

confession which we make in those formularies; at all events, no man who is not prepared frankly and cordially to accept them, as the rule and measure of his own teaching, can have any right to intrude himself into the ministry of our branch of the Church. He cannot, in so doing, look for the blessing of Almighty God, for the approval of honest minds, or for the repose of a quiet conscience.

But we are next directed to pray that we may follow the example of St. John the Baptist, "by boldly rebuking vice." And here recent events remind us, in a very startling manner, how soon we may be called upon to follow his example to the very letter. His words, "it is not lawful for thee to have her," have a strange application to the circumstances of the present time, when the lawfulness and expediency of that very connexion, which this servant of God denounced in the case of a degenerate Jew, is publicly and unblushingly advocated by men who claim for themselves the name of Christians. St. John said, ⁽¹⁾ "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." Christian legislators are found to say, "It is lawful for thee to have thy sister's husband." Thus are men seeking to infringe the only authoritative marriage law which the world has ever received—to break through the one sacred defence, which the wisdom and benevolence of the Almighty have set around the peace and purity of the domestic circle, elevating thereby unspeakably the moral sense in man, and making his earthly existence incomparably more precious to him than it could otherwise have been, by restraining, by a positive enactment, his absolute freedom in respect of marriage. Let this one great law of God be broken through, and we have no guard whatever against the flood of iniquity; marriage, accounted no longer a holy and honourable thing, will gradually become a thing profane and contemptible, till all distinction between vice and virtue, in this momentous regard, will be utterly obliterated.

Nor can we forget that a step has already been actually

(1) See note (B) at the end.