April 24. 1844.

My dear Lord

I have written to Mr Few in reply to a letter asking whether I would be present at a meeting on the subject of Convocation, to say that on the 4th, 6th, & 7th of May I hope to be in London, and would gladly attend any private meeting on one of those days.

It is with the greatest satisfaction that I find so strong a feeling among our laity, and I shall be ready in every way to lend what aid I can extend it.

What Gladstone feels is, I believe, that the Clergy are too much divided, & too little matured in opinion to make any definitions, or positive enactments of Convocation safe for the Church. I feel this like wise.

But he would also admit that to say that the Clergy are unfit to legislate in the spiritual matter of the Church is to say that they are unfit for one of the chiefest functions: & that, if this is to continue the Church of England is really dissolved, and her government extinct.

I conceive it is necessary to make all efforts to prepare the Clergy for the discharge of such duties.

And in the meanwhile to check the legislation of Parliament which has in it two evils: first, the no less unfitness of the Legislators, and next which is much worse, the establishment of the falsest & most fatal principle namely that the Church has no Legislature, and that the state is competent alone to initiate and determine all Ecclesiastical questions.

It seems to me therefore that the affirming of the Legislative power & duty of the Church is most important in bar of the Erastian practice now all but established for ever. The Ecclesiastical Commission was a bold & dangerous innovation in that direction: & the sense of the Church has imposed a check upon it. I think the Church may also impose a check on the disposition to attempt such practices hereafter, & on the theory by which that disposition justifies itself. For this purpose I think the most expedient, & directest course is to possess the Archbishop & Bishops with the fact of the extensive dissatisfaction of the laity of the Church, so long as they have no security against the Legislation of Parliament in matters vitally affecting the Church.

If they felt themselves strongly supported by the laity their own course in Parliament would be much easier: & their means of treating with Government much more affection.

For instance the question of Spiritual Discipline as it regards the Burial of infidels and impenitent people on. Every day I have proof of the increasing disquiet of the Clergy on such points. The Archbishop strongly supported by the laity might require either that Bills originating with the Church in private, should be passed, & that license should be granted to Convocation to declare its sense upon the subject.

I know no better way of possessing the Archbishop & bishops with these feelings & views than by strong private representatives. Addresses publicly signed often lose in weight what they gain in numbers: and many laymen will say in private things tenfold stranger than they will publicly set their hands to. There are many reasons in drawing me to the same conclusion of which I will add only one more.

The Convocation wheresoever it be convoked, must be convoked by the Archbishop, and by whose application the license to deliberate must also be obtained from the Crown. I am therefore unwilling to direct addresses, & representatives to my the one & only proper person, with whom the Bishops may be regarded as identified.
I have before me at the moment the draft of a memorial intended to be presented to the Bishop of the Diocese by the Clergy of one of our Diocese, on the subject of Spiritual Discipline. Last year the Clergy of this Archdeaconry took this same course, by the address which I inclose.

I shall be most happy next week to meet you & others for the purpose of discussing this matter which is not only vital but is rapidly coming to the very quick.

Believe me.

My dear Lord,

Yours faithfully

H.E. Manning

The Lord Lyttelton

[Transcription developed by Jared Beverly]