

But our Gaelic people are not alone in this feeling of adhesion to the ancestral usages of the Church. I know a congregation of Lowlanders, perhaps from the hills of Lanark or the fair banks of the Tweed, where a change in their devotional forms by the introduction of a book of hymns created a scene of unhappy violence that eventually terminated in a wide breach. Call it ignorance, if you will—or obstinacy, or bigotry, or rustic prejudice; that our people love their Church with a devotion so deep, so true, as that you are not able to bend it to an acquiescence in changes which violate the simplicity of a service enshrined by holy memories in their fondest veneration—is that a thing to be deplored—to be treated with indignation—to be held up for satire—for the taunts and acerbity of an oratorical invective? You plead for it on the ground of expediency or of taste; they resist it on the ground of conscience. What! does that provoke a smile? Do you not know that there are men in this and in other churches—men of world-wide reputation—who believe not only that the New Testament does not recognize the sound of instruments as a congenial element in the devotions of the Church, but that it virtually, or by implication, condemns it as foreign and repulsive to the genius and the bearing of an evangelical dispensation. Is there not one at least of our own Presbyteries that takes that view of the question? Is not that, too, the belief of a large minority in the Presbytery of Toronto? In the United States a conspicuous body of Presbyterians point to that very principle as lying at the base of their existence as a distinct organization. It is a fallacy to call it a prejudice. What confronts you is a sober, deliberate conviction; the protest of sincere and honest minds. There are brethren in this Court whose hearts are now aching with distressful anxiety; who feel that if the Synod will give its legislative sanction—broad and formal—to these innovations, the spheres of their usefulness will be broken up. Talk of “tyranny!”—of “cruelty!”—if the policy that you desire to press upon the Synod be adopted, who, then, will have a right to complain of “tyranny,”—of a “cruel” disregard of feelings the most sacred in the human heart?—With all your ardour for these changes, that appear to you to be so desirable on the ground, as you tell us, at once of reason, Scripture, and expediency—would you persistently demand them—would you even accept of them at such a cost?

There is danger, Sir, that the Synod may forget or underestimate the real nature of that antipathy with which our people regard this question of Instrumental Music, and that it may be tempted to shape its action as if it had to deal with only the noisy and insignificant clamours of a blind prejudice or an obstinate caprice. If there is a time when one has a right to expect that