
A LETTER

TO

The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Huron

BY

The Lord Bishop of Ontario.

To the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Huron.

MY LORD :—

I received, when in London, a pamphlet sent to me by your Lordship's direction, containing remarks on an Address delivered by me to the Synod of my Diocese in last April. Though I considered that the perversion of my meaning, and the general unfairness of your Lordship's criticisms, called for reply, yet I felt that I could safely leave my language to be interpreted by unprejudiced men; and as I never hope for much success with prejudiced ones, I determined to let the matter rest, and make no rejoinder.

But, to my astonishment, your Lordship read your attack on my Synodical Address before the Council of Trinity College, assembled on October 7th, for the purpose of receiving your charges against the Provost's teaching and his replies. Not being responsible to the Council for any remarks I may think fit to deliver to my Synod, I thought your Lordship's conduct in bad taste, and could only account for it by supposing that you read your strictures on my Charge as a formal challenge to me. The Council had met to receive a report of your Lordship's objections to Provost Whittaker's teaching, but not to listen to criticisms on my Synodical Address; but as they were compelled to listen to the latter, I must now, in self-defence, set myself right before the Church and the Council of Trinity College.

Your Lordship read the following paragraph before the Council :—

“ It has been asserted also that the reasons which I have given for object-
“ ing to the teaching of Trinity College are the ostensible, not the real,
“ grounds of my opposition. This I regard as a most serious charge. The
“ form in which it has been lately put by the newly consecrated Bishop of
“ Ontario, is, that charges have been brought against the teaching of Trin-
“ ity College ‘ostensibly on the ground of its having a tendency towards
“ ‘Rome, but really because it has not a tendency towards Geneva.’ Such
“ a statement as this concerning my motives can only be met as I now meet

“ it, with a most pointed and solemn denial of its truth. To search into the heart is the prerogative only of one, and to Him, with all reverence, but with the utmost confidence, I can appeal. when I state that the charges which I have publicly brought against the teaching of Trinity College are the true reasons which have influenced me, and that the idea of objecting to the College because no Calvinistic theories were taught there never once entered my head.”

My Lord, I never stated that you wilfully disguised your real motives, or that you acted hypocritically. I made no personal attack whatever. My aim was to account for the strange anomaly of a Bishop of the Church differing from the great majority of the Council of Trinity College and two of his brethren on such an apparently plain question, as whether certain doctrines had or had not a Romish tendency. The Protestantism of the gentlemen who sit in the Council is unimpeachable, and my own I can answer for; so that *some* explanation is necessary to account for such a wide difference of opinion on so plain a subject. That your Lordship honestly thinks that the teaching of Trinity College tends towards Rome, I firmly believe; but it is allowable for men who are surprised at this to endeavor to account for the phenomenon. Your Lordship's motive in attacking Trinity College was undoubtedly a feeling that the teaching was Romish. But what inspired that feeling? There is something in your Lordship's habit of thought and theological bias which makes you see what neither the Bishop of Toronto nor myself can see. A prejudiced man may know that his motive is honest, yet he may not know what inspired it. He may solemnly appeal to his conscience, but if he have not instructed his conscience aright, he may be a fanatic. Now, my Lord, I think that they who have attacked Trinity College in any publication that I have yet seen, have had their consciences formed and their motives inspired in a theological school commonly called Calvinistical. I may be mistaken in this supposition, but I have a right to hold it and assert it till some proof to the contrary is given. My reason for giving the Synod of the Diocese my views on this point was simply that I perceived your Lordship had gained converts to your way of thinking, from that great mass of Churchmen who are rightly very jealous for the Protestant character of the Church. Your Lordship had also all the advantage of the popularity gained to a cause which proposed as its task the exposing the Popery of a Church of England Institution; and in proportion as the attack was rendered popular, so was Trinity College endangered and its

defence made uninviting. I felt that, as a responsible officer of the College, I was bound to defend it if I thought that it deserved defence. Accordingly, I endeavored to show that a false issue had been raised; that the question was not Protestantism against Romanism, but Calvinism against anti-Calvinism; and I am glad to find that I am not singular in my opinion, but that multitudes now attribute the unhappy controversy to the *odium theologicum*, and are convinced that a Protestant cry can be raised sometimes as falsely for theological as for political purposes.

Your Lordship deeply deplores my treatment of this controversy in the following language:—

“It is deeply to be deplored that the Bishop of Ontario should have thought it expedient in his first solemn address to his Clergy and Laity to have brought forward a question of Calvinism, concerning which, he truly says, that the peace of the Church in Canada has not heretofore been disturbed by it. None of the aged Bishops in this Province ever considered such a proceeding necessary, and it surely would have been wiser to have followed their good example, than on the unsound bias of a false assumption, to disturb the internal harmony of the Church by the introduction of a question which had never at any previous period been thus officially agitated in the country.”

The reason, my Lord, why none of the aged Bishops ever considered such a proceeding necessary, is, I fancy, because they never had provocation. Your Lordship's attack was unprecedented, and so, perhaps, is the defence. But if it be unwise to disturb the peace of the Church on a question of Calvinism, it is more unwise to disturb it by imputations of Romish teaching in a Church of England Institution, and by arguments which fail to convince two Bishops and some of the principal Protestant laity in Canada West.

My Lord, sarcasm directed against the comparative youth of a man thirty-seven years old, has not much edge; indeed the contrast between the conduct of the “aged Bishops” and my own, could only have point if your Lordship is prepared to prove that the aged Bishops condemn my Synodical address. This your Lordship does not attempt to prove; indeed it would be a futile task, as I have the high satisfaction of knowing that my address received the marked approval of the Lord Bishop of Toronto. I hope, however, that it is my earnest desire that age may bring me wisdom, and experience may add to my knowledge, as it is but too evident that in spite of great experience men often are very ignorant. Impressed with these views, I further hope that I may be withheld from hastily denouncing

a brother's tenets, and, for the credit of the Church, that I may not rush into the Romish controversy without an adequate appreciation of the principles of the Prayer Book and the English Reformation.

Your Lordship objects also to my language respecting the evidence on which your attack was based:—

“The Bishop of Ontario, however, in his address to his Synod takes no notice of the Provost's letters, which were the subject of the resolution before the corporation, but speaks only of the evidence which had been adduced previous to their publication. He says, ‘To my surprise and sorrow I found that it was made up of second-hand extracts supplied from an apocryphal catechism by anonymous and disaffected students.’ Thus raising what may be termed a false issue and diverting attention from the real subject then before the corporation, namely, the published letters of the Provost. If by ‘apocryphal’ his Lordship meant ‘fabulous’, this epithet cannot apply to the work spoken of, for the questions in the catechism were copied from the Provost's, which he lent for that purpose, and the answers were compiled from notes carefully taken by the students and corrected from time to time. As to the catechism being ‘anonymous’, I am surprised that the Bishop of Ontario should so soon forget that *at the meeting* of the corporation of which he spoke, I produced a copy of this catechism, which I stated had been compiled by the Rev. J. Middleton and Messrs. Jones and Badgley.”

A very little attention to my address would have shown your Lordship that when I used the language above quoted I was justifying my vote given September 27th, 1860, and alluding to the evidence *then* before your Lordship, when the Provost's letters had not as yet been printed. I reassert my description of that evidence, and affirm that my statement is not affected by the fact that long after your Lordship's first attack on Trinity College you were supplied with evidence which cannot be justly called anonymous. *At the time* of the Council meeting held in Sept. 1860, the catechism on which your Lordship based your charges was apocryphal and its compilers anonymous. By apocryphal I do *not* mean “fabulous”; my meaning was that as those books which are called apocryphal are not by the Church “applied to establish any doctrine,” so such a catechism should not be applied to establish any charge of heresy or false doctrine. The compilers of the catechism *were* anonymous in Sept. 1860, and it is beside the question to say that your Lordship informed us, Feb. 1862, from whom you received it. I therefore did *not* “forget” the information given us; I only thought it irrelevant to speak of it in connection with occurrences which took place sixteen months

* Article 6.

previously. I was giving an account of the controversy chronologically *previous* to the meeting of February, 1862, when for the first time the catechism ceased to be anonymous, but it continues in my estimation to be decidedly apocryphal.

Your Lordship fails to understand what I mean by the word "disaffected" students. I meant that most probably, nay, I concluded certainly, students who could give private information to the detriment of the College must be disaffected to or dissatisfied with the College. But I am really happy to find that in this instance I have been mistaken; and that though the evidence of these students was used to damage the College, yet they do not draw the same conclusions from their own evidence as your Lordship, and that their sympathies are still with their Alma Mater.

Your Lordship goes on to intimate your disbelief in my assertion that "I went to the Council meeting held last February for the purpose of taking the whole question into consideration, with my mind made up to no course but that of urging a fair and critical investigation into the charges against Provost Whitaker." And your reason for not believing my word is that "it must have been evident that the Bishop of Ontario came to the meeting prepared to second the amendment of the Chief Justice, the effect of which was to give the sanction of the Corporation to the things contained in the letters of the Provost." My Lord, I did go to the Council with the determination I expressed; but also prepared to second *if necessary* the amendment of the Chief Justice. To be quite unprejudiced in inquiry is compatible with being prepared to resist an unreasonable resolution; and I deny that the effect of my amendment was to give the sanction of the Corporation to the things contained in the Provost's letters." On the contrary, the language of the amendment is explicit in *not* committing the Corporation to the details of the Provost's second letter. I give the amendment, because unless I do so, some may imagine that I misrepresent your Lordship:—

"That it be resolved, that the Corporation of Trinity College does not assume either to represent or to identify itself with the views of any party in the Council. That the opinion expressed by the Corporation on the first letters of the Provost vindicated the writer from the imputation of teaching doctrines not allowed by the Church, and to that opinion the corporation still adheres. That although the second letter of the Provost was not submitted to the corporation, its publication was authorized as stated by him. And, *although the Corporation is not committed to its details*, it is not aware that it can be shown to be contrary to the teaching

“of the Church: that the corporation cannot, therefore, entertain any proposition to condemn any portion of either of these letters without a specific statement, in writing, of the objections that are urged against them.”

If your Lordship draws from the foregoing amendment the logical deduction that by it the sanction of the Corporation is given to the things contained in the Provost's two letters, it is not surprising that your deduction from the letters themselves should be rather strained.

I am sorry to be obliged to say that your Lordship does not fairly state my words when you say “that the Bishop of Ontario to my surprise several times repeated that nothing could be considered dangerous which was not contrary to the teaching of the Church of England.” I appeal to every member of the Council when I deny that I used those words. Your Lordship repeatedly said that “you did not charge the Provost with teaching anything heretical or anything contrary to the doctrines of the Church of England, but that you did charge him with teaching doctrines *dangerous in the extreme*.” Whereupon I said that “*I could not understand how a doctrine could be dangerous in the extreme and yet not heretical nor contrary to the teaching of the Church of England.*” Whether I am able to understand your Lordship's position or not does not perhaps signify, but you apparently pay but a poor compliment to the Church in which you preside as a Bishop.

Your Lordship goes on to cite instances to prove your strange position, viz., the Bishop of Exeter v. Gorham, and the Bishop of Salisbury v. Williams, &c. I am free to admit that these cases may prove that *in the opinion of Bishops* doctrines may be considered highly dangerous and yet not be contrary to the formularies of the Church. But it seems to me that your Lordship cited cases which tell against yourself, and that as the law decided against the Bishop of Exeter and may decide against the Bishop of Salisbury, so the law if appealed to may decide that your Lordship is not justified in crushing a clergyman and depriving him of his office because *you consider* his doctrine dangerous. The absence of a Court which, according to your Lordship, does not exist in Canada, should make us cautious lest we carry a point by appeals to the prejudices of the public which we could not carry by due course of law.

As regards my assertion “that your Lordship once proposed to submit the whole case to the Lord Bishop of Rupert's Land

“for his decision,” I admit that I was in error, though the mistake is pardonable, as I scarcely thought it probable that your Lordship would select the Bishop of Rupert’s Land simply as a witness of an interview. Any Canadian gentleman would have answered the purpose equally well.

I now must comment on the most extraordinary clause in your Lordship’s address, viz :—

“In the course of the discussion I put to the Bishop of Ontario a question with reference to the pamphlet of the Provost, which was the subject of my resolution. I asked his Lordship twice whether that book contained heresy? He twice declined to answer the question. It may appear strange that I should put such a question to his Lordship. The reason was that the venerable Archdeacon Brough, who then sat near me, had informed me that in a conversation with the Bishop of Ontario, his Lordship had stated to him that the view advocated in the Provost’s letters concerning the reception of the glorified humanity of our Lord, by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper, was heretical.’ This will account for my putting the question, and may also account for the unwillingness of the Bishop of Ontario to reply.”

My Lord, I have never yet been afraid or ashamed to speak out my honest sentiments manfully. I therefore spurn the insinuation that I declined to answer your Lordship’s question, because I had once admitted that the Provost’s book contained heresy. In the course of our discussion in the Council your Lordship did *not* ask me twice “whether that book contained heresy?” but holding the book in your hand across the table towards me, your Lordship said: “Now you know that this book contains heresy.” I did not answer—not because I had ever told Archdeacon Brough that the Provost’s views on the subject of the reception of the “glorified humanity” of our blessed Lord in the Eucharist were heretical, but because I was dumbfounded at your Lordship’s attempt to entrap me into an admission which you dared not make yourself.

As regards Archdeacon Brough’s statement, I have only to say that I distinctly remember the conversation he alludes to when I did admit my dislike of the term “glorified humanity,” on the ground that it was new to me in connection with the reception of the Eucharist; but the assertion that I called the Provost’s views on this subject heretical, I affirm to be a fabrication.

It is most devoutly to be wished that your Lordship had come at an earlier date to the determination “never to desecrate the public assemblies of the Church in your Diocese by making them the arena of personal attack upon any man;” it would have saved your Lordship from making the gross

attack upon Trinity College, or rather its Divinity Professor, which you did make in your public Synod. It is idle to say that the topic was forced on your Lordship by the indiscretion of a clergyman or the questioning of a layman. Had your Lordship replied to both by saying that you intended to use your constitutional powers in remedying evils which you supposed to exist in Trinity College, no fault could be found with your conduct; but as the case now stands, no promise of future abstinence from personal attack will suffice to make the Church forget that Trinity College is on the defensive, and that your Lordship is the aggressor. Indeed, after the wholesale nature of your assault on the Provost, it is enough to provoke a smile that you should assume an air of injured innocence, and say that "whether in Synod or elsewhere, I shall never desecrate the public assemblies of the Church by making them the arena of personal attack."

I am,

Your Lordship's faithful servant,

J. T. ONTARIO.

ALWINGTON HOUSE,
Kingston, October 24th, 1862.

