



Durrington In The News

ADDRESS TO “S. G. O.” FROM THE AGRICULTURALISTS OF WILTSHIRE

[WE have been requested to publish the following address, which has just been presented to the Rev. Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborne by a number of influential lay occupiers of land in Wiltshire, approving the course which his lordship has lately taken with reference to Church matters:-]

To the Rev. Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborne.

My Lord, - As occupiers of land in the Wiltshire portion of the Diocese of Salisbury, we beg to tender your lordship our warmest thanks, for the timely protest you have recently made against the inroads now being attempted upon the Protestant Faith by the introduction of doctrines and practices which are plainly repugnant to the teaching of our Established Church.

We also desire to declare our alarm at the tone of the letter which has, in consequence of this protest, been addressed to your Lordship by the Bishop of Salisbury; and we would express our full belief that if the opinions inculcated in that letter were to be generally adopted by the Clergy throughout our Diocese, the consequences to the cause of real Scriptural Religion must be serious indeed.

Hoping that your lordship may be enabled yet further to help forward the cause of God's truth, in the crisis which seems rapidly approaching.

We are, my Lord,

Your Lordship's faithful Servants,

(A list of 75 names was printed – with one name being from Durrington)

John Rowden, Durrington

To the Gentleman who have signed an Address, being Occupiers of Land in Wiltshire, to the Rev. Lord Sidney G. Osborne.

Gentlemen, - I have had placed in my hands the Address you have signed, conveying to me your warmest thanks for the timely protest I have made against the inroads now being attempted upon the Protestant faith by the introduction of doctrines and practices which are plainly repugnant to the teaching of the Established Church. My attention has been called to the fact that it is signed by occupiers of land, in number seventy five, whose average occupations exceed 1,000 acres. I am also assured that it would have been easy to have obtained the signatures of four-fifths of the laity of that part of the county of Wilts;

and I am asked to conclude that this Address is in itself sufficient evidence of the feeling entertained on the subject.

Gentleman, I beg to thank you heartily for the honour you thus do me, by this appreciation of my action in the matter. I must also add, that quite irrespective of any personal feeling, I am most grateful for this powerful expression of opinion in aid of a cause, not only yours and mine, but that of every true Protestant in the Kingdom.

Believe me, I can quite sympathize with your feelings as to the tone of the letter addressed to me by the Bishop of Salisbury; as, however, I have already publicly given expression to my own opinion of it, I am sure you will acquit me of any falling short in my duty to you, if I do not now enter again on a subject for many reasons most distressing to myself.

You will easily understand how painful it was to me to enter on such a controversy with one I should have wished to have submitted to, as my Bishop. I could only have viewed with the deepest pain anything which would disturb the affectionate friendship which existed between us, and which I yet trust may survive all the irritation natural to this painful controversy.

I cannot but feel that our Church, the Church of our forefathers, is at this moment on her trial. No human institution, even when founded on Divine teaching, can escape all imperfection. It must, however, have struck you, as it has myself, that of late the attempt made, on the pretext of improving our Church, has been one with no aim to fit her the better to meet the growing intelligence, the increased Scriptural knowledge of the day; but to revive errors in doctrine and practice, from which she was purged in a far darker age; and to restrict rather than encourage her dependence on the love of her people, as proceeding from a sense *that what she teaches is only that the Bible enjoins*.

Our religious liberty – freedom to read our Bibles, and submit our souls to that Bible teaching which wants only God's help – never refused to give us the Christian's rule of life, and his hopes beyond it, is indeed endangered when the Minister of our Church's services claims to be the Priest, to absolutely rule what we are to believe. It is libel on your intelligence to argue that where you and your forefathers were bred to accept the Prayer Book and the teaching of the pulpit as helps to the knowledge yourselves could gain from the Scriptures, you are now to bow to the rules of a so-called Church faith, making you as children put to school to a Parish Priest; to accept as true that which you were reared to believe false; to render yourselves subjects to the spiritual despotism of men, rather than partakers of the glorious liberty which the Gospel gives to you, to go straight to the pure teaching of God.

I earnestly pray that the spirit you have shown in this matter may be yet proved to be that of the great mass of the people of this country. No body of men have more opportunity to protest against this attempt to undermine the principles of our Church, and to take steps to oppose it, in your own separate localities, than yourselves.

I did not seek the support you have so kindly given me. I accept it as the assurance that you will yourselves continue earnest in that good cause which shall not want all the aid I can give it.

Earnestly praying you may yet find in our Church a sober and truthful guide in the principles which should regulate your daily life, affording you all real means of grace and the one true hope of glory.

Believe me, Gentleman, your faithful servant,

S. G. OSBORNE.

Durweston, Dec. 6, 1866

(*Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 13th December, 1866)