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# LETTER



TO THE

REVEREND JAMES SLADE,

PREBENDARY OF CHESTER;

CONTAINING

REMARKS

ON HIS

LETTER TO THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

ON THE

SUBJECT OF CHURCH REFORM.

BY THE

HON. & REV. ARTHUR PHILIP PERCEVAL, B.C.L.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

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**LONDON:**  
**GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,**  
**ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.**

# LETTER,

*&c.*

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REVEREND SIR,

IF the "Letter on Church Reform, addressed to the Lord Bishop of London," had come into the world under the sanction of a less distinguished name, it would not have called forth these remarks. I should, in that case, have classed it with the herd of publications, on the same subject, which have lately issued from the press; the well-meant, but, with the truest respect, I beg leave to think, very ill-weighed, attempts of worthy men to promote the good cause. As these are so numerous, that it would be a hard task to reply to them all severally, and as, on many accounts, perhaps, they are not likely to have much influence, they may safely be let pass unnoticed. But when the learned editor of the Annotations on the Epistles, sends forth a treatise of this sort, it is a different matter; and the very reason which might make one slow to bring forward such objections as it may appear to deserve, from the fear of incurring the charge of presumption, at the same time enforces the neces-

sity of attempting to do so. Under this two-fold conviction I shall endeavour, in the following pages, to point out such passages in your Letter as seem to me justly exceptionable. If in doing so any expression should escape me, which the most sensitive mind can deem deficient in courtesy, I beseech you to regard it as unintentional, and to attribute it to zeal for that cause, which must be as dear to you as it is to me.

I must premise, that I am not one of those excellent and amiable persons whom you describe as “recoiling with a sort of sacrilegious horror at the very mention of the slightest change,” nor am I at all inclined to consider our Church as having advanced beyond the reach of improvement, either in her Articles, or her Liturgy, her discipline, or any other point. On the contrary, I have no doubt that, under each of these heads, room for amendment might be found; though whether it would be expedient to make any change in the two former<sup>1</sup>, I am not prepared to say. With regard, however, to the last head, namely, discipline, under which I

<sup>1</sup> In the Articles the only correction which seems desirable, is to bring out the meaning of some of them a little more clearly; and in the Liturgy, I would not willingly assent to any alteration, except such as made it more exactly conformable to the models of the primitive ages; restoring the passages which stood in the first (more perfect) prayer-book of Edward the Sixth's reign, but which, unhappily, were expunged from the second for the sake of pleasing the distempered vision of the foreign divines.

would include, as well, the ecclesiastical laws and canons themselves, relating whether to the laity or the clergy, as the administration of them, I believe that all, or almost all, serious and considerate persons are agreed that, from the reformation downwards, it has called loudly for amendment. Our lamentable negligence on this score, it seems to me, has afforded our adversaries of the Church of Rome, their only plausible ground for attack<sup>1</sup>; it being no unfair argument, that in whatever degree a Church ceases to exercise her ecclesiastical functions, of which discipline, surely, is a conspicuous one, in that degree she forfeits her ecclesiastical character. So far, indeed, am I from dreading attempts at improvement, that, if the only authority which can claim obedience in these matters, I mean *the Church herself*<sup>2</sup>, were to set about the work, I should hail, with delight, the happy omen of her restoration to her ancient vigour and apostolical efficiency; the symptom, that she had at length determined to trust, under the blessing of the Almighty, in her own good cause, and on her sure resources, and not in the adventitious aid which the smiles of fortune, or the favour of the State may award her.

The objections to which your Letter seems liable, are called for, partly, by some of the motives and

<sup>1</sup> See Burnet's preface to the Second Volume of his History of the Reformation.

<sup>2</sup> See Articles XX. and XXXIV. of the Church of England.



reasons advanced in support of your proposal for an alteration, and some important, though incidental, observations; but chiefly, and more especially, by the strange spirit of Erastianism, which seems to pervade the whole; the (apparently) utter oblivion of that apostolical authority in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters, which the Church of Christ has received, not from earthly statesmen, but from the Lord himself.

As an instance of the former class, I would cite the passage (p. 6), in which you hold out the hope of avoiding persecution as a motive why the Church should acquiesce in the alterations you propose. Surely, a member of the Catholic Church is hardly warranted in suggesting such a motive to her. Either it is right to make these alterations, or it is not; if it be, the Church of Christ, unless she betrays her trust, needs not the bugbear of human violence to lead her to undertake them; if it be not right, so base a motive ought to have, and will have no weight with her.

Again, I would refer to the admission (p. 10), that parliament has a right to exercise the same control over ecclesiastical property, that governors exercise over a charitable endowment. Who constituted parliament the governors of the property of the Church? or when, before the present day, was it ever heard that parliament has a right to interfere in the administration of it? What authority, in short, for interference can parliament claim

in this case, which it might not equally claim in the case of any other body, single or corporate? The Church and her property are no otherwise concerned with parliament than that, so long as she conducts herself as a faithful member of the State, she has a right, in common with all other loyal bodies, to look for protection to the laws. If she should fail in her duty to the State, then, and not till then, would she forfeit her claim to protection; and be justly liable, not only to the interference of parliament, but to its confiscating a portion of her revenues as a punishment for her delinquency. Except in such an extreme case, she has unquestionably the right, like any other individual, to make what arrangements she may judge best with regard to her own property, and to decree such arrangements by the voice of convocation. All interference, except it be in accordance with that voice, is as much an act of oppression and tyrannical usurpation, as if the parliament should think fit to meddle with the manner in which the Dukes of Norfolk and Northumberland spend the incomes of their estates.

I will offer some remarks, in the next place, on what you urge in favour of an alteration of the Liturgy. You observe, "that it could not be expected that every word and expression, suitable in the sixteenth century, should be equally appropriate now." If by this it is merely meant that, in the lapse of 300 years, some words have

fallen out of use, or become differently applied in common conversation, so that there is danger of their being either unintelligible, or misunderstood, and that therefore it might tend to edification to substitute others for them, I suppose there can be no question but that in some few instances this is the case. If, however, as the wording of the passage leads me to suppose, more than this is meant, I would ask in what respect is human nature in the nineteenth century other than what it was in the sixteenth? Are our wants fewer in number, or different in kind, from those of our ancestors, that the petitions which uttered their needs, are unsuited to ours? Or are we so much improved in holiness and the angelic life, that the plain cautions against sin, which our ancestors needed, are superfluous to us? You refer especially to the occasional services. I will only express my opinion with regard to one of them, the matrimonial, that the Church would do ill to countenance the spurious delicacy in deference to which many clergymen take upon themselves to mangle that beautiful service, and to omit, not only the wholesome admonitions which the wisdom of the Church judged it especially expedient to press at that time upon the married couple, but also the scriptural exposition of the marital duties never so likely as then to make a lasting impression.

Again, you observe that the length of the whole

morning service often furnishes matter of objection. When was this ever wanting where there was the wish to find it?—"Many persons of delicate health are thereby prevented from attending the church, and others are sometimes discouraged." What, then, are the constitutions also of men of the present age so changed that they are unable, through sheer debility, to give as much time to the whole service as their ancestors were wont gladly to bestow upon the sermon alone? The world must be on its last legs indeed, if this be so. But what other symptom of this enervation can we discover? Are the play-houses less frequented than formerly? or have the managers found it necessary to curtail the performances, owing to the more than effeminate weakness of the audience? Are the ball-rooms empty, or the hours of dissipation shortened? Are the speeches in parliament less prolix, the debates more rapidly dispatched, than they were in the age of Queen Elizabeth; or has any one laborious pursuit of worldly profit, or of worldly pleasure, slackened or been abridged in consequence of the degenerate constitutions of men of the present day? Alas! no. It is only in the house of God that our strength fails us,—only in the worship of the Almighty that this "discouraging" lassitude gets the better of us. And is the Church of Christ to pander to such a taste as this? To curtail the fair proportions of the worship of Jehovah

and of the Lamb, and to slur it over that she may raise a little faint approbation, a few sickly vapours of popularity, from a lukewarm and irreligious age? God forbid! Let her arouse her energies anew, and redouble the earnestness of her supplications, that she may again raise the affections of the people up to her standard; but, for Christ's sake, let her not lower that standard to suit their waning affection.

Again. "Some of the rubrical directions are ambiguous,"—let them by all means be made clear: "a few of them impossible, *in the present day*, to be complied with." Here is some more of the temporising spirit; a little more trimming of the Church's boat, that she may still sail with the shifting wind, and be fanned by popular breezes, when the people shall tell her, and not she the people, what is fitting and edifying. As none of these impossible rubrics are mentioned, one is at a loss to conjecture which are meant, I can only say, I know of none which answer to this description<sup>1</sup>; and am so far from desiring any to be expunged, that my firm conviction is, our Church will never be what she ought to be, nor exercise

<sup>1</sup> The rubric which orders the clergyman who ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being at home, to say the morning and evening service, daily in the church or chapel where he ministereth, might be considered such, if it were not for the discretionary clause, "not being otherwise reasonably hindered." I would suggest to my brethren in the ministry, how much the

her legitimate and salutary influence over the people, until they are all complied with. Let me adduce one instance in support of this opinion. There is no rubric more commonly found fault with, or disregarded, than that which appoints the sacrament of Baptism to be administered, not in bye hours or private rooms, as if the less that was known about it were the better; but in the hours of public worship, and in the face of the congregation. I have never departed from that rule, since I first took orders, except in the cases of necessity in which such departure is allowed; and, I can safely say, that I have never once experienced reluctance or difficulty on account of it, nor found the slightest reason to believe that the administering it at the time appointed, namely, after the second lesson, is considered by the congregation as irksome and fatiguing. On the contrary, the silent attention, invariably paid, is striking and impressive; and, as from frequent recurrence of the office, this cannot be owing to the effect of novelty, I am willing to ascribe it to a higher and better motive; and am led to conclude that, at least in this instance, it is not

preceding part of the rubric, which enjoins "all priests and deacons to say daily the morning and evening prayer either privately or openly," recommends their using the Church service in their domestic worship, in preference to the pious effusions of individuals, which seem only proper to be used when the Church is to be, or has been attended on the same day.

altering, but observing the rubric that will benefit the cause of religion.

I will proceed, however, to consider the most objectionable feature in your letter. This, as was before observed, is the strange spirit of Erastianism which pervades it, the (apparently) utter oblivion of that apostolical authority in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters, which the Church has received, not from earthly statesmen, but from the Lord himself.

It is, indeed, most remarkable. You propose that alterations should be made, not only in the resources of the Church,—which would merely affect the right she possesses, in common with every other member of the State, to order and regulate them as shall seem best to her; but in her ecclesiastical laws<sup>1</sup>, her Liturgy, and her discipline.

<sup>1</sup> When I object to the alterations of the ecclesiastical laws being entrusted to the secular power, to the exclusion of the Church, I beg to be understood only so far as spiritual punishment or censure is concerned. With appointing civil or temporal penalties, the *Church* should have *nothing* to do. It is natural, perhaps, that pious princes and laity, should desire to add their testimony to the Church, by annexing civil punishment where she ordains spiritual; but, I humbly conceive, that the less there is of this the better; and that ecclesiastical discipline will never be what it ought to be, till all civil penalties are done away. The only interference on the part of the State which the Church requires in these matters, is that she may be supported in the exercise of that authority, which is allowed to every other society, namely, that of excluding from her communion those who will not comply with her rules. This power is still denied her, and her clergy, in many cases, are liable to civil

And by whom do you propose that these important alterations are to be made? By the Church? No. The alterations are to be decreed by "his Majesty in council, or the parliament, as the case may require:" and the voice of the Church is not to be heard in any stage of the proceedings. For the voice of the Church is known only by the decrees of her councils: and the constitution of the Church of England recognises no other council of the Church than that assembled in convocation; but respecting the convocation, we are informed in a note at the end of your letter, that you "*have said nothing respecting it, because you are unable to form an adequate opinion on the expediency of reviving it.*" *Reviving* convocation is rather a lax expression. Her convocation is not defunct; though, unfortunately, it has too long been in a state of almost suspended animation. It still exists, as its learned prolocutor remarked, in his concio, but the other day, on the occasion of its assembling; all its forms are observed, and it is ready to enter upon business, should any thing make it necessary to do so. But, according to you, convocation is superfluous, and alterations are to be made in the most momentous spiritual and ecclesiastical matters, by the exclusive authority of the State: the only legi-

punishment, if they attempt to enforce her discipline. She is, therefore, so far as this goes, in a state of persecution; from which, I believe, all classes of dissenters, not excepting the Roman Catholics, are free.



timate and constitutional voice of the Church not being even consulted upon the subject.

Reverend Sir, I feel very sure that you meant no harm by your Letter, and, therefore, it grieves me to say any thing which may, perhaps, give you pain ; but I am equally sure, that among all the propositions which the enemies of our Church have put forward for the express purpose of injuring her, no one has come to my knowledge which, if carried into effect, would be attended with such pernicious and deadly results. For all the attacks of her enemies, whether schismatics<sup>1</sup> or heretics, sceptics or infidels, are aimed either at her power of relieving the bodily wants of those who labour in her vineyard, or at her intimate union with the State. And although, doubtless, much individual distress would fall upon her Bishops and Clergy if these attacks

<sup>1</sup> Under this title I include the members of the Church of Rome residing in England. It is their true designation in this country. I do not deny that the same term is applicable to the members of our own Church, when they find themselves in countries where the apostolical (that is episcopal) Church still retains the tenets of the Church of Rome. There is, however, this material difference between the two cases, in Roman Catholic countries the schism of the Catholics of other Churches is compulsory, since the Roman Church admits none to her communion unless they embrace her peculiar tenets. In an English Catholic country, the schism is voluntary, because the English Church has no peculiar tenets, or, if she has, does not require the Catholics of other Churches to embrace them in order to communicate with her.

were to succeed, the Church herself would be uninjured; nay, possibly, might be a gainer. For as “the corruptible body presseth down the soul<sup>1</sup>,” and though necessary for man’s existence upon earth, impeded his spiritual advancement, so the corruptible possessions of the Church may affect her likewise; and, though requisite, in some degree, for the maintenance of the “earthly vessels” to whom the ministry of reconciliation is committed, may fetter her spiritual exertions. Hope may, therefore, be entertained that, in her case also, in proportion “as her outward man perisheth, her inward man may be renewed day by day<sup>2</sup>,” and that as it was by want and suffering that our Lord at first set forth the glory of his Church, so when He is preparing to take her unto himself, it may be by suffering and want that He will fit her for this her assumption.

But the Erastian proposition in your Letter affects the *spiritual existence* of the Church of England, as a true and apostolic branch of the Church of Christ. It does not so much call into question, it passes over as totally groundless, the idea of her having received any apostolical authority to regulate and set in order her ecclesiastical and spiritual affairs. But that apostolical authority the Church of England either does, or does not possess. If she does not, then is she no true branch of the Church of

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. ix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 15.

Christ, and salvation must be sought in some other. If she does possess it, then, as she did not receive it from the State, so neither can she delegate it to the State. She, and she alone, is competent to exercise it. And if, when need requires, she shrinks from doing so, she basely betrays her trust; or, if she turns over the exercise of this authority to unauthorised hands, she puts a knife to her own throat, and brings her very existence into question.

It is true, you suggest in p. 20, that the King and Bishops should appoint a number of the inferior clergy, to form a sort of commission, for examining such matters as shall, from time to time, be prescribed to them. If this were for the purpose of preparing matters to be brought before Convocation, according to the precedent which you mention (p. 7), in King William's reign, no objection could be offered to it. But this, as we have seen before, was far from your thoughts, since you are "unable to form an adequate opinion on the expediency of *reviving* Convocation."

Or if the sentiments of the lower orders of clergy could be considered as fairly represented by a few individuals, not chosen by them, but arbitrarily selected by others, though all idea of the Church's *authority* in these matters would still be set aside, a faint expression of her *opinion* would be heard. This, however, is not so: and if such a measure would be contrary to the constitution of the Church of England as it has existed both before and since

the Reformation; contrary to the custom of the early ages, as St. Ambrose speaks, "the Church had her elders, without whose counsel nothing was done in the Church<sup>1</sup>;" and we find Cornelius, bishop of Rome, calling together the presbytery, that the matter might be determined with the consent of all<sup>2</sup>; and St. Ignatius calling the presbyters the counsellors and assessors of the bishop<sup>3</sup>; and if it be also at variance with scriptural example, no apology is needed for opposing it.

Will it be said that such opposition manifests disrespect to the sacred episcopal order? God knows, such a charge can ill be brought against one who considers that order so indispensable to a Christian Church as to deem it sinful to communicate in a congregation which does not acknowledge it. But though I reverence the bishops as the successors of the apostles, and venerate them as vested with their authority, I will not place them above the apostles, nor can I suppose that the general consent of the presbytery is less desirable for them than it was for their inspired predecessors. When the question concerning the observance of the Mosaic rites was to be decided, it was to the apostles *and elders* that the question was referred; the apostles *and elders* received the embassy from Antioch, and "the apostles *and elders* came together for to consider of this matter<sup>4</sup>." It was when both

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i.

<sup>2</sup> Inter Cypr. Ep. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. ad Trall.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xv. 2. 4. 6.

had agreed in their sentence that the *Church*<sup>1</sup> was judged to have spoken, and the decretal epistle sent to the Church of Antioch, in the name of "the apostles, and elders, and brethren<sup>2</sup>."

The parties most affected by the proposed alteration, are the parochial clergy, whose right to have their voice heard in ecclesiastical matters, by their freely-chosen representatives, would thus be annihilated: and the Church of England herself, whose apostolical authority to decree in spiritual and clerical matters would be equally done away, in defiance of the XXth and XXXIVth Articles. What fault have the English presbyters committed, that they should thus be deprived of privileges which the apostles sanctioned, which the primitive Fathers recognised, and which the customs of our Church have secured to us, not as a matter of favour, but of right? Or how has the English Catholic Church deserved to be thus laid open to the derision of her enemies? What pæans of triumph would not her Roman enemies raise, when they should see her, by her own acts, acknowledging the truth of their calumnies, and exhibiting herself as a mere civil establishment, destitute of the spiritual authority inherent in every true branch of the holy Catholic Church! And would not her still more bitter enemies, the sectarian Dissenters, point also with the finger of scorn, and ask what has become of her

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 23.

claim to be deemed the representative of the primitive Catholic and Apostolic Church, when her pastors either do not possess, or dare not exercise, the power of decreeing in things pertaining to the Church, for which, if it be theirs, they alone are responsible !

I need not pursue these observations. Only—if, haply, there should be any ground for a suspicion which has crossed my mind while reading your Letter, that it has been put forth for the purpose of feeling the pulse of the English Catholic clergy with regard to such a flagrant violation of the constitution and sacred character of their Church,—I shall not do wrong in expressing my opinion, that, should such an attempt be made, it will behove every clergyman, (saving the reverence due to the episcopal order), to consider well, not only whether he is bound to submit to it, but whether, with a safe conscience, he can do so.

And now, Reverend Sir, once more I entreat your forgiveness, if, unintentionally, any expression has escaped me inconsistent with that courtesy and good will which should mark the intercourse of Christian clergymen. To yourself no apology is due for my undertaking: but I feel that I owe some to the right reverend prelate to whom your Letter is addressed, for having ventured to anticipate his sentence on your (as I think) incautious proposal<sup>1</sup>; it would have come with more propriety,

<sup>1</sup> There is one piece of information in your Letter (pp. 15—21),

and greater weight, from one of the responsible guardians of the privileges and rights of the Church, than from,

Reverend Sir,

Your faithful brother, and

Fellow-servant in the Church of Christ,

ARTHUR PERCEVAL.

*East Horsley, Jan. 7, 1831.*

which, if correct, deserves to be noticed. It is, that the ecclesiastical commission lately appointed, which all the world thought had merely to ascertain how the forms of the ecclesiastical courts may be shortened, and the business simplified and expedited, is really to draw up a code of ecclesiastical laws. I cannot but suppose that you have been misinformed on this point, else the attention of the members of the Establishment should be called to it; for, unless this code be sanctioned by convocation, it will not possess the force of ecclesiastical law, nor have any claim, for conscience sake, on the obedience of either laity or clergy.

## APPENDIX.

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IF the exercise of the Church's apostolical authority to decree in all spiritual and ecclesiastical matters, be of the importance assigned to it in the foregoing pages; and essential to the maintaining the true character of our English branch, two difficulties will suggest themselves. First, to *account for* the disuse into which our Synods have fallen. Secondly, to *excuse* our spiritual heads for sanctioning and permitting such disuse.

With regard to the first, it is not a Christian's province to impute to ill-motives, conduct which, possibly, may have originated in far different ones. I shall, therefore, simply state the facts of the case, and shall not, I trust, infringe upon the rules either of charity or propriety, if I venture to draw the inference that the governors of the State to whom, in accordance with the example of the Jews, the Church of England has consented to ascribe that power of controlling and superintending ecclesiastical affairs, which is expressed by the title "Head of the Church," have paid too little attention to the responsibility of an office, for the exercise of which they must one day give account. For the facts respecting the disuse of the English councils are these; as long as the clergy retained the power of taxing themselves, which was the principle of the English constitution down to the beginning of the reign of King Charles the Second; so long their synods were allowed to assemble regularly, and, when assembled, made whatever decrees the exigencies of the times required: but from the inauspicious moment, for such it has proved to be, in which they resigned that power, their



assemblies have gradually fallen into disuse, so that now for above a century, though regularly convoked, no business whatever has been transacted by them. Have not the civil heads of the Church hereby laid themselves open to the imputation of regarding the Church of Christ solely in a temporal point of view? Of being her “nursing fathers” only so long as she had the power of paying for that protection, and of changing their character and thwarting the exercise of her spiritual jurisdiction so soon as she was unable to enrich their coffers?

That the heat with which the debates in convocation were sometimes managed, may have afforded an excuse, to those who desired an excuse, for suspending the proceedings, I am not prepared to deny. But every reflecting person will see at the first glance, that it is a mere excuse; for the pastors of the Church, the ministers of reconciliation, to whom the governance of spiritual matters belongs, “have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us<sup>1</sup>,” and, doubtless, as long as the Church is militant here on earth, proofs of the earthen quality of her guides will be afforded, sufficient to shew that she is not yet made perfect. In subjects, also, of such near concern to responsible beings, as those of religion must necessarily be, it is not to be expected—I should almost say, hardly to be wished—that men should always preserve the same calm and even temper which it costs them little to display in affairs of small moment. But to argue that, because the pastors are, like other persons, subject to human infirmity, it is therefore inexpedient to suffer the exercise of their spiritual authority in governing the Church of Christ, would be to impugn the wisdom of the Almighty, who has entrusted that authority to them. Since, moreover, we find in Scripture that not even the “wise master-builder<sup>2</sup>” (St. Paul), nor his colleagues, were exempt from the same

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 10.

instances of frailty<sup>1</sup>, the objection, if worth any thing, will be worth more than is intended.

As to the second difficulty which occurs, namely, the excusing our spiritual rulers for sanctioning the disuse of the synods of the Church, the defence which charity suggests is, that they considered no alteration to be necessary; and as long as things remain undisturbed, it is sufficient. But when, as in the present day, alterations are not only loudly demanded, and the necessity for them too readily admitted, but they are, in some sort, attempted by those in power, the excuse falls to the ground; and our spiritual heads are called upon to explain, not only to their fellow-creatures, but to a higher tribunal, why the Church is denied the opportunity of expressing her voice, and of exercising her authority, in matters so peculiarly hers. Under a wicked and irreligious prince, opposition to the exercise of her authority might perhaps be expected, and obstacles be thrown in the way: but, even in such a case, the rulers of Christ's flock must remember the apostle's sentence, "We ought to obey God rather than man." If, "for the edifying of the body of Christ," alterations are needed in the Church; if the safety of his members requires prevailing errors and insidious heresies to be marked by the voice of authority, and they, to whom the charge of this has been especially committed, fail to answer those wants through fear of human opposition,—it is for them to consider in what light such an excuse will be looked upon hereafter. But, at the present time, when it has pleased Almighty God to call to the throne of these realms, a pious and conscientious sovereign, no ground can exist for expecting any hindrance. Let the Church make known her wishes to the father of his people, and there can be little doubt that his royal breast will be willing freely to accord that full exercise of her spiritual authority, which the custom of this Church and nation warrant her in requesting.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 39.

The evils which *have* resulted from the denial of this permission, are sufficiently grievous ; it is enough to say, they have served to lower her spiritual character in the opinion of her own members, and of those of other communions, whether hostile or friendly. But the evils which, in the altered circumstances of the Church, *will* result from a continuance of that denial, now that external aid is almost wholly withdrawn, and the numerous forces of her enemies are combined to injure her, are incalculable.

If the exercise of these important functions should, through God's mercy, be restored to the Church, there seems to be no occasion that the convocation should, as was the custom formerly, assemble and adjourn, meet and be prorogued, *pari passu*, with the houses of parliament. The experience which other legislative bodies have shewn of the evil of too long and too frequent sessions, which, from want of specific objects, make "busy men" of those who should be "men of business," renders such a step far from desirable. But to wish that, from time to time, where questions of moment occur, the example of the Scriptures should be followed, and that "the apostles and elders should come together for to consider the matter," is not unreasonable. And surely it is fair to demand that, if alteration in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters are to be made at all, they should be decreed by that voice, which alone has authority to do so, and not by a command of the State : least of all, by a vote of Parliament, in which, since the abolition of the corporation and test acts, there is nothing to hinder infidels, heretics, and schismatics, from outnumbering the members of the English Catholic Church.

THE END.

1. 2. 3. 4.

