

# GOSPEL FREEDOM, AND PRIESTLY TYRANNY

Church Association Tract 006

THE English people are famed for their love of Liberty—not a freedom from such restraint as is involved in submission to the Commandments of God, or to moral principles, but from the tyranny of man's will, whether presented in the shape of priestcraft, despotism, or mob-law. The nation struggled for and won its Civil Liberty through many a bloody conflict, and for its Religious Liberty the martyrs died.

Our National Church, based on the Bible, and adopting this principle of freedom, carefully cast aside all earthly bondage. There is doubtless room within the comprehensiveness of our Church for varying shades of opinion as to the degree in which the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper may be efficacious as means of Grace, or as to the extent to which Church fellowship is connected with the faith of the individual and other kindred subjects; but we are now called on by certain men, who, though they have indeed subscribed the Articles of the Church, yet lay claim to the authority of sacrificing priests, requiring us to submit our souls to their keeping, and to accept their order as the sole channel through which the saving grace of God can flow.

It is with the view of offering a note of warning against these serious errors that the reader of this paper is invited to contrast the teaching of the Word of God and the teaching of the Church of England on the one hand, with the voice of the Sacerdotalists (or Ritualists) on the other, touching those essential points where the fulness and freedom of Gospel grace are intercepted or destroyed by means of the chain of priestly tyranny.

In a short paper it is impossible to do more than select certain leading passages, but in order that the reader may verify the selection and examine the context, each passage has references attached.

## 1. THE ONE COMPLETE AND FINISHED SACRIFICE.

*God's Word Written.*

It is finished.—St. John xix. 30. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom.—St. Matt. xxvii. 51.

Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.—Heb. ix. 26.

Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His blood.—Id. x, 19, 20.

By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.—Id. x. 10, also 12, 14.

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more . . . Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.— Id. 17, 18.

Christ once suffered for sins; the just for the unjust.—1 Pet. iii. 18.

He is the propitiation for our sins.—1 St. John ii. 2.

*Church of England teaching.*

“The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of masses in which it was commonly said that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.”—Art. 31.

See also Article 25, defining sacraments as “sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace.”

“We must then take heed lest of a memory it (the Lord’s Supper) be made a sacrifice.”—27th Homily.

“Whereas Christ commanded to His Church a *sacrament* of His body and blood, they have changed it into a *sacrifice* for quick and dead.”—28th Homily.

## **2. CHRIST’S WORK ALONE NECESSARY TO SALVATION.**

*God’s Word Written.*

I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live.—St. John xi. 25.

And this is Life Eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.—Id. xvii. 3.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.— Acts xvi. 31.

Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.— Id. iv. 12.

Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ.—1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

In whom we have redemption through His blood; the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.—Eph. i. 7.

And they sang a new song, saying—Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.—Rev. v. 9, 10.

*Church of England teaching.*

“Holy Scripture doth set out unto us, only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.”—Art. 18.

“That we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.”—Art. 11.

## **3. JESUS ONLY WAY OF ACCESS TO GOD.**

*God's Word Written.*

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.—St. John xiv. 6.

Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.—Id. vi. 37.

I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and 'shall go in and out, and find pasture.—Id. x. 9. See also xv. 5.

Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.—Rev. iii. 8.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.—Rom. v. 1,2.

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.—Eph. iii. 12.

The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers.—1 Pet. iii. 12.

*Church of England teaching.*

“Although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity to salvation.”—Art. 20.

“We ought to acknowledge none other priest for deliverance from our sins, but our Saviour Jesus Christ; who being Sovereign Bishop, doth with the sacrifice of His body and blood, offered once for ever upon the altar of the Cross, most effectually change the spiritual leprosy, and wash away the sins of all those that with true confession of the same do flee unto Him.”—Homily on Repentance.

#### **4. JESUS THE ONLY MEDIATOR AND ADVOCATE.**

*God's Word Written.*

There is One God, and One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.—1 Tim. ii. 5.

And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament; that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.—Heb. ix. 15.

He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.—Heb. vii. 25.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died—yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.—Rom. viii. 34.

If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.—1 St. John ii. 1.

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto

me, Fear not; I am the first, and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell, and of death.—Rev. i. 17, 18.

These things, saith He, that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand; who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.—Rev. ii. 1.

*Church of England teaching.*

“Christ . . . took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man’s nature; wherewith He ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth until He return to judge all men at the last day.”—Art. iv.

“Thou needest no other man’s help; no sacrificing priest.”—27th Homily.

## **5. FREE ACCESS TO THE THRONE OF GRACE.**

*God’s Word Written.*

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—St. Matt. xi. 28.

All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me, and him that cometh unto Me I will in nowise cast out.—St. John vi. 37.

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.—Id. vii. 37.

Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.—Id. xvi. 24.

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.—Eph. iii. 12.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.—Heb. iv. 10.

Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.—Id. x. 22.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth say, Come: and let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely.—Rev. xxii. 17.

*Church of England teaching.*

“It is against the true Christian liberty that any man should be bound to the numbering of his sins, as it hath been used heretofore in the time of blindness and ignorance.”—*Sermons and Homilies*, 372.

“And whereas the adversaries go about to wrest this place (St. James v. 16) for to maintain their auricular confession withal, they are greatly deceived themselves, and do shamefully deceive others; for if this test ought to be understood of auricular confession, then the priests are as much bound to confess themselves unto the lay-people, as the lay-people to them.”—Id. 371.

Have we not here a full and free provision for the deliverance of sinners from the darkness of sin,

and for their adoption into the glorious liberty of the children of God? “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God . . . and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”—1 Pet. i. 23 and 25.

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Turn now to the doctrinal teaching of the Sacerdotalists, or Ritualists.

1. *The Lord's Supper declared to be a propitiatory Sacrifice.*

“It is no bare sign of an absent victim that we offer before God in the Holy Eucharist; no mere bread and wine figuratively signifying the body and blood of Christ . . . but by the real presence of the body and blood of Christ veiled beneath the form of bread and wine, we offer before God Christ Himself.”—*The Mediation of the Church*, p. 46.

“The faith once delivered derives its whole efficacy from a right appreciation, primarily of the doctrine of the Incarnation, and depending on that, the real actual presence of our Lord on the altars of our churches.”—*Plea for Toleration*, 3rd edit. 2.

“The presence must be objective . . . It does not depend in any manner on our faith.”—*Tracts for the Day*, v. 26.

“The holy Eucharist is Christ's offering itself—the very same which He made on Calvary, offered in a different manner.”—*Christian Sacrifice*.

“Body of Christ save me,  
Blood of Christ inebriate me.”—*Divine (!) Liturgy*, p. 30.

“Most high and adorable Sacrament,  
Most holy of all sacrifices,  
True propitiation for the living and the dead,  
Have mercy on us.”—*Little Prayer Book*, p. 28.

2. *This assumed Sacrifice declared to be essential.*

“The penitent is taught to seek Christ, not within himself individually, but without himself, in the Church, in the sacrament which Christ Himself appointed.”—*Tracts for the Day*, iii. 60.

“Not a single step can be taken in the supernatural life without the cooperation of sacraments. No sacramental grace can be applied to individuals without the intervention of a personal agency.”—*Sermons on Sin*. Rev. O. Shipley.

“It is not a bloody sacrifice but unbloody, in which by a way which Christ set up we make His sacrifice always present, and offer and plead it as the only procuring cause of salvation.”

“Those Christians who are never present when the holy Eucharist is offered up, never plead for their pardon and forgiveness in that one way which Christ ordered that they should plead.” “The holy communion is one of the sacraments which the Church declares to be to all persons in general, without regard to their calling, necessary to salvation.”—*Eucharistic Manual*.

### 3. Hence necessity for a sacrificing Priesthood.

“None but priests can offer a Sacrifice, therefore Christ ordained His apostles to be priests to offer His body and His blood to God the Father, under the sacrificial veils of bread and wine, as the one true Sacrifice which can take away the sins of the world.”

“The Christian priesthood sums up the offices which under the old covenants were distributed. The priest was the sacrificing, the prophet the preaching, and the judge the ruling officer. The Catholic priest at the altar offers the adorable Saviour—in the pulpit he declares the oracles of God, and in the confessional he sits in his judicial capacity.”— *Tracts for the Day*, i. 25.

“His office, and the reverence due, depend entirely on that cardinal doctrine of the earthly priesthood as the divinely appointed channel through which the Omnipotent power of the sinless High Priest in Heaven is conveyed to the ordinances of the Church, and through them applied to the souls of His members.”— *The Ministry of Consolation*, 56.

### 4 Thence the assumption of Priestly power of Absolution.

“It has been ordained that the guests at this banquet must be clothed in marriage garments, and that the same men who are commissioned to provide the supper are entrusted with the charge of excluding those who are not thus clothed. It is for this very purpose that our Lord has committed to these stewards of His Mysteries, those judicial functions which are often described as the power of the keys.” — *Bp. of Salisbury’s Charge*, 1867.

“If priestly absolution be the means ordained of God for remitting sin, then it is fearful to contemplate the ruin which may have been inflicted on souls by the neglect of it. Souls have been launched into eternity by us unabsolved, because we either did not believe in the power given us at our ordination, or we seem too timid to exert it.”— *Tracts for the Day*, i. 21.

“God alone is the giver of all spiritual life, and grace and favour, and yet we are not bid to go direct to God for these gifts, (for that right we forfeited at the fall,) but we are to go to the Church which stands between us and God in its appointed sphere, in the same way in civil governments do in theirs, and parents in theirs.”— *The Mediation of the Church*, 9.

“It is no mere question of courtesy, which must influence us in reverence for the priest . . . he is regarded as one possessed of nothing less than the authority of the Lord Christ, as the Church commands him to declare, with his own mouth, in the Absolution.”— *The Ministry of Consolation; a Guide to Confession*, p. 56.

### 5. Involving the necessity of Confession to the Priest.

“The Church has in some cases required—in our own strongly recommended the practice of private confession and absolution as the only proper preparation for the worthy reception of the sacrament.”— *Tracts for the Day*, iv. 80.

“In truth it were utterly impossible for the priest to give absolution, unless he had a perfect knowledge of all other sins that burden the conscience of the penitent.”— *The Ministry of Consolation; a Guide to Confession*, 32.

“Confession, that true confession to which alone absolution is promised or can be given, must be, so far as it is possible to make it, an actual forestalling of the judgment.”— *Ib.* 29.

“In the English Church, though enjoined in particular cases, confession is not enforced by any penalty, except that of losing the benefit which the proper and timely use of this ordinance would afford.”— *The Ordinance of Confession*.

How striking the contradiction of this complex chain of Sacerdotal teaching to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus! The “true Christian liberty” spoken of in the Homilies (which writings our Church in the 35th Article declares to contain godly and wholesome doctrine) would be wholly denied us if these priestly pretensions were accepted. Once admit the necessity for a present Sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ as a propitiation for sin, and we are instantly bound with priestly fetters. If there must be sacrifice, there must also be a priest to offer it, and an altar whereon to lay it. Nor can any partake the offering—save those, who by confession and absolution, have obtained from the priest the remission of their sins. In fact, without confession, there would be no absolution: nor without absolution, any sacramental grace, or any procuring cause of salvation available to the soul.

Shall those who have heard the joyful sound of the Gospel—who are members of that Church whose teaching we have seen to be so fully in accord with “Gospel freedom”—whose forefathers secured the blessed privileges of the Reformation; shall they, of all men, now submit to the thralldom of “Priestly Tyranny.” The struggle is at hand, so let all faithful members of the Church prepare for the inevitable conflict.

The Ritualists (as may be more fully tested by reference to Church Association Tract No. 4) make no secret of their hostility to the work of the Reformation, and their repugnance to the Articles of our Church. They are striving to bring us back into the bondage of superstition, and to “destroy our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.” We must, therefore, contend as for our spiritual life. We must follow the noble example of St. Paul when he was confronted by “false brethren”—“To whom” (says he) “we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might remain with you.”—Gal. ii. 5.

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*Note.*—Without desiring in any degree to detract from the high appreciation in which the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (as a means of grace) is held, it may not be unimportant, in view of the desire of the Ritualists to elevate it as the great central act of worship,” to remind faithful enquirers that while there are twenty-one Epistles in the New Testament, there is no direction, save in one, for the administration or reception of the Lord’s Supper. Surely if this Sacrament were intended by God as “the great central act of worship,” or as the special channel for conveying grace, St. Paul would have referred to it when writing to Timothy and Titus, who must have been, according to Ritualists, sacrificing Priests. Every enquirer must see the strong contrast which exists between the writings of the Ritualists and the Epistles of St. Paul.