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GEORGE, LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER,

TO THE

CLERGY OF HIS DIOCESE,

AT THE

TRIENNIAL VISITATION,

HOLDEN IN OCTOBER 1843.

SECOND EDITION.

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TO THE
REV. THE CLERGY
OF THE
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER,

This Charge,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND AND SERVANT,

G. ROCHESTER.

C H A R G E,

&c.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

I was induced to defer meeting you, until a later period of the year than usual, in the expectation that the Bill, which was brought into Parliament for the regulation of the Ecclesiastical Courts, would have conferred on me the peculiar jurisdiction, at present exercised in this Diocese by our Metropolitan, in which case I was desirous that an opportunity might be afforded me of including the Peculiars in my present Visitation. The measure in question, as you are aware, was withdrawn at the conclusion of the session, and it now appears to be doubtful whether, in the event of its being hereafter adopted, the jurisdiction of the Archbishop will cease until further meditated changes shall take place in this Diocese.

Amidst the controversy which at present unhappily exists in our Church, I have so strongly felt the

difficulties which have presented themselves to my mind, previously to addressing you on this occasion, that I have not thought it desirable to call upon any of you for an expression of your opinions on those points, which are usually comprised in a Visitation sermon. I feel assured that you will give a favourable interpretation to my motives, and not consider, that in omitting a customary practice, I evince any doubt as to the soundness of your doctrinal opinions, for which, I am happy to say, the Clergy of this Diocese are distinguished, or, that I suppose you are likely to be led to adopt any of the novelties, with respect to certain ceremonial observances, which have been introduced elsewhere.—I call them novelties, for although some of them may be authorized by ancient practice, change of times and circumstances and long desuetude have rendered them obsolete for several generations. Not being essential, they are therefore unnecessary innovations, which disturb the minds of our congregations, not so much, perhaps, from any real objection to the ceremonies themselves, as from an apprehension that they lead to something more than they appear to indicate, and to the restoration of other observances, which our Church thought fit to lay aside, as tending to create superstitious feelings amongst the ignorant. It is my duty to state my opinion on some of the points in dispute, and, in doing so, I am anxious, as far as possible, to avoid giving offence to those who may differ from me; and more especially, in what-

ever may fall from me this day, I desire to be understood as speaking with due respect of the pious and learned men, to whose agency the introduction of the novelties to which I allude is principally to be attributed. I entirely disapprove of the intemperate conduct of some of their adversaries, who not only apply to them the bitterest terms of reproach, ascribing to them motives and intentions far distant, as I believe, from their minds, but also adopt the same language towards those prelates of our Church who have rebuked their errors, but not, as they think, with sufficient harshness and severity. On the contrary the opposite party, in advancing their opinions, have never departed, as far as I have read in their sermons and other publications, from the spirit of mildness and Christian charity which becomes the ministers of the Gospel; and they evinced their regard for discipline and order, and their respect for those who bear rule in the Church, by the ready obedience they at first paid to their Diocesan, in ceasing to continue the publication of the Tracts, some of which he had felt it his duty to condemn; and I cannot but hope that the opinions which have been so generally expressed by the Bishops of our Church, of the evil tendency of some of the doctrines and practices advocated in the Tracts in question, will induce the authors to abandon the further propagation of opinions calculated to produce the most lamentable schisms and divisions in our Church, already too much divided against itself.

The approbation with which their proceedings have been viewed by one of the most distinguished of the Roman Catholic priests in this country ought, I think, to be sufficient to create some suspicions and misgivings in their minds that all is not right. He says, "It is impossible to read the works of the Oxford Divines, and especially to follow them chronologically, without discovering in them a daily approach towards our Holy Church both in doctrine and affectionate feeling. Our saints, our popes have become dear to them by little and little, our rites, our ceremonies, our offices, nay, our very *Rubrics*, are precious in their eyes, alas! beyond what many of us consider them. Our monastic institutions, our charitable and educational provisions, have become more and more objects with them of earnest study, and every thing in fine that concerns our religion deeply interests their attention. I know that some will say that all this interest is of an interested character, and that they only wish to take so much from us as may serve to give consistency to their own Church, but have no idea of advancing further. This suspicion is, I conceive, unjust and ungrounded. It is based upon ignorance of the *true* character and feelings of those writers. Their admiration of our institutions and practices, their regret at having lost them, *manifestly* spring from the *value* they set upon every thing Catholic: and to suppose them (without a degree of inconsistency with which we have no right to charge them) to love the parts of a system, and to wish for

them, whilst they would reject the root and only source and support of them, the system itself, is to my mind revoltingly contradictory¹.”

Whether the writer of the above observations is sincere in this expression of his opinion, or is only endeavouring to sow the seeds of discord and disunion amongst us, I will not take upon me to say; but I fear that he has too much reason for arriving at some of the conclusions he has formed, which having been happily published may serve as a beacon to warn us of approaching danger.

The low notions which have been entertained by some of the Clergy with respect to our sacramental ordinances and the services of our Church, have, I fear, in a great degree, led to the adoption of extreme views in an opposite direction; and if I were obliged to unite with either of the parties, I should certainly much prefer the opinions of those which exalt, to those which depreciate the value of these sacred rites. Thus I cannot entertain any unity of religious feeling with a body of Christian ministers, who having declared that they will conform to the Liturgy of the Church of England, and having been admitted to partake of its endowments, offer up the prayers of that Church with their lips, whilst they disbelieve the doctrines involved in them, and return thanks to Almighty God that the children they baptize are regenerated, when they at the same time deny that any such influence of the Holy Spirit has

¹ Letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury.

been exercised in their behalf. There is, however, a middle course, equally removed from puritanism and the errors of popery, which we may safely follow. That middle course has been very generally adopted by our Bishops and Clergy since the Reformation, and from it I hope we shall not depart.

Whilst, however, I differ from and condemn many of the opinions which have been advanced by the authors of the Tracts, I applaud them for having been the means of exciting a greater degree of attention to order and discipline, greater veneration for our Liturgy and sacramental ordinances, and greater regard for the honour of Almighty God, by rousing the spirit which is now abroad for the restoration, where it can be effected, of our sacred edifices to their primitive splendour and beauty. I applaud them for the sanctity of their lives, for their earnestness in the discharge of the duties of their high and holy calling, and will only add that I wish they were as eminent for sound judgment and discretion as they are for their piety and zeal in propagating their opinions. Desirous as I am to give them all the praise which is justly due to their exertions for the revival of a spirit of greater holiness, and more ardent devotion to our religious duties, I feel myself compelled to oppose some of their opinions, more particularly those advanced in the Eighty-first and Ninetieth Tracts; in the latter of which the articles of our Church are wrested from their plain meaning, to mitigate and soften down

the condemnation which is therein attached to certain doctrines of the Church of Rome. Thus the Invocation of saints, the Sacrifice of the mass, and the Infallibility of general councils, are admitted by the authors of the Tracts, in a sense they are pleased to attach to these doctrines; whilst they are decidedly rejected by our articles. It has, indeed, sometimes been alleged, that in the collect for St. Michael and all Angels our Liturgy recognizes the invocation of saints. But it is not so. We therein only pray to God, that by his appointment they may succour and defend us on earth; but no prayer is offered up to them, and we have no reason to believe they could hear us were we so to address them. If by invocation is only meant that we pray God will be pleased to allow them to watch over and protect us, there certainly can be no objection to our entertaining such a belief in their superintending care. I by no means, however, admit that in the collect in question our Church intended to include the saints who have departed this life, with St. Michael and the Angels who do service in heaven; but, at all events, we are expressly forbidden in Scripture to pay even to them any degree of worship, and when some of the Colossians were inclined to do so, we find that St. Paul rebuked them, by saying, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and *worshipping of angels*, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind²."

² Col. ii. 18.

Again, I cannot agree in the opinions advanced in the Eighty-first Tract with regard to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is therein asserted that the mysteries of the Holy Eucharist have been *depreciated* by our Church, in departing from the primitive doctrine of the fathers; namely, that in the Eucharist a continued oblation and sacrifice is made to God under the form of bread and wine: and the anxiety which is now manifested for the substitution of the term Altar for that of Table of the Lord, appears to be intended to give countenance to the doctrine of a continued sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ being offered up by the priest; that is to say, a *commemorative sacrifice*, not the commemoration of, or a feast upon a sacrifice. In one sense, indeed, it may be called an altar, inasmuch as we offer the sacrifice of our praise and thanksgiving, of our alms and oblations, and of our souls and bodies, in token of our gratitude to God for the blessings of which we are partakers by the mysterious communication of the body and blood of Christ, spiritually conveyed to us in the form and manner appointed by our Lord; but in this we are *recipients*. There is no *offering up again* of the ONE full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and oblation, but only a participation of the benefits of Christ's death and passion, through the means appointed for their reception. I cannot then admit that in the Prayer for the Church Militant, the word "oblations" is intended to mean more than the offerings of the communicants in

token of the gratitude and thankfulness to God, which they are bound to evince when about to partake of the body and blood of Christ. The elements of bread and wine were, indeed, formerly taken out of the general offerings of the people; and by degrees the term "*oblatae*" was used in the Romish Church to signify the consecrated wafer which was OFFERED up by the priest.

In our Service, the alms and *oblations* having been *first* presented and placed on the table, the priest is *afterwards* directed to place thereon so much bread and wine as he shall think sufficient; not as the oblations, for they have already been presented and placed there. The prayer that follows, in which we beg God to accept them, is only expressive of our thankfulness, and is a preparatory step to our becoming spiritually partakers of the body and blood of Christ AFTER the bread and wine shall have been consecrated according to the directions and after the example of our Lord.

It is no doubt right that the elements about to be consecrated to so divine a mystery should be placed on the table with due reverence, but there is nothing of a *sacrificial* nature in *this act*, nor do I believe that the word "oblation" refers to this part of the service. If it could have been so intended, it would scarcely have been placed AFTER "our alms," and as a secondary object. Moreover, it frequently happens that strangers partake of the Holy Sacrament in our Churches, who have borne no share in the oblations,

and therefore in what is so essential a part of the service as to be described in Tract Eighty-one, as “one of the *higher mysteries* of the Eucharist, this awful part of our devotions.”

In the first part of the homily concerning the Sacrament, it is said, “We must take care, lest of the memory it be made a sacrifice.” Again, “Thou must have faith, that Christ made upon the cross a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee—a perfect cleansing of thy sins. Herein thou needest no other man’s help, no other sacrifice or OBLATION, no *sacrificing* priest, no *mass*, no means established by man’s invention.” Wheatley, in his “Commentary on the Common Prayer,” in speaking of the sentences at the offertory, observes, that, “from the sixth to the tenth, they refer to the Clergy; and this,” he adds, “he supposes was the reason why, at the last review, there was a distinction made between alms for the poor and the other devotions of the people.” Now this remark, coupled with the fact that, at the last review the word “oblations” was added, proves, I think, contrary to his opinion, that what are called “other devotions of the people,” answers to the term “oblations;” and that neither have reference to any offering up of the elements. Archbishop Secker, as a later authority, says, “Those sentences of the offertory which regard the Clergy are seldom or never read to the people, lest they should seem to plead their own cause, excepting in some few of our churches, where the primitive practice of giving

oblations to the minister is still preserved." The directions in the Rubric immediately preceding the Prayer for the Church Militant appear to me to afford further proof of the true meaning to be attached to the word "oblations;" for it is there said, "And when there is a communion, the priest shall place on the table so much bread and wine as he shall think sufficient; after which he shall say the prayer which follows." To which there is this note: "But if there be no alms or oblations, these words shall be omitted." The bread and wine, however, have already been placed on the table; how, then, can there be no oblations if the word refers to the elements about to be consecrated?

The following passage occurs in the Eighty-first Tract with reference to the word in question, in which some mysterious allusions are made to the restoration of certain privileges, of which we are led to imagine the Church of England has been long deprived:—"The substitution of the term 'table,' 'holy table,' for that of 'altar,' which is in King Edward's first book, as well as 'God's Board,' is a strong instance of this *our judicial humiliation*. For what is it but to say, that the *higher mysteries* which this word 'altar' represents are, not taken away from us, but partially withdrawn from view? and doubtless, therefore, lost to many who consider not the Lord's body. Such a loss is doubtless, therefore, a great one, which withholds the altar from our due acknowledgment. But who reads not in this the

visitation upon children's children of the *sacrilegious pollution it has undergone in this country?* Still, however, we have a great privilege in the insertion of the word 'oblations' in the last review of the Liturgy. We have that which prophets and kings desired to see,—that which Charles the First and Bishop Andrews had not. And with regard to the oblation itself, is not the case significant of our position? For it is not that no oblation is made, for we pray that our oblations may be accepted; but that it is made in *silence*. Is not this silence expressive? May it not be considered eloquently significant, more than any other word, of our condition, that the *higher part of the service*, which looks more like the privilege of sons, is performed in humiliation and silence?"

Here I cannot but observe how painful it is to read the remarks which are contained in this and other passages in the Tracts, directed, as it seems, against the Reformers, and other holy men who laid down their lives in defence of the Protestant faith, and in proof of their love to God; and not only against them, but the greater number of their successors who have ministered in the Church for so many centuries. It would appear from the opinions now advanced, that for this length of time they have entertained and taught low and unworthy notions of our religious duties, and evinced an unpardonable degree of ignorance of the true doctrines of our Church. The discipline thereof, I admit, may have

been impaired, and the spirit of devotion may at some periods have been less eminent than at others, or than it now ought to be; but I trust that the outworks of our Zion have not been so neglected as to admit the intrusion of a spurious faith, and that in fundamental points of doctrine, we have never departed from any one of the principles of the Catholic Church, as recognized at the Reformation. I believe the Holy Eucharist is a commemorative feast, upon the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice once offered up, and not again to be repeated. By the consecration of the bread and wine according to the example, and in obedience to the commands of our Lord, his spiritual presence is in a mysterious manner vouchsafed to us through the medium of these elements, the emblems or representation of his body and blood, thus verily and indeed taken and received by those who feed on Him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving. We must rest satisfied with our Saviour's declaration, "This is my body;" but how the Holy Spirit operates we know not, and if we could obtain such knowledge as would render the mode of communication evident to our senses, the Eucharist would cease to bear the character of the holy *mystery* we acknowledge it to be.

In the consecration of the bread and wine, we do not believe that any change takes place in the elements, but that they become the channels for conveying spiritual blessings to the faithful recipient. It

must be borne in mind, however, that when we speak of human benedictions and their efficacy, we mean not that they have any real virtue or efficacy in *themselves*, or under any consideration, but as founded on a Divine promise from God to man, and whatever degree of consecration or sanctification is imparted in this sacrament to things or persons, it all proceeds from God in the Divine warrant and promise that a blessing shall accompany it. The effect then, which the words of our Lord, "This is my body," may be supposed to have, may be stated as follows:—

We do not conceive with the Church of Rome, that the pronouncing the words make the consecration, but that the words of our Lord once spoken operate now, as virtually conveying with them a rule for all succeeding ages of the Church; and that what was then done, when our Lord Himself consecrated the bread and wine, will always be done in the celebration of the Eucharist according to its original appointment. If the elements were then sanctified so as to be representative symbols of Christ's body and blood, and if the worthy recipients were then partakers of the true spiritual food on receiving the symbolical; and if all this was implied in the words, "This is my body;" so the same blessings are now imparted to us, and what the sacrament then was in virtue and effect, so it is also at this day. Such was the line of argument which some of the Fathers adopted on this subject, and it was under this view

of the holy mystery they contended that the words of our Saviour, once spoken, were to have their true effect in every subsequent consecration of the elements of bread and wine, as being declaratory of what then was, and promissory of what should be in all times to come. The whole matter is thus well and clearly stated by Archbishop Sharpe; and I quote his authority more especially, because the authors of the Tracts claim him as one of the divines who is in favour of the views they take of the Eucharistic sacrifice. “We offer up our alms, we offer up our praises, our prayers, and ourselves, and these we offer up in virtue and consideration of Christ’s sacrifice *represented* before us and before God by way of *commemoration*, nor can it be proved that the ancient Fathers did more. This whole service was their Christian sacrifice, and this is ours³.”

³ “First of all in this service we bring our offerings to God for the use of the poor. We do not appear before Him empty, but make a present to Him of our substance, every one according to his ability. Whereby we both acknowledge Him for the Lord of the world and the Giver of all good things, and also show our charity to our indigent brethren, with which kind of sacrifice, as St. Paul tells us, God is well pleased. These gifts our Church calleth by the names of offerings and *oblations*, and in the first solemn prayer in this office, we beg God to accept our alms and *oblations*.”—*Archbishop Sharpe, concerning the Sacrifice of the Lord’s Supper.*

“In these three things consisted the whole of the Christian sacrifice, as it was held by the primitive Fathers. They first offered to God of their substance, then they offered their prayers

We cannot, then, I think, speak of the Lord's table as an altar with reference to the one perfect oblation once offered, although it may, in a secondary point of view, be so called, as the place where *we* more immediately devote our souls and bodies to the service of God, and offer up our prayers and thanksgivings. It is in this point of view that the words "altar" and "table" have been used indifferently; and although the former is not recognized in our Rubric and services, I admit that in common parlance, both terms have been very generally applied to indicate the same thing. An attempt is made in the Eighty-first Tract, page 21st, to revive what was once, as it is asserted, the practice of the Universal Church, namely, the offering up of prayers for the dead in connexion with the Eucharist. The author says, "Our Church has excluded the more solemn

and their praises, and at the same time they *commemorated* to God the death and sacrifice of Christ, and prayed that their oblations and themselves might be accepted."—*Ibid.*

"Was it ever heard that the benefit of a sacrifice was to be applied to men by means of offering up another sacrifice? How can any thing be applied to men by being offered up and applied to God? It is just as if we should apply phisic, or the salves that are prescribed, not to the patient or the wounded person, but to the physician."—*Ibid.*

"The learned writer (Mr. Robert Nelson) then proceeds to the confutation of those who hold the last supper to be a Eucharistic sacrifice commemorative of that on the cross, *but with this neither I, nor, as I apprehend, the Church of England hath any thing to do.*"—*Bishop Warburton.*

commendation to God of the dead, which is a *moving thought*, for may we not venture to consider it in this light, that we are by the exclusion, as it were, in some degree disunited from the pure communion of the saints, as if scarce worthy to profess ourselves one with them?

“ It is in his Son that the whole Church is, notwithstanding her manifold deficiencies and unfaithfulness, still acceptable to God; and so in Christ, all the several members of the one body who sleep in Christ, are in Christ. Why then should we take upon ourselves to say, that they who are his members as well as we, have *no interest* in this which is *offered for a memorial for all*, or why should man think it an unhappiness or imperfection that they, the dead, should obtain *additional joys and satisfactions* thereby?”

In the Prayer for the Church Militant, we return *thanks* to God for those who have departed this life in the faith and fear of his holy name. And this is a *commemoration* of their virtues; but it is not a commendatory prayer on their behalf. And if it is admitted that our Church in her services has excluded prayers for the dead, is any professed minister of that Church justified in attempting to revive a practice which, after repeated consideration, was finally rejected? I have briefly touched on the subject of the Holy Eucharist to call your attention to the question, whether it be, as the authors of the Tracts assert, a continued commemorative sacrifice,

or only the commemoration of a sacrifice? It is a subject far too extensive to be properly discussed on the present occasion. I will not attempt farther to enlarge upon it; but refer my younger brethren to the works of Dr. Cudworth, of Dr. Waterland, to the Sermons of Archbishop Sharpe on the Eucharistic Sacrifice, to Bishop Warburton, and to two Sermons by the late Bishop Cleaver, published in the year 1787; in which you will find the doctrine on this important subject, as laid down in Scripture and antiquity, fully discussed and explained. I do not think you will discover therein any marks of our Church having been visited by a "*judicial humiliation*," or of the proper view which the altar represents having been withdrawn from those learned men; or that we shall now only begin to have "*that which prophets and kings desired to see*," by adopting the sense which the authors of the Tracts attach to that word.

With respect to the authority of the writers to whom I refer, and of tradition generally,—for they quote largely from the Fathers,—we must admit that, for the right understanding of Holy Scripture, it is of great importance to ascertain what opinions the writers, ancient or modern, have held on the questions respecting which we desire to obtain information; and, more especially, to observe on what points they universally agree. In such cases, the concurring sentiments of the Christian world ought to prevail against any modern interpretations. But

then we must be satisfied that there is such a concurrence; and this requires much reading and research.

The learned Hooker observes, with respect to the Holy Communion, "that all sides have agreed on this, that it is instrumentally a cause of the *real participation* of the body and blood of Christ. All," as far as he could see, "were come to a general agreement on this point; *all* approve and acknowledge *this* doctrine, and admit that there is nothing but that which is alone sufficient for a Christian man to believe concerning the use and force of the Sacrament. *Finally*, nothing but that wherewith the writings of all antiquity are consonant, and all Christian confessions agreeable." I am not, however, disposed to adopt a blind admiration of the Fathers on many other disputed points of doctrine; for it is well observed by Melancthon, "Quoties lapsus est Hieronymus, quoties Augustinus, quoties Ambrosius, quoties ipsi inter se dissentiunt, quoties suos errores retractant? et quid multis? Una est Scriptura, cœlestis Spiritus, pura et per omnia verax, quam Canonicam vocant."

I next proceed to the ceremonial and other observances, which there is now a desire to revive. In these (so-called) enlightened days, I could scarcely have conceived it possible, that the question, as to the use of the surplice in the performance of Divine service, could have created so much excitement in the public mind. This habit has always been adopted

in the pulpits of our cathedrals, and by a great number of the parochial Clergy in different parts of the kingdom ; and, as a matter of convenience, I frequently so used it when I officiated as a curate in the diocese of Lincoln. In our cathedrals it is rather a mark by which the immediate members of the collegiate body are distinguished, as I believe strangers, when preaching, are usually habited in a gown. In general it is an indifferent matter which is worn ; and if, from the temper of the times, you consider that your congregations are likely to take offence by a change from the custom which has usually been followed in your respective churches, I recommend you to pay deference to their prejudices ; and they will probably discover, when the heat of the present controversy shall have passed away, that they need not have apprehended any great danger to the Protestant faith from a practice which, in so many cases, for the last two hundred years, has not been found to produce any evil effects. The disputes about the habits and usages of the Church during the reign of Queen Elizabeth were managed, we are told, with great heat and indecency by the Dissenters ; and the indiscretion of some zealots broke the people into parties, created misunderstandings, and weakened the authority of the government in Church and State. I hope we shall derive wisdom from their example, and that so puerile a question will not be suffered to disturb the mind of the public, nor to lead them to suppose that it is one which in the

slightest degree affects our devotional services. More especially let it not be made a badge of party distinction, which shall cause us to look upon each other with distrust as to our religious opinions.

Much stress is now laid on the position of the desk from whence the prayers are offered up. The Rubric only directs "that the Morning and Evening Prayer shall be used in the *accustomed* place of the church or chancel, except it shall be otherwise determined by the ordinary." I do not know of any rule which directs that we are to turn to the north or south, or any other point of the compass. The plain and sensible injunction is that which we find in King Edward's first Book, "that the minister so turn as to be best heard by the people," and the reading-desk ought now to be placed so that this object may be best attained. In 1554 the Bishops issued directions, "that the Common Prayer be said or sung decently and distinctly, in *such place* as the ordinary shall direct, according to the largeness and straightness of the choir, so that the people may be best edified." Turning in any other direction, so that they cannot distinctly hear the minister, I have no hesitation in saying, involves the popish notion of praying for, and not with our congregations.

Again, the form of the desk is made a matter of importance, the Lessons to be read one way, and the Prayers another. I confess, that this solemn trifling creates in my mind any other than feelings of respect for the good sense of those persons, who can take

an interest in such distinctions. If indeed it is only desired that the form of the reading-desk shall accord with the architecture of the church, that Grecian models shall not be erected in Gothic edifices, or the reverse, I entirely agree in opinion with those persons, who are anxious to establish greater uniformity in this respect; for we must admit that the additions and repairs which were executed in our churches, subsequent to the great Rebellion, introduced the most flagrant breaches of architectural rules. The wild and destructive spirit of puritanism had previously destroyed the greater part of the beautiful and ornamental works with which they had been adorned, and I rejoice in the spirit which is now evinced for the restoration of our sacred edifices to their former splendor and beauty. But this may be done without the introduction of a superstitious attention to mysterious forms and symbols, to which some persons are disposed to attach so much importance.

I would not advise you to use the Litany in any other than the accustomed place, by which I mean the place where your congregations have from time immemorial been used to hear it read. In short, in the present state of the public mind, depart as little as possible from the usages of the Church to which they have long been accustomed: provided nothing is done in a slovenly and irreverent manner, or so far in contradiction to the directions of the Rubric, as to give *reasonable* cause of offence. In such case, if

complaint shall be made to me, I will give the directions I may think necessary, and to which, from the attention you have always paid to my advice, I doubt not you will yield a ready obedience. I will only add, that the pulpit or reading-desk cannot legally be taken down, and removed from the accustomed places, without my sanction having first been obtained; and I call the attention of the churchwardens to this regulation, and desire they will act accordingly.

Another innovation which gives offence, is the omission of the singing of the Psalms, at the periods of the service in which it has been the custom to introduce this act of devotion. I am of opinion, that in this respect, I mean as far as regards the *time* for singing, there was a sufficient degree of uniformity in the practice which was generally observed in our churches; but we have had much reason to complain of the introduction of unauthorized versions of the Psalms, and hymns often of an objectionable nature. The directions in the Act of Uniformity are as follow, "that from henceforth the whole realm shall have but one use." I hope we shall return to this practice, and generally adopt the new version of the Psalms which was published by authority in the year 1698, for it often happens that a great number in our congregations are excluded from joining in the Psalms, from the introduction of versions, a copy of which they do not possess.

I do not approve of a practice which is adopted in

some of our churches, of administering the Holy Sacrament to many communicants at the same time, without addressing each individual. I am aware, that in populous towns the numbers may be so great, as to render it physically impossible for the minister to do so, and in such cases my observation will not apply; but I think that by more frequent Communions, this difficulty might be obviated, and the feelings of the recipient be gratified by a personal application of our Blessed Lord's institution to each individual.

With respect to ceremonies in general, we are not to go back to the reigns of Edward, or Elizabeth, or any other sovereigns previous to that of Charles the Second. The Act of Uniformity, which was then passed with the full approbation and consent of the Convocation, is now our proper guide, as far as it can be obeyed without manifest inconvenience. It is stated that some ceremonies were then laid aside; what they were does not appear, but such as are to be *retained* are clearly defined, for we read in the first page of the Prayer Book, "The rites and ceremonies of the Church according to the use of the Church of England;" and, therefore, what we do not find therein ought not to be practised. It is said, and truly said, that if one minister is allowed to disregard any particular injunction, another may take the same liberty in some other respect; but I must here observe, that there is a great difference between omitting the repetition of a prayer, the substance of

which has been already offered up during the service, as in the case of the prayer for the Church Militant (in consequence of the union of three services in one), and the *systematic rejection* or *mutilation* of certain prayers or creeds involving doctrines of which the minister does not approve. I allude especially to the omission of the Athanasian Creed, and to *alterations* in the Baptismal and Burial Services, of which offence some of the Clergy are I am afraid guilty, but not to my knowledge in this Diocese. In some places offence has been taken at the bowing of the head on approaching the communion-table, or on entering or leaving the church. This is an observance which I cannot say that I am in the habit of practising myself, but of which no one has any right to complain, or to find fault with his brother for adopting. If it affords any satisfaction to pious minds, why should we object to so innocent a mode of expressing their reverence for the supposed presence of the Deity? No one is compelled to do the same, and the injunction of St. Paul may well here be followed. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not, despise him that eateth; let us not judge one another any more, but follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith we may edify each other."

Turning to the east during the repetition of the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, has generally been the practice in our churches, and it is a pleasing and

laudable custom, as an outward mark of the profession of the great truths of the Christian religion by the whole congregation: but I think the officiating minister ought not to do so, because if, as I suppose, it is principally intended to evince the general assent of the people to the doctrines contained in the creeds, there seems to be no occasion for such proofs of orthodoxy on his part. Moreover, as many persons cannot read, he ought so to turn as to be heard by them, that the articles of our faith may, by frequent repetition, become impressed on their memory. It appears to be especially directed in the Rubric that he shall so turn when reciting the Nicene Creed⁴, and therefore I think the rule is equally applicable to the Apostles' Creed.

The last question to which I shall at present refer, is that which relates to the obligation on the Clergy publicly to perform daily service. In this respect I am bound to say, that in conforming to the Rubric you cannot do otherwise than well; but I am satisfied, in our country parishes, it in most cases is impracticable, and incompatible with the discharge of the other parochial duties of the Clergy. With regard to the people, situated as many of our churches are at a remote distance from the resi-

⁴ "The Priest standing as before." It is doubted by some persons in what sense these words are to be taken; I am of opinion that the minister is to turn to the people, as he is previously directed to do.

dence of the parishioners, a congregation could not be daily assembled; nor do I think that the other necessary duties of life could be carried on, if they should be required to perform this act of devotion. In large and populous towns the Clergy may be able to comply more frequently with the directions of the Rubric, and I know that they have done so with good effect. I leave this question as it stands in the Rubric: "All parsons and vicars are to say daily the morning and evening prayers, either *privately* or openly, not being let by sickness, or other urgent cause. And the curate that ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being at home, and not being otherwise *reasonably* hindered, shall say the same in the parish church." Of the reasonableness of the hindrance the Clergy have hitherto been allowed to judge for themselves. But although a strict obedience to the Rubric in this respect is not practicable, and, as far as I can learn, has never been insisted upon, I trust that you will not omit the fasts, festivals, and saints' days, for which special services have been appointed, whenever there is a probability of a congregation being assembled together.

With respect to some other questions which are now mooted, such as the introduction of a weekly offertory, and reading the prayer for the Church Militant, I recommend you to follow the practice which has from time immemorial been adopted in the church in which you are called to officiate. I

have not hitherto, in this diocese, had reason to complain of any material neglect in your ministerial duties ; and it will be time enough for me to signify disapprobation of your conduct, when I shall find any just occasion for my interference. I close these observations with the advice which was given by our Most reverend Metropolitan to the Clergy of his Grace's diocese, with which I cordially agree: "In the celebration of divine service the introduction of novelties is much to be deprecated ; and even the revival of obsolete usages, which, having the appearance of novelties to the ignorant, may occasion dissatisfaction, dissension, and controversy. In cases of this nature it may be better to forego even advantageous changes, and wait for the decision of authority, than to open fresh sources of misapprehension and strife by singularity."

Having given you my advice with respect to your public ministrations in the church, I shall conclude with a few observations to my younger brethren on those of a more private and parochial nature. Preaching and the public services are principally calculated for the common wants and circumstances of the congregation at large, but there are many cases in which individuals need peculiar comfort, exhortation, and advice, and these you are required to supply. You must be prepared to meet the doubts, the fears, and the sorrows, which may be laid before you, and must therefore be acquainted with the consolations, the instructions, and the sup-

port you ought to administer. The house of mourning and the bed of sickness present opportunities for "turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," of which you should endeavour to avail yourselves. To convey reproof is perhaps the most difficult duty you will have to discharge. In most cases it should be done in private, and with the meekness, forbearance, and gentleness of the Gospel. In visiting the sick and the dying, our Church requires that you move them to make special confession of their sins, and on the expression of their sincere faith and repentance, the power of absolution is confided to you ; but all the real comfort and effect to be derived from it, depend upon the satisfaction of the person's mind as to the sincerity of his repentance. There is, therefore, much difficulty in satisfying yourselves and the conscience of the sick man on this important point. You will sometimes meet with persons utterly ignorant of their religious duties, and whose lives have been passed without one serious thought of another world. Can you venture to apply to them all the promises of grace and pardon, when their consciences appear only to be awakened by the fear of death, and the terrors of another world? Such distressing scenes require much judgment and discretion ; on the one hand, you may not limit the mercy of God ; and yet you may not encourage presumption, or lead him to break forth in the language of rapture and confidence, which is now, at the hour of death, too often

assumed by the most profligate and abandoned sinner.

In addition to such extreme cases, there are others which will require your earnest attention. How, for instance, to satisfy a doubting conscience as to its sincerity. How a sinner, who has relapsed after repentance, may be convinced of the reality of his conversion. These, and many other cases of a similar nature, will show you how necessary it is that you should apply your minds to the study of such doubtful and important questions; for "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and the people should hear the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."

Whoever considers the many difficulties in which our stations involve us, will feel that it requires the utmost exertion of mind, the greatest circumspection in conduct, and the most earnest devotion to our high calling, so to discharge its duties that "we may approve ourselves to God as workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;" and even he who thus devotes himself to the ministry will often be constrained to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The answer is given by St. Paul: "We have the treasure in earthen vessels, that the sufficiency may be of God." All the difficulties to which I have called your attention, and many others to which time will not allow me to allude, have been successfully encountered by faithful men, and by the cloud of witnesses who have

gone before you; and if you will conscientiously endeavour to follow their example, you will not find that any necessity exists for your adopting those novel views of your duty, which are now insisted upon by the self-appointed and unauthorized reformers of our Church.

THE END.











