

**TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE
OF LONDON THIS CHARGE IS
INSCRIBED WITH SINCERE
AFFECTION AND RESPECT**

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To the Clergy of the diocese of london this Charge is inscribed with sincere affection and respect by C. J. London

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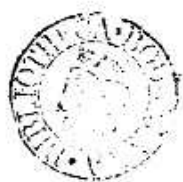
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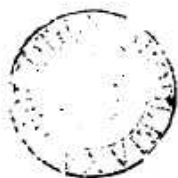
C. J. LONDON

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THIS CHARGE
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WITH SINCERE AFFECTION AND RESPECT
BY
THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND AND BROTHER

C. J. LONDON.





CHARGE.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

ON this the sixth occasion of my calling you together to hear the words of pastoral admonition and advice, I feel an unwonted degree of anxiety and difficulty in addressing you. Events have recently occurred deeply affecting the character and well-being of that branch of the Universal Church, in which it is our privilege to minister, of such a nature that, while it is impossible for me to pass them over without notice, it is difficult so to speak of them as not to give offence in some quarters where I would not willingly awaken any feeling of displeasure. But looking to the present position of the Church, and to the uneasiness and disquietude which agitate the minds of many of its most attached and thoughtful members, I feel that I should be wanting to my duty, if I did not declare my opinions with great plainness of speech; but, at the same time, I desire to do this in a spirit of gentleness and forbearance, and to say nothing which may serve to increase, or perpetuate, the unhappy divisions which cripple the energies, and

impair the usefulness of our Church, and enable our adversaries to assail us with weapons of our own forging. May that Holy Spirit, whose office it is to teach God's faithful people, grant us to have a right judgment in all things, and especially in those which concern the peace of His Church!

I proceed at once to the most important of the questions upon which it will be my duty to touch; that which has arisen out of the proceedings of the ecclesiastical courts in the case of Mr. Gorham *v.* the Bishop of Exeter. I do not intend to enter at length into the history of those proceedings, nor into a minute examination of the judgment delivered by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, or, more properly speaking, the report made by them to Her Majesty the Queen. But I feel myself bound to explain to the clergy of my diocese the reasons which induced me to withhold my approval of that report, and I am desirous of offering some suggestions as to the consequences likely to result from it, which I would hope may tend to quiet, in some measure, the minds of those who look upon it as in a high degree injurious, if not absolutely fatal, to the character of the Church, as the keeper and dispenser of God's truth.

When, in obedience to Her Majesty's commands, I attended the first meeting of the Judicial Committee, I had not read Mr. Gorham's published account of his examination by the Bishop of Exeter;

nor was I aware of the extreme opinions which he had avowed. I went into the inquiry with the expectation of finding that he had not transgressed the bounds of that latitude, which has been allowed, or tolerated, ever since the Reformation. Had such proved to be the case, I could have acquiesced in a judgment which, while it recognised that latitude, should have distinctly asserted the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, in the proper sense of the words, to be the doctrine of our Church. But having read, with great attention, Mr. Gorham's publication, I found that it contained assertions wholly irreconcilable, as it appeared to me, with the plain teaching of the Church of England, and of the Church Universal in all ages.

The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council have stated that Mr. Gorham's doctrine appears to them to be as follows:—"That Baptism is a sacrament
 "generally necessary to salvation, but that the grace
 "of regeneration does not so necessarily accompany
 "the act of Baptism, that regeneration invariably
 "takes place in Baptism; that the grace may be
 "granted before, in, or after Baptism; that Baptism
 "is an effectual sign of grace, by which God works
 "invisibly in us, but only in such as worthily receive
 "it; that in them alone it has a wholesome effect,
 "and that without reference to the qualification of
 "the recipient, it is not in itself an effectual sign of
 "grace; that infants baptized, dying before actual

“ sin, are certainly saved, but that in no case is “ regeneration in baptism unconditional.”

Had this been a full and accurate account of Mr. Gorham's opinions on the subject of Baptism, as set forth by himself, and had the reasoning, by which the judgment of the Judicial Committee is supported, been omitted, in part at least, I might have felt less difficulty in assenting to the judgment. It certainly must be admitted that regeneration does not invariably take place in Baptism, if such admission be limited to the case of unbelieving or impenitent adults; and that the grace is not so restrained to the rite but that God may, if it so please him, grant it separately from the rite; and that it is an effectual sign of grace to them only who worthily receive it; the question being, whether all infants *are* worthy recipients; and lastly, that in no case is regeneration in Baptism unconditional, the question being, what are the conditions to be fulfilled.

But Mr. Gorham's assertions are not fully nor adequately represented by the foregoing statement. His real errors, as I consider them to be, are of a more serious nature; being, as far as I can understand his language, not merely of *doubtful* tendency with reference to the Church's doctrine, but precisely and dogmatically *opposed* to that doctrine. Those errors are passed over in silence by the Judicial Committee in their elaborate report to the Queen, a silence, which is in one point of view satisfactory, inasmuch as, if it

does not expressly *condemn* the errors in question, it certainly does not expressly *vindicate*, nor in terms *sanction* them.

“Mr. Gorham,” says the Judicial Committee, “maintains that the grace of regeneration does not so necessarily accompany the act of Baptism, that regeneration invariably takes place in Baptism; that the grace may be granted before, in, or after Baptism.” It is true that Mr. Gorham asserts this in some of his answers; but in others he goes much further, and advances positions, from which it follows, as a necessary inference, not only that there *may be* cases in which infants are not regenerated in and by Baptism, but that they are *in no case* so regenerated; that infants, duly baptized, *may be* regenerated; but that if they are, it is *before* Baptism, by an act of prevenient grace; and that so they come to Baptism already regenerated; that forgiveness of sins, the new nature, adoption into the family of God, the being made “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven,” are benefits conferred on worthy recipients,—not in Baptism, but by an act of prevenient grace given by God *before* Baptism,—so making them worthy recipients of the rite; that Baptism is so far an *effectual* sign of God’s grace bestowed beforehand, and implanting beforehand a new nature; and that it strengthens and confirms faith in Him, such faith having been given by prevenient grace.¹

¹ *Examination*, pp. 69, 81, 83, 85, 88, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 111, 113, 197.