheme, however, contemplated that its members might themselves originate subjects, but directed that the results of their deliberations on such subjects, as well as on those referred to them by the Archbishop, should be communicated to him. It will be seen in our review of the proceedings of the late House that it fully availed itself of the privilege of initiation which was thus accorded.

In his opening address to the House on February 8, 1887,

the Archbishop called attention to four contemplated legislative measures affecting the Church: the Government Bills on tithe rent-charge and on glebe lands, and Bills which he himself intended to introduce on Church patronage and on clergy discipline. The House diligently applied itself to the discussion of all these matters, and it is interesting to note the effect which its deliberations had upon their fate. The first of them, the tithe rent-charge question, had, as we may remember, a long and troublous career before it was ultimately settled in March, 1891, with the help of a pre-Christmas meeting of Parliament. The House of Laymen expressed more than once its strong sense of the importance of a Bill on the subject being carried, and its approval of the payment of the tithe rent-charge being thrown upon the land-owner instead of upon the occupier. It passed a resolution deprecating the five per cent. deduction, which, in their Bill of 1887, the Government proposed to allow the landlords to make from the tithe rent-charge, as a compensation for the liability to its payment being transferred to them. This expression of opinion had probably no small share in causing the proposal for the deduction to be subsequently abandoned. The Bill for facilitating the sale of glebe lands was passed in 1888. In its final form, in accordance with recommendations made by the House of Laymen, the Bill provided for due notice of any intended sale being given to the patron of the benefice, no less than to the bishop of the diocese; and the original provisions as to the supply of allotments and small holdings out of any glebe lands which might be offered for sale were modified so as not to prejudice the value of these lands in the market. Of the two Bills of the Archbishop, the first to be introduced and considered—that on Church patronage—has not yet passed into law. The measure was very carefully discussed by the first House of Laymen during the two sessions of their existence in 1886, and again by the late House in the following year. Approval was given to the principle that resignation bonds, the sale of next presentations, and the mortgage of advowsons should be prohibited; to donations being converted into presentative benefices; and to power being accorded to parishioners to bring before the Bishop objections to the institution of any presentee. Let us hope that, before many years are gone by, a Bill will be passed embodying these and other valuable details. The Clergy Discipline Bill, as our readers will remember, became law last session. From the year 1887 onwards the subject was continually before the House of Laymen, and in 1888 they offered various criticisms on the clauses of the measure as it was originally drafted, and suggested that the name which it then bore, of Church Discipline Bill, was inap-

propriate, and should be altered to that of Clergy Discipline Bill. This alteration, as we all know, was made, and it marks a salutary change of feeling from that which prevailed fifty years ago when the Act of 1840 (which the new measure is designed to supersede so far as respects breaches of morals on the part of the clergy) was styled, without remonstrance, "An Act for better enforcing Church Discipline." We now recognise that the laity are as much a part of the Church as the clergy. It would be superfluous to enumerate the other criticisms of the House of Laymen since they were superseded by the new form which the Bill assumed in 1891, and in which it was ultimately passed last summer. Suffice it to say, that due weight was given to them, and that they exercised an appreciable influence in the subsequent phases through which the measure passed before it eventually became law.

Early in 1889 the Archbishop desired the opinion of the House on a Bill which the Bishop of London proposed to introduce for amending the law as to the churches in which marriages can be solemnized, and as to the fees to be taken for the ceremony and for the previous banns or license. The House did useful work in criticising this Bill, which, in its original shape, seemed open to objection in several respects. In the May session a resolution, moved by the late Earl Beauchamp, was unanimously agreed to, to the effect that the House was not prepared to recommend the adoption of the Bill. In consequence of this vote the Bill was recast, and in 1891 the House was able to express, with equal unanimity, a general approval of the new draft submitted to it, recommending, however, a few improvements in certain matters of detail. The state of public business has not as yet allowed of this Bill making any progress in the Legislature.

Besides considering the Parliamentary measures specially referred to it by the Archbishop, the House expressed its opinion upon other Bills affecting more or less directly the welfare of the Church. It affirmed the necessity for an amendment in the Law of Dilapidations, and commended Mr. H. T. Davenport's Bill as deserving of careful consideration in connection with the subject. In 1890 a resolution urging Churchmen, through their Diocesan Conferences and otherwise, to oppose the legalization of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, was carried with only four dissentients. And in the following year the Free Education Bill was considered, and amendments in it were suggested, some of which were afterwards adopted by the Government, though others—such as the enlargement of the 17s. 6d. limit, and the exemption of public elementary schools from payment of rates—are still waited for in vain. In its first session the House affirmed, by

thirty-four votes to eighteen, the principle of Mr. Sydney Gedge's Deacon's Bill, by a resolution that it was desirable that the legislative enactments which prevent a deacon from engaging in secular occupation should be repealed or greatly modified. This proposal for recruiting the ranks of the clergy attracted at the time considerable attention, and provoked some animated discussions in different assemblies of Churchmen. But it became evident that, whatever might be urged in favour of its intrinsic merits, the general opinion and feeling in the Church was adverse to it, and the idea has gradually fallen into abeyance. While, however, the project for secularizing the clergy has not gained ground, a very decided forward step has been taken in the Diocese of London, in the counter-plan of spiritualizing the laity by the creation, in March, 1891, of a body of diocesan readers, having the Bishop's commission to conduct special services and give addresses in consecrated buildings.

As long ago as 1884 the Upper House of the Southern Convocation passed a resolution approving of action being taken in this direction; but our prelates, in the exercise of a wise caution, abstained from hastily giving effect to their own recommendation. In London, however, the Diocesan Conference took up the matter, and showed unequivocally that they were in favour of going forward; and in 1890 the House of Laymen so far endorsed the scheme that they approved of the creation of a body of commissioned readers, to be appointed after passing an examination, and to serve throughout the area of the diocese, as distinct from the ordinary lay reader, who is merely licensed by the Bishop for work in a particular parish. The House refrained from expressly mentioning ministrations in consecrated buildings as part of the functions of the commissioned readers, and left the question open by simply resolving that it was desirable that they should perform, with the consent and under the direction of the incumbents of the parishes in which they were invited to work, such duties as they lawfully might, and as were prescribed in the Bishop's commission. There can, however, be little doubt that this vote helped to strengthen Bishop Temple in the step which he took in the following spring of admitting and commissioning diocesan readers, with authority from him, to conduct special or "extra" services and deliver addresses in consecrated buildings. After an experience of nearly two years it may be safely affirmed that this order—if it may be so called—of diocesan readers has taken permanent root in our Church.

Not so the proposed institution which immediately afterwards occupied the attention of the House. The discussion

on lay readers was followed by one on brotherhoods, which at that time loomed large before the eyes of the Church, though many of us could not divest ourselves of the suspicion that their promoters were rather endeavouring to create a demand for them than to supply a demand already existing. The House passed, by thirty-eight votes to three, a resolution in favour of the sanction of the Church being given to brotherhoods, whether clerical or lay, provided that their rules be approved by the Bishop of the diocese, and that they work in strict subordination to him, and on the invitation and under the sanction of the incumbent of the parish. A second resolution on the same subject was of a nature to test the good sense and feeling of the House. It was to the effect that the brothers should be allowed to bind themselves by vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience, the Bishop of the diocese having the power at any time to release any brother from the vows. After considerable discussion, the Vice-Chairman, who had moved the resolution, but who did not appear to possess any very keen ardour for it himself, saw that its success was hopeless, and obtained leave to withdraw it. The whole subject of brotherhoods has ceased for the present to attract any attention.

One of the most interesting series of proceedings in which the late House of Laymen was engaged arose out of a resolution of the Upper House of the Canterbury Convocation in February, 1887, by which the Draft Prayer-Book (Rubrics and Additional Services) Bill was referred to the Lay House and to the Lower House of Convocation for consideration. This draft Bill proposed that a scheme for amendments or additions to the Prayer-Book, by way of modification of the Rubrics and sanction of additional prayers and forms of services, might be proposed in Convocation, and, after being approved by both Houses in the Convocation of each province, might be laid before the Queen in Council, and, if her Majesty thought fit, before both Houses of Parliament. Then if neither House of Parliament presented an address for its rejection within forty days of its being so submitted to them, it might receive the Royal assent, and become the law of the land. We admittedly require legal permission for greater elasticity in our public worship; we require authorized forms of service for special occasions, such as harvest festivals; and our Prayer-Book needs to be enriched by prayers for foreign missionary work and other special objects. These wants can at present only be supplied by Act of Parliament; but even if there were any prospect of obtaining such an Act, the unseemliness of a discussion of the whole subject in the House of Commons, as at present constituted, is apparent. These considerations led to the proposal embodied in the draft Bill in

question, and on February 11 the Bishops of Truro and Ely (Dr. Wilkinson and Lord Alwyne Compton) attended and explained its provisions to the House of Laymen. The former dwelt, among other things, on the impropriety of using the present Confirmation Service, with its allusion to godparents, in the case of candidates who have been baptized as Nonconformists without sponsors. The House, being anxious to give full consideration to so important a measure, adjourned the discussion of it till their next session in May. Lord Harrowby then offered a strenuous opposition to its acceptance. As a layman, he looked with suspicion on the powers which it proposed to confer on the Convocations of the clergy; and he felt sure that Parliament would never consent to such a virtual surrender of its own control over the ritual of the National Church as the passing of the Bill would involve. The House of Laymen largely participated in this view, and passed the following cautious resolution:

That this House has received with great respect the draft Bill on Rubrics as an expression of the want by the Church of some power of legislation and an attempt to move in that direction; but this House at the same time desires to reserve for the present any expression of its opinion as to the particular matters to which such powers ought to extend.

Meantime, the Lower House of Convocation had accepted the proposed Bill, and on the reassembling of the House of Laymen in July a letter was read from the Archbishop, in which he expressed his satisfaction at the recognition by the House of the need in the Church of some additional power of legislation, and his absence of surprise at its hesitation with respect to the matters which the power should embrace. He had also gathered from the reports of the debate that many members of the House felt an anxiety whether the safeguards in the draft Bill were sufficient to protect the Church from ill-considered efforts at legislation. With a view, therefore, to the further consideration of these two important points, the Archbishop suggested a conference between eight members of the House of Laymen and eight members of each of the two Houses of Convocation. This was the first occasion on which the provision in the constitution of the House with respect to such a conference with the Houses of Convocation was resorted to, and whatever may be the changes through which our ecclesiastical organization is destined to pass, it will always possess a certain amount of historic interest. Eight representatives were appointed by the House of Laymen, and on July 7 they met eight Bishops and eight members of the Lower House of Convocation in the board-room of Queen Anne's Bounty. In the afternoon of the same day, as a result

of the Conference, a proposal was made in the House by the Vice-Chairman that the draft Bill should be referred to a committee; but the members were not yet prepared to go even so far as this. The debate was adjourned till the following day, and the motion was then withdrawn. In the following year (1888), owing to the Lambeth Conference, the House held only one session—namely in April—but Professor Stokes (M.P. for Cambridge University), took advantage of it to renew the proposal for the committee, which he succeeded in carrying; and when the House met again in February, 1889, he moved, in accordance with the first recommendation in the committee's report:

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that power should be given to authorize the provision of additional services for use in the Church of England [and for the revision from time to time of the rubrics and directions contained in the Book of Common-Prayer] in some such manner as is provided by the draft Bill.

Mr. J. G. Talbot (M.P. for Oxford University), moved, as an amendment, the omission of the bracketed words, but after considerable discussion his amendment was defeated by thirteen votes to twelve, and the original motion was carried by fourteen votes to eight. Three important supplementary resolutions were then passed to the effect: (1) That the House approved of the proposals in the draft Bill upon the express condition that no scheme should be finally adopted by the two Convocations and laid before the Queen in Council, until it had been first published in draft, and until an interval of twelve months had elapsed from the time of its publication; (2) that if an address of either House of Parliament was presented against a scheme, the scheme should be abandoned, but without preventing the subsequent preparation and passage of a new scheme identical in whole or in part with the defeated scheme; and (3) that it was of great importance that provision should be made to enable the services of the Church to be adapted to special circumstances. The twelve months' interval was suggested in order to allow of any scheme being fully discussed by all the Diocesan Conferences and by the House of Laymen, as well as by the Church generally. Two days afterwards these resolutions received the concurrence of each of the two Houses of Convocation, to whom they were communicated by the Archbishop.

It has been thought worth while to narrate at length the proceedings which took place in reference to this matter, partly because they illustrate the action of the House on a difficult question and its relations to the two Houses of Convocation, and partly because the subject itself is of great importance for the spiritual well-being of the Church. Experience in Diocesan

Conferences and elsewhere has shown that Churchmen generally are no more ready than were the members of the House of Laymen to accept off-hand the provisions of the proposed draft Bill. But we may hope that, as they become better known and considered, they will gradually win assent and be accepted as practically the only possible mode of escape from the deadlock to which we are at present reduced as respects any legislation on the subject of the ritual and worship of the Church.

The opponents of the draft Rubrics Bill in their arguments against entrusting to the Convocations the powers with which that Bill would have clothed them, insisted not only that these two bodies contained no representation of the laity, but further that they only very imperfectly represented the clergy. Their failure in this latter respect is an admitted blot in our present ecclesiastical arrangements, and, as our readers are aware, the Archbishop pointedly called the attention of the first House of Laymen to it in 1886. It was not, however, until May, 1889, that the members of the House addressed themselves to the question, and they then referred it to a committee. When this committee met the chairman, Lord Selborne, took a decidedly adverse view as to the practicability of any reform of Convocation being effected without bringing the subject before Parliament in a manner which would be distasteful to the feelings and prejudicial to the interests of the Church; and, influenced mainly by his weighty opinion, the committee made a brief report to the House in the following February to the effect that they thought that no effectual reform of Convocation could be carried out without the intervention of Parliament, and therefore they did not consider it expedient that further action should be taken at present. Such a summary dismissal of the matter, however, appeared to the House to be scarcely respectful to the Primate, or worthy of the importance of the subject, and the House accordingly referred it back to the committee for further consideration. Three months later they presented a second and more detailed report, in which they pointed out that the question referred to them was not as to the abstract expediency of a reform of Convocation, but as to the next step towards the attainment of that object which it might be practicable and desirable to take. They presented a summary of the legal opinions which had been given on the subject, and concluded by saying that it did not appear to them to be expedient at the present time to propose the introduction into Parliament of any measure for the reform of the representation of the clergy in Convocation, or for the removal of any doubts which might exist on the subject; and that there was no step which it was in their power to suggest as capable of being at that time advantageously taken for the practical attainment of

the desired object. This report was received by the House, and there the matter has since rested.

In our review of the proceedings of the House of Laymen, allusion has more than once been made to the reports of its committees. These reports are published, and are procurable separately for a trifle at the National Society's depository. Many of them deal with subjects of general interest to Churchmen, such as the Representation of the Laity in the Councils of the Church, Clergy Pensions, Purity, the Duty of the Church in regard to the Religious Education of the Upper and Middle Classes, and the Organization of Philanthropic Efforts. The two reports of the committee on the Increase of the Episcopate contain information and well-considered suggestions, which will be found of the greatest value whenever that important subject is seriously taken up, either as a whole or in detail. A similar value attaches to the first and second reports of the committee on Church Trusts, which are published together. The first deals with Parochial Trusts, and contains a form of a draft Bill for amending and extending the provisions of the ninth section of the Compulsory Church Rates Abolition Act, 1868, which, it may be remembered, authorized the appointment of a corporate body of trustees in any parish to accept and hold contributions for ecclesiastical purposes. The second report treats of the larger question of Diocesan Trust Bodies. The different bodies which already exist in the dioceses of Chester, Lichfield, Manchester, and Salisbury, are explained, and the special advantages and drawbacks attendant on each are discussed. It is needless to point out the benefit of having in every diocese a permanent trust body capable of holding, and, it necessary, of managing Church buildings and funds. Such an institution would not only render more secure the existing property of the Church, but would also, doubtless, attract additional gifts.

It remains to add that the late House of Laymen had the distinction of being the first deliberative assembly of the Church which has found a permanent abode in the Church House. During the first three years of its existence it met, like its predecessor, in the board room of the National Society. But in February, 1890, it moved into the large room of the premises on the west of Dean's Yard, which at present constitute the Church House, and its sittings have been held there ever since. When the new buildings are completed, it is of course contemplated that both Houses of Convocation will also be received into them; but at present these august bodies continue to occupy the temporary quarters in which they have been sheltered since the revival of their meetings fifty years ago.

PHILIP VERNON SMITH.