

**THE RECORDS OF
CONVOCATION,
1790-1848**

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The records of convocation, 1790-1848 by Joseph Hooper

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JOSEPH HOOPER

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Canons should be adopted. The motion was not agreed^{to}, as the majority of the Convoation wished for further consideration.

Adjourned till the afternoon. —

The Rt. Rev^d Bishop Seabury, — The Rev^d Mess^{rs} Fogg, Tyler, & Pitt, joined the Convoation.

Met in the Church at 3^o clock — And the Bishop took his seat as President, *ex officio*. — The Rev^d Mr. Ogilvie took his seat as a member of the Convoation —

The alterations in the Book of Common Prayer, made by the General Convention at Philadelphia, were read & considered. —

On motion, The question was put, in these words, "Whether we confirm the Doings of our Proctors in the General Convention at Philadelphia, on the 9th day of October 1769."

Which passed in the affirmative by the votes of every member present, the Rev^d Mr. Sayre excepted; — Who then entered the following Protest against the aforesaid Vote & proceedings of the Convoation, which Protest is here recorded at his desire, by order of the Convoation viz —

"In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

"I James Sayre, a Minister, in Presbyter^{al} Orders, of the Church of England, of late having officiated as a Presbyter of the Church of England in Connecticut, & having been a member of a Convention of the Clergy of Connecticut, for the

A PAGE FROM THE "RECORDS"

Containing the Approval of the Union of the Church in America

Diocese of Connecticut

THE
Records of Convocation

A.D. 1790—A.D. 1848

EDITED AND ANNOTATED FOR
THE DIOCESAN COMMISSION ON
ARCHIVES

BY
THE REVEREND JOSEPH HOOPER, M.A.

NEW HAVEN :
PRINTED FOR THE CONVENTION
MCMIV

THE TUTTLE, MOREHOUSE & TAYLOR COMPANY,
NEW HAVEN, CONN.

PREFACE.

With the printing of these "*Records*" the documentary history of the Diocese is made more complete. Some acts of the earlier Conventions seem obscure until explained by the discussions and conclusions of the Bishop and clergy in Convocation.

While the "*Records*" have been recognized as of great historic value by all Connecticut Churchmen, and especially by those who have carefully studied "the spotless history," as Bishop Williams styled it, of this the mother diocese of the American Church, there has been but one previous proposal to publish them.

This was in 1851, when the lovable and erudite Rev. Dr. Alonzo B. Chapin, editor of *The Calendar*, contemplated issuing them with some historical notes after publishing extracts in the columns of *The Calendar*; and for this purpose had a copy made which apparently has disappeared.

The historian of the Church in Connecticut, the revered and learned Dr. Eben Edwards Beardsley, consulted them while preparing his "History" and incorporated some extracts into his text. He also used them freely in his "Life" of our first Bishop, Dr. Samuel Seabury.

At the annual meeting of the permanent Commission upon Parochial Archives held on April 10, 1899, it was resolved that the Convention "have the existing *Records* of the Convocations of the clergy carefully printed with notes for preservation."

No measures were then taken to bring the subject before the Convention.

The consideration of the "*Records*" was resumed at the annual meeting of the Commission on May 13, 1902. The former resolution was unanimously reaffirmed and a member of the Commission appointed to present it to the Convention.

At the Convention of the Diocese held in Trinity Church, Hartford, on June 10, 1902, the present publication was unanimously authorized.

The Commission subsequently appointed the Rev. Dr. Samuel Hart, Registrar of the Diocese, and the Rev. Joseph Hooper, a committee to superintend its annotation and publication.

The desire of the Committee to verify every detail of both the text and the notes has made an earlier publication impracticable.

The Committee has in all matters connected with the publication acted as a unit.

Dr. Hart kindly undertook the comparison of the transcript with the original and read the proof of the text also with the original. Mr. Hooper is responsible for the "Introduction," which is intended to give such information as is available concerning the "Voluntary Conventions" and earlier Convocations in Connecticut. He has also compiled such "Notes" as seemed necessary. He gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to his colleague's profound knowledge of our history.

The "*Records*" are printed exactly as found in the original minute books with these exceptions: the years are inserted in bold-faced type and a few emendations necessary to complete the sense have been made. They are enclosed in square brackets.

J. H.

JUNE, 1904.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

It was the custom of the clergy of the Church of England in the Colony of Connecticut to meet from time to time in "voluntary convention."

At these meetings matters of common interest were discussed, and often protests were made and measures taken to maintain the rights of oppressed Churchmen in some of the towns.

Although a yearly gathering of the clergy in each colony or province, or if there were very few in any colony the clergy of two or more colonies, was favored by the venerable Propagation Society, the Conventions were held at irregular intervals until the middle of the eighteenth century. Each meeting in New England generally, and in Connecticut especially, had the warrant of some special need of their various cures or the presence of some danger or menace to the Church of which they were ministers.

The same irregularity is noticed in the Conventions in the other North American colonies and provinces until after 1750. At that time the agitation for an American Episcopate became more active, and appeals and plans for its successful accomplishment were frequently sent to the venerable Society, "his Grace of Canterbury" or "my Lord of London."

An organized opposition to this design, and the union against it of all those dissenting from the Church of England, caused the clergy of the more northern colonies to meet more frequently until the Revolution.

We know certainly from letters of missionaries, notices in the newspapers, and the formal documents sent "home" to the venerable Society or the Bishop of London, that seventeen Conventions were held in Connecticut from 1739 to 1776.

Probably there were other meetings more purely social in their character of which no record was made.

The first recorded Convention is that held at "Fairfield in New England" on March 20, 1739. It was attended by seven clergymen, the six then laboring in Connecticut and the Rector of Christ Church, Rye, New York, who ministered to the Connecti-

cut Churchmen on the border of New York at Horse Neck (now Greenwich), and Stamford.¹ From the "representation" sent to the venerable Society the meeting was occasioned by the aggressions of the "Standing Order" upon Churchmen. Taxes for the support of the ministry were levied in every town. These taxes were to be the provision for the salary of the ministers of the "Standing Order," that is, those who subscribed and conformed to the Saybrook Platform of 1708. All "sober dissenters," including Churchmen, who were certified to belong to other religious bodies could have their ministerial taxes paid to their respective pastors. In practice very few towns were willing to divert any portion of their tax from the local pastor without a formal suit and mandamus. The particular case of aggression in 1739 was that of the Churchmen in Horse Neck and Stamford, where the collectors refused to pay their proportion of the tax to Mr. Wetmore. This treatment of a just claim demanded redress.

The Convention also mentioned the indignity offered to the Rev. Mr. Arnold of West Haven and his servants, who were forcibly ejected by a mob of about one hundred and fifty people from the "Gregson Glebe" in New Haven, of which he was taking possession by ploughing.

This plot had been deeded to the Rev. Jonathan Arnold by Mr. William Gregson of London in trust for the Church of England in New Haven. The actual title was obscure and disputed.²

¹ The Rev. Samuel Johnson, of Stratford ;
John Beach, of Newtown ;
Samuel Scabury, of New London ;
Jonathan Arnold, of West Haven ;
Ebenezer Punderson, of North Groton ;
Henry Caner, of Fairfield ;
James Wetmore, of Rye, New York.

² The "Representation" is on pp. 166-169 of *Documentary History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America*. I. Connecticut. Francis L. Hawks, D.D., LL.D., William Stevens Perry, A.M., Editors. Vol. I. New York, James Pott, 1863. Usually quoted as "*Connecticut Church Documents*." For the "Gregson Glebe," see pp. 114, 115, 168, 170, 171, 224, 227 of *The History of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, from the Settlement of the Colony to the death of Bishop Scabury*. By E. E. Beardsley, D.D. Vol. I. Third edition. New York, Hurd and Houghton, 1874. Also pp. 19, 20, 22, *The Beginning of the Episcopal Church in New Haven*. By Edwin Harwood, D.D. 1894.