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A FEW WORDS  
ON  
THE SPIRIT IN WHICH MEN ARE MEETING  
THE  
PRESENT CRISIS IN THE CHURCH.

A LETTER  
TO  
ROUNDELL PALMER, Esq. Q.C., M.P.  
BY  
THE REV. EDWARD MONRO, M.A.  
INCUMBENT OF HARROW WEALD, MIDDLESEX.

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## A LETTER, &c.

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MY DEAR MR. PALMER,

IN a moment of agitation and difficulty like the present, any one may be excused offering some suggestions and advice, if at least, as in my own case, he has been asked to do it.

Having taken no public part in the questions which have occupied the attention of men in recent discussions, educational or ecclesiastical, and having simply viewed them from a distance, I may be perhaps able to form a more unprejudiced opinion on some points connected with their agitation than many of those who have been more personally engaged. And I address myself to you from the conviction forced on me by your recent acts, of your ability and will to aid and advise in the present juncture of the relations of Church and State.

Two great questions are before us, and a large body of the clergy are feeling strongly on both. The first is the conduct of the Committee of Privy Council on Education; and the second, the late decision of the Judicial Committee. I will here say a few words in passing on the first, and that only because I feel that its discussion has very

much excited and soured men's minds, and left them in possession of too small an amount of patience and calmness to meet to advantage the second and more real danger.

In a crisis like the present, the clergy have their proper part to perform, very distinct from that of either the legislator or the lawyer. It appears to me that the clergy in deserting the former, and intruding on the latter, would much hinder an effective and successful struggle. The political mode of attack on matters such as those before us is very alien from that religious temper which they especially are bound to cultivate; I am, of course, aware that there have been periods of ecclesiastical history when men of eminently holy calling did do battle with the State with political weapons; but leaving for the present the consideration of such cases, I feel that in the impending crisis and under existing circumstances amongst us, our weight must be a moral one, applied through the mass of the people in our respective spheres, and thus indirectly brought to bear on the operations of those who are immediately and more fitly engaged in the proximate struggle with the civil power. We see, on the contrary, a large body of the clergy earnest in the education of the poor and in the consideration of the machinery necessary for the achievement of that education, engaged in a close political struggle on the subject. To the conditions imposed by Government to the accepta-

tion by the clergy of grants to further that end, they have naturally and properly objected, and no true Churchman can do otherwise than dissent from the imposition of such terms on Church Education. But do not many seem inclined to create difficulties, and to aggravate, in some degree, existing troubles?

We are not tied in the Education question by any compulsory shackle, and we need not accept a single term from Government, if we are willing to devote that amount of self-denial and energy to our work which our calling lays upon us. Personal exertion and a small amount of self-sacrifice would far more than make up for the absence of the pecuniary aid which we should reject. It might surprise many, on a slight consideration, to find at how small a sacrifice of income and time the school of a village, or even town parish, might be started and worked by a clergyman himself, without accepting one farthing of Government grants: and if it be pleaded that it is necessary to offer the kind of opposition which has been made on the ground of there being so large a majority of the clergy whose means are small, powers moderate, and energy slight, and who consequently do and will fall back on Government grants; I answer, that the number will be very small indeed who could not raise enough to keep a school going, with a master of moderate abilities, if he personally would consider himself tied to his parish

in such a way as would be necessary for taking an active part in the management of those schools ; and with regard to lack of powers and energy, the number must be indeed small who lack the power to instruct a school of poor children ; while the absence of energy will generally be a fault rather than a misfortune.

To accept grants, therefore, which necessitate agitation to guard them when accepted, seems scarcely justifiable, when the consequences are such as we have in many respects to regret. As I said, it appears very much like creating difficulties or exaggerating evils already existing. Of course, I am not blaming men for contending strenuously for freedom for the operations of the Church, and release from civil thralldom ; but simply asserting that the Church need not just now place herself in such a position with regard to the State as to need to make such protests, and so bear a part in weaving the chain of her own captivity. In too many cases lack of energy has forged this fetter for ourselves, and when we feel its pressure we complain of it, forgetting that it is nearly self-imposed. Parochial education is the work of the parochial clergy with assistants, and the pecuniary nerve it needs should be the work of the laity. It is not the work of Government, and Government may naturally expect the Church to do her own work ; and as she does not do it, may throw back on her clergy their complaints.

The truth is, there is a taste abroad for political agitation, which too much compromises the dignity and calmness of the clerical character. The platform and even Church union pander too much to the love of oratorical display, debate, and disputation; and secret love of pre-eminence and distinction are too strong temptations in this mode of operation: all this paralyses the moral judgment, lowers the holy calling, and unfits men to meet those distressing shocks which in this day we shall be called upon to encounter. It produces an irritable and petulant mood, instead of the calm moderation which, while consistent with our vocation, is far more likely to offer a successful opposition to hostile efforts.

Much of this was apparent in the meeting lately held at Willis's Rooms; and some of those very evils were brought under the notice of those present. One could scarcely avoid being struck with something too like irreverence in the course of the free discussion of these topics by the clergy. The frequent introduction of matter ill-suited to the platform, the mode in which such statements were received by an excited audience, left behind an impression of great lack of religious reverence. Men were driven to feel, in the case of clerical speeches, that when the speech was clerical it was out of keeping with the place; and when it was political, and consequently consistent, it was out of keeping with the speaker.

Overstatement and exaggeration have a peculiar tendency to destroy true dignity: moral dignity is essentially dependent on truth: and the almost necessary consequence of such meetings is overstatement; and that peculiarly from the clergy, who are unused to disciplined oratory from the very irresponsible nature of parochial addresses, and are naturally inclined to exaggerated statements from the transcendental nature of the subjects they teach; while the lawyer's statements, arguments, and oratory are alike restrained within the limits imposed by law. The imputation to Government, either stated or implied, of intentions with regard to the education of the people, which no one in a calm moment can imagine they are actuated by; as well as a large amount of attack on individuals which reflected far too severely upon either their motives or their acts, alike opened the meeting to the charge of exaggeration and consequent absence of sufficient dignity. The speeches which especially on that occasion seemed effective and in place were those of laymen, and especially of lawyers. Those present could not but feel that there was a mistake somewhere in the majority of speeches, and could hardly go away from scenes of the kind without being in some degree unsettled and irritated.

It was impossible to avoid the conviction that the object for which we had gathered,—the education of the poor,—would have been far better attained by each clergyman present having been em-

ployed in educating his own school-children, and thereby undermining Kneller Hall, and unriveting, link by link, the chain of Government grants. I do not mean that the work of education would have been so much advanced by the devotion of that one day : but when we consider the unsettled temper produced by it ; the outlay necessary on the journey ; the habit it tended to form, of making the metropolis a battle-field instead of the sphere allotted to us in our parishes, it did seem that the true work of education was being deterred and injured rather than advanced. I do not say that no such protest should have been made, or no such meeting held ; but that it was more in the province of other men than of clergymen. I suppose that, in some cases, on that day alone, the outlay on railroad journeys, and other attendant expenses, would have gone far to defray the necessary cost of a village-school for a quarter of the year. The great points of attack were, the establishment of Kneller Hall and the opening out of the Government tactics. But if, in every parish, the clergy were already forming the minds of their children by daily and hourly instruction, and strongly impregnating them with the teaching of the Church, the Government scheme would become a skeleton, as far as Church education is concerned, and Kneller Hall would fall to pieces for lack of ground for its students to occupy ; we shall snatch from the civil hand the

sword with which the wound is threatened, the moment we are resolutely occupying our own ground, and we shall march forth, as Israel of old, not only released from our captivity, but laden with the spoils of our foe.

I feel that we are in danger of meeting the Judicial-Committee question in an equally disadvantageous manner. The centralisation in London of many of our influential parochial clergy throughout a great part of the winter, seems unnecessary; and is it certain that the floors of Church unions are the best battle-fields for our clergy to engage on with Government? It must be a matter of regret to see continually men called away from home, and threading the streets of the metropolis, to discuss for hours questions of business which would be far better discussed and arranged by lawyers, who would be incalculably strengthened in such struggle by the moral weight of a clergy in their own spheres, leavening and forming the mass of society all over England. We want to see men at their posts, and each one doing his own work, and there will be far better hope that each work will be then done effectually. The interference of the clergy in legal matters much distracts effective operations, and wastes time; and we should dread the charge brought against us: "You are earnest in a battle to gain freedom of teaching for the Church, when, by absence from your posts, it is possible in your spheres the Church is scarcely

teaching at all." What, in fact, must become of many daily services and village-schools, when a whole winter campaign has been spent by clergy in the metropolis? I should imagine that the conviction on the minds of those who have adopted this line of warfare is, that an unsatisfactory spirit of irritability has been excited, instead of that calm and sobered tone which befits their office. In brief, political agitation is not the weapon of the clergy, and the question remains, To whom does it belong? I imagine, and I ask you is it not, rather to lawyers, by whose counsel the Church will be directed generally in some systematic movement, and through whom, as her organ, she will deal with the powers of the State. The present necessary agitation must, as in matters of private life, take more or less the form of a matter of business in the eyes of the world; and surely such men are far the most competent to conduct and guide it with dignity and prudence. They will digest such counsels as they receive from ecclesiastical bodies throughout the country, and communicate with them accordingly. The State will thus come to know accurately the condition of the mind of the Church, and many fruitless labours will be avoided. I should be glad to see a body of well-selected lawyers retained as a counsel to the Church for the present, but not hampered unnecessarily by the presence of the clergy at their meetings.

In matters of private life, individuals trust life and fortune in such hands with confidence; and *in connexion* with ecclesiastical synods elsewhere surely the Church may do the same to advantage. In union with a deep and wise resistance, we might then be exhibiting a calmness which politicians would not fail to be struck with.

There have been days when the clergy have presented the picture I am contending for; and when, in their own spheres, they awaited the bursting of the gathering storm, and threw the whole onus of attack on the civil power. And if we imagine the details of such a position, we cannot be long in seeing the beauty and advantage of it. One feature would be that of the clergy meeting synodically and religiously in their respective arch-deaconries and deaneries, far more suitable to the gravity of their character than the hurried journey to London; none of them being for more than an hour or two beyond the call of their parishioners.

In any case of agitation such as the present one, the vicinity of his parish would strikingly aid a clergyman in the accomplishment of his aim; he would speak and counsel with ten times the wisdom and reality if he were just fresh from those scenes which make his protest important. From the parish school, where he had been that morning at work among his baptised children, he would plead with a force for their condition, which must be to a great degree lost when he has committed

them to the daily keeping of another, while he at a distance speaks of education as a theory, and the parochial school as a system separate from himself. A life led among the children whose Catholic education he asserts, would give his manner and presence a gravity and dignity which reality always invests men with, much superior to the excitement merely produced by meditating on an injury. And in a still higher degree would the daily ministrations of the church shed a dignity, a calm and holy power over the minister of God, if he met his fellows in a meeting convened by authority, with the echoes of holy words still lingering in his ears : daily prayer and communion are the high work of the priest ; it is his life, and, apart from that, he is bereft of part of his nature. The performance of high ministrations in his own parish, and surrounded with his people, invests him with a power he cannot spare ; it not only gives weight to his example and judgment, but it adds actual wisdom to his deliberation and counsel. The meeting of clergy under these circumstances, and in this close connexion with their own spheres of action, would bear a very different aspect to what we do see. And the enemy with whom we have to contend would far more respect us and fear our power, if we were thus offering a firm opposition to their aggression, by remaining calmly at our post, and awaiting in faith and hope the outburst of the storm.

We have a sphere of our own, weapons of our own, aims of our own; and we are not acting wisely while we throw them aside, and attempt to struggle with weapons formed to fit the hands of warriors of another kind. And in those periods of the history of our own branch of the Church which peculiarly bring before the mind the picture of calmness, dignity, retirement, and holiness among her clergy, the men who wore that aspect were men who were taking the line which is here suggested. In the crises of the reigns of James II., or William III., or in the biographies of holy men who have been lights in their own dark days, we find distinct traces of this kind of life and action. It is this very feeling which is thrown like a mantle round such names as Nicholas Ferrar, Bishop Ken, and Bishop Wilson, names which suggest feelings which are explicable by no words, because it was one which was the result of deep, and true, and unobtrusive reality. It was necessary perhaps for a very few of those painfully called to it to mix themselves with the more immediate and proximate contests; but their arms were upheld amid a life of fasting and prayer in the scenes of the busy world, by the strenuous and unwearying work of the mass of the clergy in their homes and parishes; in fact, days of political crisis were days of more than usual parochial effort—of renewed daily prayer and communion. We want that again.

This line will compel the enemy to act on the

aggressive, and throw on them the onus of strife. We have a commission and a calling; we are bent on fulfilling it, and we wait for the attempt to move us one inch from the ground we are bound and determined to occupy, to shew how firmly the barrier can be opposed between lawful and unlawful interference. There is a wide difference between making an attack, which, from various accidents, may be a despised one, and being found resolutely at our post, determined to abide there despite the most daring efforts which may be used to drive us from it. The latter position gives an impression of single intention, reality, and truth, which are truly formidable to the view of any hostile body.

A crisis is plainly at hand for the Church, and one in which she will require all the devotion and heart of the people of England: these will be her strength; with these the struggle must be victorious, and we may defy our enemies to do their worst. But it is a painful truth that at this moment the Church has not got the hearts of the great mass of our people. No religious energy has thoroughly or unitedly gained possession of them. If any, the Church has not. The mould in which they are formed is rather that of the Puritan than the Catholic, Dissent than the Church. The slumber of the Church for two centuries; the activity and earnestness of schismatic bodies; the slowness of English character in realising religious energy at all; the peculiar tone of the English clergy, and

the mistaken line they have generally taken of merging the parish priest in the member of society ; all help to account for this fact. But it is a fact. We cannot look around and think for a moment that the religious mind of our people is one which leans consciously on the life of sacraments, daily prayer, and absolution. The feature of their religious energy is the substitution of preaching and informality, unreserved religious conversation, and the like, in their place : in fact Puritan, and not Catholic. In many places the Church, as a separate body from the State, will not be recognised and understood by the people ; and the actual possession of the Church fabric, and the post of office, will go far, very far, to satisfy them, though half the creed were expunged, and the virtue of sacraments denied. The result of this would be, that in many cases the introduction of a corrupt faith and corrupt teachers, representing the Church, and occupying the ground of an Establishment, would gain the ears and interests of the multitude. But in a crisis like the present, all depends on the Church having the hearts of the people ; and we may not, we dare not, rest satisfied with a general natural religion amongst the population. It is manifest that this evil can only be remedied by an enormous self-devotion on the part of the clergy, and a sacrifice of time they have never thought of before ; a sacrifice which, if it involves that of health and life too, is worthy of such a result ; for

we are in a difficulty of no ordinary importance, and our lives and death were pledged at the altar of our ordination. Whatever call there is for self-sacrifice at the time of a prevailing and infectious plague, whatever risk of life and death is to be run at such periods, the same must be entered upon now, when the cause of the whole Church is at stake.

We must not shrink from doing our duty, whatever that may cost; if we do, we are unworthy of our calling, and incur as much the contempt and censure of an indignant people as would the regiments which swerved before the batteries of their country's enemies. And there is, I fear, much of such shrinking around us; and the very mode in which some meet the present crisis seems to shew it. Journeys to London; anxious discussions; paper wars; absence from parishes in holy seasons, contention for comparative trifles, are not, for the mass at any time, the mode of meeting a crisis, and do partake of the character of cowardice and indolence.

The way to meet the imminent peril is, by winning the people to the Church by a strenuous and vigorous move, such as we never made before; by each being at his post, and teaching the people to love and lean on daily prayer and weekly communion; by mixing daily with the mass in the concerns of daily life; sympathising with their sorrows and troubles, and by first lead-

ing them to love us, to lead them on to love the Church. By inducing them to confide their difficulties to us, and by earnestly, affectionately, and simply preaching to them; by so arranging all our time and our church service, as to make them feel that our time is theirs, so that by seeing that *we* are honestly concerned for their welfare, they will realise the fact of the Church being so too.

Sacraments, creeds, ministrations, must not be left as cold theories before their eyes, but must be associated in their ideas with earnestness, affection, and adaptation to their individual wants; then they will believe what the Church is, and will not only know, but love and pray for her. Without this our people will so little realise what the Church is, that many will for a time accept and follow any sect which (should a disruption ever occur) may happen to be the Establishment. This will not do. Many who have been talking of Church principles for fifteen years, have gained the reputation of high-churchmen, have done battle for the cause in the circle of society, have espoused the side of some persecuted individual of the school in their neighbourhood, have appeared in the Convocation House at Oxford or the Church Union somewhere else; while no bell has called their poor to daily prayer, no more frequent communion calls them to gather round their altar, no more energetic teaching in the village schools marks the belief in baptismal regeneration; and

the only distinction the mass of the parishioners can see between their own high-church clergyman and the low-church minister of an adjoining parish is, that the former wears a more clerical dress, uses ecclesiastical terms oftener in his sermon, and makes attempts at a more elaborate church ceremonial.

This is not doing work ; and this will never win the people. It is a mockery of reality ; and I fear the impending crisis may test how unreal it has been. But time yet remains. Let us use it. It is an anomaly to make principles simply rest in words, and tends more than any thing to make the holding Church principles party-spirited and factious. The spirit with which we want men to meet the present crisis is for those who have hitherto never had daily prayer to begin it, and those who simply have lived in society at once to give it up ; for those who have hitherto lived for their few rich, now to live for their numberless poor ; for those who have hitherto kept a reserved distance between themselves and their flock, to break it down, and merge the mere gentleman in the minister of God ; for those who have hitherto left their parish school simply to a schoolmaster, now to be there daily themselves, and be themselves the offerers of the morning and evening prayers ; for those who have hitherto held no personal intercourse with their people, to induce them to open burdened hearts to one who is ready to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who

weep." And then when, if ever, the clergy are driven forth from their homes and churches, they will be followed by a unanimous and sympathising people. This seems the spirit in which to meet the crisis; and if men shrink on the score of health, sacrifice of time, and dread of so great a tie, let them be as ashamed of putting forward such a plea as an officer of a regiment would be to plead dread of death as a reason against leading on his troop against an enemy. Shall the clergyman dare to plead, and shall society accept a plea, which would heap infamy on the head of the meanest soldier in the English army? Clergymen have not shrunk from the risk of infection; then why shrink now? for the crisis we are in is as momentous, and far more than the visitations of cholera, typhus, or plague. Is not the present painful crisis less painful than we have deserved?

Let the clergy realise that they are all but living in the days of old, whose tales they have so often told, and whose glories they have dwelt on; let them feel that the circumstances they are called into are all but those which once formed the martyr and confessor, who have wellnigh become phantoms of a fiction; and none can tell whether he may not find that he himself is incurring, by self-indulgence, the guilt of the lapsed whom he condemns, or, by self-devotion, may gain, in the nineteenth century, the crown of the martyr or the palm of the confessor.

Let us be found at work when the enemy attacks us, and so surrounded by a living system, by a devoted people and a holy cause, that we shall terrify assault by the armour of a practical and living reality ; let us not incur contempt for interference in spheres where we do not excel, and for manifesting such an amount of excitement as to destroy the conviction that we have a worthy cause. Imagine the dignity, the moral weight, the greatness of a clergy thus calmly employed over the length and breadth of the kingdom ! planting a tree in the hearts of the people which might ere long overshadow the land. Imagine the calmness, the holy beauty, and the awe inspired by a large mass of men, on whose heads rests the impress of holy hands, linked by the closest of all conceivable ties into one great brotherhood, having resolved on the stake of life and property, and in faith waiting, as Israel of old, on the Red Sea strand, till the Lord should make a way through the pathless and fathomless deep. In this lies our hope of seeing our enemies discomfited.

It will be said to this, the political line must be taken by some one, and agitation must be made or the Church will be crushed beneath the weight of the civil power. Protests were made by the Church of old, and holy men have been political. St. Athanasius and St. Ambrose, St. Anselm and St. Thomas, fought with carnal weapons. True ! I grant some even of our teachers must be engaged

personally in the conflict ; but let them be as few as possible, and those peculiarly qualified for it,—such as some of those whose names we have, in the past three weeks, hailed with joy as rallying points and centres ; and if it can be, let these do the work from their own spheres by directing those who are more immediately engaged in the strife. Let it be done as far as can be through synods and deaneries at a distance.

Beyond this, the men who should do the actual work, as it appears to me, should be, as I said, lawyers and statesmen,—men every way qualified to struggle with the State,—who being in their legitimate sphere will not be despised. Let them, when they feel there is need, consult any of those few clergy whose position, name, and knowledge on the subject of ecclesiastical law or doctrine makes their advice important, but generally let them rather digest the sentiments of clerical meetings at large through the country, which must be encouraged constantly to communicate. Thus, in the main, the clergy would be engaged in their respective spheres in prayer and spiritual work, creating strength for those engaged in the conflict. The State is not prepared for a really religious opposition. And I make this appeal to you as to one who has lately shewn himself so truly and ably the champion of the Church's truth in Parliament and elsewhere.

It was the conviction of very many in a late

meeting, that the speeches and arguments which were most characterised by knowledge of the subject, accuracy of logic, moderation of statement, and judgment, were those made by Mr. Talbot and yourself, and that the confidence of most men present was gained far more by those addresses than by any others. Some speeches were admirable in themselves, and full of truth, but lost their weight because unsuited to an excited general meeting in London, although well enough fitted for an ecclesiastical and clerical convention in the country. We must gain the confidence of the mass of the Church and people in the effort we are making, otherwise it will be fruitless; and that confidence will not be gained unless there be a business-like air in all our proceedings, and an appearance of reality and earnestness in the lives and conduct of the clergy. When men are out of their place they are despised; when in it, and pursuing their calling, they are respected. And surely we might expect that, if, at the beginning of this Lent, a redoubled and threefold effort had been made to a deeper life for ourselves and our people, we should have already gained more of the only strength on which we can rely,—the favour and love of God. The present line of conduct gives an impression that the clergy are an excitable and undisciplined body of men, who are looking out in public agitation and political meetings to make up for the lack of other modes of satisfying

the love for such things in the world, from which their holy office precludes them. This is a moment for wiping off reproach; and it can only be done by appearing zealously employed in our own sphere. The very thing which gave weight to the judgment and resistances of the saints of old in similar strifes, was the conviction that they were earnestly employed in their own vocation at the same time, and entered the conflict daily steeped in the influence of prayer and fasting, the prayers of their spiritual children hovering like unseen angels round them, and the air of a holy life pervading their frame. Monarchs and statesmen felt they were not fighting with mere men, and quailed before a battle with saints. Now we inspire no terror, create no alarm, for the light of saintliness is not reflected in face, or tone, or manner, and in its place have simply crept the shallow expressions of men of the world. We have mistaken our weapons; we have buckled on the armour of Saul, forgetting that our conflict is with faith,—a sling and a stone; unarmed we come down to encourage those who war with carnal weapons, to meet and subdue a foe invincible to them without us, for we defy him in the name of the living God. Well will it be if, having found out our mistake, we go back, saying, “We cannot go with these, we tried them without proving them, and we will put them off.” Let the world use her own weapons. We lose vantage ground by attempting to meet them in this way,

and with weapons which have been tempered in an earthly forge. "Thou comest to us with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

Our war is with "principalities and powers, with spiritual wickedness in high places;" and for that war we know our weapons, "the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit." No earthly weapon can pierce the one or blunt the other. The moral weight of the army of clergy inhabiting England, arrayed in their true weapons, would present a spectacle so imposing as to daunt the boldest, and resist the scoff of the most contemptuous; it would support, with an invincible arm, the advanced guard of our army, who were striving for us with other weapons; it would inspire with confidence the humblest peasant and the highest peer; it would enhearten those who stand up to plead our cause on the floor of Parliament; it would fix a conviction that our cause was of God; and those who strove on the plains of the world would fight with sure success, with their eyes fixed on the uplifted hands on the hill: "When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed."

One mode, which I much deplore, in which men are proposing to meet the present crisis, is the voluntary desertion, in some form or other, of

the English Church, or full communion within her limits.

Now, I am by no means about to enter into the discussion of the *vexata questio* with regard to our own communion, and its position in respect of the Roman Church; I wish simply, consistently with my object, to take a general moral view of the position of those who are meditating a change. It is not my intention at this moment to enter on the intellectual view of the matter, but to take the general impression which such lines of action would excite. It is very possible that men have thrown too much weight into the purely intellectual argument. It lacks expansiveness and elasticity. Nor can it suit all the changes, eccentricities, and informalities of our moral and social existence.

There seem three lines open for men to adopt who refuse to work any longer: communion with the Church of Rome, a voluntary Free Church movement, and one into lay communion, in some respects resembling the movement of the non-jurors. To the first of these intentions I will apply myself, taking a *primá facie* view of the subject. A restless and uneasy spirit is in itself to be deprecated; and unless founded on some deep and authorised conviction of the fact that we do not occupy a trustworthy position, it is unjustifiable. Mere restlessness implies an unloving and rebellious spirit, not that formed on obedience, and disciplined by autho-

rity; and it is to be feared that many are actuated by it for no other motive than a want of interest and point in the life they are leading. The amount of self-reliance must be large in any person who, simply as an individual, deserts the faith and Church of his baptism and his childhood, to throw himself into the arms of one he has hitherto condemned. He must have gone far on the road to individuality of action: and however right his line may be, and conscientious his motive, it must ever be a hazardous one to self, and one of great pain to an obedient spirit; needing wellnigh the three years' sojourn in Arabia, conferring not with flesh and blood. To change the position of baptism and childhood, should ever be painful even as death; and to the earnest mind must ever be so: change of position is in religious matters *primâ facie* wrong, and we must deprecate the all but joke which is made of it in the conversation of many. It often appears, that want of success in work, indolence of character, and a desire to try something new, lies at the bottom of their desires, which cannot be too severely censured, and too strongly deprecated. With some, I know that uneasiness is excited in them only by deep convictions; and many are meditating a junction with the Church of Rome on one of two hypotheses, either that she alone possesses claims to Catholicity, or that she has privileges so superior to what we enjoy, that it is lawful to join her communion.

These doubts of our own Catholicity have been excited in some persons at the present juncture by the position of the theory of supremacy, and the illustration given to it by the recent decision of the Judicial Committee. It remains to be proved how far that decision is lawful, and how far the supremacy is tied up with the Church so as to form part of her essential existence, as now constituted in England. But even if it be determined that the worst view of the supremacy is the true one, that fact surely does not affect the essential nature of the Church in England: it seems to be but an incumbent weight upon her, forming no more part and parcel of the Church herself, than the stone does of the plant on which it rests. And unless those who would move on that score were persons already prepared to accept the whole of the teaching of the Church of Rome, they must see some considerable obstacles of something of the same kind in the present working of the theory of infallibility. Tested by the rule of faith, which we are bound to suppose men are governed by amongst us, Scripture, and the undivided Church, surely the present working of the doctrine of infallibility will present difficulties of a very considerable nature. If, however, the theory of infallibility presents no difficulty to individuals, it implies that by such Roman doctrine has been already accepted, and the case is one beyond the province of my present remarks. I might add, that supposing the theory of the su-

premacv of the Crown to have been at all times a matter of doubt to certain minds, but only illustrated fully by the recent decision, and thereby supposed to be defined within the worst conceivable limits, surely we are not authorised to consider that decision as conclusively illustrative of the theory, until its legality has been tested, or the possibility of its reversion attempted.

The great depression which the union of the English Church with the State is causing in her discipline is made another argument against her; but no amount of State subjugation can affect the Catholicity of the Church: they are and must continue to be separate bodies, even though, for a while, such Church should appear, by silence, to acquiesce in the imposed condition. If it is not so, what can be said of many positions of the Church Catholic before the great schism, and of periods of the Roman branch since the severance of the East and West? What subjugation and thralldom can be conceived more oppressive than some of which we read before the fifth century, or of later acts in the annals of Rome under the Emperors of Germany, when men of profligate character, and even boys, were thrust into or supported in the Pontificate; or when the French monarchs held the freedom of the Bishop of Rome in their own hands in the memorable struggles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? The spirit which will quietly overlook and ignore all

this, and simply give weight to the fact of State influence over the English Church, cannot be acting in a free and candid manner. It must be remembered that the Jewish Church was not essentially impaired by the control of the civil governments of Assyria and Egypt, any more than men conceived that the Church of the fourth century, or the Church of the tenth, were by the mere fact of State oppression. It seems that the tyranny of the civil power, variously applied, has always been the probation and trial of the Church, and that in every age it has been her lot to have to contend with the extravagant demands of the State. No one ever imagined that the life and character of the English Church were impaired by the constitutions of Clarendon or the statutes of Edward the First. The tyranny of the Plantagenet sovereigns was as great at times as that of the Tudors, and the integrity of the Church was never questioned then. It is true that she has committed herself more to the recognition of Royal supremacy, but I do not see that that fact tends to weaken the arguments for her still existing Catholicity. Now that she sees fairly what that supremacy means, she must strive to reduce its action within proper and legal limits. Our age has seen other reforms greater than this successfully achieved. We judge her unfairly and hardly when we act as if she had accepted this authority with a full knowledge of its present apparent consequences.

What has been done may be undone, or at least we may risk all in the attempt. No one ventures to imagine that Rome left her Catholicity a spoil in the imperial diadem of the mediæval sovereigns of Germany ; then why conceive that England has lost the jewel of her Catholicity by the usurpations of the Governments of modern days ?

In addition, men urge the lack of free Catholic teaching and the practical suppression of many a doctrine of earlier days. It is objected also that many essentially Catholic characteristics are obsolete amongst us, and excite suspicion at their bare mention ; that our discipline is effete in many cases, and our whole penitential system meagrely below antiquity. If such objectors take their stand on the test I suggested above, surely they must grant that, on the side of development, Rome has as much exceeded as we have fallen short of our rule of faith ; and though excess in such matters is generally the safer extreme of the two, involving, with addition, the whole truth, it does not seem in this instance to be true ; for while we have preserved the seed of all Catholic teaching, Rome has so superadded, as to give a new complexion to the Catholic faith. As if to give an appearance of strength and life in days of very real weakness, she has proceeded to define distinctly and dogmatically points which have not hitherto been necessary articles of faith. This is but, I believe, an imitation of health and life,

and, to a close observer, denotes disorder and disease.

If another class of objectors bring forward the absence of religious life as a sign of the deadness of the English branch, it seems to me easy to meet it in two ways. I first deny the fact. Men are too much expecting the very same form of religious life which they meet with abroad. But England and the continent are distinct atmospheres, and I should be sorry to see forced and mechanical imitations of foreign character. Can that Church be dead which has formed eminently saintly men, and has at times put forth vigorously the energy of holiness? Can we look on the condition of the Church now or in past days, witness the revival going on in every diocese, archdeaconry, and parish, and satisfy ourselves that she is dead and withered? If so, we must be prepared to assert that a dead branch can produce living fruit, or that the holiness of many whose piety we have most revered was a mockery, and the energy of the last twenty years a fiction. It would require some courage to occupy this position. The English Church may have produced few saints; I imagine, however, she has produced many, but very much hidden in the retirement of family life. The names of Wilson, Ken, Andrewes, and many more, are household names among our very poor. There has been certainly a salt somewhere in our English society. Our present

movement has already drawn many (especially women) from private retired station to work publicly for the Church. The intervals between the throbbings of her more religious pulse may have been long and many; she may have lacked many important features of a vigorous Church; but there are reasons to account for such facts: it may be a chastisement, and so a preparation for great and active work yet to come. I feel no hesitation in thus instituting equal comparison between the Churches of England and Rome, for facts are against my considering Rome in the light that some would have us do, as the Church of the whole world. If the English system has had life enough to form many eminent Christians, and to propagate herself in the colonies, Scotland, and America, however little else she has done, she is not dead; and there are reasons countless why she has, as yet, done no more.

And, once more, has not Rome herself at times been equally apparently lifeless? Were not the days immediately preceding those of Gregory VII., equally low in spiritual life and energy? A slight examination into the history of those times would shew that the profligacy of men occupying the holiest offices was even more appalling than apparent lifelessness in any period of the English Church: with whatever force the argument can lie against our Communion, it lies with equal force against the other.

A fourth class of men are unduly dazzled by the appearance of unity, centrality, and continued dogmatic teaching in the Church of Rome, with her determined and bold assertion of being the entire Church, and with her bold excommunication of the English and Greek branches. Bold assertion is striking, and has a strong effect, but it may not bear investigation. Are each of these powers and qualities necessary to a true Church? There may be considerable beauty and convenience about them, they may singularly coincide with the preconceived view of a Church, they may be traits which will exist in the perfect condition of the Church of God; but I can hardly consider unity in the sense that this argument implies *essential*, when the only analogy we have, in the case of the Jewish Church, recognised a division of something of the same kind as that existing between ourselves and Rome,—a division created by the state policy of a wicked king.

Unity in certain points is doubtless needful; but I do not know from what source we can draw the argument that unity in all respects may not be, for providential reasons, disturbed without injury to Catholicity. It is not so easy for human eyes to decide at what stage we cease to be one in Him who is the Church's only head. It is not a mathematical or philosophical question. Men have made it too much so; and I feel that Mr. Maskell, in his recent letter, has erred on that side. No

questions of morals will bear this mode of dealing. They are too large for it; too intricate and too complex, and occupy too wide a basis.

The arguments founded on the centralisation of the Roman See, and her continued voice of dogmatic teaching, seem equally difficult to be proved. We know that Rome herself is uncertain in her view on the subject; and *we* acknowledge the dogmatic teaching of the first four centuries, and maintain the creeds. The mere fact of assuming the power and right to excommunicate is, of course, no sign that the power exists. But I cannot do more, for many reasons, than cast the most cursory glance over the kind of arguments used by men as an excuse for change. I am simply speaking to the points of the general spirit with which men are meeting the present crisis; each argument would, of course, bear a much closer examination. Rome is not more right, because England is placed in a false position. A false position does not destroy the possibility of position at all. We may assert a true one; and even if we cannot, I do not see how that fact supersedes the difficulty we have seen for years to lie against the Roman Communion.

I supposed above the case of some men not dissatisfied with her Catholicity, but discontent with the meagreness of its development and application, and therefore changing her communion for another more Catholic; in fact, individually, and by

their own authority, altering *providential* position. The reasons against such a line as this seem even more unanswerable than those against the last line. To make a change from ecclesiastical position is ever a grave and serious matter. If any position is directly from God, birth, baptism, education, and first communion in a Church are so. To renounce them is like a renunciation of Divine Providence, seeking a path for ourselves, and thrusting aside the hand of God, which nothing short of the fullest conviction, on reasonable grounds, that we are not members of the Church could justify. Individual movement is ever hazardous, and even when it is towards what we know has the sanction of God, it is dangerous to make one at our own suggestion. Jeroboam and David were both promised a new sphere of action, and the possession of a crown; the former seized his promised possession, and was condemned; the latter patiently waited, and was blest. Besides which, we have no right to seek ease, quietness, and privileges; it may be as much part of our probation to endure their absence, as to undergo severer chastisements in life of a more palpable kind. It is perilous to thrust ourselves out of a line which needed the exercise of faith and patience, and to place ourselves in one which will release us from cares, watching, and anxiety; it looks like seeking authoritative guiding, while it may be a culpable yearning after irresponsibility. It by no means

follows that because a branch of the Church lacks many Catholic elements, that she is therefore not the best for us. Our condition may be one which would be far rather benefited by their loss than their possession. There is an untold claim in the authoritative voice of the Church of our baptism, confirmation, and ordination, and those who lightly place her aside are probably taking a step which will considerably deter their own spiritual growth. Besides this, have men fully counted on what they are about to accept to gain those privileges? Have they carefully looked in the face the present teaching and practice of the Roman communion with regard to the Blessed Virgin and purgatory? unless they have already fully accepted them, there is a fearful gulf to leap over. There is a wide difference between gazing at a doctrine from a distance, the minute authoritative recognition of which we may lack, and being in a communion which excessively asserts the doctrine; there is a difference between aiming at a higher reverence for the Blessed Virgin, and being expected to accept the modern extreme view with regard to her as a matter of course.

We cannot tell what is coming. We have every reason to believe that the Church will have been broken up before the end of all things, and that the act of Union will be a final and providential work. We calmly wait that end, probably so near at hand, each on our own portion of the Church

of Christ, marked perhaps with peculiar errors as well as privileges. We know not what vocation the English Church may have, but she doubtless has one, and that not an easy one; and to leave her communion in a crisis might be a deadly sin. Desertion is cowardly. Why not stay and remedy evils? Why not do our best by the devotion of life and death? To desert her for a softer path is beneath the man and the Christian. We may do much by remaining true and firm in the day of her adversity; while, by deserting her, we may have to give an account of the neglect of our stewardship. Besides which, let men so tempted consider carefully whether there may not be a lurking love of singularity, and of following a prevalent effeminate fashion in their restless desire, which they imagine proceeds from sincerity of conscience? May we not think that if devotion to the work of self-discipline and the guidance of others to Christ had been the entire aim of life in some cases, the uneasiness of which we complain would not have existed?

But some have in contemplation what is called a Free Church. Surely there are grave objections to such a line, if adopted voluntarily and without compulsion. *In limine*, it would create a schism and rival communions in many parishes, which, over and above the fact of schism in the present condition of our people, would be of serious consequence. They are not sufficiently attached to, or

acquainted with, the Church's constitution to bear the conflicting appearance of two communions; and the danger would be considerable of very many accepting the teaching and communion of him who has possession of the Church fabric, parsonage, and the income. Above this, there will be much danger of such a movement dying out, and leaving the un-Catholic establishment in possession of the minds of many of the people, who might have been Christianised if a different course had been taken.

To men engaged in guiding their people, such a prospect is full of anguish; and the leaving those we have been teaching for years to pass an old age, and perhaps die, in an heretical communion, is a pang keener than death. Let us boldly and firmly protest individually in our respective spheres, and assert as essentially and necessarily true, that view of doctrine which an unfit authority has declared to be an open question. Let us stand by our people resolutely, occupying a sphere which a higher than any civil authority has committed to us; and if in the assertion of Catholic truth we are assailed by a hostile power, we shall be in a position intelligible to our people: we shall appear as teachers of God's truth, and persecuted for it; and if in persisting we are forcibly ejected from whatever we can be ejected, we shall appear plainly to our people as persecuted for Christ's sake. Our position, then, as teacher in the parish is clear and easy; we should have no choice, and

the efforts of a rival would fall with impotence to the ground. Few things would so tend to create a religious confidence in our people as patient endurance of persecution. But a voluntary Free Church move without authority would be cowardice and desertion, and perfectly unintelligible to the mass of the people. I am not attempting to go deeply into the arguments of any of these subjects; I am simply speaking to the generally excited and restless mind which recent questions have aroused; I have not time to do more. Surely men should gravely consider the possible consequence of any move at all, until it be positively forced upon them, and until they have exercised patience to the full, and should deeply examine the motives that impel them, lest they should at all partake of love of eccentricity, personal pique, or desire of change. We should consider deeply the position of our people; to what does not a movement on our part open them? and how hazardous for us if, at the last day, they shall be found injured by any step of ours, which after all may prove to be a false one. For their sakes, for the sake of the millions of England over whom schism, latitudinarianism, socialism, and infidelity are brooding, let us cling to our post till expelled by force; let us throw off the possible imputation of second motive in doing this—by casting aside all consideration of life and property, and by risking every thing at one great hazard, and quietly, un-

ostentatiously, within our own spheres, let us forsake all for Christ's sake and for the sheep of His fold. Why should we desert them? How can we coldly talk and argue about breaking loose the tie, and leaving them to possible ruin? What right have we to consult some intellectual fancy or moral craving of our own at the expense of souls committed to our care? By sudden moves we tend to paralyse the Bishops, and to make their efforts powerless. By a steady and firm obedience, and a manifest will to gather round those who are our ecclesiastical leaders, we shall hold together and present a firm and united front, which will terrify the adversary. Men complain of the line adopted by those in authority, and then, at the first appearance of danger, the first trumpet that gives the signal of a real conflict, they ruin their efforts by the rumours of desertions on all sides, and that before a blow has been struck. How can rulers from above, or the people from below, have trust and confidence in us, if they see that the first thought of many is to find out difficulties as an excuse for restlessness? The position that a hard-working and devoted clergy might occupy in a crisis like this transcends words; with them it to a great degree lies, whether the present movement shall be one marked by a weak and uncontested flight, to be handed down to the censure of posterity on the page of our ecclesiastical history, or whether the impending crisis shall be one

which will rouse the obedience, energy, and devotion of the clergy in such degree as to wipe out the charge of slumber that has lain upon us for a century and a half.

A simply non-juror movement, and a movement of the clergy into lay communion, seems equally full of difficulty, and appears very like desertion of our post. We have received a commission to work as well as to occupy a position, and I do not see how men are to fulfil that commission by a line of this kind.

There surely are reasons enough for men to rouse themselves:—disunion is ruin, unity is strength. We are not without trumpet-calls which give no uncertain sound. Clear and unmistakable has been the line pursued by the Bishop of Exeter in his unanswerable letter: the Bishop of London has spoken with a firmness and decision which should indeed rouse every clergyman in his diocese to rally round him; during a long and painful episcopate he has been called to see questions raised for difficulty and intricacy scarcely equalled in any period of that episcopate since the Reformation; he has often shewn his devotion and zeal, and in the present crisis he has indeed stood firmly and foremost in the episcopal body. The clergy of his diocese are bound to gather round him manfully, and so give strength and vigour to his action by a united and zealous energy in their vocation. We must give

him confidence in us, as he has given us confidence in him. Every day brings out a new note of hope, and even dissenting journals teem with condemnation of the position in which we have been placed. The attacks made on the cause we are enlisted in and the individuals who have led it have been weak, impotent, and frivolous, while strength and truth mark the blows which have been hitherto struck in our defence.

If only those who doubt would pause a while, join their strength to ours, and abide the issue; if only those who are true to us would throw themselves devotedly into their work; if only individuality of action would succumb to the good of a united cause; above all, far above all, if only all would pray,—“kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges of the world, young men and maidens, old men and children,” “rich and poor, one with another,”—if only all who love God would join in one united prayer for the success of truth, we *must* succeed. His ear has not been deaf since the assembled myriads of Israel calmly waited on the Egyptian shore, with an armed host behind them and a rolling sea before them. His arm is not shortened since, from the dungeons of Babylon, the released captives of seventy years beheld once more the rocky defiles of Jericho and the blue hills of their own Judea. He will do for us what He did for them. Only let us pray and act in faith; and what will not the prayers of a united Church

effect, still bearing in them the echoes of the Holy Week, and bursting from hearts which have been dwelling on the Passion of Him who purchased with His own blood the Church for which we plead?

I remain,

My dear Mr. Palmer,

Yours, very sincerely,

EDWARD MONRO.

*Harrowweald,  
Tuesday in Holy Week.*

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