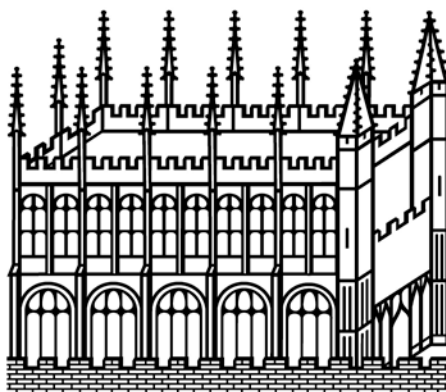




Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries
and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-
ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.



Dublin, 10th December.

REVEREND SIR,

As you were one of the Deputation which presented a Memorial to me last Wednesday, I address, through you, the rest of the Gentlemen who signed it.

I feel doubtful, indeed, whether any answer from me is expected, or wished for ; as no copy of the Memorial was sent to me previously to its being presented ; and as it was immediately afterwards inserted in the newspapers. On the whole, however, I have thought it best to send you an abstract of a letter written by me,—before the Memorial was presented, and indeed before I knew that there was to be any,—to one of the gentlemen who signed it.

I need not add the expressions of my deep regret that there should exist any difference as to religious points,—especially those of a practical character,—among clergymen of the same Church. But the

(11.)

evil is one,—I wish you to observe,—which neither I, *nor any one else*, in my situation, could have prevented. I was consulted, and distinctly applied to, to give my opinion. Had I entertained and expressed an opinion exactly opposite to the one I did entertain, I should have equally incurred the disapprobation,—not indeed of the same individuals, but—of a great number of individuals, members of the same Church, and not less entitled to respect.

I will take an early opportunity of laying the Memorial before the other Bishops, and consulting them as to the best mode of proceeding, so as to insure, if not uniformity, at least unity, in the Church.

I am, Rev. Sir,

Your faithful humble servant,

(Signed) RICHARD DUBLIN.

I was far from discountenancing Extemporaneous Prayer, except in congregations. I never objected to the use of it either in the devotions of an individual, or in the course of private ministerial instruction, either of a child, or an adult who may need to be taught how to pray in private ; when the learner, attending leisurely to each sentence, may

stop to ask explanation wherever he needs it. And again, I could easily have pointed out to you how far I am from intending to attack the Presbyterians or any other Christians not belonging to our Church. I have, indeed, a deliberate preference for our own system, both in its letter and in its spirit; from which I cannot but think (along with, at least, very many others) unpremeditated prayer in a congregation to be altogether foreign; as our Reformers do not seem to have recognized or contemplated any congregational assemblies except those for which they have expressly provided forms.* Nor do I conceive that they calculated on clergymen being ready to avail themselves of any legal nicety by which they might be enabled to disregard the spirit, and shelter themselves under the letter of the regulations; so as to do any thing whatever that is not forbidden in so many words, expressed with the technical accuracy of an Act of Parliament, framed purposely to guard against ingenious evasions. But it was not my design to pronounce a censure on any who conscientiously *dissent* from our communion. The only allusion I made to any of them was in reference to Ministers whose unwritten prayers are not really “unpre-

* The “Act of Uniformity” obliges all Ministers to say and use the morning and evening prayer, *and ALL OTHER the public and common prayer* in such order and form as is mentioned in the book of Common Prayer.

meditated," but are adapted to the purpose of joint worship in a congregation, by being in substance and almost in words, so constantly repeated as to enable the people readily to join in them. And I feel bound to notice also one advantage (though not in my view a counterbalancing advantage,) possessed by Presbyterians and other denominations, of whose recognized system extemporary Prayer forms a part ;—viz. that their Ministers are trained, and examined, (whether well or ill,) and admitted to their office, *with a view to this practice*. I do not say that this circumstance sufficiently secures them from the many and great dangers you advert to, and which, according to my own observation, much more than counterbalance any good effects of the system : I do not say that the prayers of Ministers so trained are always such as the people *can*, or always such as they *should*, join in : I do not say that these prayers are not often addresses to the hearers,—sometimes incautious effusions of excited feelings,—sometimes sharp reproaches, to the present or the absent, tinctured with controversial bitterness : I do not say that they never substitute in the minds of the audience, for pure devotion, a pleasurable enthusiastic excitement, such as may end in the belief that miraculous gifts, importunately called for, have been actually bestowed : but I do say, that in order to *lessen* at least these dangers in any Church that does admit

extemporary Prayers, it is quite necessary that its Ministers should be regularly appointed, after due training and careful examination, to so delicate and hazardous an office. We ought at least to *know* to *what* we ordain a man. You are aware it is left to the discretion of Ecclesiastical Authorities, who shall or shall not be permitted to *preach* and expound: now to deliver extemporary *Prayer* in a congregation, you cannot surely regard as an office of less (I should say much more) delicacy and difficulty. And the worst of it is, the very persons most exposed to the dangers you allude to, are precisely those least likely to distrust their own qualifications. Such cautions and warnings as you allude to, are likely to be most *attended to* by the most discreet, sober-minded and modest, while it is for those of opposite character they are most *needed*. At any rate, however, the office is one which all must admit to be at least something *different* from other ministerial functions, and requiring,—if not *greater*—at least, *peculiar* qualifications. If proof of this were needed, an anecdote which I heard the other day from a friend of your's and mine, would furnish one out of many. He was present at the delivery of an extemporary Prayer, when one of the party, feeling that he could not conscientiously join in one of the petitions, rose and left the room. Now, surely, much as such an occurrence in a religious assembly is to be deprecated, he could not

be blamed, supposing, of course, that he took care not to be again exposed to a like necessity. But this same person would probably not have felt himself obliged thus to shock the feelings of the congregation, had it been a *sermon* in which the objectionable sentiment (supposing it not downright blasphemy) had occurred ; because merely to sit still and listen, would not have implied the same *adoption* of the sentiment as the toleration of it in a prayer professing to be offered up, as all prayers in a congregation *ought* to be considered, by *all who are present*.

If all prayers in a congregation *were*, in *fact*, universally considered as "common supplications," such occurrences as the one just mentioned would, I am convinced, be much more frequent. Hence it is that I say, we ought to know to *what* we ordain a man. The use of extemporaneous prayer in a congregation, ought surely to be either, first, universally enjoined or encouraged ; or, secondly, universally prohibited ; or, thirdly, left to the discretion of each diocesan ; or, fourthly, to the discretion of each minister. It cannot tend to the unity, the edification, or the safety of the Church, that matters should be left in a state of uncertainty. I am ready, in this matter, to bow to the decision of regular ecclesiastical authority, if there be a reasonable doubt what the intention of our Reformers was, or what it ought to have been.

I could say much more on this subject ; but instead of occupying your time and my own, by writing further upon it, I will prefer discussing any points on which your mind may remain unsatisfied, in a personal interview ; which, you need not be told, I shall be most ready to afford you. It may be, that, in the course of a calm and friendly oral discussion, we may nearly or entirely come to an agreement. But if we should not, this will afford a very strong presumption, that at least it is not *every* one that can be qualified to carry along with him a congregation in the ready understanding and full adoption of his “unpremeditated” effusions. If two members of the Church, long acquainted, and giving each other credit for sincere piety and Christian zeal, cannot, in a leisurely conversational private discussion, fully enter into each other’s views on a religious subject, how much less can this be hoped in respect of a congregation of persons far less intimately known to the minister, and called upon to listen to what he utters, without interruption, and to take it in and join in it, at the moment !

In a moral point of view at least, I feel sure of the approbation of every candid and considerate person, acquainted with, and reflecting on, the circumstances in which I was placed. I was, as you know, *actually consulted* by a real individual, in reference to his own parish. Now, ought I to have *refused to give him my opinion* ? or, to have disguised or suppressed

any part of my opinion, leaving him to suppose that I considered as a matter left *optional and indifferent* by the Church, what I conscientiously thought, and think, *not* to be so left ? or, should I have kept *private*, for fear of giving offence to some, the opinion I had expressed to one individual, as to a point of duty that equally concerns others ? No upright man can, I think, answer these questions but in the negative ; or can consequently fail to perceive, that, thinking as I do, I should have been guilty of a cowardly dereliction of duty, had I acted any otherwise. But what I wish to press upon your notice is, that if my opinion had been the direct *contrary*, the difficulty would not have been at all lessened. Suppose that you or any upright man who may be of opinion that the practice in question is *not* at variance with the spirit of our Church, had been in my place, he would, of course, have declared honestly and frankly, *that*, his opinion ; and in so doing he would have found himself equally opposed to the judgment of a great number (I myself believe, a great majority) of the members of our Church ; who consider the practice not only as not *advisable*, but as not *allowable*, consistently with the spirit of the Church. The persons objecting to *your* procedure, therefore, (supposing you to have been the diocesan,) though not the same individuals as those *now* objecting, would have been equally entitled to regard, as ministers of the same Church.

I will conclude, therefore, by pointing out to your attention,—what is every day more and more forcibly impressed on mine,—the impossibility that the Church can subsist much longer (I do not say, as an endowed *establishment*, but, as a *society*,) *without a government*. How long could the civil community subsist, if Parliaments were to fall into desuetude, and the society were held together merely through the agency of justices of the peace, sheriffs, and other such functionaries? It would soon be found, first, difficult in many cases to *enforce* even the *clearest* laws; secondly, much more difficult to *ascertain* the law in any doubtful case; and thirdly, quite impossible to *add, amend, or abrogate* any law, however palpable the need.

Such is the situation of the Church;—nearly, though not entirely the situation in which it has existed for more *years*, than a civil community could, *weeks*. I cannot think it can subsist as it is much longer. The whole frame-work of the society seems loosening daily, and affording daily fresh advantages to the external dangers that assail it.—

“*Accipiunt inimicum imbrem, rimisque fatiscunt.*”

You observed that some of the clergy seem “too much disposed to act independently of the bishops.” That there are some to whom a much stronger remark would apply, you are, I am sure, well aware:—persons who *seek occasions* for setting at

nought and opposing,—slandering and reviling, their ecclesiastical superiors, in such a manner as would surely be most indecorous and unjustifiable, even if directed against one notorious for remissness,—for selfish worldliness,—or for oppressive haughtiness ; but which you cannot think to have even this shadow of a justification. Look over the ordination-vows, and reflect what would be the procedure to be expected from men who should have vowed the direct *contrary* ; whose vow should have been to *destroy*, as far as in them lieth, peace, quietness, and concord, and assiduously to defy and insult their ecclesiastical superiors. The divisions—the anarchy—the unchristian strife, prevailing among us, and seeming to increase as the external dangers become more pressing, like the civil wars in Jerusalem at its final siege, must be, to the most inveterate of our opponents, matter of malignant triumph and exulting hope ; and in those of them in whom the attachment to *Christianity* prevails over that to a *sect, church, or party*, must excite feelings of mingled shame, pity, and disgust.

I advert to this subject, not, of course, as conveying to you any *information*, but because I would suggest to you whether it does not behove you, at such a period, to consider what steps may be taken to put an end to a state of things that is so disgraceful and so ruinous. Those who have not cast off the spirit of Christianity, and the character of rational and civi-

lized beings, are I trust, even much more numerous, —though they may appear less so, from being less clamorous—than those of opposite character. These may be able,—if they will consent to waive, for the present, minor differences, and to act in concert,—to devise some means for placing the Church in a permanently regular and secure condition.

The prayers which you assure me are offered up in behalf of my endeavours to benefit the Church, cannot, if sincere, be left unaccompanied by corresponding exertions. We cannot expect that God will listen to them, if we will not listen to them ourselves. My prayers are daily offered up in the same cause ; but I do not cease daily to exert myself in its promotion, according to the best of the judgment that Providence has bestowed on me. And whatever may be the ultimate good or ill-success of those efforts, I trust I shall never have to reproach myself with having shrunk from my duty, and sat down in despair, while any possible effort of mine remained untried.



1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

21.

22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.