





LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

A
PASTORAL LETTER

TO

THE CLERGY

OF

THE DIOCESE OF RIPON.

BY

CHARLES THOMAS, BISHOP OF RIPON.

LONDON:

FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE.

1850.

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

A

LETTER,

&c.

MY REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN,

IT has not been without much anxious reflection, nor without a deep sense of the solemn responsibility which I should incur in so doing, that I have made up my mind to address you under the present troubled circumstances of our Church: but having received Memorials from different parts of my diocese, including one signed by twelve of my rural deans, on the subject of the recent decision in the case of *Gorham v. the Bishop of Exeter*, and having also had the most pressing appeals from clergy as well as laity within it to resolve, if possible, the painful doubts, and remove the distressing perplexities, under which so many are labouring in consequence of it, I have deemed it advisable, instead of replying separately to each communication, to address this "Pastoral Letter¹" to you all;

¹ This Letter would have appeared three weeks earlier, but that I was engaged, when I received most of the addresses, in a long round of Episcopal duties in various parts of my diocese;

feeling that I should be unfaithful to the Church, to my office, and to my people, were I to shrink from endeavouring, according to my ability, to satisfy those scruples and remove those difficulties ; or refuse to give such counsel as might, under God's blessing, tend to calm agitation and compose differences. May He, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, grant me wisdom and discernment to guide me in the task of unusual difficulty which is thus imposed upon me.

In one respect, however, I am thankful to confess that this difficulty is much less than it might have been ; because the main point in dispute between those who differ in opinion as to the Judgment recently pronounced, does not depend upon the definition of the term Regeneration, in which, when parties attempt to introduce refinements and subtleties beyond the simple language of the Church, they may easily differ, and yet all be consistent churchmen : the real question at issue, although I think it is as yet scarcely realized by many, is whether Baptism, as an instrument ordained by Christ for that purpose, does convey the blessings which Holy Scripture and the Church ascribe to it ; or whether the blessings and graces must not have been given to the individual pre-

and having, immediately afterwards, been summoned to London to attend a Meeting of Archbishops and Bishops, I felt it to be more respectful towards my Episcopal Brethren to postpone its publication, until our deliberations were concluded.

viously, in order to render him a worthy recipient of Baptism. For, in spite of all one's anxiety to save a brother clergyman from such penalties as would deprive him of his benefice, it cannot, I fear, be denied, that he, in whose favour the recent judgment has been pronounced, has asserted that as no spiritual grace is conveyed in Baptism, except to worthy recipients, and "as infants are unworthy recipients, being born in sin and the children of wrath, they cannot receive any benefit in Baptism, except there shall have been a prevenient grace to make them worthy²;" and that prevenient grace he describes more fully to be, the having been "regenerated by an act of grace prevenient to their Baptism, in order to make them worthy recipients of that Sacrament³." He asserts also, that "the filial state⁴," that is, the grace of adoption, the being made a child of God, was bestowed on the recipient before Baptism, not in Baptism: thus maintaining that the remission of original sin, adoption into the family of God, and Regeneration, must take place, in the case of infants, not in Baptism, nor by means of Baptism, but before Baptism. Such tenets as these seem to leave Baptism an empty rite, conveying no real benefit, nor advancing the receiver one step in the way of sal-

² Gorham's *Efficacy of Baptism*, p. 83, Answer 15, and pp. 123, 124; Question and Answer 70; and p. 88, Answer 27.

³ *Ibid.* p. 85, Answer 19.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 113, end of Answer 60.

vation ; they seem to overthrow the nature of a Sacrament, robbing Baptism of all its inward and spiritual grace.

Now, it can hardly be matter of surprise that such an exposition of Christian doctrine, in connexion with the recent Judgment, should produce some alarm and much perplexity in the minds of many : at the same time I am full of hope that when the real question at issue is more attentively considered, a calm and dispassionate review of its leading features may tend, under God's blessing, to a clearer understanding of its real bearings, and to more of agreement than we have lately witnessed in this unhappy controversy. At any rate, I think we should all, at the present moment, be feeling for points of union and agreement, and seeking for some common ground to stand upon. It will be my endeavour in this communication to speak the truth in love, and strive, in that spirit, to promote this much desired end. May it please God, of His infinite mercy, to overrule our present difficulties to the furtherance of this blessed object ; and to lead all who acknowledge one Faith and one Baptism, to be henceforth more united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity !

The perplexities to which I have above referred, seem chiefly to be these : First, the Church of England appears to many to be reduced to the dilemma of having no doctrine at all, touching the effect of the Holy Sacrament of Baptism on infants, which

seems incredible when they consider the service for the Baptism of Infants, in connexion with the Catechism ; or that, though it have a doctrine, it is nevertheless competent to any clergyman who pleases to dissent from or deny it ; an alternative which seems equally incredible. Secondly, they feel it to be a great grievance that the supreme tribunal for deciding questions involving points of doctrine, should have been constituted without the consent of the Church, and should be composed of laymen, none of whom need be members of the Church of England.

Let us first consider the question of the constitution and composition of the supreme tribunal of appeal. As to its present composition, it unquestionably does involve a grievance. That grievance has been felt, and a bill has already been introduced into the House of Lords, which provides that the judicial committee of Privy Council shall be required, whensoever it is necessary to determine any question as to doctrine or the tenets of the Church of England, to refer such question to the archbishops and bishops of the provinces of Canterbury and York ; and that the opinion of the archbishops and bishops upon such questions shall be binding for the purposes of the appeal in which such reference is made. As regards the point that the judicial committee of the Privy Council was constituted without the consent of the Church in convocation or synod, I think the difficulty arises mainly from an imperfect apprehension of the nature

of the royal supremacy. Our XXth Article, where it asserts that the Church hath "authority in controversies of faith" is evidently speaking of her authority to settle and lay down articles of faith; as may be gathered from its proceeding to declare that "it is not lawful for the Church to *ordain* any thing that is contrary to God's written word," adding that "it ought not to *decree* any thing against the same:" thus intending to describe the legislative power of the Church. But we well know that the legislative does not necessarily involve the judicial power. According to our Constitution in Church and State, the judicial power is vested in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil, in the sovereign of this realm; and I apprehend it would be just as great an act of usurpation on the part of the Church to claim for the two houses of convocation, jurisdiction, or the power of appointing judges, in ecclesiastical causes, as it would be for the Houses of Lords and Commons to insist upon appointing judges in all civil causes to the exclusion of the royal prerogative. That this power of appointing judges in causes ecclesiastical has rested with the crown, in virtue of the royal supremacy since the Reformation, will appear from a perusal of the following statutes:—The 25th of Henry VIII. c. 19, establishes the power of appeal from the archbishops' court to the chancery; the appeals to be there determined by commissioners appointed by the king. By 26th Henry VIII. c. 1, the king shall be re-

puted head of the Church, and shall correct all heresies and offences. By 1st Eliz. c. 1, commissioners may be appointed by the crown to exercise all spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction; especially “to visit, reform, redress, order, correct and amend all such errors, heresies, and schisms whatsoever, which by spiritual or ecclesiastical power can or may lawfully be reformed;” and “such person or persons, to be named according to letters patent, shall have full power to execute all the premises.” Sir Edward Coke pronounces the act 1st Eliz. to have been an act of restitution of the ancient jurisdiction ecclesiastical, which always belonged of right to the crown of England, but had been usurped by the pope; that it was not introductory of a new law, but declaratory of the old, and that which was, or of a right ought to be, by the fundamental laws of this realm, parcel of the sovereign’s jurisdiction. The act 2nd, 3rd Wm. IV. cap. 91, transfers the powers of the high court of delegates (established by 1st Eliz.), in ecclesiastical as well as maritime causes, to his majesty in council; the decrees of the council to be final and definitive. The 3rd, 4th Wm. IV. c. 41, appoints the judicial committee of Privy Council to take cognizance of these causes: all appeals from the sentence of any judge in such causes to be referred by the sovereign to the committee to report thereon; and that report is to be ratified or annulled by the sovereign in council. The tribunal therefore which decided the case of

Gorham *v.* Bishop of Exeter in final appeals was in strict conformity with our constitution in Church and State. Nevertheless, although it be quite legally constituted, its present composition is a real grievance: and while, in the recent judgment, we most willingly acknowledge the ability, patience, and anxiety to arrive at a generally satisfactory decision which characterized the proceedings of the court, it is still consistent with the most profound loyalty to petition the sovereign and the legislature to apply the fitting remedy to the imperfect composition of that most important tribunal.

As to that alternative of the dilemma, in which our Church seems to many to be placed; viz., that she has no doctrine touching the effect of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism on infants, I would desire to quiet the alarms of those who have addressed me under such feelings, by assuring them that the teaching of the Church of England in this matter remains exactly what it was; and that they both clearly teach that the remission of sins is the grace conveyed by Baptism *to the baptized generally*, and therefore to infants with the rest. For although the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is of course the sole meritorious cause of the remission of guilt, and the Spirit of God the efficient, operating cause, nevertheless Baptism is the instrumental rite, whereby that grace is actually conveyed.

Let us first see what light Holy Scripture throws

upon the subject. The promise of our blessed Lord himself assures us that Baptism is instrumental to salvation, when He says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Those who were converted on the day of Pentecost were bidden to “repent and be baptized, every one of them, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins.*” To St. Paul, although already converted to Christianity, these words were addressed by Ananias, “Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins.*” And although the Holy Ghost had already fallen on those who were assembled with Cornelius, still St. Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord, doubtless for the same purpose.

Thus, in each of these instances of adult Baptism, although the several parties had before received some grace, or they would not have been converted, nevertheless, they lacked the peculiar grace of Baptism; namely, the remission of sins. For had this grace of remission of guilt been actually imparted previously, then would their Baptism have been an empty rite, conveying no grace, and therefore no Sacrament.

It is, then, upon Scriptural authority such as that above referred to, that the Universal Church acknowledges, in the Nicene Creed, that there is “one Baptism for the remission of sins;” thus distinctly pronouncing that this blessing accompanies the Sacrament of Baptism. And inasmuch as the XXVIIth Article of our Church declares that “the Baptism of

young children is in anywise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ," it thereby affirms that the "one Baptism" which is to be applied to infants as well as adults, is in each case for the remission of sins,—of original sin, that is to say, in the case of infants, seeing that they have been guilty of no actual sins.

Original sin being thus, upon the authority of Holy Scripture, and of the Nicene Creed in conformity with it, remitted to infants, through and by Baptism as an instrument, our Church, resting upon this solid foundation, considers, that whensoever original sin is remitted in infants, the child must, by that act of remission, be taken out of Adam and brought into Christ; is no longer a child of wrath, but a child of grace, has undergone a death unto sin (that original sin in which it was born, and from whose guilt it is freed), and has entered upon a new birth unto righteousness; spiritual regeneration being the entrance into a state of grace and salvation, as the natural birth is an entrance into life. For our Catechism, stating first, that a Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, proceeds to describe the inward and spiritual grace of Baptism, as a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness; for that, being born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace; and the Church bids each baptized child say that, in Baptism, he was "made a member of Christ, a

child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”

These ideas, thus distinctly enunciated in our Catechism, are so clearly expressed by Hooker⁵, that I cannot refrain from quoting the passage at length: “Although in the rest we make not Baptism a cause of grace, yet the grace which is given them with their Baptism doth so far depend on the very outward Sacrament, that God will have it embraced, not only as a sign or token of what we receive, but also as an instrument or mean whereby we receive grace; because Baptism is a Sacrament which God hath instituted in His Church, to the end that they which receive the same might be incorporated into Christ, and so through His most precious merit, obtain as well that saving grace of imputation which taketh away all former guiltiness, as also that infused Divine virtue of the Holy Ghost which giveth to the powers of the soul their first disposition towards future newness of life.” All who rightly receive this Sacrament being thus endowed with grace enough for their final salvation, if only they will use and improve it; and being thrown upon their own responsibility in after life, to employ this precious talent for the purposes for which it was given.

With this view of the effect of Baptism on original sin, the Homily on Salvation, towards the conclusion

⁵ B. V. § 60.

of the second part, entirely agrees, saying, “ Therefore we must trust only in God’s mercy and that sacrifice which our High Priest and Saviour Christ Jesus, the Son of God, once offered for us upon the cross, to obtain thereby God’s grace and remission, *as well of our original sin in Baptism*, as of all actual sin committed by us after our Baptism, if we truly repent and turn to Him unfeignedly again ⁶.”

As to the Baptism of infants, it is true that our Articles say no more than that it is in anywise to be retained as most agreeable to the institution of Christ ; but we have ample information touching its virtue and efficacy in the Service for the Public Baptism of Infants, which we are authorized to receive as the teaching of the Church upon this subject, because the 57th Canon expressly refers us to the Prayer Book for the fullest explanation of the doctrine of the Church on this point, saying, that “ the doctrine of Baptism and of the Lord’s Supper is so sufficiently set down in the Book of Common Prayer, that nothing can be added unto it that is material and necessary.”

But even without reference to the Baptismal Service, I must say that any assertion which empties the Sacrament of Baptism of its grace, is as essentially opposed to the Articles as it is to the Prayer

⁶ Those who wish fuller information on these points might consult with much advantage the chapter, “ Of Baptizing Infants,” in Bishop Taylor’s “ Life of Christ.”

Book. For the XXVth Article declares that “the Sacraments are not merely badges and tokens of Christian men’s profession, but *rather* be certain sure witnesses and *effectual* signs of God’s grace and good will toward us, by the which He doth invisibly work in us.” And of Baptism, it is said in the XXVIIth Article, that is a sign—an effectual sign, according to the XXVth, by which God doth work invisibly in us—“a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church, the promise of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, are visibly signed and sealed.” These two Articles, therefore, are surely standing witnesses to the real efficacy of Baptism as a channel of Divine grace.

I am now, however, directed by the 57th Canon to refer to the Prayer Book for the fullest instruction as to the doctrine of our Church touching Baptism generally, and therefore touching the Baptism of infants in particular. I there observe, that in the Service for the Public Baptism of Infants, we are taught to pray, before Baptism, that the child may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration; we are bidden to remember God’s good will towards little children, as was proved by Christ blessing them; we are taught to pray that the Holy Spirit may be given to the infant, that he may be born again, be released from his sins, and be sanctified by the Holy Ghost; we are reminded that

Christ has promised in His Gospel, to grant all the things we have prayed for ; and that He, for His part, will most surely keep and perform His promise; we are taught to pray that the old Adam may be buried, and the new man raised up in him. After we have offered up these prayers, and the act of Baptism, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has been performed, the Church pronounces the child to be regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, bidding us give thanks to Almighty God for these benefits. Accordingly, we do thank God in the case of every child whom we baptize ; not doubting, but earnestly believing, that he is received as a child of God by adoption, and incorporated into the Church of God.

Thus have we Creed and Catechism, Article, Homily and Liturgy, all speaking the same distinct, unambiguous language based upon the sure foundation of Holy Scripture. Nothing that has recently occurred can at all invalidate such combined testimony. Holy Scripture still teaches us that Baptism is for the remission of sins : the Church still teaches that infants are to be baptized ; you, my reverend brethren, are still bound to pronounce each individual child whom you baptize, regenerate ; are still bound to teach every child of your flock that he was, in his Baptism, made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Neither can any thing that has recently occurred absolve me from the obligation of protesting against any such

strange doctrine as that which would teach that an individual who comes to Baptism without any impediment in himself to the right receiving of it, may, although it is rightly administered, fail of receiving that particular grace which Holy Scripture assigns to it; viz. the remission of sin, the being born again of the Spirit.

Now, had we been told by the recent judgment that we were bound to believe, to teach, and to act, each in our several spheres, in direct opposition to the teaching of Holy Scripture, the Creed, the Baptismal Service, the Catechism, and the Homily; or were we forbidden to propagate the doctrine so clearly laid down in them, it would, indeed, have been a widely different case. But the judgment leaves the teaching of Holy Scripture and of the Church, as well as our own position and responsibilities just as they were; and so long as our Church does set forth her doctrine in language so scriptural, so pointed, so emphatic, that language must stand as a perpetual and living testimony against the contrary doctrine. What need then, I may ask, of further protest? Each time the various congregations over the whole world repeat the Nicene Creed, acknowledging "one Baptism for the remission of sins," does not the Universal Church protest thereby against the contrary doctrine? Each time the service for the Baptism of Infants is repeated, does not the Church of England protest against the teaching that children are not regenerate in and by their Baptism,

as an instrument? Each time the children of our flocks are catechized, does not the Church of England enter a fresh protest against the doctrine which would empty Baptism of its inward and spiritual grace? To my own mind, I confess, these are the most comfortable, and at the same time the most effectual, protests which we can put forth, and which the Church does put forth for us whenever the said declarations are made under her bidding. These will more effectually tend to prevent the spread of any such doctrine as that which led to the present controversy, than any means of resisting it which are not in accordance with our Church polity. In truth, I cannot help believing, paradoxical though it may at first appear, that all which has recently happened, will tend, when the heat of controversy is somewhat abated, to further the acceptance of that doctrine of the whole Church from the earliest ages on this point which our Church so plainly sets forth: and this would be my answer to those who fear that henceforth there will be a general licence to deny the doctrine of our Articles, and Liturgy touching infant Baptism.

I have thus endeavoured, according to my ability, to suggest such topics for your consideration as the present exigency seemed to require. It would certainly have been far more congenial to my natural feelings to have abstained from all interference under the present troubled aspect of the Church: and I think that, after fourteen years' intercourse, you will

have known me well enough to believe that, in conformity with the apostolical precept, it has been my habitual study to be quiet, and to do my own business. But the present occasion seems to me to be one on which silence would have been culpable ; I have accordingly spoken to you in all faithfulness, having counted the cost, and being willing to sacrifice much of what might be personally agreeable, in the hope, under God's blessing, of being able to render some small service to the cause of truth and of peace : nor will I willingly believe that a calm and temperate statement of doctrine, a frank and unreserved avowal of deep and long-cherished convictions, made in the spirit of Christian love, can ever, or at least ought ever to excite any feelings of a contrary character.

This surely is not the fitting season for eager and angry polemics, or for captious controversy ; but rather for solemn searchings of the heart ; for probing the depth of our own convictions as in the sight of God, and satisfying ourselves that they rest on the right foundations : nor can I but believe that we shall arrive at a better understanding with each other by mutual interchange of opinion in a spirit of Christian simplicity and sincerity, than by standing aloof and shunning each other's society as aliens and enemies, without effort to come to better agreement.

I have already expressed a hope that the present controversy, hostile as it seems at this moment to

the peace of the Church, may ultimately tend to promote greater unanimity, when the vehemence of party feeling has somewhat subsided, and the time is come for calm reflection. It will then, I think, be felt by many whose convictions were previously unsettled, that our blessed Saviour never could have instituted a Sacrament which was to have no efficacy. It will be perceived that the same principles on which a latitude is claimed in one direction, may be used, and must be conceded, in the case of those who claim it in every other direction ; much to the detriment, as I humbly conceive, of all fixed doctrine. It will be acknowledged that the language of our Prayer Book, in the Baptismal Service, is rather the language of faith than of hope or charity. Further researches will convince many that those who have, in times past, held the very highest Calvinistic opinions, have admitted and advocated the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration, according to the natural meaning of the words of our Service and our Catechism ; thus recognizing the truth, that all grace given need not be accompanied with the grace of final perseverance. It will be felt that the doctrine of grace imparted to all fit recipients in Baptism (all infants in the Christian Church being deemed, according to Christ's institution, fit recipients), is the basis of all Christian teaching, under the direction of our Church ; and that it is not merely by expunging two or three phrases, but by remodelling the whole Prayer Book, that it can be brought into

agreement with a contrary system. It will be perceived how clear a course the Church of England holds between the Romanizing extreme on the one hand which maintains that there is a complete inherent righteousness in every baptized person, and that it is not only the guilt, but the power also, of original sin which is entirely abolished in the Sacrament of holy Baptism ; and the other extreme, which confounds regeneration (the new birth unto righteousness, the entrance into the state of grace and salvation) with the perfect manhood, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ; an extreme which confounds a part with the whole, regeneration with final and complete sanctification ; as though there were no gradual growing up in grace after regeneration ; as if there were not the same relation between our natural birth and our natural growth, as there is between regeneration and progressive sanctification. It will be felt also, I believe, that the preaching of Baptismal regeneration in the sense which avoids each of these extremes, is entirely consistent with the fullest and freest recognition of that blessed truth, so full of all comfort to the believer, that we are justified by faith only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; and is likewise entirely consistent with the most powerful appeals to personal responsibility ; a responsibility fearfully enhanced and aggravated by the Baptismal grace conferred : entirely consistent, too, with a teaching which enforces the necessity of

a conversion, by the grace of God, of those who are living in sin, and of the actual renewal of the will and affections of all. It will be felt that it is the abuse, and not the use, of the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration which is really dangerous ; that most unscriptural abuse of it which, in forgetfulness of the Apostolic model, is ever preaching the privileges of Baptism without enforcing its tremendous responsibilities, thereby encouraging the reckless profligacy of Antinomianism.

If those benefits which I am sanguine enough to anticipate, shall, under the Divine blessing, be the ultimate result of a more general canvassing of the questions which are at the present moment exciting such uneasy feelings among us, it will indeed be working well for the future peace and unity of our Church. Only let us beware, as we value our own souls, that the controversy is not meanwhile working ill for ourselves, by fomenting angry and uncharitable feelings in our own hearts ; let us watch, in the spirit of prayer, against all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking, in our discussions on these solemn subjects, eschewing every thing which can foster division and aggravate the spirit of party. And yet further, let us beware that our flock take no hurt or hindrance in the midst of this strife of tongues. The Lord has given us, both clergy and laity in this diocese, a great work to perform ; our lot has been cast amidst an enormous and steadily increasing population, which, unless we

persevere in strenuous exertions, will be growing up without God in the world or a Saviour in their hearts. We are not without some gracious tokens that the Lord has, in a measure, blessed our work in seeking for those sheep of Christ that are dispersed abroad, that they may be saved through Him for ever. May no check be given to this work and labour of love by our own unhappy divisions ; and may we each of us, in our several callings, feel ourselves specially bound to guard against any such distractions arising from them, as may divert us from our endeavours, according to our respective offices and abilities, to win souls to Christ, to build up his Church, and enlarge his kingdom !

As a help against the evils of our present condition, I desire to recommend for our use, as occasion may admit, that devout Prayer for Unity which occurs in the service for the day of the accession of our sovereign to the throne : and praying that the God of Peace may keep your hearts and minds in mutual love and concord,

I remain,

Reverend and dear Brethren,

Your affectionate Friend and Servant,

C. T. RIPON.

LONDON,
May 10, 1850.

A PRAYER FOR UNITY.

O GOD the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly Union and Concord: that, as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope of our Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

ADDRESSES

REFERRED TO IN THE PASTORAL LETTER.

I.

To the Right Reverend Father in God, Charles Thomas,
Lord Bishop of Ripon.

We, the undersigned Clergy of your Lordship's diocese, residing in the deanery of Leeds, approach your Lordship with an expression of our affection and respect, and venture to seek your paternal advice under the existing circumstances of the Church.

The undersigned receive the Articles of the Creed and the Formularies of the Church on the subject of Baptism, in their plain, literal, and obvious sense,—in the sense in which the words have always been understood by the Church of England, in common with the Universal Church, from the earliest ages.

It may seem, therefore, that we are only remotely concerned in the late decision of Her Majesty in Council, in the question of *Gorham v. the Bishop of Exeter*: a judgment, which, in our opinion, amounts only to this,—that persons receiving the Articles of the Creed and the Formularies of the Church on the subject of Baptism in a non-natural sense, shall not be disturbed in their

preferments. But we beg leave to call the attention of your Lordship to the fact that the counsellors of Her Majesty, in advising the judgment, have supported it, not only by arguments which appear to us to be inconsistent with the spirit of the Church's teaching, but by misquotations (unintentionally made) from the writings of some of our standard divines, who are made to express the very opinions, for the refutation of which those writings were composed and given to the world.

This has caused perplexity in the minds of many of our parishioners ; and while we feel confident that your Lordship and your Right Reverend brethren will seek a suitable occasion for bringing these misstatements under the notice of Her Majesty, we ask your Lordship's advice with respect to the proper course to be pursued by us in satisfying the minds of our parishioners.

(Signed by thirty-nine of the Clergy of the Rural Deanery of Leeds.)

II.

To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Ripon.

We, the undersigned Clergymen in the Rural Deanery of Leeds, and your Lordship's diocese, having learned that an Address to your Lordship is in circulation among the Clergy of this deanery, impugning the recent decision of Her Majesty in Council as supreme head of the Church, desire to express our deep anxiety for the preservation of the peace of the Church, and likewise that there should be no compromise of its principles.

We are anxious to maintain in its integrity the Book of Common Prayer, and to uphold the principle, that the articles of the Church be interpreted in their plain, literal, and grammatical sense.

While we yield to none in our attachment to this principle, we could not subscribe our names to the Address now in circulation, which in effect charges Her Majesty in Council with deciding that the Articles may be held in a non-natural sense, and with making false quotations from theological writers. We have carefully read the judgment referred to in that Address, verifying

the quotations, as far as we have had opportunity, and have seen nothing to warrant such serious charges.

Looking to the proceedings of the court which advised Her Majesty in this decision, we cannot refrain from expressing to your Lordship our grateful admiration of the calm, judicious, and able manner in which the eminent judges who formed the Judicial Committee, and the Prelates who advised them, considered the question submitted to them.

With regard to the question itself, it appears to us, that while the Church of England plainly holds the sacraments to be generally necessary to salvation, and teaches that we should use them as means of grace, it has, in its Articles and Liturgy, wisely abstained from any exact definition with regard to the grace imparted.

We fear that great injury will arise to the Church, if at this time the Clergy should unhappily be arrayed against each other on questions of difficult and doubtful controversy, endeavouring to define what the Church has not defined ; or, if they should engage in a struggle for power against the lawful supremacy of the Crown.

As our observation and experience lead us to conclude that the lay members of the Church, far from being unsettled by the recent decision, are greatly relieved by it, and heartily acquiesce in it, we earnestly look to your Lordship, in the hope that, by the blessing of God, your healing counsels will avert so great a calamity, as a renewed religious agitation in this populous diocese.

(Signed by ten Clergy of the Rural Deanery of Leeds.)

III.

To the Right Reverend Charles Thomas, Lord Bishop of Ripon.

MY LORD,

We, the undersigned Clergy of the deanery of Wakefield, assembled in chapter, unanimously agreed to lay before your

Lordship the following resolutions, expressive of the grievances under which we conceive the Church at present to labour, and to request your Lordship to permit us to found thereupon addresses to Her Majesty the Queen, and to the Archbishop of Canterbury :—

Resolved,

1. That, it is a right inherent in the Church of Christ, by the commission of her Divine Founder, to define in matters of doctrine.

2. That, in accordance with the above-named right, no court ought to possess the power of judicially and finally declaring the doctrines of the Church, except such as shall be constituted in agreement with the principles of the Church, and have received its jurisdiction by formal ecclesiastical sanction.

3. That, the power which is at present vested by Act of Parliament, without the formal concurrence of the Church, in the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, to interpret the formularies of the Church by a final judicial sentence, and thus practically to define and declare the doctrines of the Church, is an infringement of the fundamental right of the Church, to be the sole judge in matters affecting the Faith, and at variance with the Law of Christ.

4. That, the existence of this state of things is a grievance in conscience, and that this grievance is rendered more burdensome by the fact, that the members of the Judicial Committee of Council are not necessarily members of the Church of England.

5. That, for the redress of the said grievance, the following steps are necessary :—

(1.) That, the Church in Convocation or Synod has licence to deliberate for the special purpose of devising a proper appellate tribunal for determining all questions of doctrine, and other matters purely spiritual.

(2.) That, an Act of Parliament be passed for the purpose of making the judgment of such tribunal binding on the temporal courts of these realms.

(3.) That, the Acts of Parliament relating to the Privy Council be so amended as to exempt questions of doctrine and

other matters purely spiritual from the cognizance of the Privy Council.

(Signed by the Rural Dean and fifteen Clergy of the Rural Deanery.)

IV.

We, the undersigned Rural Deans of the diocese of Ripon, approach your Lordship with entire confidence in your Lordship's wisdom and judgment at a period of much anxiety in the Church's history.

Difficulties which have arisen from the recent decision in the case of *Gorham v. the Bishop of Exeter*, have perplexed the minds of many, both of the Clergy and the Laity, and we venture, therefore, to ask your paternal advice as to the proper course to be pursued by us under the existing circumstances.

(Signed by twelve Rural Deans.)

V.

To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Ripon.

We, the Rural Dean, and the undersigned members of the deanery of North Craven, deeply impressed with the importance of the late decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (in the case of *Gorham v. the Bishop of Exeter*) beg leave respectfully to convey to your Lordship this expression of our hearty sympathy; and also to ask for your Lordship's guidance and assistance under the difficulties in which as ministers of the Church we are hereby placed.

We feel strongly how desirable it is for the integrity of the Church, that measures be forthwith taken to secure to her an effectual mode of giving her authoritative declaration on this, as well as on other spiritual questions; and we, therefore, urgently pray that your Lordship will take such steps as may seem expedient for that purpose.

That the Head of the Church may give to your Lordship, and those who have the rule over us, a right judgment in this and all other things which concern the peace of His Church, is the earnest prayer of your Lordship's obedient Servants—

(Signed by the Rural Dean, and thirteen Clergy of the Rural Deanery.)

VI.

To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Ripon.

May it please your Lorship,

We, the Rectors, Vicars, and Curates of the archdeaconry of Richmond, within your Lordship's diocese, whose names are underwritten, beg leave respectfully to address your Lordship on the subject of a recent decision, by the Judicial Committee of Her Majesty's Privy Council. We have been in the habit of reading publicly every Sunday the Nicene Creed, in which we acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. We have also been in the habit of administering the Sacrament of Baptism, in which we return thanks to Almighty God, that it hath pleased Him to regenerate this infant with His Holy Spirit, to receive him for His own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into His holy Church. We have also been accustomed, in using the Church Catechism, to instruct the children that Baptism conveys a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, for that being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, they are hereby (*i. e.* by Baptism) made the children of grace. We thoroughly receive and believe these doctrines of our Church, as they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture. We think that a Minister who denies these doctrines, ought not to be instituted to a benefice in the established Church. We therefore disapprove of the late judgment of the Privy Council in the case of *Gorham v. the Bishop of Exeter*.

At the same time, we acknowledge that the Sovereign is over all persons, and in all causes ecclesiastical, as well as civil, su-

preme. And we rely upon your Lordship's wisdom, in conjunction with the other Prelates of our Church, to promote such measures, as may preserve the rights, privileges, and Faith of our Church in matters of Spiritual doctrine, and at the same time maintain the just prerogative and supremacy of the Crown.

We are, my Lord,

Your Lordship's dutiful Servants.

*(Signed by the Archdeacon and Chancellor of the Diocese,
and fifty-eight Clergy of the Archdeaconry.)*

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



