

# PASTORAL LETTER

TO THE

CLERGY AND LAITY

OF THE

Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Ohio,

ON THE SUBJECTS OF

## CONFIRMATION AND CHURCH MUSIC:

TO BE READ IN THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE DIOCESE ON THE FIRST  
SUNDAY AFTER ITS RECEPTION.

RESOLVED, [by the Convention of the Diocese of Ohio,] That the Bishop be respectfully requested to embody so much of his Address as relates to the subjects of Confirmation and Church Music, in the form of a Pastoral to the Clergy and Laity of the Church, with his request that it be read publicly by the ministers of the churches in this Diocese, to their respective congregations.—[Offered by Rev. Mr. Cumming, and adopted June 8, 1856.]

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Charles Pettit McIlvaine

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## PASTORAL LETTER.

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DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN :

Having, at our recent Diocesan Convention at Zanesville, addressed the clergy and laity therein assembled, on certain topics of much interest, more particularly on the spiritual qualifications for Confirmation, and the interests of that part of our public worship with which Music is associated, I was requested by the Convention to set forth so much of my Address as related to those two subjects, in the form of a Pastoral Letter to the Churches. This request I proceed to comply with, by extracting from my Annual Address, as it will be found on the pages of the Journal of the Convention, the precise words on those subjects which attracted the attention of that body.

On the subject of Confirmation, my Address stated that the number of confirmations since the previous Convention was much less than that of the previous year. Two considerations were given as explaining the difference, namely: the interval between the two Conventions being only a little more than eight months, the parishes visited are twenty-two less than last year, while in almost all instances the interval between the last visitation and the preceding has been shorter than usual. After these reasons, I proceeded as follows :

But here I take occasion to assure you that while I most earnestly desire the greatest increase of the number of truly converted persons

gathered out of the world into the fold of Christ, and while in such increase and the growth of believers in every Christian grace, we must look for the only fruit of our ministry that will abide the winnowing of Him whose fan is in his hand, I have no desire that the clergy should present to me for confirmation any but those who, in the judgment of charity, they have reason to trust are truly converted to Christ. Whether a large number presented for confirmation, or any, indeed, are to me a pleasant spectacle, an encouragement to my heart, a just subject of congratulation to the pastor, an evidence of the success of our ministry, or of the prosperity of the Church, depends altogether upon the question, how far they consist of those who seriously and intelligently profess the hope that, by the grace of God, they have been changed in heart, made new creatures in Christ, and in heart and life have truly renounced the world, and embraced, in its stead, the whole obedience of the Gospel. Tell me that those who come to be confirmed make no such profession in their hearts, tell me that they are renouncing the vanities of the world only after the world's interpretation; that they do not realize that their confirmation is their solemn declaration before God and man, that, in heart and life they have embraced Christ, and do devote themselves to his service; tell me that in their state of mind, or in their views of what they promise and profess in their confirmation, there is no security that they will not be seen again, as ever, mingling in scenes of worldly conformity, seeking their pleasure where a spiritual mind can find no pleasure; tell me there is no promise in their professed experience that the Lord will be glorified in their walk and life, as trophies of his converting grace, then, though hundreds come, I have no pleasure in their confirmation. But tell me that one single soul, out of those hundreds, does realize all; does seriously, after solemn self-examination, trust that he is a new creature, and is of a contrite spirit, and loves the service of Christ, and makes him all his hope, and desires only to live for him; then, though that one

be the obscurest, and poorest, and least valuable in a worldly sense of all, I shall esteem that one soul as of great price, and will lay hands on his head with pleasure indeed, and pray God, with faith, that he may *continue* His forever, and daily increase in His Holy Spirit more and more, until he enter the everlasting kingdom. Yes, that one contrite heart is to me a more encouraging confirmation than any number who might come in any other spirit. Let us be persuaded, brethren, and act always on the persuasion, that *numbers* added to the communion, independently of their conversion to God, can never profit the Church, are no blessing to our ministry; but, on the contrary, must hang as a dead weight upon the true life of the Church, reducing its standard of practical godliness, crippling its energies, deforming its example, and conforming it to the world. What possible benefit to a Church can there be, what evidence of prosperity, what honor to God, what good to the souls of men, in having a number of persons connected with our communion, who, before God and man, have ratified upon their souls the most solemn vows of self-dedication to God and renunciation of the world, and thus have had the door opened to them to the highest privileges of the Lord's people, at his holy table, but who either never come to that table, or if they do, are manifesting an example in contradiction to all the qualifications of a true communicant. I well know it is not in us to search the heart, or to say who are Christ's, and who are not. But we can do what our Church teaches us to do. What she says to all who meditate a participation in the Lord's Supper, she says, and bids us say, to all who think of coming to that ordinance, which is simply the door to that sacrament, and gives title to its reception. Immediately before the Order for Confirmation, occur these last words of the Catechism: "What is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper? *Answer*—To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have

a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men." Such, then, are the requisites for confirmation,—*serious self-examination* as to the *work of grace in the heart*; whether it has brought that heart to true repentance; in other words, whether it has created in the sinner a new heart, leading to the steadfast purpose of a new life. And again, *self-examination* as to that inward work of grace, whether it has proceeded so far as to lead the sinner to the exercise of a "*lively faith in God's mercy through Christ*;" in other words, to a "faith that worketh by love," that "overcometh and renounceth the world;" for no other faith is a lively faith, a faith which expects mercy only through the merits of Christ, renouncing all other trust and hope.

We cannot say who thus repents and believes and who does not; but, brethren, we can earnestly and faithfully teach and maintain that none but such as do thus examine themselves, and in such examination do intelligently trust that they are thus penitent and believing, should come to confirmation any more than to the communion; and while we encourage all such freely to come to both, we can and ought to warn all others that they come not; and if any apply to be received, who, besides their sufficient knowledge of Christian doctrine, are not able to profess that they have thus seriously and solemnly examined themselves, and that they do thus trust that they find in themselves the evidences of a true repentance and a lively faith, and are fully purposed, in spirit and in truth, in reality as well as name, to renounce "the pomps and vanities of the world," as well as "the sinful lusts of the flesh," and (as one plainly required act of obedience, and one so nearly connected with confirmation,) to participate in the communion which the Lord has commanded, we ought not to admit them to be confirmed. Must the Bishop, administering confirmation, say in the first prayer of the office, "Almighty God, who has vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them for-

giveness of all their sins," and must he not at least have the comfort of feeling assured that, while he can know whether their sins are forgiven, only as they profess to have truly *repented*, and to be now in the exercise of "*a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ*," and it is only on that supposed profession that the Church puts into his mouth that prayer—must he not, I say, have the comfort of the assurance that all who come to be confirmed do consider themselves as making that profession in the very act of coming; that their pastor, who presents them, has duly ascertained from each of them that such is their profession and such is their understanding, and that he has solemnly exhorted them that what they thus trust and profess, shall be, according to the admonition of the Church, in consequence of having first solemnly "*examined themselves*"?

How painful to a Bishop to have to utter those words of prayer over a company of persons presented, and yet not have the confidence that the pastor has been faithful to secure, as far as he can, that self-examination, that right understanding of what each must be considered as doing, that actual, personal, inward and real, as well as outward and ceremonial profession of true repentance and "*lively faith*." Be persuaded, we shall never gain souls to Christ, or honor to the Gospel, or prosperity to the Church, or increase to its spiritual strength; we shall never advance one single step in the fulfilment of our ministry, by relaxing or keeping in the background these plain and self-evident terms. "*To this man*," saith the Lord, "*will I look*, even to him that is *humble and of a contrite spirit* and that *trembleth at my word*." Many others, when he hath shut the door, will stand without and cry: "Lord, Lord, open unto us," and they will plead that they have "eaten and drunk in his presence," been at his table, and in his name "done many wonderful works," but to none of them will he look, because the contrite heart, the obedient, new heart, the living faith, is not in them. He will say: "I never knew you,"—"workers of iniquity" he will

call them. They have deceived themselves. But alas! did any minister of the Gospel, by keeping back from them the truth, by encouraging them to Gospel ordinances before they had examined themselves, whether they had a gospel repentance and a lively faith; did any minister assist and promote their self-delusion? Let us be careful. True, we must not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; but we must ask, is the reed a *bruised* reed? Is the heart a contrite heart? Is the flax the *smoking* flax? Is the fire of a true love in the heart? It may be very feeble, as the fire in the flax, when it is so weak that the smoke is its only evidence, but the fire must be there nevertheless, and it will find some way to manifest itself, and nothing can supply its place.

I have thus enlarged on this subject, brethren, not only that I may again, as I have often done before, contribute my feeble effort to keep up, what there are so many influences at work to depress, namely: the right standard of qualification for, and a strict faithfulness in admitting to confirmation, and hence to the communion—a door which requires continual watching; but that I may encourage you and help your patience and steadfastness, when the trial of having very few candidates to present, after long and earnest laboring, is bearing upon you.

We are all compassed with infirmities. Man loves the praise of man. It is thought an evidence of a successful minister and a prospering parish when a large flock is presented for confirmation. It may be such evidence—it may not be. A faithful minister is tempted by the desire of such evidence to open the door too wide, to relax the requisitions or not to urge them as he should, to withhold the needed warning, to yield an unmerited encouragement, to urge where he should not. The comparison of his parish with others in point of confirmations may be painful to him. Be faithful. Leave results to God. Have not Bishops the same temptation? Are there not comparisons between Dioceses as well as parishes? If a looser system is practised, and a wider door is

opened in other Dioceses, than that which I have always inculcated, must not comparisons be drawn between the number brought to confirmation there and here, which must seem unfavorable to the comparative prosperity of the Church in this Diocese? None of these things move me, and I trust will not move you. I have learned how little is learned by the mere numbering of the people. The question should first be asked, on what terms, by what rule, more or less strict, are candidates for confirmation admitted by the pastor, and presented to the Bishop? Let us stand by our duty, seeking our reward in our duty, and our praise of God.

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After these remarks on Confirmation, I spoke, in my Address to the Convention, on the subject of the Memorial addressed to the House of Bishops at the last General Convention, by certain Presbyters, in regard to the better adaptation of our Church services, and whole action, to the need of the times. For much of what I then said on that head, I must refer you to the whole Address, as published in the Journal of the Convention. At the request of the Convention, I place in this Letter the following extracts :

— There is much opinion expressed in the Memorial, and by those who have written on the subjects introduced therein, that our service, at least our morning service, is too long. Whether, when we strictly conform to what is required, adding nothing that is not required, spending no time in our service about appendages which are purely voluntary and of no benefit, the service needs abridgement, I will not now express any opinion. There will be a better opportunity when that question is to be acted on. But that we often *make* the service too long; that, in many parts of our Church it is made much too long,

by unedifying, or at least needless, additions to what the rubrics require, I have no doubt. It is a subject, brethren, which demands your serious consideration. One thing is certain, the *required* service is long enough. The good of our congregations demands that it should be made no longer. Let us then consider how we are chargeable with needless and unprofitable additions, which it were better to avoid.

Before the beginning of the appointed service, when the minister is ready, and the time has come for its commencement, the precious moments are often occupied with an anthem, or something analogous, and sometimes very long, for which no rubrical provision is made, and which is, almost always, not only selected by, but introduced or omitted at the single discretion of the choir. It is usually a mere *performance* by the orchestra! which the people are not expected and are unable, to unite in; and frequently the music is set to words unknown to, and that can not be distinguished by, the congregation. Let it be remembered that the service of the Church has not commenced, until such prefixes are ended. By all means, let the people sit while they are in progress; for the worship has not begun, and their strength should be kept for its own sufficient requirements. I think all the addition made to the length of the service by such preliminaries, however well executed and well intended, should be avoided. Again: in my younger days, the Gloria Patri was not generally read or sung, except at the end of the Psalter, where it is required. It is not required any where else. But now, at a time when we are met on every side with complaints that our service is too long, and it is so much the question how it may be best abridged, the custom is to sing the Gloria Patri at the end of every anthem, and sometimes at the end of every psalm in the daily Psalter. Thus time is needlessly spent. I think that in the present state of our required service, it would be wise to confine the Gloria Patri to the end of the Psalter, and omit it every where else,

especially when the time occupied in the use of it is increased by its being chanted. Such was old custom in most of our Churches. Composers of music books, for the most part, not ministers or congregations, have changed it. Again : there is a most unprofitable and inexcusable protraction in the voluntaries, with which the organ often introduces the chants and hymns ; but especially in those voluntaries which are played between the verses of the psalms and hymns, at the discretion of the organist, and often to the great detriment of the worship of the congregation. Of what possible use are they to the devotion of the people ? Why must a whole congregation be kept standing, in silence and weariness, to listen simply to an organ ? Why must the devotional sentiment of the hymn, and the connection of thought in the mind of the worshiper, be interrupted to give place simply to the playing of an organ ? The voluntaries are often so long, that they make a serious addition to the length of our services ; the more so, when it is recollected that the people are standing while they proceed. I have never known a congregation that did not complain of them ; and still they are tolerated, as if it were supposed they actually belong to the prescribed order of our worship. They are the rubric of the organist, not of the Church. We have not time for them — we have not strength to spend in standing to listen to them. We are inquiring on all sides how our services may be abridged without impairing their integrity. Here is one way — and an easy way. Five minutes, at least — often ten — sometimes fifteen and twenty, would be gained in many churches, by laying aside such useless things as I have now adverted to ; and that would be a gain of an important proportion of the whole time of our morning prayer. But again : have we not often too much chanting, especially when the *Te Deum* is sung, unless our chanting is brought to its proper simplicity, which would make it occupy scarcely more time than ordinary deliberate reading. I once

timed a *Te Deum*, not unfrequently sung, which occupied eleven minutes; and all that while the people were standing in silence; for, of course, they could not unite in it. Can we complain that our service should seem too long, when such things are done? Often the chants to other parts are much too long; witness the most common, and at the same time the least devotional, of those employed for the *Gloria Patri*, and certain chants that are often used at the announcement of the Gospel. The longer, the less suitable, is a general rule with chants for public worship; because the longer, ordinarily, the less simple, the more complex, the least adapted to the use of the congregation, and the more expensive of time and of the strength of those who wish to stand when the praises of God are sung.

I believe that, simply, by having better music, because more simple; by restricting the organ to being the accompaniment, instead of being ever the suspension of the worship, and by having neither reading nor singing where no rubric requires either, till we come to the metrical psalm or hymn, we may avoid a great deal of that weariness to the flesh, which, without any remunerating benefit, causes our services to seem to many, and especially to the aged, too long. For this we need no legislation. And is it not worth our while to see to it?

This leads me to the general subject of singing in our congregations. How little we have of it! Singing *to* our congregations we have in abundance. But what a poor substitute it is for that singing of the praises of God *in* the congregation and *by* the congregation, which our service contemplates, and for the absence of which, as a matter of devotion, the best music that man ever executed can make no amends. We have become so accustomed to the surrender of all that delightful portion of our public worship to the organ and the choir, the whole congregation being contented to listen to a mere *performance* of sacred music, when they are expected all to unite in the vocal praise of God

that we have ceased in a great degree to realize how greatly we have departed from our duty, and our pleasure, and profit, in that part of our worship. Why should not all the responses be given up to the choir, as well as all the psalms and hymns? If it would strike you as a very miserable way of conducting worship to have one voice in the gallery to respond in place of the whole congregation; how is the case improved when a few voices in the gallery are singing in place of the whole congregation? I never saw the man who did not feel that the singing of a whole assembly, however plain the music, and imperfectly executed, is unspeakably more like the reality of worship, and in accordance with the character of a Church of God; more impressive, more effective, more calculated to aid devotional affections, than the solitary performances of the best orchestra that ever engrossed to itself the singing of the praises of God.

I desire very earnestly to call the attention of the clergy to this subject. CONGREGATIONAL SINGING, with or without the aid of an organ and a choir, is the only singing that answers the ends of public worship. We have far too little of it. In many of our churches it is almost dead. In many it is quite dead. I speak not of this Diocese now, but of our whole Church. The performance of music by a choir often seems to be considered the whole attainment to be desired, as if to listen to performances, instead of to worship with voice and heart, were the whole duty of man, in that part of our services. But can we consent to this? Where is the remedy? Do you say the people will not sing? Certainly they will not, when chants and tunes are sung that are so new, so difficult, so often changed for others equally new, that not only have they never learned them, but learn them they can not. But how is it when so familiar a tune as Old Hundred is sung? Do not the people then unite? How is it in the lecture room, the prayer meeting, in the hymn before the Communion? Do not the people

join? Why? Because tunes are sung which are familiar—so simple as to be easily learned—so adapted that no special cultivation of ear or voice is needed for their adoption. And if you would see to it that such tunes and chants alone are sung; if you will prevent this constant introduction of new music, without the least regard to the rights of the congregation; if you will see to it that, not display of voices, nor exhibition of art, but simply the devotional feelings and profit of the people, are consulted in the selection of the chants and tunes, and in the manner of their execution, you will remove all the causes that have led to the evils we now deplore, and will do very much to elevate our public worship, in this very important branch, to a measure of interest in which, in some places of worship, where there are neither choirs nor organs, we are far exceeded, in the judgment of the truly spiritual worshiper.

And is it not the duty of the clergy to see to this? Is not the duty of seeing to it entirely committed to the clergy? I would revive in your recollections the law of the Church, printed in every Prayer Book, just before the Psalms in Metre, where it is written thus: "It shall be the duty of every minister, with such assistance as he can obtain from persons skilled in music, to give order concerning the tunes to be sung at any time in his Church; and especially it shall be his duty to suppress all light and unseemly music."

All light and unseemly music! Music merely for the exhibition of musical art, on the part of a few, which the congregation cannot unite in; which the very nature of the performance forbids them to unite in; especially, which is so executed that it requires a very nice ear to ascertain any of the words sung—much more to catch them so as to join them together and extract the hidden sentiment of devotion; music, therefore, which is as much worshipping in an *unknown tongue* as ever Romish Mass could be—and therefore cannot be worship to the congre-

gation in any degree. I ask you whether such music, no matter how well performed, is not indeed "*light and unseemly*," considering the rights of the congregation and the only true nature of Christian worship? What if our reading of prayers should be such that what we say could not be heard; so mumbled or so rapid that the people could not join or follow—would it not be "*light and unseemly*"? What if we should preach, simply for exhibition of rhetoric or gesture, of art of composition or delivery, so that the mass of our hearers, especially the unlettered, could learn nothing from us—would it not be "*light and unseemly*"? And must not our hymns and psalms be as intelligible, and as much a part of our *common* prayer and praise, as the prayers we read, and as level to the minds of the humble and unlettered as our sermons?

To the minister, as you have just seen, there is given dominion over the tunes sung. There is no need ordinarily that he should select each tune, though in my visitations I have sometimes had to do that, when I knew that otherwise there would be "*unseemly music*," such as the minister is required to prevent. But the minister should so exercise his authority, (and there is a way of exercising it, kindly, gently, considerately, so as to give no offence and to carry the consent and approbation of all with him,) he should so exercise his authority as to suppress such selections of tunes, as by their frequent newness, and especially by their want of simplicity and facility of adaptation, deprive the congregation of their privilege of vocally uniting in them; and he should secure that general rule of selection which will insure to the people the tunes which, by the usage of generations, they are able every where to join in, with such additions only, now and then, if additions are really needed, as the people, by frequent repetition, may reasonably be expected to learn.

I believe that, in this way, under the proper exhortation of the minister, we may have what, in so many places is lost—real “*common prayer*” and *common praise*, when the psalms, and hymns, and anthems are sung, as well as when they are read.

I have thus, beloved brethren, presented to you in this Letter, what the Convention desired you should all hear. It needs no addition or exposition. I commend it affectionately to your kind acceptance and consideration; and praying the grace of God to be with you, I remain,

Your affectionate friend and Pastor,

CHAS. P. McILVAINE.

CINCINNATI, June 12, 1855.

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