

WE MUST UNITE!

BEING THOUGHTS ON

THE NECESSITY OF FORMING A WELL
ORGANIZED UNION OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHMEN.

BY THE

REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.,

Vicar of Stradbroke, Suffolk.

AUTHOR OF "EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS," ETC.

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The Necessity of Forming a Well Organized Union of Evangelical Churchmen.¹

THE title of this tract points to a subject which must always be interesting to a true Christian. That subject is unity.

Unity was a thing that the Lord Jesus asked for His people, in almost His last prayer. (John xvii. 21, 22.) Unity will be part of the perfection of heaven. Unity with one another ought to be the aim of all travellers in the narrow way. Where is the believer who does not feel that “union is strength,”—that religious divisions are the weakness of Christendom,—and that the Master’s words are true to the letter: “If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand”? (Mark iii. 24.)

But unity in general, abstract unity, is not the particular subject I wish to handle in this tract. I am writing with a special reference to one section of the Church of Christ. The point that I have in view is the pressing necessity of organized union among Evangelical members of the Church of England. To them particularly I venture to address the paper I am now sending forth. On them especially I urge the words which head these pages: “We must unite.”

That there is a distinct, clearly-marked body, called the Evangelical body in the Church of England,—that the members of this body are the only genuine and thorough representatives of the Church of England,—that the theological principles of this body are essentially different from those of Ritualists and Neologians,—that the whole Evangelical body is at this moment in a state of extreme peril,—all these are points which I shall either take for granted or touch very lightly. They are tempting subjects; but I dare not enter upon them at any length.

I wish in this tract to stick closely to my subject. I shall proceed therefore, without further preface, to examine three questions, which in this day appear to me to demand an answer:—

I. *Is there a want of organized union among Evangelical Churchmen?*

II. *Is such an organized union a necessary thing?*

¹ The substance of this paper was originally read as one of the Addresses at the Annual Clerical Meeting at Islington, in January 1868.

III. *Is such an organized union a practical and possible thing?*

If an examination of these three questions does not throw strong light on the position and duties of Evangelical Churchmen at this peculiar crisis, I shall be much mistaken.

I. In the first place, "*Is there a want of organized union among Evangelical Churchmen?*"

I answer that question, without hesitation, in the affirmative. There is a "conspicuous absence "of organized union among us. The old saying is true, whether we like it or not, we are "a rope of sand." Each individual particle and fibre and hair of the rope may be sound and good. But there is a curious absence of interweaving, cohesion, cement, and glue about the whole. The huge rope will neither lift, nor pull, nor draw as it ought, in proportion to its size. Try to do anything out of the beaten path of custom, and it falls to pieces.

I grant freely that we have many things in common. You may see clearly that the atoms of sand are all chips and fragments out of the same quarry. In the main we preach the same doctrines, and hold the same opinions. In the main we support the same Societies, go to the same meetings, subscribe to the same charities, work our parishes in the same way, go to the same booksellers' shops, read the same books, papers, and magazines, and groan and sigh over the same evils in the world. But here our union stops. Hitherto I can go, but I can go no further. Now begins the "rope of sand."

For defending common principles,—for resisting common enemies,—for facing common dangers,—for attaining common great objects,—for harmonious conduct in circumstances of common perplexity,—for decided, prompt, energetic action in great emergencies,—for all this I say unhesitatingly that we have no organized union at all. Every Evangelical Churchman does what is right in his own eyes, and every district goes to work in its own way; and only too many, without suggestions and directions, do nothing at all. In short, for want of organization, the Evangelical body often finds itself as helpless as a mob. We have God's truth on our side. We have numbers, strength, good will, and desires to do what is right; but from lack of organization and generalship, we are weak as water.

I dislike making vague and general assertions. Let me come to facts. I will name a few subjects of pressing moment at the present day, and I will ask my Evangelical readers whether we are prepared to act together about them. Have we taken counsel together? Have we weighed them well, and come to any united conclusion? Are we ready to show a common front about them, or are we at sixes and sevens for want of conference and organization? "Judge ye what I say."

Take the case of the *Established Church of Ireland*. That Church is in

imminent peril. "Shoot at her: spare no arrows: this is the city to be destroyed,"—this is the cry on all sides. From Mr. Gladstone down to Mr. Bright, almost all statesmen have a fling at her. The union of Greeks to take Troy is nothing to the union of political parties against the Irish Church.

Now what is the Evangelical body in England going to do? Shall we desert our sister because she is unpopular and small? Shall we turn our back on her, like Edom, in the day of her calamity, and leave her out in the cold? Shall we forget that her danger is ours? "Today thine: tomorrow mine." When a neighbour's house is on fire, our own is in peril. Are the Evangelical body ready to act together? At present I see no sign. There is no organized union, no harmonious action.²

Take the case of *Convocation*. That heterogeneous body, of late years galvanized into an unhappy and mischievous activity, is becoming a very serious subject. Its composition is most unsatisfactory. It neither represents the laity nor the parochial clergy. Yet the Southern part of it is gradually swelling itself up, and assuming a consequential position. But how does the Evangelical body treat the subject? Some never touch it with the tip of their finger, and never vote for a proctor. Some tolerate it as an excellent safety valve for ecclesiastical orators, and at any rate think it does no harm. Again there is no organized union, no conference, and no harmonious action.

Take the case of the *Annual Church Congresses*. Whether men like them or not, they have become an institution of the times. Are Evangelical Churchmen to go to them or not? If they do not attend them, the laity cannot understand it, and hint that we are afraid to meet men with whom we do not agree! If they do attend them, an outcry is raised by hundreds, as if the unfortunate attendant were an apostate and a traitor! Clearly all ought to go or none: yet nothing is settled about the matter. Every year the same perplexity arises. And why? All because in the Evangelical body there is no organized union, no systematic conference, and consequently no harmonious action.

Take the case of the *best mode of opposing Ritualism*. No man, we are agreed, is worthy of the name of Evangelical who does not deeply dislike Ritualism, who does not regard it as the greatest evil which has arisen in our Church since the days of Laud. All over the land there is a common and most harmonious cry in the Evangelical camp: "Something ought to be done." Yet when we ask what that "something" should be, we receive very diverse and conflicting answers. "Prosecute right and left," says one party.—"Apply to Parliament," says a second.—"Besiege the Bishops with memorials," says a

² These words were originally penned in January, 1868. Up to the present day, July 10, they have proved painfully prophetic. In the matter of the Irish Church the English Evangelical body has fallen sadly short of its duty. The day of retribution will come. We shall reap as we have sown.

third.—“Flood the country with lecturers,” says a fourth.—“Get up an aggregate declaration” says a fifth.—“Sit still and do nothing,” says a sixth.—In fact, “*quot homines tot sententiae*— every man has his opinion. The whole result is that nothing really effective is done at all. And why? Simply because in the Evangelical body there is no organized union, no systematic conference, no comparison of opinions, and consequently no harmonious action.

Take the case of *Synodical action*, whether general, provincial, or diocesan. The question is a very serious one, looming large, and gradually assuming very large proportions. The Pan-Anglican Synod, whether we laugh at it or not, is a great fact, and bodes great mischief. Lame and impotent as its conclusions may appear, a beginning has been made, and a Synod has been held. We may depend on it, it is *only a beginning!* There are prelates on our bench who will take care the movement does not stop here. The wedge will be driven further by those who wish the union of Church and State to be split in twain. Does the Evangelical body like it? Are we prepared to admit that we ought to be addressed by foreign prelates, like the American Bishops, or by Bishops of a dissenting community, like the Scotch Episcopal Church Bishops? Are we ready all over England to read to our congregations such defective pastorals as that which emanated lately from Lambeth? Are we willing to have every English diocese split into two distinct, sharply-cut parties,—Synod-men and Anti-synod-men, Bishop’s-men and opponents of Bishops? Are we prepared to have a machinery set up in every diocese, which shall enable any ambitious High Church Prelate to coerce and snub into silence his Evangelical clergy, either by incessantly worrying them about trifles, or by rattening and gibbeting them as “contumacious,” if they will not bow the knee before the idol of all his schemes? Have we made up our minds in this matter? Are we prepared to act in concert about it? We know we are not. And why? Simply because there is no organized union in the Evangelical body,³ no getting together to exchange opinions, no systematic conference, and no harmonious action.

Take the case of *concessions for peace sake*. There are a good many things now-a-days, which at one time were trifles and indifferent matters, but are

³ The subject of Diocesan Synods is receiving far less attention than it deserves. It is truly lamentable to observe how few Evangelical Churchmen seem to know, or care to know, what has been going on in the Diocese of Lichfield this very summer. *There*, through the energy of the Bishop, a Diocesan Synod has been actually organized, and has commenced operations. The very first result has been to split the Evangelical body into three distinct sections! If they had been united, the whole movement might have been completely checkmated. A Synod, without a single Evangelical Churchman present in it, would have been useless. But, as usual, the Evangelical clergy in the Diocese of Lichfield could not agree to act together, and were “a rope of sand?” It would probably be the same in every diocese in the land.

now of very serious importance. Shall we preach in surplices, if Royal Commissions recommend it, or the Bench of Bishops requires it? Shall we walk in processions with our surplices on, at consecrations and visitations, if Bishops request it? Shall we give up Evening Communions, and administering to the whole rail at once? Shall we commence daily services and saints'-day services all over England, if the next Lambeth Synod proposes it? These questions, I venture to say, will receive very different answers in different parts of England, and most disastrous will be the consequences. And why? Simply because there is no organized union in the Evangelical body, no systematic conference, and no harmonious action.

I might easily multiply my list of cases, but time will not allow me. The increase of the Episcopate,—the great coming changes about national education,—the Colonial Church,—the establishment of a new order of licensed lay-readers,—the recognition of Sisterhoods and Houses of Mercy,—the use of processional banners in some dioceses,—all these are subjects supplying an illustration of what I mean. They are all subjects on which many Evangelical men, both clergymen and laymen, feel very strongly indeed. But nothing is done, settled, agreed upon, or decided! And why? Once more I reply, because there is no organized union in the Evangelical body, no effort to get together and talk matters over, no systematic conference, no harmonious action.

Of course I am not so Quixotic as to suppose that there can ever be entire agreement in so large a body as the Evangelical body. Complete unity of opinion on all points among Christian men, in a world like this, is a mere dream and vision, and will never be attained. But I do say boldly, that the want of organized union, and consequently of harmonious action and co-operation in the Evangelical body, is very great indeed. It is our weakness. It ought to be our sorrow and our shame.

II. I turn to the second question which I proposed to ask,—“*Is organized union of the Evangelical body a necessity?*”

I answer that question, without the slightest hesitation, in the affirmative. I say that the state of the Church of England, and the aspect of the times, make it all important that we should close our ranks, get together, confer, take counsel, and agree to act together in every emergency that may arise.

When the country was in danger of foreign invasion, we all know well that organization of our national strength was one of the first things that sensible men thought of. None but a madman would have been content to trust to the isolated, independent exertions of the Mayors of Rye and Winchelsea, and the other Cinque-ports, or to the untrained and undisciplined valour of

Sussex and Kent yeomen suddenly rallying round their stackyards and pigsties. No, indeed! To get men together, to drill them, to teach them to act together, obey the word of command, move together, stand together, and not squabble about trifles,—this was the aim of all wise statesmen of our country. It ought to be the same in the Evangelical body. We ought to learn to get together, to act together, to stand by one another, to help one another, and to be as one body in resisting error and defending truth. We know nothing of it at present. It is high time that we did.

I must honestly admit that many excellent people are unable to see the necessity of any such organized union as I plead for.—“Where is the special danger?” they cry. “Where is the need of any peculiar exertion? False prophets there always will be; divisions there always have been. The evils of our days present no special features of peril. Why disturb the peace of the Church and aggravate our divisions? Why not let things alone? It is a passing cloud. *‘Nubecula est: transibit.’*”—Such is the language used by many whose opinions in many things I respect. I believe, however, they are totally mistaken. They are crying “Peace, when there is no peace.” I believe that no words hardly can exaggerate the real extent of our peril, and the real necessities of our position.

The *whole cause of Protestant religion in England* is in danger. For thirty years and more, I am firmly persuaded, a deep-laid conspiracy has been at work among us, having for its final object the destruction of the work of the blessed Reformation, and the reestablishment of Popery. Whether consciously or unconsciously, none have done the work of this conspiracy so thoroughly as the Ritualistic body. They have familiarized the minds of people with the outward ceremonials of Romanism. They have preached and taught doctrines which no impartial judge can distinguish from Romish doctrine. They have boldly avowed thoroughly Romish views upon such subjects as the priestly office, the sacrifice of the mass, the real presence, the adoration of the consecrated elements in the Lord's Supper, and auricular confession. They have poured scorn on our martyred Reformers and their opinions. They have publicly professed their kindly feelings towards the Romish Church, and their contempt for the Church of Knox, and Chalmers, and M'Cheyne. They have succeeded in gathering around them a vast crowd of fashionable and wealthy adherents, and in lowering the general tone of public feeling about the difference between Romanism and Protestantism. In a word, they have successfully driven a mine under the whole cause of Protestantism in this land, while we have been sleeping or squabbling. Church and Chapel, Conformists and Nonconformists, all alike are in serious jeopardy. Let the plague only march on with the same giant strides that have marked its progress during the last five years, and no man can tell whereunto it may

grow. If any man had predicted ten years ago that in 1868 the real presence and auricular confession would have been openly taught, unchecked, in Church of England pulpits, he would have been laughed at as a lunatic! But if we have fallen so far in ten years, I should like to know where we shall be when ten more years have come to an end? At the rate we are travelling now, we shall have the Pope at Lambeth Palace, and the real Popish mass at St. Paul's Cathedral, within ten years. I repeat it deliberately. At this moment the whole cause of Protestantism in England is in imminent peril.

But this is not all. The *position of the Evangelical body* in the Church of England is in danger. Let no one mistake me when I say this. I have no fear that our antagonists will drive us out of the Establishment. It is not expulsion I fear, but a gradual voluntary secession, and a dribbling away of the life-blood of the Church. I fear that Popish doctrines and practices may gradually be tolerated in our Communion, under the specious plea of "liberty, free thought, liberality, and letting all men do what they like?" I fear that men of tender conscience will feel it a solemn duty to resign their position and *retire*, rather than be partakers of other men's sins. I am quite sure that there is far more risk of this than people suppose. A few more deaths on the Episcopal bench,—a few more successors of the type and stamp which many of us know so well,—a few more Charges like that of the Bishop of Salisbury,—a few more Lambeth Pastorals pressed upon the unwilling consciences of incumbents,—a little more snubbing of recalcitrant and remonstrant Evangelical clergy,—a few more evasive and unsatisfactory replies of Bishops to indignant laity,—a little more of all this, and the patience of many will be exhausted. It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. The cup will at length run over. A few here and a few there will be tired out and begin to secede. Great will be the joy of the enemy. We are not popular. High Church and Broad Church always make common cause against the Evangelical body! Nothing will please them more than to see us dropping off one by one. A fatal day it will be when this gradual process of secession begins. But if the present system of tolerating everything and everybody goes on much longer, I am persuaded secessions *will* begin. Once let them begin, and our position is turned.

But this is not all. *The very existence of the Church of England* itself is in danger. Ritualism is gradually robbing our Church of some of its best members among the laity. Not a few bankers, lawyers, doctors, and members of Parliament, are dropping off and leaving the ship. Their affections are thoroughly shaken. They cannot understand an Established Church in which the service is Popish in one parish and Protestant in another! They are getting disgusted with the continued toleration of Popish novelties, which their own

common sense tells them are as thoroughly unchurchmanlike as they are unscriptural. They are weary of being told that Bishops *cannot* check Rubrical excesses, when they see they *can* check Rubrical defects! Some of these men go off to the Plymouth Brethren; some join the Baptists, Methodists, or Independents; some stand aloof altogether, and will take no part in the Church's affairs. This state of things is most mischievous and prejudicial. It evidently cannot go on long without leading to most disastrous results. Little by little the very life-blood of the Church is being drained away. Many of the middle classes are sick to death of Ritualism. Thousands of tradesmen in town, and of farmers in country parishes, are thoroughly determined not to put up with Popery in our churches. They will not have it at any price; and if it cannot be kept out or turned out, they will soon cease to be Churchmen altogether. A few more years of this draining process, and the Established Church worshippers will become *a minority* in the country! Once become a minority, and we shall be treated like our sister Church in Ireland. Statesmen and mob orators alike will declare that "the English Establishment is a huge anomaly," and must be got rid of. The voice of the people will demand our destruction, and on modern principles it will be obeyed. I say it deliberately,—I believe that the very existence of the Established Church is in peril.

In the face of the dangers I have just adverted to, an organized union of Evangelical Churchmen appears to me a positive necessity of the times,—a union not only of the clergy, but also of the laity,—a union not only of the London clergy and laity, but of all Evangelical Church people throughout the country,—a union above all so systematically organized that we shall be able at a day's notice to stand to our arms, to form square, to man our walls, to advance, to take up any position which circumstances may require, and in any event to act together.

I know not what other people may be waiting for. They may be expecting deliverance at this crisis from some quarter of which I know nothing. If they do expect it, I hope they will tell us what it is. For my part I see no gleam of light on any side. The Bishops are "a house divided against itself," as we all saw in the division on Lord Shaftesbury's bill, and in the Lambeth Conference. Convocation has not the confidence of the country, and has no power to do anything if it had. Lawsuits are proverbially tedious and always unpopular. The Royal Commission, like the Indian elephants, is as likely to trample on one side as the other, and at most can only report. Acts of Parliament are more easily talked of than obtained. I do not say that good cannot come from any of these quarters; but I do say that its coming is most uncertain, and to rely on it is like leaning on a broken reed. At all events, time is flying and mischief is spreading. Whatever is before us, the Evangelical body ought to be ready to act promptly and decidedly and together. They cannot do it now

for want of organization. For these reasons organized union appears to me a positive necessity of the times.

It is my own firm belief that want of union and internal harmony lost the whole body of the Puritans to the Church of England in 1662. If they could only have agreed to sink their petty private scruples, and act together for the common good, they would have occupied a position in the Church from which they could never have been dislodged. If, when Reynolds accepted the Bishopric of Norwich, Baxter had gone to the See of Hereford, and Calamy to that of Lichfield, and Manton and Bates had accepted deaneries, the Church history of England might have told a very different tale. With Baxter, Calamy, and Reynolds in the House of Lords and Upper House of Convocation, and Manton and Bates in the Lower House of Convocation, my conviction is strong that the wretched Act of Uniformity could not and would not have been passed. Want of union and harmonious action weakened the party, and almost ruined the Church of England. I only hope that most unsatisfactory and disastrous page in our Ecclesiastical history may never have to be written a second time.

III. The last question I undertake to consider in my paper, is one which I approach with much diffidence and hesitation: "*Is an organized union of the Evangelical body practicable? Is it a possibility?*"

This, I freely admit, is a very difficult point. Scores of things, we all know, are theoretically desirable, but practically impossible. The stern logic of facts cannot be got over. If things are impossible, it is waste of time to attempt them. Now, is such an union as I have been speaking of in this paper, possible or not?

I grant that there are many difficulties in our way, and difficulties of a very formidable description. Whether they can be surmounted or not, is a problem which has yet to be solved.

One difficulty of course is *not peculiar to ourselves*. It arises from the constitution of human nature. Like all other bodies of men, the Evangelical body contains innumerable varieties and shades of character. Some are timid, and some are rash. Some are crotchety, and some are cautious, and some are fiery. Some are eaten up with an excess of charity, and abhor all collisions. Some are always riding hobbies, and will never consent to dismount from their favourite little animals, to march on foot, and to keep line. Of course it is no easy matter to get all these varieties of character to agree, to combine, and to work together. This is no doubt a grave difficulty.

Another difficulty arises from the *very first principles* of the Evangelical creed. We who are called, rightly or wrongly, Evangelical Churchmen, are trained and taught to acknowledge no Father but God, no Master but Christ,

and no rule of faith but the Bible. We shrink almost intuitively from submitting our judgment, even in appearance, to the judgment of others. We dislike even to seem to follow a leader, as if it was ignoring the right of private judgment. We are fond of our old Protestant liberty of thinking and acting for ourselves. Now, to combine in one body a number of men who are thoroughly imbued with these principles, is of course no easy matter. It is another great difficulty.

One more difficulty arises from the *habits of working*, to which Evangelical clergymen are accustomed. We are most of us so thoroughly engaged with the weekly business of our own pulpits and schools, parishes and congregations, that we make little time for anything else. Hundreds of excellent clergymen hardly ever leave their parishes, except for the annual missionary gathering in their county town, or their monthly clerical meeting. Their life is an unbroken round of quiet home duties, sermons, lectures, school management, pastoral visitation, and good works within the limits of the parish boundaries. You really cannot get them to look at anything in the Church and the world outside these boundaries! Episcopalians in theory, they are almost Independents in practice. With all their grace and excellence, they appear to forget that they were not ordained to be ministers of their own parishes alone, but ministers of the whole “United Church of England and Ireland,” and that whatever affects the interest of that Church or endangers its position ought to be of deep concern to them. Men in this state of mind are of course as backward to come forward and join a public combination, as a hermit is to leave his garden of herbs and his cave. These “cave and garden” Evangelicals are a serious difficulty.

But I cannot concede, after stating all these difficulties, that organized union of Evangelical Churchmen is an absolute impossibility. I have a better opinion of my beloved brethren who really love the Gospel, than to suppose that they will not come forward and combine, if once convinced that there is a necessity and a cause. There is One who can “make men of one mind in a house,” and He has not entirely forsaken us.

I see on all sides the principle of association carried out to an enormous extent in these latter days. I see chambers of commerce and agriculture established for commercial purposes. I see anti-corn law leagues and reform leagues established for political ends. I see trades unions established for the promotion and defence of class interests. I see the Jesuit body overspreading the world for ecclesiastical ends, a sword whose hilt is at Rome, and whose point is at every man’s heart. I see even the English Church Union (for the Propagation of Romish Views in the Church of England) numbering its thousands, and exerting no small influence and power. And shall I believe that Evangelical Churchmen cannot be combined, organized, and united for the

defence of Christ's truth? Shall I lazily sit down and say, "There is a lion in the way," there is "a hedge of thorns across the path," the thing cannot be done? I will not say it yet. I will never concede,—if we will only look the matter firmly in the face, lock up our hobbies some of us, come out of our caves others of us, and lay aside petty jealousies and self-conceit, all of us,—I will never concede that a league of Evangelical Churchmen is either impracticable or impossible. I see Scotch Presbyterians mustering every year in Edinburgh by hundreds, for their General Assemblies. I will never believe that English Evangelical Churchmen cannot form an organized union if they will only try.

Does the machinery for forming such an organized union exist already? That is of course a delicate question, and one which will receive very different answers. I do not think, as some, that our great religious societies supply a basis of union. They have their own work to do, and that work is evangelization. Let us not attempt to mix them up with controversy. They have enough on their hands already.—I do not think, with other valued brethren, that our great aggregate clerical meetings supply a sufficient basis for our union. They have their own annual work to do, and that work is generally simple edification. They are not numerous enough yet. They are not all composed of purely Evangelical elements.⁴ In some cases they do not comprehend the laity.—Now is there no other existing nucleus of organized union? My belief is that there is. I have a strong impression that at this moment there exists no better centre of union than the London Church Association. It may be young in years, and at present comparatively weak. It may have made mistakes at its beginning. It undoubtedly began too much as a Negative Anti-Ritualistic Society, and not sufficiently as a Positive Protestant and Evangelical Society. But all must allow that it has lately assumed a very much bolder and more decided position. Its *conferences* in London are the most remarkable demonstration of Evangelical feeling and opinion that has been made for many years. In short, at this time I see no more likely beginning for a league of Protestant and Evangelical Churchmen, than the "London Church Association." If we only rally round it, and give it a hearty and united support, I think it offers a fulcrum for shaking the country and uniting all Evangelical Churchmen. If we stand aloof from it, like the men of Succoth and Penuel, we must not complain if it does not succeed. My own mind is fully made up.

⁴ I take occasion to say that in my judgment it is an immense mistake to attempt to comprehend men of different opinions in the large aggregate clerical meetings which take place every year. The attempt either leads to jarring and discord, or lowers the whole tone of the proceedings. To be really profitable, these meetings ought to be composed only of men who are entirely of one mind.

Whatever be the fault and defects of the London Association, I mean to support it so long as it sails under its present colours. If any man will show me a better machinery, I will gladly give it my attention. At present the Church Association seems to me to occupy the field alone, and I humbly think that it deserves our support.

A central organ of union in London can of course do little unless it is supplemented by local organization throughout the country. I cannot see any great difficulty in the formation of such local organization as the times require. If the Evangelical clergy and laity of a diocese, or a county, or an arch-deaconry, or a rural deanery, or a town, or a district, will only get together, draw up some simple rules, appoint a secretary, and open communications with the Central Association in London, the thing is done. The whole country would soon be covered with a network of close and intimate relations among Evangelical Churchmen. At any given moment the central committee in London would only have to send a letter to the secretary of each provincial association, and start a whole train of machinery. Just as in some huge manufactory, you have but to turn a handle and let on the steam, and the whole array of spindles and powerlooms begins to move and hum, till the building vibrates with busy activity, so the secretary of the Central Association would only have to post so many letters, by direction of the committee, and in every county of England, Protestant and Evangelical Churchmen would start into life and action, and stand on their feet “an exceeding great army “

To do what? someone will ask. “*Cui bono*,” for what purpose this organization? That is a question which cannot be fully answered till the organization exists. The machinery must be created before the results can be fully realized. But surely there are many benefits which a moment’s reflection will show us would at once accrue. Prompt action would be obtained, and prompt expression of opinion would be elicited.—A bill is in Parliament: “Send up petitions and memorials about it?”—A difficult question has arisen: “Send us your opinion about it.”—An attempt is about to be made to coerce the consciences of the Evangelical body: “Be prepared for it, and act together.”—A Semi-Romish charge has been delivered by some Bishop: “Call the attention of your members to it.”—A valuable lecture has been delivered by some champion of the Protestant cause: “Tell your members of it, and get it circulated.”—A conference is about to be held in London on some important point: “Ask some of your leading members to attend it.”—These are only instances of what would be the benefits of organization. If any man thinks there is nothing much in all this, I can only say that I totally disagree with him. At present I am quite sure that nothing of the kind is ever attained, or possible. At this moment the Evangelical body is like a mixed multitude of Spanish guerillas, all individually brave men and good patriots, but weak

as water, for want of union and organization, helpless in the face of a small disciplined army, and unable to resist invasion. I leave my subject here. Time will not allow me to go further, and I trust I have said enough to supply food for reflection. If I have only dropped a few seeds of thought, and set the wheels of some abler minds than my own revolving, I shall feel that I have not drawn up this paper in vain.

All I plead for is that something may be *done*. Meetings for mere talk and conference have their dangers as well as their advantages. This incessant talking about things, and having passive impressions aroused within us, is likely to have a hardening effect on our minds, unless *something is done*. Action, action in the most literal sense, is what is wanted. It was the highest praise of the great Athenian orator, that, when his speech was ended, men did not say, "How fine and clever!" but, "Let us march against Philip." If the Church Association is worthy our support, let us each resolve to give it hearty and active co-operation, both in town and country. If it is not worthy, let us have something better in its place. But let us, at any rate, for ever lay aside mere talking and grumbling and complaining. Let us resolve that something shall be done, and that it may be done, let us unite and organize without delay.

We have sat still long enough and waited for I know not what. It is high time that we make up our minds to wait no longer. We have sat by the banks of the river long enough, and indulged the foolish hope that the stream of Ritualism would run itself dry. But the stream grows deeper and broader every year. We have folded our arms and refused to come forward, unless compelled to do so, and have taken nothing by our quiescent and tame attitude except contempt. If we mean to preserve Protestantism in the Church of England,—if we mean to preserve our own position,—if we mean to keep the Martyrs' candle lighted, we must boldly change front, alter our tactics, and take up a new position. We must draw the sword and cast away the scabbard. We must stand to our arms and fight. Spiritually our warfare no doubt must be waged, but really, with the arms that Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer wielded before us. I repeat it, *we must fight!*

(a) Some Evangelical Churchmen, I know, are men of a gentle and tender spirit, have an instinctive horror of controversy, and always shrink from it in dismay. I can understand their feeling. I do not wonder at it. Controversy no doubt is an odious thing, and has a desperate tendency to injure our souls. But surely there are times when controversy is a positive duty; when, as the Apostle Jude tells us, we must "contend earnestly for the faith." Surely there is a vast difference between controversy sought voluntarily, and controversy thrust upon you. That the present controversy is thrust upon the Evangelical

body, I firmly maintain. We have not left our ground. We stand in the old paths. The attack begins without antagonists. It is a defensive warfare that we wage. Paul was doing God's work as much when he withstood Peter at Antioch, as when he addressed Ephesian elders. Let us not doubt that St. Paul's Master, when we tread in St. Paul's steps, will preserve us from harm and take care of our souls.

(b) Some brethren will say that we are weak, and unable to cope with the hosts of High Church, and Broad Church, and Indifferentism combined. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be next week or next year? Will it be when the Ritualistic Churches have increased in number, and the Bishop of Oxford sits at Lambeth Palace, and the Bishop of Salisbury at Fulham? Will it be when the Real Presence is preached in half the pulpits of London, and auricular confession is practised throughout Belgravia and Tyburnia? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we nerve our minds by a masterly inactivity, and by sitting still until our enemies have surrounded us, bound us hand and foot, and gagged us? Away with the unworthy thought! I trust we know better than that.

(c) I remind my brethren that we are not weak, if we make a proper use of the Scriptural means which God has put into our hands. Two thousand Evangelical clergymen, backed by their congregations, united, organized, praying, and working in the holy cause of Christ's pure truth, are a host that cannot be easily overcome.

(d) I remind my brethren, moreover, that we shall not fight our battle alone. There is a great Head of the Church whose eyes are on all that goes on in the earth, who holds in His hands the hearts of rulers and statesmen, and can raise up friends for us both in Church and State, both among Lords and Commons. The Lord God of Wycliffe and Luther, the God of the Martyrs of Oxford and Smithfield, is not dead, but alive. The battle is not always to the strong, the wealthy, and the numerous, but to the humble, the praying, the active, the vigilant, and the brave.

(e) I remind my brethren, above all, that we have no election. If we are base enough to draw back, and refuse strife and contention for Christ's truth, there will soon be nothing for us but submission and disgrace. Some men may cry, "Peace, peace: oh, sacrifice anything for peace!" but there can be no real peace while our Church tolerates and fosters Popery. Is ecclesiastical peace so sweet, that it is worth purchasing at the expense of truth? Is a quiet life so precious, that in order to secure it, we will tolerate transubstantiation

and auricular confession? God forbid that we should say so! What others think I know not. For my own part my mind is made up. I have come to one decided conclusion. I say, Give me a really Protestant and Evangelical Church of England, or no Church of England at all. When the Reformed Church of England renounces her Protestant principles, and goes back to Popery, her glory will have departed. She will be an offence to God, and not a resting-place for any true Christian. "*We must unite!*"

P.S. JULY 25TH, 1868.

Since these pages were originally penned, in January, 1868, the course of public events in England has proved more than ever the crying necessity for organized union among Evangelical Churchmen.

The sudden attack made by Mr. Gladstone on the Irish branch of the United Church of England and Ireland,—the repeated unfavourable divisions upon the subject which have taken place in the House of Commons,—the imminent danger which manifestly threatens the English branch of the Establishment,—the successful formation of a Diocesan Synod in the Diocese of Lichfield,—the movement for increasing the strength and numbers of the Canterbury House of Convocation,—all these are patent facts which speak trumpet-tongued. They all cry aloud to the Evangelical body in the Church of England, "Awake! Organize! Unite!"

But what are Evangelical Churchmen doing? Absolutely nothing at all! They present at this moment the most melancholy spectacle that English Church history has exhibited for three hundred years. They seem unable to discern the signs of the times,—unable to comprehend the increasing peril of their position,—unable to get together and agree on any bold, decided, thorough line of action,—unable to show a compact, united front against their enemies. Men look at one another, and say, "Something ought to be done," and then go quietly home, and do nothing at all! With nineteen Evangelical men out of twenty the interests of the Church at large seem as nothing compared to those of their own parishes. And yet they call themselves Episcopalians!

This state of things cannot and will not last. The end must come. Whether the poor old Church of England will become downright Popish, or downright latitudinarian, or go to pieces altogether, is a problem which I will not pretend to solve. We shall know more about it in ten years. But this I will boldly say,—that of all the bodies within the Church's pale, none is so thoroughly disunited and disorganized as the Evangelical body, none is so completely unprepared for action if the Church of England is suddenly disestablished, and yet none possesses such internal elements of power, if it only knew how to use them.

I conclude with a passage from the *Contemporary Review* of last May, which I commend to the special attention of all my Evangelical brethren. It is the closing paragraph of a review of the addresses delivered at the Islington meeting of last January. The Reviewer winds up his article with the following remarkable words:

"We earnestly recommend our readers to procure and study this Evangelical manifesto for themselves. It is well to see that our excellent friends are up and stirring; that the enemy is not to be allowed, if they can help it, to climb in at the window or over the tiles. It is well

also to read of such firm determination to stand by all that a Christian man loves and values. But at the same time it is somewhat sad to see such a regiment coming up, even on the right side, to feel how much discipline the army want before they can do real service; to have borne in upon us irresistibly the saying of a Scottish Evangelical divine and scholar respecting them: *'Your Evangelicals in England will never do anything; their fight is all for words, and not for deeds.'*"

I am sadly afraid the Scot is right!

J. C. RYLE.