

WHAT PRACTICAL COURSE OF ACTION SHOULD NOW BE TAKEN TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE VARIOUS JUDGMENTS ON DISPUTED POINTS OF CEREMONY IN THE CHURCH?

Church Association Tract 61

BY THE REV. CANON J. C. RYLE, M. A.,
VICAR OF STRADBROKE,

Paper read at the Conference of the Church Association, held at
St. James's Hall, on the 14th June, 1877.

THE whole difficulty lies in one little word. That word is "*Action*."

Action no doubt is an excellent thing. It is far better than boasting, and talking, and threatening, and speechmaking. But then it must be wise action. There are living statesmen who find it easier to make eloquent harangues about the Eastern question and Turkish misrule, than to point out specifically what ought to be done, and define a course of action. There are scores of zealous Protestant Churchmen just now who fill the air with their cries, and tell us "the time has come for action." But if you ask them to sit down quietly, and tell you what practical course they can recommend, you soon find they have nothing to say.

Action moreover in ecclesiastical matters, and things connected with them, is a very delicate business, and, like matrimony, must not be enterprised or taken in hand lightly. We never know the consequences to which it may lead. We may unintentionally set stones rolling which may roll we know not whither, and produce results we never anticipated. When Henry VIII. first mooted the Spanish divorce question, and finally took counsel with Cranmer, I doubt if any one living would have believed that the movement would end in the Thirty-nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. Yet so it was.—When Hampden and Pym first stood up for civil and religious liberty in the Long Parliament they never dreamed that a day would come when Charles I. would walk out of Whitehall Palace window, to be publicly beheaded, and the realm lie at the feet of a military dictator. Yet so it was.—When Baxter and Manton helped Charles II. to return to the throne after the Commonwealth, they little thought that the Act of Uniformity would be passed in 1662 and they and 2000 other admirable ministers would be ejected from the Church of England. Yet so it was.—These things are worth remembering just now. Let us mind what we are about when we talk of action. "He that moveth stones shall be endangered thereby." Let us take care that our action is practical, discreet, and wise.

Let me first clear the way by setting before you the position which the Church Association occupies at this moment, and the various steps by which that position has been attained. I shall then perhaps be better able to offer some suggestions about action.

We began our Association, you will remember, some twelve years ago in consequence of the rise and progress of an organized attempt to unprotestantize the Church of England. That attempt we determined by God's help to resist. We therefore formed a Society of Clergymen and Laymen which had for its object "To Uphold the Doctrines, Principles, and Order of the United Church of England and Ireland, and to counteract the efforts now being made to pervert her teaching on essential points of the Christian faith, or assimilate her Services to those of the Church of Rome, and further to encourage concerted action for the advancement and progress of Spiritual Religion."

What possible crime or harm there could be in forming such a Society I am at a loss to understand. If any one likes to say that the Church of England *ought* to be Romanized and the Romanizer *ought not* to be resisted, I shall not waste words on him. There is no common ground between him and me. We differ *toto cœlo*. But I tell any honest loyal Churchman, and I challenge him to deny it, that in forming the Church Association on its original basis we did a thing which was a positive necessity, and proved ourselves the best friends of the Church of England.

We soon found however that if we contented ourselves with speaking, preaching, lecturing, talking, printing, petitioning, and memorializing, we should make little way, and do no real good at all. The Bishops as a body either could not or would not help us. They charged and charged, and exhorted, and put out addresses and pastorals and remonstrances without producing the slightest effect. Mrs. Partington did as much when she tried to keep out the Atlantic with a broom. The Romanizers asserted confidently that they were sound Churchmen, acting entirely within the law, and that the law was on their side. Their boldness and positiveness made many believe them, and I am afraid some of the Bishops were of the number. It was THEN that we resolved to appeal to the law courts, and have the legality of our opponents' proceedings fairly and openly tried. In a word we determined to find out from the highest authorities whether Ritualism was legal or not.

The Mackonochie case, the Bennett case, the Purchas case, the Ridsdale case, have all been successively tried. And the whole result has been very great gain. Almost every ceremonial innovation of the Romanizing party has been declared illegal, the Sacrificial theory of the Lord's Supper has been repeatedly condemned, and nowhere more severely and completely than in the Bennett judgment. The Protestant meaning of the Prayer Book, and the Protestant character of the Church of England, have been formally upheld by the highest legal tribunals, and the most acute legal minds in the world.

I sorrowfully admit that we have not attained our present position without encountering much that has been most painful and disagreeable. Our work has been done under a constant fire of the most pitiless, senseless, unreasoning, vituperation, that was ever poured on men. Open enemies have pelted us with nicknames and invented ridiculous reports about us. Cold-hearted High Churchmen have stood by, like Edom in the day of Jerusalem's trouble (Obad. 12), and refused to lift a finger in our aid. Timid brethren have fallen away occasionally from our ranks, and refused to walk any more with us. Tender-hearted and sensitive Evangelicals would have had us believe that Mackonochie, Bennett, Purchas and Ridsdale, ought to have been let alone, and allowed to ruin the Church of England unresisted and undisturbed. But I thank God that in spite of all these difficulties and discouragements our Council persevered. And I for one can only say that as I look back on the steps by which we have reached our present position I see no cause to be ashamed.

But the question now remains to be considered, "what ought our future course of action to be?" The point is one about which we may reasonably expect some difference of opinion, and we are here to speak our minds. I lay no claims to infallibility, and what I am going to say may be wrong. But I shall venture to offer a few simple suggestions as to the line of action which we ought to adopt, in my humble opinion, in consequence of the recent judgments, and I ask you to take them for what they are worth.

1. My first suggestion is this. I submit to your consideration that *the judgments do not afford the slightest reason for dissolving the Church Association, and putting an end to its operations*. I place this suggestion purposely in the forefront of all I have to say. I hold it to be one of cardinal importance, and I shall be very sorry if I fail to carry conviction to your minds.

Of course I need not remind you that nothing would give more satisfaction in many quarters than the dissolution of our Society. The Romanizing party would naturally be delighted. The great barrier to their career would be taken out of their way. The old High Church party, who with a few brilliant exceptions, like the lamented Mr. Jelf, have steadily declined to work with us, would not be sorry.

The Bishops, who as a body regard us as “troublers of Israel,” would most of them be downright glad. The Bishop of Winchester actually declared, in an address dated May 2nd, that our existence is one of the things “which really most trouble the peace of the Church.” Even among Evangelical Churchmen there are not a few who will not touch us with the tip of their fingers and think we do more harm than good. In short we are very unpopular. There would be very few mourners at our funeral. We thoroughly escape the woe of those of whom “all men speak well.” But none of these things move me. I maintain firmly that our existence is a blessing if not a necessity to the Protestant Church of England, and that our dissolution would be a positive calamity, and an enormous mistake.

For one thing, to dissolve at this moment would be a public confession that the old charge is true, that we are nothing but a “prosecuting” society, and that our only object is to go to law. It would be tantamount to saying, “we have appealed to the law courts about all the disputed points with more or less success. On the whole we have established our views and won the day. Our work is done, and we have only to shut up shop and make our bow.” I for one should object to such a view of our position most entirely. I do not admit for a moment that our lawsuits were the only object for which our Association was founded. I grant that circumstances have given them a peculiar prominence, and that they have filled the public eye to the exclusion of everything else. But I contend that the lawsuits have only been one part of our plan of operation, and that there is much to be done in opposing Ritualism beside going to law.

For another thing I fail to see that there is anything in the circumstances of the Church at this day which renders an organized resistance to the Romanizing movement one whit less necessary than it was twelve years ago. I challenge the attention of all who say we ought to dissolve to facts which stand out on every side. Is the determination to unprotestantize the Church and recede from the principles of the Reformation less publicly avowed than it was twelve years ago? Are Romanizing ceremonials and attempts to imitate Popery less frequent? Are crucifixes, processions, incense, auricular confession, and all the long catalogue of acts of will-worship more or less common? I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say! I appeal to men like the Bishop of Winchester, and I challenge him to deny, if he can, that the Romanizing movement in the Church of England is increasing every year, and is occasioning most serious anxiety to the whole Bench of Bishops. They are beginning to “doubt whereunto this thing will grow.” And is this a time for dissolving the Church Association? God forbid that we should dream of such a thing. The evils which called it into existence are still rife, and until they are checked my sentence is that on no account ought we to dissolve. The danger is not over. Our work is not done.

Pardon me, if I speak strongly on this point. I do so because I feel warmly, and because I think I detect in many quarters a disposition to haul down our flag, and put our good old ship out of commission. I am dead against that policy. I believe it would be a fatal mistake. Partly from the inroad of thorough Popery both in doctrine and practice,—partly from the unwillingness of the Bishops to act,—partly from the liberal tendency of the times, and the growing disposition to think everybody is right in religion and nobody wrong,—partly from the increasing apathy of Englishmen about Popery,—I suspect most people would like us to put our shutters up, close our office, and disband our forces. I trust we shall do nothing of the kind. I trust we shall rather stand firm, strengthen our ramparts, stand to our guns, put our trust in God, and keep our powder dry. The battle of the Reformation has to be fought over again in this country, and whether it is lost or won depends very much on the attitude of the Church Association. If we show the white feather, and sneak into obscurity, melt away like the Scotch army after Flodden Field and commit suicide, it will be an evil day for the Church of England. In short at this moment I believe it would be as wise to shut up Woolwich Arsenal, pay off the Channel Fleet, disband the army, and disarm Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Chatham, as it would be to dissolve the Church Association.

2. My second suggestion is this. I submit that *we ought to address a respectful memorial to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and ask to be informed whether the Bench of Bishops intend to enforce the judgments which have been obtained in ceremonial matters or not.*

This is a delicate subject, I am well aware; and I desire to handle it delicately. No one feels more strongly than I do that the English Bishops in the present day occupy a most difficult position. They deserve the utmost consideration, and ought to be continually remembered in our prayers. They are the Bishops of a "comprehensive" Church, and not of a narrow party. They are bound to allow a large liberty of opinion to Churchmen, and not to require the Church to wear clothes which fit so tightly that if you move they tear. But I am sure most of our Bishops know that there are limits and bounds to the comprehensiveness of the Church of England, and that those limits and bounds must be observed. They know also that the extreme of liberty becomes anarchy, confusion, and downright lawlessness, and that a Church without law is a Church without order. Well says the judicious Hooker, "Of Law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power." To the recollection of these words I suspect we owe Pope's famous saying, "Order is heaven's first law."

Such being the case, I think the time has come when we may fairly ask the Bishops to tell us whether the law of the Church of England, as it has now been interpreted by the highest Courts in the realm, is to be enforced or not? It may seem a hard question to ask; but I contend it is a question which we have a right to ask; but I contend it is a question which we have a right to ask, and we have a right to look for an answer.

If the ablest legal minds in the world are to give time and attention to Ecclesiastical cases such as those which the Church Association has brought before them, and then their decisions are to be trampled under foot and neglected, it is a very serious state of things. It has long ago been laid down as a first principle in the history of nations, that national decay begins with contempt of law. There are Bishops on the English Bench who know that as well as we do. Let us ask them courteously and respectfully what course they mean to take at the present crisis. Do they mean to call upon the clergy to discontinue albs, chasubles, crucifixes, processions, incense, lighted candles on the communion-table in open day, and the like, things which have all been declared illegal? Do they, or do they not?

If the Bishops reply that they do not intend to enforce the law, and that they purpose to allow every clergyman to do what is right in his own eyes, like Israel in the days of the Judges, or to use any ceremonial which is pleasing to his congregation, even when he flatly contradicts the decision of the highest tribunals in the land, we shall at all events know where we are, and where the responsibility of lawlessness lies.

It is needless however to remark that such a reply would throw the whole Church into confusion, and that Parliament would not be likely to stand by and see the law courts deliberately treated with contempt, without interfering.

I must say that I am unable to believe that any body of sensible men like the English Bishops will ever make such a reply as that I have just foreshadowed as possible. They cannot, for common sense sake, desire to take up a position which would place them distinctly at issue with the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and some of the ablest lawyers of the day. They will at any rate be glad to have an opportunity of speaking out, and saying something to explain their own views. For that explanation we are bound in fairness and courtesy to wait, and to hope the best. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." But that it is our bounden duty to approach the two Archbishops for a respectful request for information after the recent judgments, I feel no doubt at all. I trust you will agree with me that the request, at any rate, ought to be made, whatever may come of it.

3. My third suggestion is one which I offer with some diffidence. I think it possible you will not all agree with me about it. But a conference ought to be a palace of truth, and I am sure you will not wish me to keep back anything.

I submit then to your consideration that we have reached a point in our Society's operations, when *it is not expedient for the Church Association, as an Association, to commence new law suits unless under peculiar circumstances*. We have succeeded in bringing all the leading innovations of Ritualism before the highest courts in the realm, and have got the law laid down about them. Is it, or is it not, our duty now to take legal proceedings against all clergymen who disobey the law in ceremonial matters, from one end of the land to the other? I, for one, answer that question decidedly in the negative. I cannot see that it is our duty to become general prosecutors and common informers. I do not of course mean that we ought to pledge ourselves never to appeal to the law courts, or to shrink from defending every legal position we have gained. There may be peculiar cases and peculiar circumstances. But I do mean to say that, as a general rule, we should abstain as far as possible from fresh prosecutions.

We have done our duty to the Church of England. We have narrowed and cleared an immense quantity of debateable ground. We have obtained the decision of some of the greatest judges in the world, on points which have been long regarded as disputable and doubtful. We have made it impossible for perplexed Bishops to say they cannot interpret the rubrics. We have made it difficult for any honest Churchman to say that he does not know what the law is. But are we now to go forward and undertake to enforce the law all over England? Are we to commence a general campaign against all Ritualist transgressors, and to drag every offender before Lord Penzance? I say, plainly, that I cannot see this to be our duty.

The time has come, I believe, when the laity, and notably the Churchwardens, if they feel aggrieved, must do their duty in their respective parishes. We have obtained for them decisions from the highest Courts as to what is legal and what is illegal in the ceremonial of the Church of England. The application of those decisions may fairly be left to others. If those decisions are anything, they are precedents by which all future proceedings will be guided. Armed with these precedents, no Churchman has a right to say he can do nothing to check Romanizing ceremonial in his parish, so long as he is able to prove facts. For anything I can see, his remedy would be speedy and cheap, if he will only use the means which the Public Worship Act puts in his power. But I cannot see that it is the duty of the Church Association to be always coming forward and saving aggrieved parishioners trouble and expense by pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for them.

In saying all this I hope I shall not be misunderstood. If any one supposes that I object to any more prosecutions, and wish all legal proceedings to be dropped, he is entirely mistaken. This is not my meaning. Such a course would play the game of our opponents.

By all means let us continue to give advice, counsel, and information to all aggrieved Churchmen who apply for them. Let us even be ready to give material assistance, when such assistance is really needed. Let us not shrink from using our old weapon if some new case which has not been decided should arise. Each case must stand on its own merits. What I do object to is the favourite idea of some that we ought to *open a general crusade, and commence an action against every Ritualistic clergyman in England*—from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland. Such a policy, I venture to think, will be downright Quixotism, and would even damage our cause. It is a policy which, I trust, will never be adopted by the Council of the Church Association. A notoriously litigious man always comes into court at a disadvantage; and excessive litigiousness about ecclesiastical matters, I suspect, is specially disliked by the lawyers. I am one of those, remember, who have never doubted the propriety of our law proceedings hitherto. I have never been moved or frightened by common sneers or chaff about, our being a "Persecution Society Limited." But while I would reserve to ourselves the right to appeal to the Law Courts if it appear needful, I do maintain that there must be some limit to litigation.

4. My fourth suggestion is this. *I submit that we must watch with the utmost vigilance and jealousy any attempt to alter the constitution of the Court of Appeal in Ecclesiastical causes.* I believe this to be a point of grave importance. I have little doubt, from the language of the organs of Ritualism, and the letters and speeches of Ritualists, that a vigorous effort will soon be made to overthrow the jurisdiction of the existing Committee of Privy Council, and to procure the appointment of a very different Court of Appeal. In short, our opponents hope to retrieve their lost ground by obtaining a new tribunal. Let us take care that we offer a vigorous resistance to that effort whenever it is made.

What kind of Court of final Appeal our opponents want to set up I do not pretend to understand. It sounds very fine, no doubt, to say that ecclesiastical cases should always be referred to ecclesiastical men. But the theory is a mere baseless dream, and would never work. Ecclesiastics as a rule are utterly unfitted to be judges. In our pulpits no doubt we are excellent fellows. But we do not shine on the bench. If there is any one thing that Bishops and clergy do not possess, it is the judicial mind, and the power of giving a strictly impartial, unbiased decision. It is easy to say that men like Lord Cairns and Lord Selborne and their companions are incompetent to handle spiritual subjects, and that they know nothing about Rubrics and Church history. But who, I should like to know, will believe this? Will the House of Lords, or the House of Commons, or the Temple, or Lincoln's Inn, or the City, or the West End, or Manchester, or Birmingham, or Liverpool? Will any body of thinking Englishmen tell us that you could find ten Bishops on the English Bench who could give a better opinion of the meaning of words than the ten men who recently delivered the Ridsdale Judgment? I am really ashamed to ask such questions. We all know what the answer will be. In short, when men say, "We want a new Court of Appeal," we may boldly reply, "Show your hand, and mark out a better court than the present court if you can."

I will not dwell further on this point. In fact, it is one which demands caution more than action, and to dwell on it is mere waste of time. I am utterly unable to believe that Parliament will ever allow the final Court of Appeal to be composed of ecclesiastics only. But this I say, the thing is likely to be brought forward and pressed on the public mind, and it becomes us to be on our guard.

5. My fifth suggestion is this. *I submit that we ought steadily to resist any proposal to give more power to the existing Houses of Convocation.*

There are not a few persons now-a-days who are incessantly proclaiming that Convocation is the grand remedy for all the Church's diseases. We hear much "tall talk" about the "living voice of the Church"—"Pan-Anglican Synods"—and the like. We are told that if Parliament would only give Convocation more legislative power to revise our Rubrics and settle all disputed questions, the Church would soon be a happy and united family, and all would be serene. I fervently hope that the Church Association will never be so green as to be taken in by such tall talk, but will fight to the bitter end against the idea of giving more power to the existing Convocations. We may depend on it, the matter is one which will soon be a pressing one, and will demand very serious attention.

An old and well-known Divine, still living, said many years ago that "the revival of Convocation would prove the ruin of the Established Church of England." I am not sure that I can go so far as that, though I think it was three-quarters true. But I do say that Convocation, as it is, does not represent the Church of England, and that, so long as it is unaltered and unreformed, it would be a most dangerous mistake to entrust it with more power.

At present the Lower House of Canterbury is a most anomalous and unsatisfactory body. Individually its members are very able and respectable men. But it would be absurd to say that the body has any claim to represent the Church of the Province of Canterbury. The official element predominates to a monstrous degree. The elected representatives of the parochial clergy form a ludicrous minority. The mode of election in some dioceses is very unsatisfactory. The principle of a minority vote in the election of proctor would have to be adopted, or else some schools of thought

would lie entirely excluded from the House. Above all, the laity would have to be represented, and they must be admitted to sit, debate, and vote in the House as an integral part of its constitution.

Whether such root-and-branch reform as this, and the establishment of an Ecclesiastical Parliament, are things ever likely to be sanctioned by Queen, Lords and Commons in our times, is a question I leave to others to settle. For myself, I have not the slightest faith either in Convocations or Pan-Anglican synods, from which the laity are excluded. But I am quite certain that without some such reforms as I have sketched in outline, no English Convocation will ever be fit to take in hand the revision of rubrics or the settlement of ecclesiastical disputes. As for the present Convocation being "the living voice" of the Church, and being entrusted with one jot more power than it has at present, I protest against the idea as absurd.

On this point, however, I will not dwell. As I said before, it is a matter which needs caution far more than action. I only hope that the Council of the Church Association will not forget it, and will not allow our opponents to steal a march on us. Change in the Court of Appeal, and increase of power to Convocation are two engines which, I am certain, will be brought forward by the Romanizing party within our pale, and it will be our wisdom to be ready for them. They are torpedoes which will be exploded some day, and we shall do well to be prepared.

6. My sixth and last suggestion is this. I submit that the time has arrived when *special action should be taken in order to inform the public mind about the recent Judgments, and show what they mean and what are the real objects of the Church Association.*

Ignorance, I am certain, is one of the greatest difficulties we have to contend with in carrying on our operations. I honestly confess that I am as much afraid of Giant Ignorance as of Giant Pope. To speak plainly, I believe that myriads of English people have not the faintest idea what the recent Judgments are about, or what are the special objects of the Church Association. Take the first twelve respectable men you meet in Oxford Street or Piccadilly, and ask them separately what they know about a chasuble and the Eastward position, and I doubt extremely whether two could tell you. Ask them if they know what the aims and purposes of the Church Association are, and I suspect you would find them equally ignorant. Most people have nothing but a vague idea that there is a sort of controversy between Evangelical Churchmen and Ritualists, but they have not the slightest clear idea of its nature. They seem to fancy it is a petty ecclesiastical squabble between Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee, about ceremonial trifles which have no real meaning and do not signify a jot one way or another. Tweedle-dee wants plenty of flowers and ornaments, and flags and smart dresses, and gestures and postures, and Tweedle-dum wants a very plain unadorned service without anything of the kind. The young gentlemen and ladies of the family think Tweedle-dum's Services are very dull affairs, and Tweedle-dee's Services very hearty and pretty. The whole thing appears to many people a mere trumpety childish dispute, and they cannot understand going to law and making such a fuss about it. They would have both the silly children let alone. They do not pretend to understand who is right, and they have no doubt all earnest hard-working clergymen are very good fellows.

Ignorance like this is really deplorable, but I fear it is terribly common, and we must compass sea and land and use every engine to remove it. We must try to make English people understand that what they call "trifles" in religious worship are very serious things and have a great deal of meaning. We must try to show them that they are secret machines for bringing back that very Popery which our forefathers indignantly cast out, and that the root of them all is a deliberate desire to overthrow the work of the Protestant Reformation. Above all we must try to impress on them that the object of the Church Association is not to wrangle about unimportant ceremonial trifles, but to resist things which are the stepping-stones to Popery.

How and in what way this ignorance is to be taken in hand and attacked is a matter which demands the attention of our Council, and I trust it will receive it. The Platform, the Pulpit, and the

Press of course must be employed. A large-type list of the forty-nine points gained in the recent decisions with a little explanation accompanying each point, I believe would be a very useful thing, and ought to be widely circulated.

There are, however, several other points of vast importance about which there is an amazing want of information in the present day, and I really think that information should be supplied in a popular way. How few people now-a-days know what Popery really is! How few know what the Mass is or why our Reformers were burned! How few know the history of Archbishop Laud and his times, and the everlasting injury that unhappy man did to the Church of England! How few know anything of the Thirty-nine Articles and the various revisions of the Prayer-book! Above all how few know anything of the real history of that masterpiece of Satan, Auricular Confession! If fathers and husbands only knew the historical facts about Auricular Confession, I never will believe they would allow wives and daughters to do what they often do now! Those facts ought to be exposed to public view and dragged into light.

On all these points, I repeat, we want more light, knowledge and information diffused throughout the land, and I do hope an organized effort will be made in order to diffuse them. I have little fear for the future if we can only get the shutters taken down and light let into men's minds. I believe that people are trifling and coquetting and flirting with Ritualism in hundreds of cases, simply because they do not know what it means. If we could only multiply men like Joseph Bardsley by fifty, and send them into every city and town in the land, I believe we should strike a deadly blow at Ritualism. Of one thing I am perfectly certain. Ignorance is one grand cause of the progress and prosperity of Ritualism. An organized effort ought to be made to spread light.

I cannot bring this paper to a close without expressing my solemn conviction that there is much to cause anxiety in our ecclesiastical horizon, and that there was never more need for prayer, pains, faith, union, and watchfulness among Protestant Churchmen. By God's blessing we have been enabled to do much in the Church Association. My own belief is, that we have saved our Church from destruction. But much remains yet to be done.

The increasing taste for a sensuous, sensational, ornate, histrionic religion,—the growing disposition to dislike all sharply-cut definite doctrine, and to regard all earnest hard-working clergymen as equally good,—the unhappy complications in our Colonies and Mission-fields, from the pretensions of Bishops who appear to copy Hildebrand rather than St. Paul,—the morbid liking for the horrible practice of Auricular Confession which is creeping in among young men and women,—the depraved appetite for a thoroughly sacerdotal religion and servile imitations of Popish practices which characterizes so much of the Christianity of the day,—the bitter enmity with which old-fashioned, Scriptural, Evangelical theology is denounced in many quarters,—all these are signs of the times which any observing eye can read. They are no reason for despair. They ought not to surprise us in an earth full of sin and error, in which those who "speak of the world" are those whom "the world hears." But they are weighty reasons why the Church Association should watch, and pray, and stand to its guns, persevere, fight on, nail its colours to the mast, and refuse to dissolve.

I am no longer a young man, and I do not pretend to see further into the future than others. The deluge may not come in my time. But of one thing I am perfectly certain. The Church of England's Protestant principles are the life and strength of the Church of England. Once let these principles be forsaken and given up for semi-Romanism, and the Church of England will fall, and fall deservedly, for it will not be worth preserving. God will forsake her as he forsook Thyatira, when she suffered Jezebel to teach. The bulk of the laity will forsake her, and the Church will perish for want of Churchmen. Let no one imagine that I am counselling secession. The time has not come for that. Let us stick by the old ship. So long as the Church is Protestant and faithful to Christ so long we ought all to stand by it and fight to the last plank. But if the Church is faithless and returns to Rome it will be a positive duty to forsake it. Our cry must then be "Arise, and let us depart. We

had rather have the Gospel without the Establishment, than the Establishment without the Gospel.”
From such a consummation may God in mercy deliver us! But much, I am convinced, may depend
on the future action of the Church Association.