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A Nation Under Judgement

Moses and the Children of Israel were on the verge of entering the promised land. It was clearly important – vitally important – that the people would be sincerely obedient to the commandments of God when they settled down in the land flowing with milk and honey which He had provided for them. Moses therefore emphasised the duty of obedience and listed the blessings which would be theirs if they would “hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments”. And, on the other hand, Moses warned them of the multitude of curses which would come upon them, as a nation under judgement for their sins, if they were not obedient.

Among all the fearful curses he pronounced was: “Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron” (Deut 28:23). So serious would be the drought, so long-continued the absence of rain, that the ground would be rock hard, and it would seem as if the sky above was just as solid. And no doubt it was in judgement that the Lord “called for a famine” in the time of Elisha, when he advised the Shunammite woman to leave the country for the time being.

In the United Kingdom today, and in other countries also with a similar heritage, there is no drought, no famine, or anything of that nature. Are we then free from God’s judgments? By no means. We are experiencing the situation Amos prophesied of: “a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). In many areas of this country there is nothing remotely like the pure preaching of the Word of God. In such circumstances we cannot expect that the Lord will give the Holy Spirit, the rain from heaven. Where there is no scattering of the good seed of the Word of God, there will be no spiritual harvest, though we must not limit the power of God to apply His truth to those who read it in these places. But we can only anticipate such communities continuing to descend further and further into heathenism.

By way of contrast, God has often blessed communities by sending not only drops from heaven, in a spiritual sense, but heavy showers of rain. What

an abundance of rain fell from heaven on the Day of Pentecost! The Holy Spirit was so wonderfully poured out that, when Peter proclaimed the truth about sin and salvation, there was much fruit. On that one day 3000 individuals believed on the Saviour. And the rain went on falling; we are told that “the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Which was according to the promise: “I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing” (Ezek 34:26). Similarly at the Reformation there was in many parts of Europe – and in times of revival in various places since then – an abundance of rain, when the Lord was, over a period of time, bringing significant numbers of sinners into His kingdom. At the same time, by the same Holy Spirit, He was building up in their most holy faith those who were already in the kingdom.

So when showers do not come regularly, there must be an element of judgement. And when, as today, we only see drops of the Holy Spirit’s power from time to time, we must conclude that God’s hand is against us in manifest judgement. We should indeed be sincerely thankful for every evidence of the Spirit’s work, but we have great reason to be disturbed when our situation is so very far from a *daily* adding to the Church of such as should be saved.

What we see today is according to the words of Psalm 107: “He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein”. Which explains what has gone wrong in a land which in the past experienced so many showers of divine blessing. Especially over the past 150 years there has been an increasing departure from God and the revelation He has given to mankind. This has not only been true within the nation as a whole but also within most of the professing Church, so that now almost everyone – including the great majority of ministers – believes whatever seems right in his own eyes. And if they have rejected the Word of the Lord, we must ask as the prophet Jeremiah had to ask: “What wisdom is in them?” No wonder if God should ask: “Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” Our present situation is much more grave than what would result from any temporal judgement; the spiritual famine we are experiencing is far more drastic than any lack of food for our bodies, for this has eternal consequences.

The outlook may not be encouraging, but we have no reason to despair, even of a generation so determined to turn its back on God. He asks: “Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?” (Is 50:2). The answer to these questions was obvious in Isaiah’s time; it ought to be just as obvious today. God’s power has not changed. And though His hand is stretched out in judgement today, we do not know how soon He may return in mercy to give showers of blessing. When He does so, it will

be in answer to the prayers of His people. He will send out a multitude of ambassadors to proclaim, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the same gospel that He so richly blessed in times past.

Meantime, preachers are to continue scattering the good seed of the Word in the hope that God will grant showers from heaven. J C Ryle uses for their encouragement the Saviour's words in John 4: "Look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal". He writes: "The true antidote against despondency in God's work is an abiding recollection of such promises as that before us. There are 'wages' laid up for faithful reapers. They shall receive a reward at the last day, far exceeding anything they have done for Christ . . . They are gathering 'fruit' which shall endure when this world has passed away – fruit, in some souls saved, if many will not believe, and fruit in evidences of their own faithfulness, to be brought out before assembled worlds. . . . Do we feel disposed to say, My labour is in vain and my words without profit? Let us lean back at such seasons on this glorious promise. There are 'wages' yet to be paid. There is 'fruit' yet to be exhibited. 'We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish' (2 Cor 2:15). Let us work on. 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him' (Ps 126:6). One single soul saved shall outlive and outweigh all the kingdoms of the world"

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon prayed: "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess Thy name, and turn from their sin, when Thou afflictest them: then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy servants, and of Thy people Israel, that Thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, *and give rain upon Thy land*" (1 Ki 8:35,36). And Solomon was assured that the Most High had heard his prayer. This should encourage God's people today to come before Him, in the name of Christ, to plead that He would give showers of spiritual blessing. We are to do so in the spirit of Daniel: "We do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies".

The Jews were sent into captivity in judgement and, for years before then, the Lord had largely withdrawn His Spirit. But it was in answer to such prayers as Daniel's that God fulfilled the promise already quoted: "I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing". How much we need to pray – in a time when God's judgement is upon this generation in a marked way – that He would "in wrath remember mercy". Then would the heaven no longer be brass or the earth iron.

The Gospel Minister's Crown (1)¹

A Sermon by John Macdonald

1 Thessalonians 2:19,20. *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy.*

The ministry of the gospel of Christ is in its substance purely spiritual. Outwardly it may be connected with many things material and temporal; but, in its own self, it is declared to be a divine grace. "To me", says the Apostle, "is this grace given, that I should preach . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ." Hence the grand moving principle is not sight but faith. We "believe and therefore speak". "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

This ministerial faith, like personal faith, lives on the testimony of God and is sustained by the revelation of objects presented there. These are made present by being spiritually received and cause us to move as we ought in our holy ministry. Bible truth is our stream of light, and Bible objects are our field of vision. Here we live and move and have our being. O how rich, how blessed, how glorious is this land of faith!

We believe in our unseen *God and Father*. His sons we are. His servants we desire to be. His will is the basis of our ministry. His mind is the very element of our office. Our message is the "glorious gospel of the blessed God".

We believe in an unseen *Mediator*, our Saviour. He is our official head; we are His personal ambassadors. We stand in His stead; we speak, we act, we suffer for Him. We receive our people from Him; we lead our people to Him. He is our life, our glory.

We believe in the unseen *Comforter*. He is the Holy Spirit of our God, coming in the Saviour's name. It is He who excites, calls, sanctifies, directs, gladdens and blesses us in our ministry. Dwelling in us, if we be true men and not hirelings, He empowers, carries out, accompanies, applies and seals our work in the Lord, accomplishing by us the will of God.

We believe in an unseen *kingdom of heaven* upon earth. This kingdom "cometh not with observation", but is within us. It does not consist in "meat and drink", but in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost". Into it men enter by regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and by faith in the gospel of Christ. Into this blessed and glorious kingdom we labour

¹Macdonald (1807-47) was the son of the better-known father of the same name, the Apostle of the North. This was a farewell discourse in May 1837 to his Church of Scotland congregation in London, before leaving to become a missionary in Calcutta. It is taken, slightly edited, from his little book of sermons, *A Pastor's Memorial to His Former Flock*.

to bring our fellow sinners, by preaching the message of reconciliation.

We believe in an unseen *eternity* of existence beyond this life. We anticipate this immortality of being, in itself unknown but revealed by God. We hope and desire to be with our Lord for ever – this is our eternal *heaven*, our last and joyful end for which we strive. Into His heaven shall enter all who believe, repent, are justified and sanctified, through the ministry of the gospel. We believe also in an eternal *hell*, into which shall be cast those “who know not God, and obey not the gospel” of His Son, all who reject the message of grace and who prefer a life of sin to a course of holiness. We believe in “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone”, and in the “smoke of . . . torment [that] ascendeth up for ever and ever”.

But, finally, we believe in the future, and therefore unseen, *coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*. We look forward to this sure event with deep interest and with joyful expectation, and we call it “the day of the Lord”. Then shall this present system of things be finally concluded. Then shall our Lord Jesus Christ visibly appear in the clouds of heaven and in His Father’s glory. Then shall the whole world be assembled before Him and be judged by Him according to the state, good or bad, of every individual of the race. Then shall all hearers of the gospel be tried as to whether their hearing was of life unto life, or of death unto death.

Then shall all unsent ministers of the gospel, who served self and not Christ, be consigned to eternal infamy and unending torment; then shall His own true servants – called, sent, upheld and sealed by Him – be accepted, owned and blessed by their beloved Lord and be invited to enter into the joy of their Master. This *acceptance* shall not be personal only but *ministerial*; as ministers we shall be accepted *firstly* for the simple discharge of duty apart from all results – that is, without reference to the fact whether men believed us or not – and *secondly* in the fruits of our ministry, when we shall be enabled to present many or few of our hearers and say, Behold us, and the children whom Thou hast given us! These persons shall then be to us our “crown of rejoicing” in the presence of our Lord and Judge; and happy is the man who shall have his quiver filled with such in the great day of Christ’s coming! O how joyful will Paul and Peter and John and Philip the evangelist be; how happy will Wycliffe and Luther and Calvin and Knox be, and many such men even of our own day, the honoured servants of their Lord!

If there be evidence that any of you, my dear hearers, have been converted from sin or reclaimed from backsliding, brought to Christ or built up in Him, under my ministry, which is to close this day amongst you – if there be any such evidence, and I know there is – then all such persons are now my “rejoicing” on the day of our separation and shall be my “crown of rejoicing” on

the great and terrible day of the Lord, when we shall be for the last time all gathered together again. This is a matter on which it is surely pleasant to dwell. Let us then here wait for a little and inquire:

1. Who shall constitute our “crown of rejoicing”? This we need not discuss from our own observation, but scripturally. We need not go in quest of texts from the whole Bible; the Apostle himself furnishes us with the description of the very persons in the foregoing part of this epistle. Those described in the first and second chapters constitute the “crown of rejoicing”. Let us consider their characteristics in the order in which they occur.

Chapter 1:1. The Church. This is the general description of the body of believers in every place, the assembly of the disciples of Jesus, the company who maintain His ordinances, who love His salvation and seek His glory. The visible Church consists of all those who profess these things; the true Church consists of those who truly believe, seek and do what is Christian. The visible Church is the shell; the true Church the kernel – and the latter is that body, in this or any other congregation, which alone can become a “crown of rejoicing” to a gospel minister.

In God the Father. These persons stand in an intimate relation to God as their Father. They have been chosen, called, regenerated, justified and adopted by God. They are united to Him in filial love, the result of all His grace to them. They dwell in God as their refuge and their portion. They trust in Him with a filial affection, humble, sincere and ardent. They cry, “Abba, Father,” pouring forth their hearts before Him, and devolving all their cares on His covenant love and truth. Such persons are our joy.

In the Lord Jesus Christ. They have received Christ to be the Mediator of their salvation. They are thus united to Him, and His Spirit goes forth unto them and blesses them. They are sprinkled by the mediatorial blood and so released from the curse. They put on the mediatorial righteousness and stand accepted before God. Christ is their life and their joy and their glory. To them Jesus is precious. Are there not *some* such among you? They are my crown; for they love the Father and the Son, and are in Them by faith.

Verse 3. They manifest *the work of faith, the labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.* They have *faith* in Christ – the faith of the heart – believing His testimony and relying on Himself as revealed in the gospel. And this faith leads them to *work* for Christ, to be “a peculiar people, zealous of good works”. They are the subjects of *love*; they love Christ with a constraining love; they prefer His people to all people and they prefer Himself to His people; and they choose Him above everything else. Therefore they *labour* for His sake. They deny themselves to advance His glory; they would suffer all or do all, that He may be glorified. Faith may work, but love

will labour. *Hope* too dwells in them. Amidst all the trials of life and the dismal prospects of the flesh, they desire and expect something better than this world presents. In Christ Jesus they look for an “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away” – they hope to be with the Lord for ever. They therefore with *patience* endure all the chastening of the Lord and glory in all the tribulations inflicted for “righteousness’ sake”. Those who are our “crown of rejoicing” are a faithful, loving and hoping people; therefore they abound in work, labour and patience for their Redeemer’s sake. Have we none such amongst *us*?

Verse 5. The persons referred to in our text have received the gospel, *not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*. They felt the power of the gospel, as a message of grace from God delivered by man. They believed the truth, received the grace and were sanctified, gladdened and blessed by the gospel of Christ. It came to them *in the Holy Ghost* in His clear, self-evidencing light, to which they cheerfully yielded their sinful selves with child-like docility, desiring to become subjects of divine operation. *In much assurance*. They felt assured of the truth and divinity of the gospel, of the certainty of all its statements, of the all-sufficiency of Him who is its substance, and they thus closed with it for their individual salvation. May we not indeed hope that in this little flock there are some such, who are now a source of joy and will be hereafter a “crown of rejoicing”?

Verse 6. *Ye became followers of us and of the Lord*. Are there not some who, under that pastoral tie which is now about to be dissolved, became decided in their purpose to follow the Lord and to do and suffer His blessed will, whatever it may be? Are there not in this congregation some who within a few years past have been induced to join themselves to the saints of God, and who have chosen as their dearest friends those whom they once most hated? Have not some of them done so in much affliction, in the midst of reproach and taunting, and other annoyances “for the gospel’s sake?” Have not some among us declared that they have often, amidst heavy earthly trials, left this house of prayer rejoicing, glorying in their Saviour? And when they looked forward to the sad gloom of the approaching week, or even to the mournful uncertainties of remaining life, they were so lifted up by the spirit of grace that they did not care what might befall them. Thanks be to God that we have had among you some such witnesses to the excellency of truth and to the efficacy of the ministry of Christ.

But is it necessary to enlarge further on this pleasant topic? Is it as safe as it is pleasant? Suffice it to add that the persons to whom we refer, are truly *converted* persons (verses 9,10). They once were idolaters of themselves and

of the world; “the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life” were their trinity. Now they have wholly rejected these; their grand conflict in life is to prevent the return and restoration of these cursed idols. Now their business is to *serve God* with singleness of mind in all the paths of righteousness and peace and joy, and they desire to connect all their prospects of perfect bliss with the second coming of their Lord Jesus Christ. Having been blessed on earth already by His death and resurrection, they desire to be supremely blessed with Him in His exaltation and glory; and it is their earnest desire to be with the Lord for evermore.

Alas, alas, that such persons seem so few, so very few, among us; yet, we trust, there are some. A remnant is precious in God’s sight; so let it be in ours. If there be any that believe, love, obey, rejoice in, suffer for and live by the word of Christ – be they what they may in other respects – these are they that now make us happy in the day of our separation. As for some others before me, they are a sorrow and a burden this day before the Lord. And although my responsibility for them may cease for ever from this day, yet until life close I expect to have many a sad thought and to heave many a deep sigh at the remembrance of their unbelief or inconsistency. I may still pray for them, but I cannot teach them any more. The Lord convert them!

The Labourers in the Vineyard¹

W K Tweedie

What does the Lord Jesus mean to teach by this parable? We have here some more of the words of Him who knew all the counsel of God, and what are we to learn while He again opens up the mind of the Father to man?

The first thing is that the first labourers were hired at so much for the day, to begin from the early morning. About nine o’clock others went into the vineyard, and were to get “whatsoever is right”. At noon, and at three in the afternoon, other labourers were sent into the vineyard, and the bargain with them also was that they were to receive “whatsoever is right” for their labour – that at least. About the eleventh hour, moreover, that is just one hour before the end of the day, still others were sent to work, and the bargain with them also was that they should receive “whatsoever is right”.

Now, hitherto everything is easy to be understood. The difficulty begins when the hour of payment comes – when they who had begun to work at six o’clock in the morning and they who had not entered the vineyard till five

¹Taken, slightly edited, from Tweedie’s book, *Parables of Our Lord*, published in 1865. This article is based on Matthew 20:1-15. This is the last article in the series.

in the afternoon were all paid alike. Such conduct does seem strange. At first sight we scarcely wonder though some of the workmen murmured. It seems rather unjust, at least capricious, that those who have borne the scorching sun, and toiled through the weary hours, should get no more than those whose labour had been a pastime rather than a toil – a single hour of work in the cool of the evening,

How then do we explain this? The householder here mentioned is our Father who is in heaven. “There is no unrighteousness with Him”, and how are we to understand the present case?

It teaches, first, that not one of all God’s servants shall get less than justice. Everyone will get his due. Just as the men who began work the earliest got every farthing which they were promised, so God will give unto all according as their works shall be. Perfect equity will preside over all His decrees, and not one of all the children of men will be able to say, “I have been defrauded of one jot or one tittle of my due”. Some may get more than their due; none will get less.

But this parable also shows that, while all get their due, some get more. Equity reigns, but grace reigns also. The labourers who entered at different hours throughout the day got more than they could claim as a right. The householder was not only just — he was generous. He chose to manifest his bounty, and liberally rewarded them. And so the great Householder may bless the children of men beyond all that they can ask or think. He may open His hand and satisfy every want. All will then get their due at least, while some may get far more. God is sovereign, and surely He may do what He will with his own.

But next, some murmured because they did not get more than they had agreed to take. Because their employer chose to be generous, they appear to have thought that he was unjust. They complained against the householder, and challenged his procedure as not fair. In like manner some men murmur because the great God bestows His favours according to His own good pleasure, and not according to human plans. But “friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? . . . Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?” These questions settle all disputes. They are indeed unanswerable, and he must be both unreasonable and wicked who would say, “God may not do what He will with His own”, or, “God is bound to do to all men alike”. “I claim more than is due.”

There is a hoary-headed man. He has gone home to glory after three score years and ten of suffering here below. There is another. He was called away amid the activities of life, and while yet in the prime of his manhood and vigour. And there is a little child born but to die. He also is snatched away

from this heritage of woe to one of cloudless joy and perfect blessing. They are all assembled in their Father's house on high. Now, will any of these grudge the happiness of the rest? They are all saved, and shall the hoary-headed saint complain of the steep and upward path by which he climbed to glory, whereas the little one went home at a bound? Ah no, God's will is now supreme to them, and it would be the same even here, could we comprehend the good ways of God as we shall do hereafter.

In Persia, we may add, the same practice as this parable describes continues to our times, and a traveller there has told that in the market-place at Hamadan, he saw the usage vividly illustrated, in labourers waiting from hour to hour with their implements of toil, ready to commence when hired. It is well for us to be ready to enter upon the right path as soon as we are called, and always to remember that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

Instrumental Music¹

John Kennedy

The Committee appointed by the last General Assembly of the Free Church to consider the question of the propriety of introducing the use of instrumental music in the service of praise, have arrived, after ten months' deliberations, at three conclusions: 1. That it is *not unscriptural* – or, *that it is scriptural* – to sanction the innovation; 2. That it is not *unconstitutional* or ecclesiastically illegal to give liberty to congregations, when virtually unanimous, to adopt the use of sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals, or a “kist of whistles”, in conducting the praises of the sanctuary; 3. That it is *expedient* to grant liberty to Free Church congregations at once to have instruments if, with virtual unanimity, they so incline.

1. I know not on what grounds they base their first conclusion. But having made, to some extent, an independent study of the question, I am anxious to state the conclusion to which I myself have come, and the grounds on which I am prepared to support it. I do so now because it is not likely that the tenor of the Committee's report can be known before the Assembly meets; and I am anxious to furnish before then what I can in the way of aid to those who are interested in the question – in attaining acquaintance with the information to be derived from Scripture on the subject.

¹A response, dated 31 March 1883, by the then Free Church minister of Dingwall to the moves being made in his denomination to introduce instrumental music. It shows why, on scriptural grounds, there is no place for instrumental music in public worship in any age of the Church.

I can conceive three grades of opinion regarding the relation in which the question of instrumental music stands to Scripture. Some may hold it to be *scriptural* to use instrumental music in the service of praise, contenting themselves with referring to the use of it in the service of the temple under the Old Testament dispensation. Others may hold it to be *not unscriptural*, meaning that if it is not directly sanctioned as an adjunct of praise in New Testament times, it is not forbidden, and may therefore be introduced. Others still may hold that the use of it is *anti-scriptural*, as a thing forbidden by the Word of God. Among these last am I, and I now state the grounds on which I hold that opinion.

The grounds are these two: (1.) That the use of it was, by divine appointment, introduced into the symbolic service of the temple. (2.) That, in the directory given in New Testament Scripture for New Testament worship, it is not only omitted but excluded.

(1.) It must at once be conceded that instrumental music was used in the temple service. But, as to the mode of its introduction and as to the authority for the use of it, there is a division of opinion. There are some who insist that the use of it was introduced by David, merely because he himself was a great musician and judged that the use of instruments would make the service of praise more impressive, and that God sanctioned the introduction though He did not originate it. From this baseless assumption an argument is drawn in favour of the adoption of instrumental music now. Even supposing, they say, that the Lord did not propose the rise of instrumental music in New Testament service, may He not be expected to do as He did before, in sanctioning the introduction of it by those who desire it?

There are others who think that the introduction of instrumental music into the temple service was suggested to David by God, that it became part of the stated ritual *according to divine authority* as surely as the ordering of sacrifice; and that as all the temple service was typical, this was so, as all besides; and that it was therefore one of the “carnal ordinances” which were to continue only to “the time of reformation”. The proof of this latter position is not difficult; it is furnished by those pages of the Old Testament Scriptures which refer to the introduction of the use of instrumental music and to the relation in which it stands to David and to God.

In 2 Samuel 22:1, David is declared to be “the sweet Psalmist of Israel”. This designation indicates his position in relation to the service of praise in the temple and belonged to him as that of the lawgiver of Israel belonged to Moses. The connection of David with the temple service of praise is in 2 Chronicles 23:18 placed on the same footing of authority as the connection of Moses with the service of sacrifice: “Jehoiadah appointed the offices of

the house of the Lord by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the Lord, *to offer the burnt offerings of the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David*". And it is evident from 1 Chronicles 28:12-13 that David ordained the "rejoicing and singing" as an accompaniment of the sacrificial work *under divine guidance*. For it is there declared that "David gave to Solomon . . . the pattern of all that he had *by the spirit* for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the Lord, and for *all the vessels of service* in the house of the Lord".

If he had "by the spirit" a pattern according to which he arranged the courses of the priests and Levites, that pattern extended to the appointment of a course of Levites for the use of instrumental music. This, with all besides, connected with the temple service, "the Lord", said David, "made me understand in writing by His hand upon me". And the very instruments, to be employed by these, are repeatedly declared to be "of God", as surely as they are said to be "of David" (1 Chr 16:42, 2 Chr 7:6). There is therefore no reason to doubt that the use of instrumental music was ordained by David according to the command, and under the direction of, God.

But it is quite as evident that it was introduced into the temple service as a part of its symbolical ritual. We cannot wonder that, in the immediate view of the erection of the temple by David the King, whose son the Messiah was promised to be, there should have been appointed by God, and given to Israel, a pronounced form of praise and thanksgiving. Appended to sacrificing there, we might expect a special service of praise, the matter of which, in the "everlasting kingdom" of Messiah "the Prince of Peace", was to find its fullest illustration in the reign of him by whom the temple was to be built.

Can we wonder then that Messiah's first crowned ancestor, who was also to be His type, should have been appointed the Psalmist of Israel and should have been honoured to provide both for the building of the temple and for the service to be conducted in it? But he received authority from God to act in this matter only in connection with the service of the temple. Therefore we find that only Levites were appointed to the service of praising by the use of instruments, and their work was, according to that appointment, associated with the sacrificial service of the priests. This form of praise was to accompany the offering of sacrifice according to the law of Moses. It was therefore part of the symbolic ritual which embraced all temple service, and therefore formed one of the "carnal ordinances" which were to continue only "till the time of reformation". This, with all types and shadows besides, was done away in Christ. As well, therefore, introduce into the worship of the New Testament the shedding and the sprinkling of blood, and the burning of slain

victims on an altar, as the use of instrumental music in the service of praise.

Let no one venture to say that the use of a musical instrument is a matter of no moment. It was introduced for a temporary purpose by a special revelation from God, and ought not thereafter to be regarded as a matter of indifference. And the more certain we are of its having been divinely appointed *as a symbol* and “*till the time of reformation*”, the more guilty they appear who, after that time has passed and God has laid it aside, attempt to find for it a place in the worship of the New Testament Church.

There is no force in the objection that instrumental music was occasionally used before the temple was built, and specially that it was used by David himself before he received the pattern of the temple and of its service from God. This was quite as true, yea more abundantly true, of sacrifice, and yet there can be no warrant for going back to the antediluvian and patriarchal instances of offering sacrifice to justify the slaying of victims now. No more can the occasional use of instrumental music, before its authorised introduction into the temple service, furnish any warrant for the use of it now. Both the occasional sacrifice and the occasional musical performance had a symbolical meaning, and without this neither had ever found a place in the ritual of the temple worship. The previous use of it by David in connection with worship, *associated it with the ark of the covenant and with sacrifice*, and thus made it such that it cannot be a precedent which may be followed in New Testament times. And David’s way of responding to the musical performance, on the occasion of bringing up the ark, must be adopted along with the use of an instrument if we are to follow the example then set. We can have no right to introduce the organ without the accompaniment of the *dance*, if the use of musical instruments by David, before its authorised introduction into the temple service, is the precedent by which we are to be guided.

Thus, the more certain it is that instrumental music was part of the temple service, and that its introduction was by divine appointment, the more manifestly illegitimate is the attempt to introduce it into the service of praise in the New Testament Church.

(2.) What says the New Testament Scripture on the subject of instrumental music? Is there anything there which seems to be in favour of it? Or is there any principle there laid down with which it would be utterly inconsistent, or according to which it may be regarded as legitimate? And what instruction may be derived from all these which is relevant to the subject?

There have been a few adventurous enough to affirm that there are some things in the New Testament Scripture that seem to favour the introduction of instrumental music. And the two somethings are: [1.] That there is a word used to describe the exercise of praise which means to play on a musical

instrument! The word referred to occurs in Ephesians 5:19, and is rendered “making melody”, and that this is a legitimate translation is evident, for if the literal rendering were adopted, we would have to read the passage thus: playing on an instrument “in your heart to the Lord”. That sane men should use an argument of this kind is sufficient proof of the desperateness of the cause which they advocate – if the men are sane who have recourse to a thing like this, that must be more than can be said of what they desire to establish. [2.] The second something is that, in the Apocalypse, some of the inhabitants of heaven are described as “harpers harping with their harps”. If I had not indubitable proof of the fact, I could not believe that any minister of any Church in Christendom could use this as an argument for the use of instrumental music in the Church on earth. But so it is; and what more can be needed to show that there can be nothing found in the New Testament to justify the insane clamour for organs.

The truth is that these passages teach this, and only this: that in the New Testament Church on earth there should be a service of praise, having in it the spiritual import of the symbolical service of the temple, and that this spirituality of praise shall be perfectly realized in heaven.

2. Is there any principle laid down in New Testament Scripture with which the use of instrumental music would be utterly inconsistent, or according to which it may be regarded as legitimate? It is to me utterly inconceivable how anyone can pretend to find there any general principle enunciated or implied which admits of the introduction of instrumental music. Someone, in trying to find an argument in favour of this innovation, after resolving to do what he could to secure its adoption, laid down the principle as one that could admit of no dispute regarding its validity, that as the Lord should be served in the best possible way, the use of aught that tended to make the musical performance in the service of praise more perfect was perfectly legitimate.

But this principle was found among the cobwebs of his own brain and not in the record of the New Testament. If the service of praise were an altogether heartless and graceless thing, if it consisted entirely in what reached the ears of men, one could quite understand that there was an approach to common sense in the statement and application of such a principle. But if the service of praise be rendered to God, and rendered from grace in the heart, then it is manifest that all that tends to distract attention from the state of the heart, and to interfere with the aim of pleasing God, is a hindrance rather than a help. Will anyone say it is to perfect or increase his ability to render service that would be acceptable to God that he seeks the help of an organ, or that he can accept “the kist of whistles” as an answer to his cry for help to praise the Lord? And yet this is the one general principle which can be stated as

bearing favourably on the use of organs. But where is there one syllable in New Testament Scripture of direction to take help from whistles and bellows in the worship of God, or any principle stated according to which this would be legitimate?

But there is a principle, laid down in the New Testament Scripture, with which the use of instrumental music in the worship of God is altogether inconsistent – the spirituality of the New Testament dispensation. The whole Old Testament ritual is declared to consist of “*carnal* ordinances imposed on them” of old, “until the time of reformation”. In its spirituality the New Testament form of worship must present a contrast. Indeed, it is in the mode of worship that the great revolution was to be effected. All that merely constituted shadow was to pass away, because He who was “the truth and the life” had come and had finished the work given Him to do. But all was shadow that was symbolic or typical in the former mode of worship, and was therefore utterly done away in Christ. Nothing but the spiritual import of the temple service was to remain; the whole form or mode of it passed utterly away. Can it be disputed that this was the result of the death of Christ and can there, without reproach being cast on Him and exception being taken to the work which He finished, be a retention or restoration of aught of what it was His design to displace, by His glorious self and by the ministration of the Spirit and by worship “in spirit and in truth”?

3. What instruction may be derived from all that is relevant to this subject in the New Testament Scripture? Of course it is in New Testament Scripture we must find the directory for New Testament worship. The worship regarding which minute instructions were given in Old Testament Scripture was that of the temple, which was throughout symbolic or typical and which was therefore entirely displaced. For the new worship, with its spiritual simplicity, we must therefore have a new directory. This can only be given us in the inspired record. It is there, and only there, that there is any authoritative guidance in worship. The Lord is not less careful now than of old, as to how His service is to be performed.

True, we may not expect the same prominence, and extent and minuteness of instruction regarding the mode of conducting service as of old. In those days the teaching was done by the service, and was addressed to the eye rather than to the ear. The typical character of the worship involved this, and therefore there must be the most minute directions given as to how it is to be conducted. Hence the large portion of the Old Testament Scripture covered with the rules of the service, as well as with the specification of the structure in which the service was to be performed. All this was the preaching of the gospel to the men of old and contained a symbolic representation of the spirit-

ual attainments and exercise of the saints. They were taught through the eye how alone a sinner can be justified, and shown how the justified must be the saints of God. A ritual with so ample and gracious a design must be most minutely indicated. It represented the God of Israel and His Lamb; it told how he could be the God of salvation, it instructed His people as to how they could be justified, and it directed them how, as saints, they should walk in the fear of the Lord.

Let us not therefore approach to think that there is too much in the Old Testament regarding the way in which tabernacle or temple service was to be conducted. Under the New Testament dispensation there is to be no preaching in the *mode* of conducting worship. The teaching is all done *by the word*. Epistles after Gospels, one Gospel after another, and one Epistle after another, we have for the instruction of the Church; but in these we have, amidst much spiritual doctrine, sufficient direction as to the simple worship of New Testament times.

As to the service of praise, we are taught with sufficient distinctness, and in repeated declarations, that it was to be *singing*. Again and again this is plainly indicated. This the simple form of expressing praise in the New Testament Church, according to New Testament Scripture. Regarding this there need be no dubiety – “he may run that readeth” this. What words can be more explicit than these: “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, *the fruit of our lips*, giving thanks to His name?” If any man asks the question, What is the sacrifice of praise in New Testament times? the plain answer of inspired Scripture is, “*the fruit of our lips*”. And this really settles the whole question. The Lord hath spoken, and how distinctly! And this should be enough to every Christian man and to every Christian Church.

This plain directory is in exact accordance with the example of the Lord, who by His Spirit gave it to His Church. We know that He by His presence countenanced, and by His voice took part, in a service of praise. Though His fellowship in the song is matter of inference, His presence, while His disciples sang, is directly stated. Such is the example of our Lord, confirming His instruction, and, putting both together, surely we have in these enough to assure us that the practice of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland for three centuries, in conducting the service of praise, was well founded and cannot be abandoned without our turning aside from both the precept and example of Him whom we profess to be our King

With the example of their Master, accorded the practice of the Apostles. This no one can deny. If they were sent “two and two”, one of them was not appointed to be a musical performer. They had, in the Word of God, the gift

of speech, the grace of God in their hearts, and their Master's gracious presence, and water, bread, and wine – all that was required in any place and at any time, for performing the whole work of the ministry to which they were appointed.

And with the example of Christ and with the practice of His apostles accorded the mode in which the service of praise was conducted in the early Christian Church. There were among the Jewish converts some who wished to continue the rite of circumcision and to “observe days, and months, and times, and years,” but no one among them, so far as we can know, proposed either the continuance of sacrifice or of instrumental music. Both these had been so connected, and had been carried on so exclusively by the officials of the Jewish Church, that the idea of continuing either, or of resuscitating the one without the other, seems never to have been entertained.

It required a course of decline extending over centuries to produce the corruption out of which the desire for instrumental music could spring up in the Church. It arose like a fungus, which is propagated out of decay. It was the influence of the social festival and of the concert and of the theatre, introduced through unfaithful discipline into the Church and allowed to spread its blighting chill throughout it, which procured the decay that furnished the soil out of which this carnality in worship sprung. The practice thus introduced continued till another “time of reformation” came – the Reformation from Popery. No thoroughly-reformed Church adopted the use of instrumental music. Some so-called reformed Churches, which retained some of the doctrine and government and ritual of the Roman Church, retained the use of organs, but they did so only because they were but half reformed. Thus was it with the Church of England. How could she, with her bishops and archbishops, and baptismal regeneration and saint's days, and surplices and altars, be without her organs? This was a natural appendage to all that carnal stuff which she carried into her new position. The instruments and the altars must go together, as they did of old.

But no sound of an organ was heard for three centuries in the Reformed Church in Scotland, nor in any other Church in Christendom that deserved that name, till a process of decline had commenced. What would, in the best days of the Church of Scotland, have been thought of the proposal to introduce organs into her places of worship? What would Knox, Henderson, Melville, Guthrie, Rutherford, Gillespie, Dickson, John Love, Andrew Thompson, Thomas Chalmers, William Cunningham, James Buchanan, John Duncan, Robert Candlish have done, if such a proposal had been mooted in their days? Grant liberty to congregations to have organs, if they so inclined? As soon, said the last of these, and he spoke for all the others, allow the slaying

and offering of sacrifices in our Churches. No, it required a very different class of men to make and to countenance such a proposal – men to make it, who desire the aesthetic rather than the spiritual, and men to countenance it who are guided by policy rather than the Word of God, who are ambitious of pleasing men that they may lead them, rather than anxious to please God that they may not cease to walk in the light of His face.

The Holy Garments¹

Henry Law

If ever eyes beheld an object in which splendour shone, it was the high priest in his holy garments. God planned each part “for glory and for beauty”. Hence every brilliant colour sparkled. Hence richest jewels cast back dazzling rays. The rainbow’s varied hues, the sun’s meridian light, seemed to concentrate in a human form. Earth brought her best. Art framed them with a Spirit-given skill.

Reader, such is the figure to which these pages would now invite your gaze. But you will look in vain if you see nothing but the costly robes. Here is delight for faith’s enraptured heart. Jesus is here. What is beauty, but His form, His grace, His work? What is glory, but His manifested sight? This workmanship would never have seen birth, except to show His all-surpassing worth. Spirit of Truth look down! We long for a clearer view of the Lord. It is Thy sovereign province to display Him. Cause then these holy garments to fulfil their office.

First, there was the inmost coat. Its texture was of finest linen (Ex 28:39). It covered the whole frame. It clothed the arms and flowed down to the ground. It thus showed purity from head to foot. Do any ask: Where can such full-length purity be found? The gospel answers by revealing Christ. He is one blaze of spotless righteousness. This truth is the firm pedestal of all our hopes. If one defect had touched Him, He must have brought atonement for Himself. But, being sinless, He can take the sinner’s place. He hangs a sinless body on the cross. He gives a sinless soul to bear God’s wrath. Thus wrath is satisfied. The snow-white garment exhibits too the righteousness which Christ wrought out on earth. His active obedience covers the whole surface of the law. Heaven’s palace must have heaven-pure garments. Christ weaves them. Christ bestows them. Faith takes them and is thus made fit for the throne of God.

Reader, think well; you must sink low in hell, unless a righteous Saviour

¹Taken, with slight editing, from Law’s *The Gospel in Exodus*. He is writing on the verse: “Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty” (Ex 28:2).

cleanse your guilt. You cannot stand before God's eye, unless you face Him righteous as He is righteous. You cannot breathe in heaven, unless a newborn nature love its holy atmosphere. The hands of Jesus hold out all this mercy to you. His holy blood is perfect expiation. His full obedience may be your royal robe. His Spirit can impart all grace. Behold the High Priest in this inner garment and let its snow-white hue teach you these truths.

The coat was tightly fastened by a girdle. To gird the loins was to prepare for toil. Activity is thus ensured. This sign then shows our Jesus equipped for all the labours of redeeming service. It was no light task to save souls. Mountains of difficulty must be overcome. Untiring strength must be put forth. He meets each foe. He clears each obstacle. He rests not till the path from earth to heaven is free. Yet He will work until His flock is safely gathered home. He worked on earth because He greatly loved. He works in heaven because He loves as greatly.

Reader, see Jesus all activity to save. He never flags nor loiters nor desists. One thing He does. He girds His loins for labour. Are you as earnest to be saved? Are you as active to seek Him? Are you as zealous to serve His cause? His persevering zeal should shame man's listless indolence. His girdle is a reproach to our ungirded loins.

Above the coat a robe was placed (Ex 28:31). In measure it was less. It had no covering for the arms. It scarcely reached below the knees. But its chief difference was its lovely hue and the magnificence of the bordering hem. The colour was pure blue. It thus reflected the clear canopy of heaven. The high priest ministered in a sky-blue robe. Thus Jesus brings all heaven to our thought. Heaven is in His every word. His hands extend the gift of heaven. To see Him now is heaven begun. To be with Him for ever is heaven complete. Faith knows no heaven but Him.

Reader, see Jesus as your High Priest in azure robe and you will die to earth, and earth will die to you. A brighter scene will win you to love brighter things. This robe had a rich fringe. Its hem was a broad belt of pomegranates and golden bells. These pomegranates were richly worked in purple, blue and scarlet. Of all the fruits, this is most rich in seed. Therefore it is a fit emblem of luxuriant shoots. Here Jesus is portrayed, as the "Everlasting Father" of a countless race. His blood is sown on earth; a harvest of saved souls springs up. Mark the crowds who throng the throne of glory. They all are produce of redeeming love. Mark all who in the wilderness of earth show signs of new-imparted being. They all derive existence from one stem; they all are fruit of one regenerating Spirit. We see the ornamented edge, and we adore the truth: "So shall thy seed be" (Gen 15:5).

The pomegranates were intermingled with golden bells. The high priest

could not stir but melody announced that he was near. Israel's sons found special comfort in this ordinance. Their high priest passed the veil. He stood before the ark. It was a solemn moment. The spot was terrible in awe. The thought might rise: Can man draw near to symbols of God's glory and not die? But a sweet note lulls all such fears to rest. The golden bells are heard. All hearts rejoiced. The high priest faced the mercy seat and yet he lived. The golden bells still sound. Faith is no stranger to their voice. Jesus indeed is no more seen by mortal sense. The heavens hide Him. He prosecutes His work before an unseen throne. And there He lives. The proof is clear and sweet as music from the golden bells. Each tender whisper of His love, each soothing application of His word, each sweet assurance of unfailing care, are sounds which evidence that Jesus lives. The golden bells for ever ring the joyful tidings: "Because I live, ye shall live also". Believer, look often to the fringe of the blue robe. Jesus is there, the fruitful author of your every grace. Jesus is there, assuring you that He lives to give you life.

The ephod was next added (Ex 28:6). This was a tunic, shorter in form than the preceding robe. But while the robe was simple in one azure shade, this was all radiant in diversity of hue. They shall make it, said the Lord, "of gold, of blue, of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work". Each brought its choicest produce. Art used its utmost effort. The meaning is most clear. We thus are taught that all rare graces are combined in Christ. His person, which is God and man; His work, which fills all heaven with glory; His tender dealings; His loving heart; His faithful truth; these are the perfection of all charms. None ever see true beauty till Christ appears in His salvation's robes.

Two shoulder-pieces fixed it. No common skill prepared them. Sockets of gold were formed. In each an onyx stone was placed. These stones were graven with the names of Israel's tribes. O my soul, what streams of comfort issue from this sight! Your name, your very name appears on high, uplifted on the shoulders of your Lord. How then can foes work harm? They may assail; they will assail. But you are high above their reach. Can they scale heaven? The thought is folly. Yet they must lay Christ low before they can touch you. Your seat is safety. Your prop is Deity. Rejoice, be glad. High is your Lord; are you less high? Thus, weak in yourself, you soar above all peril, and sit as more than conqueror on the eminence of Almightyness.

Rich is this comfort. But the Lord of comfort yet gives more. It is His will that joy unspeakable should fill His people's souls. A breastplate therefore is inserted in this ephod's front. No words can show its matchless splendour. Upon a ground richly embroidered like the ephod, 12 precious jewels were set. Each glittering stone exhibited the name of one of Israel's tribes. This

work is all arranged to prove how dearly Jesus loves His own. The world may scorn them as the vilest dust. But Jesus guards them as His choicest treasure and puts them on as the delight of His delights. Redeemed souls are His chief ornament. He wears them on His heart.

Believer, look to Christ. Mark, He displays His very heart. What read you there? Your name! Your very name! Do you ask, And can He love me? Surely the manger, the garden and the cross are proof. But lest such evidence should not suffice, His front is shown as a scroll written with your name. Be then persuaded. His life is love for you. His heart has never been, and never will be, without your image. You dwell entwined amid affection's fibres. Your High Priest ever wears this precious breastplate. He ever shows your name before God's throne. You are the inseparable portion of His breast.

This is not all. The breastplate holds more wondrous treasure yet. But here is mystery which we cannot scan. We know, and it is much to know, that the Urim and Thummim were adjoined. The meaning of the terms is clear. Their voice is "light and perfection". Their holy use is also known. By means of these the Lord revealed His will and gave responses to the consulting priest. The gospel of the ordinance is likewise clear. Christ is our light. He is our full perfection. Do we need wisdom? Do we seek guidance? We may draw near. From His heart pure light will shine. Do we mourn that imperfection cleaves to us as our very skin? He only can relieve. His blood, His righteousness, His Spirit, His dealings are perfect and make perfect. Reader, seek Christ, and light is yours. Seek Christ and all perfection is your portion. Our Urim and our Thummin are His smile.

The Holy Garments are not yet complete. The head must now receive its crowning grace. For this a mitre is prepared. Fair linen is the substance. A belt of blue surrounds it. On this a golden plate is fixed. And then the glorious name, "Holiness to the Lord", shines forth (Ex 28:36). My soul, look up to heaven. Jesus there ministers to consummate salvation. What is it that His front declares? "Holiness to the Lord." Adore Him, for such is His just title. His person is "holiness to the Lord". Unspotted purity is His essence. If it were otherwise, He could not take a Saviour's place. His work is "holiness to the Lord". He came to sanctify Himself, so that He might do His Father's will. His blood, His righteousness, His prayers are "holiness to the Lord". His people, in their souls, their walk and their ways, are "holiness to the Lord". He found them sinners. He made them holy. He gave them new hearts, new lives, to be for ever "holiness to the Lord".

Such is our robed High Priest. Is He not glory? Is He not beauty? Who will not love Him? Who will not praise Him? Who will not pray, Glorify me in Thy glory; beautify me in Thy beauty?

The High Dignity of the Lord Jesus¹

J C Ryle

These verses begin one of the most deep and solemn passages in the four Gospels. They show us the Lord Jesus asserting His own divine nature, His unity with God the Father, and the high dignity of His office. Nowhere does our Lord dwell so fully on these subjects as in the chapter before us. And nowhere, we must confess, do we find out so thoroughly the weakness of man's understanding! There is much, we must all feel, that is far beyond our comprehension in our Lord's account of Himself. Such knowledge, in short, is too wonderful for us. "It is high: we cannot attain unto it" (Ps 139:6). How often men say that they want clear explanations of such doctrines as the Trinity. Yet here we have our Lord handling the subject of His own Person and, behold, we cannot follow Him! We seem only to touch His meaning with the tip of our fingers.

We learn, for one thing, from the verses before us, that *there are some works which it is lawful to do on the Sabbath Day*. The Jews, as on many other occasions, found fault because, on the Sabbath, Jesus healed a man who had been ill for 38 years. They charged our Lord with a breach of the Fourth Commandment.

Our Lord's reply to the Jews is very remarkable: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I [also] work". It is as though He said: "Though my Father rested on the seventh day from His work of creation, He has never rested for a moment from His providential government of the world and from His merciful work of supplying the daily wants of all His creatures. Were He to rest from such work, the whole frame of nature would stand still. And I also work works of mercy on the Sabbath Day. I do not break the Fourth Commandment when I heal the sick, any more than my Father breaks it when He causes the sun to rise and the grass to grow on the Sabbath."

We must distinctly understand that, neither here nor elsewhere, does the Lord Jesus overthrow the obligation of the Fourth Commandment. Neither here nor elsewhere is there a word to justify the vague assertions of some modern teachers, that "Christians ought not to keep a Sabbath" and that it is "a Jewish institution which has passed away". The utmost that our Lord does is to place the claims of the Sabbath on the right foundation. He clears the day of rest from the false and superstitious teaching of the Jews about the right way of observing it. He shows us clearly that works of necessity and works of mercy are no breach of the Fourth Commandment.

¹An extract from *Expository Thoughts on John*, vol 1. Ryle is here commenting on John 5:16-23. All his seven volumes on the Gospels are available from the F P Bookroom.

After all, the errors of Christians on this subject in these latter days are of a very different kind from those of the Jews. There is little danger of men keeping the Sabbath too strictly. The thing to be feared is the disposition to keep it loosely and partially, or not to keep it at all. The tendency of the age is not to exaggerate the Fourth Commandment, but to cut it out of the Decalogue and throw it aside altogether. Against this tendency it becomes us all to be on our guard. The experience of eighteen centuries supplies abundant proofs that vital religion never flourishes when the Sabbath is not well kept.

We learn, for another thing, from these verses, *the dignity and greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The Jews, we are told, sought to kill Jesus because He said “that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God”. Our Lord in reply, on this special occasion, enters very fully into the question of His own divine nature. In reading His words, we must all feel that we are reading mysterious things and treading on very holy ground. But we must feel a deep conviction, however little we may understand, that the things He says could never have been said by one who was only man. The Speaker is nothing less than “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim 3:16).

He asserts His own unity with God the Father. No other reasonable meaning can be put on the expressions: “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.” Such language, however deep and high, appears to mean that, in operation and knowledge and heart and will, the Father and the Son are One – two Persons, but one God. Truths such as these are of course beyond man’s power to explain particularly. Enough for us to believe and rest upon them.

He asserts, in the next place, His own Divine power to give life. He tells us: “The Son quickeneth whom He will”. Life is the highest and greatest gift that can be bestowed. It is precisely the thing that man, with all his cleverness, can neither give to the work of his hands, nor restore when taken away. But life, we are told, is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, to bestow and give at His discretion. Dead bodies and dead souls are both alike under His dominion. He has the keys of death and hell. In Him is life. He is the life (John 1:4, Rev 1:18).

He asserts, in the last place, His own authority to judge the world. The Father, we are told, “hath committed all judgement unto the Son”. All power and authority over the world is committed to Christ. He is the King and the Judge of mankind. Before Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. He that was once despised and rejected of man, con-

demned and crucified as a malefactor, shall one day hold a great assize and judge all the world. “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Rom 2:16). And now let us think whether it is possible to make too much of Christ in our religion. If we have ever thought so, let us cast aside the thought for ever. Both in His own nature as God and in His office as commissioned Mediator, He is worthy of all honour. He that is one with the Father – the Giver of life, the King of kings, the coming Judge – can never be too much exalted. “He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent Him.”

If we desire salvation, let us lean our whole weight on this mighty Saviour. So leaning, we never need be afraid. Christ is the rock of ages, and he that builds on Him shall never be confounded – neither in sickness, nor in death, nor on the judgement day. The hand that was nailed to the cross is almighty. The Saviour of sinners is “mighty to save” (Is 63:1).

Protestant View

The Pope and Peace on Earth

At recent masses in Rome, the Pope has deplored war and called for a new world order. “Too much blood is still being shed on earth,” he said at one mass. “Too much violence and too many conflicts trouble the peaceful co-existence of nations.” Fine words indeed. At another mass he declared, “More than ever, we need a new international order that draws on the experience and results achieved in these years by the United Nations” – a statement that has been taken to mean that he wants the UN replaced because it did not prevent the use of force by the United States in Iraq.

His call for a new world order has been described by one commentator as “one of the most important diplomatic initiatives” of his pontificate, and as “likely to turn into a key cause” as it draws towards a close. With observer status at the UN and a network of diplomats covering 174 countries, the Vatican is in a strong position to pursue its objective.

However, we do not for a moment believe that these statements mean that there has been a change in the Vatican’s centuries-old policy of fomenting and supporting wars. Its role in the rise of the two World Wars is now part of recorded history. And its hand has been clearly seen in other wars since then – in Vietnam, for example. “The [Roman] Catholic Church,” wrote Avro Manhattan, “must be considered as a main promoter in the origin, escalation and prosecution of the Vietnamese conflict.” The present Pope complains that too much blood is being shed, but shedding of much blood is a crime laid at

the door of the papal Antichrist by both Scripture and history. Edmond Paris records that in 1948 an Italian Member of Parliament exclaimed in a speech, “The Pope’s hands are dripping with blood!”

As for a new world order, it requires no stretching of the imagination to see that the kind of geo-political body envisaged by the Vatican is one in which it will be the major player, to extend its power to every corner of the earth. Certainly there will eventually be a new world order, but of a spiritual kind, instituted by the glorious King of kings. We are therefore to pray, “Thy Kingdom come” – and this necessarily includes the petition that God will destroy that masterpiece of Satan, the papacy, by the “word of His mouth”, liberating the multitudes duped by it. NMR

A Crucial Step in the Ascending Power of the European Union

Slowly but surely the modern-day Holy Roman Empire, the European Union, tightens its hold over its member states. Among the latest steps is the implementation of the EU Arrest Warrant, which came into force on January 1 in eight of the 15 member nations, including Britain.

As the British Church Newspaper reports, “a British citizen can now find himself extradited to a foreign country for actions which are not crimes in Britain. If a foreign judicial official fills in a tick-box form claiming that the citizen is suspected of having committed a crime, a British magistrate now has no legal alternative but to order that person’s immediate arrest and subsequent delivery to a prison in that country. The Warrant thus abolishes the legal requirement, which existed until this year, that a person requesting the arrest of a British citizen had to prove they had sufficient evidence to justify an arrest – that is, a *prima facie* case.”

It is of concern that the extradition procedure will probably apply to the publishing of material which asserts that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation, or argues against the errors of other religions, or condemns certain sinful lifestyles. This concern is based on the fact that among the listed offences is “xenophobia”, which is defined as holding “religion or belief . . . as factors determining aversion to individuals or groups”. This offence is stated to include “the public dissemination or distribution of tracts or other material containing expressions of xenophobia”.

As we view this very significant stage in the progress of the EU, we do not lose sight of the fact that Rome is operating at the very heart of the Union, despite differences between the Vatican and secular forces in Europe. It seems to us that we are seeing a fulfilment of J A Wylie’s prediction of more than 100 years ago in his work on *The Papacy*: “Europe is not wide enough to hold both the old Papacy and the young Democracy; and one or other must go to the wall. . . . [The Papacy] must become the living, dominant Papacy once

more. In order that it may exist, it must reign. We may therefore expect to witness some combined and vigorous attempt on the part of Popery to recover its former dominion." Plainly, that attempt is being made with tireless vigour.

However much more power Rome may regain, it is encouraging that the day is fast approaching when it will be proclaimed that not only the nations of Europe, but also "the kingdoms of this world, are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev 11:15). NMR

Notes and Comments

No Easy Way out

The notorious Dr Harold Shipman has died after being found hanging in his prison cell. He was jailed for life in January 2000 for murdering 15 patients but it is believed that he killed at least 215 people and maybe as many as 260. A relative of one of his victims has commented: "This seems like an easy way out for him. He never showed any compassion or any guilt."

One can understand the desire on the part of the relatives for some expression of regret from the murderer, but it must be stressed, especially in the face of the contemporary refusal to believe in the reality of eternity, that suicide is not "an easy way out". Shipman has now gone to face his Maker, from whom no sin can be hidden. It is a solemn matter for any sinner to appear before God if he is not under the shelter of the blood of Christ, but it is a particularly solemn matter for one responsible for the deaths of so many, who were under his care as a medical practitioner. One cannot believe that anyone in a lost eternity will feel the least degree of compassion for those they have sinned against, but they will most certainly feel the guilt of their sins before God for ever. How necessary for everyone – including those who are not guilty of serious *crimes* – to flee at once to Christ!

Anglican Reform?

An article recently drawn to our attention from the *Daily Telegraph* reports on proposals by a working party of the House of Bishops to secure conformity to church law by the clergy. Concerns range from the denial by Anglican ministers of doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation to the failure of many of them to conform to regulations regarding the proper "vestments" to wear and the number of daily services to be held. These have led the working party to propose the imposition of "an unequivocal public oath to uphold Church law" and the creation of new courts to try those "alleged to have erred on doctrine, ritual or ceremonial". The proposed new tribunals, described by the journalist as "heresy courts", would be chaired by an independent lawyer,

and consist of “three bishops, two members of the clergy and two lay people”. They would be advised “by a panel of theologians selected to reflect a range of opinions”. The working party made clear that discipline over doctrine would be “rare and exceptional” but that there needed to be “boundaries of permissibility”.

It is not clear from the article whether the working party’s concern over vestments is that vestments with Romish implications are being worn, or that prescribed priestly vestments are not being worn. At the time of the Reformation, Bishop John Hooper contended that priestly vestments were not among things indifferent which might be tolerated in the Church but belonged to the “rituals of Aaron . . . annulled in Christ”. The compromise of leaders of the English Reformation on this matter was symptomatic of the failure of the Anglican Church to implement the regulative principle, which resulted in the Church of England becoming a Reformation Church with which Rome has always considered bridge-building most promising.

It is difficult to envisage what the “boundaries of permissibility” can be with regard to doctrine. The article recalls that, in a recent survey of 2000 of the Church’s 10 000 clerics, a third doubted or disbelieved the physical resur-rection and only half were convinced of the truth of the virgin birth. Another recent article reported the experience of a Roman Catholic who decided for once to attend “midnight mass” on “Christmas Eve” in his local Anglican Church in West Norwood and found that it was more traditionally Romanist than what he was used to. *The Scotsman* of 26 December 2003 reported that “an ecumenical message from the Archbishop of Canterbury has urged Christians, Jews and Muslims to stand together against an increasingly secular society. . . . He also made a call for multi-faith unity, saying: ‘All our great religious traditions say something of this – which is one reason for Christians, Muslims, Jews and others to stand with each other and speak out for each other in times of stress or harassment’.”

The inclusiveness of the Church of England is what accounts for the difficulty which the *Telegraph* article (and no doubt the Church of England also) finds with the definition of heresy. The article refers, though inaccurately, to the highly significant case of Rev G C Gorham, whom the Bishop of Exeter in 1847 refused to admit to a charge in his diocese because Gorham, a Calvinist, denied baptismal regeneration, which the bishop claimed to be the doctrine of the Church of England. The ecclesiastical courts upheld the bishop, but the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, to which Gorham appealed, concluded that the standards of the Church of England did not exclude Gorham’s position. This was a major factor in the decision of Anglican Archdeacon Henry Manning to move to Rome, later becoming a cardinal.

This was not, however, the last heresy case, as the article claims. Apart

from anything since, there was the case of Rev G A Denison, an Anglican Archdeacon who was, as a result of legal processes between 1854 and 1858, deprived of his charge on account of Romanising views of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, but was eventually acquitted on a technicality. These conflicting outcomes in the Tractarian-Evangelical controversy and the acceptance in subsequent decades of liberal views of Scripture, and of doctrine generally, were significant aspects of the trend towards the present pluralism of the Church of England which makes the definition of heresy and the disciplining of heretics in a Biblical sense a remote prospect.

The situation of the Church of England is a solemn reminder to all ecclesiastical bodies of the absolute necessity of maintaining and acting on thoroughly Biblical Reformation principles in every area of church life. As far as human means are concerned, this is the way to preserve church life and practice from the inevitable downgrade resultant upon human corruption, and to reform it when that downgrade has taken place: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20). *HMC*

The Wicked Honoured and Sin Promoted

Among the newspaper articles on the Queen's New Year Honours list, some commented on people who refused an honour, and others criticised the giving of honours to certain entertainment figures as a trivialising of the system. But we have seen none – except the *British Church Newspaper* – which noted that "members of the homosexual community were prominent in the list". The paper rightly observes that "this confirms their influence at the highest levels of the British political establishment".

Some of these awards were given specifically in recognition of furthering the agenda for their own iniquitous lifestyle. For example, an inspector in the Metropolitan Police was given the MBE for "services to the gay community". And an Edinburgh woman received her award "in recognition of the influence and value of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community" – whatever that may exactly mean.

It is a fixed principle that when a nation honours those who promote practices condemned by God that the nation will descend deeper into sin. Apart from God's grace, our nation can only sink further into the morass of immorality in which it now wallows. "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted" (Ps 12:8). *NMR*

The Law and Parental Discipline

A booklet entitled, *Children, Physical Punishment and the Law – a guide for parents in Scotland*, has been recently issued by the Scottish Executive. It has found its way into most homes where there are young children who attend either nurseries or primary schools. It sets out to explain recent changes in the

law which, among other things, make it illegal to use an implement in the chastisement of children. The booklet indicates that, when a court considers a case of physical punishment, it will make full scrutiny of “what was done to the child, for what reason and what the circumstances were”. To most parents the actual terms of the new legislation may sound acceptable, in that there is a very obvious need to protect little children from a minority of violently abusive parents. However certain things in the booklet give cause for concern.

When this new legislation was being framed, it was argued strongly that the law as it then stood, if properly administered, was sufficient to protect vulnerable children from physical abuse. However, it was felt that this new legislation tended to infringe on the liberty of perfectly reasonable, loving parents who saw the need, on occasion, to chastise their children physically. This remains our view. What causes most concern in the approach of the Scottish Executive to the issue, however, is the response to the question, “Don’t children need to be taught discipline?” In answering in the affirmative, the booklet takes the line that “discipline should not be about instilling obedience or inflicting physical punishment”. Apart from the rather inappropriate use of the loaded word *inflicting*, this statement is manifestly at variance with Scripture and common sense. Every parent should know that physical punishment is not something to be administered for every misdemeanour and that discipline is best instilled by careful explanation and encouragement. Yet discipline is all about instilling obedience. “Children, obey your parents,” is the Fifth Commandment, as expressed in Ephesians 6. And a minister of the New Testament is to be one who “rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity” (1 Tim 3:4). There is no conflict between instilling obedience and the gentle encouragement to self-discipline which the booklet suggests.

It seems clear that, as is strongly suggested in this booklet, the Executive desires the complete abolition of all reasonable physical chastisement. There is a very real concern, among Christian parents who love their children, that the interference of the State in such matters undermines their duty, to God and to their children, to bring them up to obey God’s commandments. The lawlessness of young children, who now rule many homes, is only further advanced by the insinuations of this booklet. While endorsing the very laudable attempt to restrain the evil and brutish parents who maltreat their children, we commend to parents the standards of the Bible in this as in every other social and domestic matter. We also commend to children of all ages God’s command to obey their parents when that is consistent with the other laws of God. To the Fifth Commandment there is added an unfailing promise: “that thy days may be long in the land”.

DC

Evil Men Waxing Worse and Worse

How persuasively certain TV producers, filmmakers, playwrights and their psychologist supporters have argued in recent years that portraying immoral behaviour would not incite others to similar behaviour. Common sense itself, let alone Scripture, indicates otherwise. And so do the cases of those who have been defiled by, and become addicted to, pornographic images – an evil that is especially heinous when child abuse is involved.

The children's charity NCH, in a study entitled *Child Pornography, Child Abuse and the Internet*, says that the internet has allowed a huge increase in the volume of child abuse images being viewed and that such images act as a "crucial trigger" for some men to become involved in the sexual abuse of children. Child-pornography crime, says the study, has risen sharply in Britain over the past 13 years and, it adds, "the consequences for children in all parts of the world are horrifying".

Our prayer for children worldwide is that they would not only be kept from such evil men but also that they would be made, by the spread of the gospel and through the power of the Spirit of God, spiritual children of God. Paul warned Timothy that evil men would wax worse and worse, but he was to continue in the truths he had learned from Scripture even as a child. May today's rising generation learn the truth and be kept by the power of God.

We pray too that such bodies as the NCH will have much success in publicising the seriousness of the problem, in pressing the internet industry to improve technical tools to prevent access to such shocking images, in calling for a unified international approach to child abuse, and in urging the United States in particular (where many of these images originate) to dedicate more resources to eradicating this evil. We must also prayerfully remember law-enforcement agencies which are striving to stem the increasing incidence of this most base vice. NMR

Palestinian Terrorism and Christian Churches

The Christian Church is indebted to the Jewish people, from whom we have received the Word of God, and it is therefore obliged to love and help them. The Christian Churches cannot remain indifferent to the Palestinian assault on Israel and the murder of numerous citizens by suicide bombers. We consider it to be the duty of the churches, in terms of the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill", to support the State of Israel in her endeavour to defeat Islamic terrorism. Accordingly, we disapprove of the majority of Christian churches in Israel giving misguided support to the Palestinians and thus lending tacit support to the terrorists. These churches are surely aware that recent polls have found that 70% of Palestinians support suicide bombing, and that Palestinian leaders are bent on the eradication of Israel.

The Christian churches should note, for example, that in a BBC interview last year a Hamas spokesman, Mahmoud Zahar, admitted his belief that there is no place for Israel in the Middle East and that, whatever concessions Israel may give, Muslim opponents will never renounce violence completely. Zahar also said that the “ceasefire” which Islam permits is known as a “hudna” – a temporary cessation of hostilities until strength is regained to resume the fight. These churches should also remember that the Hamas terrorist leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi told the world’s media from his hospital bed last year that he would not rest until the last Zionist is killed or kicked out of the Holy Land.

In our view, therefore, the appropriate Christian response is to support and sympathise with the people of Israel in their sufferings as they endeavour to oppose the campaign of terror being relentlessly waged against them. Where the “powers that be” are exercising their lawful authority, the Christian – whatever his community or ethnicity – is called to act in accordance with the principles of Romans 13:1-7.

JLG

Church Information

Committee Meetings

The following Synod committees will meet on Tuesday, March 23, DV, in Inverness Free Presbyterian Church as follows:

- 9.30 - 10.30 Magazines Committee
- 10.30 - 12.00 Training of the Ministry Committee
- 12.00 - 1.00 Sabbath Observance Committee
- 2.00 - 5.00 Finance Committee
- 2.00 - 3.00 Outreach Committee
- 3.00 - 4.00 Religion and Morals Committee
- 6.00 - 7.30 Publications and Bookroom Committee
- 6.30 - 7.30 Dominions and Overseas Committee
- 7.30 - 9.00 Welfare of Youth Committee

(Rev) John MacLeod, Clerk of Synod

Northern Presbytery Clerk

At its meeting on 23 September 2003 the Northern Presbytery accepted the resignation of its Clerk, Rev D J MacDonald, Dornoch. Rev G G Hutton, Inverness, was appointed as the new Clerk.

(Rev) Allan J Macdonald, Clerk of Presbytery pro tem

Meetings of Presbytery (DV)

Skye: At Portree, on Tuesday, February 10, at 11 am.

Southern: At Glasgow, on Wednesday, February 11, at 5 pm.

Northern: At Dingwall, on Tuesday, February, 24 at 2 pm.

Western: At Laide, on Tuesday, March 9, at 6 pm.

Zimbabwe: At Bulawayo, on Tuesday, March 9, at 1 pm.

Outer Isles: At Stornoway, on Tuesday, March 30, at 1 pm.

Bookroom Fund

By appointment of Synod, this year's special collection for the Bookroom Fund, is due to be taken in congregations during February.

R A Campbell, General Treasurer

Sly Jaricha Medical Fund

Sly has completed his radiotherapy; he is to be reviewed in two weeks and again in six months. All bills to date have been paid and there is a balance of £3800 in the fund in Scotland. In the circumstances the Committee has decided to close this Fund and to use the balance for medical treatment in other needy cases. The Committee would like to thank all who contributed.

(Rev) J R Tallach, Clerk to the Jewish and Foreign Mission Committee

Acknowledgement of Donations

The General Treasurer acknowledges with sincere thanks the following donations:

College & Library Fund: A Friend, Newcastle, Ps 27, £20.

Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund: A Friend, Gairloch, for Jewish Mission, £300 per Rev JLG;

M & A G, Lewis, for Kenya Mission, £100; Anon, for Kenya Mission, £450 per Miss JAC; E Davenel, France, for John Tallach Secondary School, €100.

Sustentation Fund: A Friend, Newcastle, Ps 27, £20.

Congregational Treasurers acknowledge with sincere thanks the following donations:

Ballfeary Home: Anon, £500 per CML.

Bracadale: *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £20.

Edinburgh: *Communion Expenses:* DM & AM, £50. *Congregational Funds:* Nigel, Wales, £100 per Rev HMC.

Glasgow: *Bus Fund:* Anon, £20; Anon, £20; Anon, £10. *Car Fund:* E Morrison, £30. *College & Library Fund:* Anon, £50; Anon, £40; Anon, £10; Anon, £5. *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £40.

Dominions & Overseas Fund: A Friend, £20 per Rev RML. *Eastern Europe Fund:* Anon, £45;

Anon, £60; Anon, £20; Anon, £25; Anon, £20; Anon, £25; Anon, £50; Anon, £65; A Friend,

Woodlands Road, £2 per ADR. *Jewish & Foreign Missions Fund:* Anon, for famine relief, £20;

Anon, for famine relief, £20; Anon, for Kenya & Zimbabwe Missions, £60; Anon, for Sly Jaricha

Medical Fund, £30; Anon, for Zimbabwe Mission, £40; Anon, for Zimbabwe Mission, £40. *TBS:*

Anon, £40; Anon, £50.

Greenock: *TBS:* Anon, £50; Anon, £40.

Ness: *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £20.

North Tolsta: *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £20; A Friend, Glasgow, for manse kitchen repairs, £100 per Rev DC. *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £20. *TBS:* Anon, £15.

Raasay: *Congregational Funds:* A Friend, Portree, for manse extension, £20 per Rev JRT.

Stornoway: *Congregational Funds:* Anon, £20; Anon, "In memory of a beloved son & brother", £250; The family of the late Mr G MacLeod, £500 per Rev JML. *Home Mission Fund:* Anon, £20.

Outreach Fund: Anon, £20. *Sustentation Fund:* Anon, £20; Mrs Morrison, Stewartfield, £100; PJM,

£140 per Rev JML. *Where Most Needed:* South Harris friends, £50; Relatives of the late Mrs P

Masters, £30, £25, £25, £30.