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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

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THE  
CHURCHMAN

APRIL, 1903.

ART. I.—THE DISPUTED PUNCTUATION OF THE  
CHURCH CATECHISM.

ALTHOUGH controversy may often be a sacred duty, there is something to be deeply deplored in the heats of controversial strife among those who are called by His Name, who said: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one towards another."

But especially are to be shunned all needless contentions among those who are desiring to be found striving together for the truth of the Gospel.

I trust, therefore, that what I have to say in this article about a point of recent discussion may be taken as a friendly contribution to the careful investigation of the subject, and as a help to those who would desire fairly to consider the matter, and who may, perhaps, have been somewhat warped in their judgments by the able arguments which they may have seen, fairly setting forth the claims of one side of a disputable question. There was something that might well be said on that side. And it has been well said.

The importance of a fair statement of the case for the other side arises mainly from the doctrinal importance which (by a doctrinal mistake,<sup>1</sup> as may appear to some) attaches to the

<sup>1</sup> If the words "given unto us" be understood of the "*sign*," they may very well also be understood as containing the doctrine of the "grace" "*given* unto us," if only they are viewed as "means whereby we receive" that grace. So Mayer: "Thus the Sacraments are both a means to receive grace, and a pledge to assure us hereof: as he which of old did draw off his shoe, and give it unto his neighbour, did hereby assure him of his inheritance, and as in all ages, he which giveth a pledge of special note to his neighbour, doth hereby assure him of the thing promised: so the Lord, by *giving* unto us the outward *signs* of the Sacraments, doth, as it were by pledges, make us sure of His grace" ("English Catechism Explained," pp. 7, 8; edit. 1635).

insertion of a comma, as interpreted by those who plead for its re-insertion.<sup>1</sup>

So Dr. Richard Sherlock, in his "Catechism of the Church of England Paraphrased," while interpreting the answer as with the comma—"Sign . . . given and ordained by Christ Himself, as a means," etc.—goes on to explain that "Christ . . . hath ordained in His Church certain rites called Sacraments, which are not only visible and apparent *signs* of His invisible and *hidden* graces, but also the *means* whereby we are made partakers of His Graces, and *pledges* to assure us of them" (pp. 49, 50; 18th edit.; London, 1699).

Indeed, a learned correspondent of the *Guardian* (July 29, 1891), pleading for the comma, and connecting "given" with "sign," and referring to the scholastic distinction between *signa naturalia* and *signa Hominiibus data*, regards it as a valuable help to find in the Catechism a passage to inculcate the truth of "the objective character of the Sacraments," the understanding of which he considers "in these days we are recovering."

See "Cat. Concil. Trident.," par. ii., cap. i., § viii., where *signa* are divided into three *species*: (1) *Naturalia*, (2) *Ab hominibus constituta*, (3) *Divinitus data*. See also Bullinger, "Decades," vol. iv., p. 27, P.S.

I would not speak too confidently, but I certainly incline to think that in this sense, as indicating a *Divine gift*, should be understood the "quod nobis datur" of Durel's version. Those who are acquainted with Durel's writings will, I believe, hardly be much disposed to question this—not that any objection can be made to understanding the "datur" of the human ministration. I will venture to refer only to the following words: "Gratiæ illius invisibilis, quæ utrumque beneficium, reatus ablutioem scilicet, et maculæ purgationem complectitur, Sacramentum seu signum visibile atque pignus certissimum Baptismus est, ut qui ad illam significandam, obsignandamque, atque instrumentaliter exhibendam a Deo institutus fuit" ("Vindiciæ," cap. xxvi., p. 290, London, 1669). Compare the following from Archbishop Sandys: "God's gift, without sealing, is sure, . . . yet . . . He added these outward signs and seals . . . to certify us that His promise is most certain. He *giveth us*, therefore, these holy and visible signs, . . . giving unto the signs the names which are proper to the things signified by them" ("Sermons," pp. 303, 304, P.S.).

"In this Sacrament there are two things—a visible sign and an invisible grace. There is a visible sacramental sign of bread and wine, and there is the thing and matter signified—namely, the Body and Blood of Christ; there is an earthly matter and a heavenly matter. . . . The spiritual part, that which feedeth the soul, only the faithful do receive" (*ibid.*, p. 88).

In these passages we see how well the very outward and visible sign may be regarded as *given* unto us by God because of its relation by Divine institution to that inward and spiritual grace, which it is ordained to be a means of our receiving, or, in other words, of which it is exhibitivè.

Compare the following: "Seeing the Sacraments are the institution and work of the Lord Himself, the faithful do receive them, not as certain superfluous inventions of men, as if at the hand of men, but as His heavenly gifts, and that at the very hand of the Lord" ("Earlier Confession of the Swiss." See Hall's "Harmony," p. 289).

"Deus in sacramentis suis quasi manum suam de cœlis extendit, et porrigit nobis suam gratiam" (Ames, "Catecheseos Sciagraphia," p. 143; Amstel., 1635).

<sup>1</sup> No doubt the purpose in view of the advocates of the comma is to defend the truth (which is not in question) that faithless communicants

It hardly needs to be said that the question is concerning the comma, which in the MS. Book of Common Prayer, as attached to the Act of Uniformity, 1662, separates "inward and spiritual grace" from "given unto us."

The following questions are therefore submitted for consideration :

I. Was the comma in the original draft of the Catechism as first set forth by authority ?

(1) Not : if we rely on the *only authoritative document*—*i.e.*, the "letters patent" of James I. authorizing the addition to the Catechism, a document which is still preserved in MS. in the Record Office (Pat. Roll 1, Jac. I., part 5), which certainly has no comma. Rymer's "Fœdera" is relied on for

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do not receive the *res sacramenti*, though they may often take the *sacramentum*. This important truth, however, is otherwise safeguarded by the word "faithful," in the answer to the question concerning the Lord's Supper : "What is the inward part or thing signified ?" (see my "Eucharistic Presence," pp. 365-370) to say nothing of the teaching of Art. XXIX.

The testimony to this doctrine seems, therefore, rather weakened than strengthened by the endeavour to force it upon the very doubtful interpretation of a justly disputed punctuation.

We would not do to any the injustice of supposing that they reject or question the truth of the *grace being given* in the faithful receiving of the sign. We are in full agreement with the advocates of the comma in their contention that the "*unio sacramentalis*" is not to be regarded as having any force *extra usum*.

It is urged, indeed, in favour of the comma, that it serves "to accentuate the contrast between a 'sacrament' and a 'sacrifice'" (Tomlinson, p. 13). But the contrast is, at least, quite as much accentuated if "given unto us" be understood of the "grace" as if it be connected with the "sign." It is not the "sign," but the "thing signified," which, in the view of Roman theology, is offered in sacrifice to God the Father (see Bellarmine, "De Missa," lib. i., cap. xxvii. ; "Disp. de Controv.," tom. iii., cc. 1035, 1037, 1041). Besides which, it should be remembered that in Roman theology the ideas of *sacrifice* and *Sacrament* are kept quite distinct. The notion of "*sacrificium*" is not allowed to enter into the "*ratio sacramenti*" (see, *e.g.*, Dens, "De Sacramentis in genere," N. 3 ; "Theologia," tom. v., p. 69 ; Dublin, 1832).

It can hardly need to be said that in the answer, as read without the comma, there was no *new* teaching for the English Church.

In Nowell's "Smallest Catechism" the thing signified in the Lord's Supper had been described as "the Body and Blood of Christ, which in the Lord's Supper are *given* to the faithful, and are by them taken, eaten, and drunken only in a heavenly and spiritual manner, but yet in truth" (see my "Eucharistic Presence," p. 306).

In Jewel's "Apology" it had been declared : "Christum asserimus, vere sese præsentem exhibere in Sacramentis suis . . . idque dicimus non perfunctorie, et frigide, sed re ipsa et vere fieri" (pp. 31, 32 ; Cantab., 1838).

Hooker had written : "The bread and cup are His Body and Blood because they are causes instrumental upon the receipt whereof the *participation* of His Body and Blood ensueth" ("Eccles. Pol.," book v., ch. lxvii., § 5 ; Works, vol. ii., p. 352 ; edit. Keble).

the comma. It was no doubt intended to be, and professed to be, a reliable reproduction of the original. But the insertion of the comma here is only evidence of the lax way in which punctuation was treated in writings of this date.<sup>1</sup>

In Cardwell's "Conferences" (p. 220), the answer will be found correctly printed without the comma, as in the original document.<sup>2</sup>

(2) *Not*: if we may take the evidence of Dr. John Mayer, who published "The English Catechism Explained" in 1622. A third edition was published in 1623, and a fourth in 1630. Here we have "spiritual grace given unto us" (see p. 497 of third edition "reviewed"). This "Commentary" bears on the title-page "Published by Command."

A fifth edition, also "Published by Command," appeared in 1635, after the accession of Laud to the Primacy, which professes to be "corrected, reordered, and in many things, which were before wanting, supplied by the author," and which contains some things which may be thought to indicate a Laudian influence. (See Goode "On Eucharist," ii., p. 697.) But there is no change in this answer. We still read "Spiritual grace given unto us" (p. 6).

II. *How, then, is the introduction of the comma to be accounted for?* I submit that it may very probably be accounted for—

<sup>1</sup> Rymer has sometimes been referred to (by inadvertence, or perhaps by a misprint—see letter in *Guardian*, July 29, 1891) as if his work had followed shortly after the addition was made to the Catechism. It is not altogether unimportant, therefore, to observe that the first volume of the "Fœdera" appeared in 1704, and the last volume in 1735, after Rymer's death.

<sup>2</sup> The absence of the comma might be, indeed, no decisive argument against the interpretation of the advocates of the comma, but it is certainly destructive of the arguments built on its presence.

In the original document there is also no comma before "ordained."

But though the answer, as found in the "Enrolment," has no punctuation, it is otherwise in the warrant on which the Patent Roll is founded. This warrant is also preserved in the Public Record Office. It has the King's sign manual, and a note that it was examined by Coke, the Attorney-General. In this warrant the answer is punctuated thus: "I mean an outward and visible sign, of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

It will be found, I believe, that these warrants (as they are called) or privy seals, are often referred to to correct or confirm the enrolments. Indeed, these warrants, rather than the enrolments, should, strictly speaking, be regarded as the *letters patent*, unless Archbishop Sandys was mistaken when he wrote: "If a prince give out his letters patent of a gift, so long as the seal is not put to, the gift is not fully ratified" ("Sermons," p. 303, P.S.). These sealed *warrants* must rightly, therefore (I conceive), be regarded as the original authoritative documents.

(1) By the prevalent laxity in the matter of punctuation, which allowed commas to be inserted or omitted in somewhat of a haphazard manner.

(2) By the printers' license, which thus was uncorrected in the Catechism contained in the folio edition of "The Book of Common Prayer" of 1636 (and confessedly in other editions also).<sup>1</sup>

(3) By the fact that a copy of this edition (which contained the comma inserted without authority) was used by the revisers of 1661 to receive their corrections.

(4) By the fact that in this revision there appears (I believe) to have been no attempt made by authority to correct punctuation, as a consequence of which some singular examples of inconsistency may be shown. Compare, *e.g.*, in the corrected Book of 1636 the punctuation of the Apostles' Creed, as found in the Morning Prayer, with that seen in the Catechism. These singular discrepancies (not all of which are found in the MS. annexed) are not seen in the Prayer-Books now in use. Why not? Simply, I suppose, because the copyist and the authorized printers, as they altered the spelling and the use of capitals, took the license of miscopying and misprinting what they thought might be amended in the matter of *stopping*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. T. Tomlinson ("Misprinted Catechism," p. 6), makes mention of two editions of 1603—one quarto, one folio—now in the British Museum, besides what is known as "Saucroft's Prayer-Book," 1634, and the Black-letter Book of 1636, in which the Convocation of 1661 marked their alterations. In all these the comma is found, and the same is to be said of an edition of 1662, and further of 1663 (see Marshall's "Latin Prayer-Book of Charles II.," p. 152).

The Rev. Edward Miller (in *Guardian*, July 29, 1891) makes mention of editions of 1604, 1605, 1613, 1621, 1631, 1633 in which there are *two* commas, thus: "I mean an outward and visible sign, of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us," etc. The two commas appear to be found also in editions of 1709, 1716, etc.

Other editions, however, earlier than the last review are cited as without the comma (see *Protestant Churchman*, January, 1903, p. 8).

<sup>2</sup> A writer in the *Guardian* (March 16, 1892) observes: "It is quite evident that those who drew up the Convocation Book, and ordered the copying of the Annexed Book and the printing of the Sealed Books, were for the most part entirely indifferent as to punctuation and orthography, as well as the use of small or capital letters. Accordingly, there is no approach to agreement in any of these points between the Convocation Book, the Annexed Book, or any of the Sealed Books" (p. 399).

A writer in the *British Magazine* nearly sixty years ago says: "Everyone knows how arbitrary punctuation was among writers of those days, and has continued even to our own. Even in editions of the Bible and Liturgy no regular system of punctuation seems to have been adopted till Dr. Blayney published the former and Bishop Randolph the latter" (quoted by Mr. Leigh-Lye in the *Record* of January 2, 1903).

(5) By the fact that, therefore, the copyist took the comma into the MS. which was annexed to the Act of Uniformity of 1662.

III. *Does it follow that with the comma, the word "given" must be construed with the "outward and visible sign"?*

*Not:* if we take duly into account the laxity with which punctuation was frequently employed—a laxity which continued longer, perhaps, than commonly supposed.

The following extract from an "Explanation of the Church Catechism," which was highly esteemed at the time of its publication, will give satisfactory evidence of this: "The thing signified by the outward visible sign in a Sacrament, is an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us of God in the Covenant" (Ellis, "Scripture Catechist," p. 377; edit. 1738).<sup>1</sup>

Here the comma separates between "grace" and "given," though it is impossible not to understand the "given" as agreeing with "grace."

Here certainly we have a participial adjective comma'd off from the noun with which it *immediately* agrees, and which stands next to it in the sentence. Other examples of the same use will be found in Parsell as quoted below, as well as in extracts from Beveridge and Harrison, which will appear, I believe, in the next number of the CHURCHMAN.

IV. *Before the last review was the "given" always understood as agreeing with the "sign"?*

Certainly not, unless we altogether reject the evidence of the Greek Version of the Prayer-Book, which was dedicated to Archbishop Laud, and compiled by his desire (perhaps especially for the use of Cyril Lucar. See Blew's letter on "The Common Prayer in Latin," p. 50) by Elias Petley, and published in 1638. Here the words *πνευματικῆς χάριτος ἡμῶν ἐσθλείσης σημεῖον* are decisive.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellis died in 1700, having just completed this "Explanation."

<sup>2</sup> It is too little to say that this Greek translation, like the Latin "collatæ" and the English "given" does not necessarily require the dating (or restraining) of the donation to the moment of receiving the sign (see my "Doctrine of the Sacraments," pp. 120-130). Such a restraining sense the words can only acquire by being viewed in connection with "means whereby we receive the same."

So the sacramental signs of the New Law are said to have reference to benefits *past, present, and future* ("Commemorativa Passionis Christi, demonstrativa Gratiae . . . et prognostica Gloriæ"—Dens, following Aquinas, "Theologia," tom. v., p. 67; Dublin, 1832).

Even the Tridentine Catechism teaches: "Quodlibet sacramentum saltem tria significat; gratiam præsentem, Passionem Christi, Vitam æternam" (par. ii., cap. i., § xi.).

The following extract is worthy of special attention: "Cum Scriptura ipsa, omnia ea, quæ pro Sacramentis habentur, inter signa numeret: et interim illis æterna gratiæ suæ dona designari doceat: quæ sint videlicet,

V. After the last review was the "given" universally interpreted as belonging to the "sign"?

(1) We have another Greek version—the well-known translation of Dean Duport, dedicated to Archbishop Sheldon, and published in 1665. It was followed by the reprints of Priestley and Bagster. It is not, by any means, a mere reprint of Petley's book. But its evidence on the point before us is equally decisive. The very same Greek words are employed by Duport.

(2) The editions of Durel's version were followed by Parsell's translation, which, though said to be founded on Durel's (see Marshall's "Latin Prayer-Book," p. 37), contained several changes. The edition of 1713 was followed by another in 1716. I have a copy of another edition of 1720, bearing on the title-page the words "Editio tertia prioribus longe emendatior, tribusque formulis auctior."

In this, though the comma remains, the Latin sufficiently determines the sense—the "given" belongs to "grace," and not to sign." The words are "Signum internæ et spiritualis gratiæ, collatæ nobis."<sup>1</sup>

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et præterita, quatenus jam olim nobis sunt delata, et præsentia, quatenus perpetuo exhibentur : neque cessare unquam possunt : et futura, quatenus illorum gloriam adhuc (sub spe certissima) post nostram resurrectionem expectamus. Perspicuum est, Sacramenta ipsa, non tantum signis externis, quibus dona gratiæ adumbrantur : sed etiam donorum perpetuatione, adeoque et exhibitione constare : sed quæ tamen in ipsis signis Sacramentalibus constitui, neque debeat, neque possit" (Jo. à Lasco, "Brevis et dilucida de Sacramentis Ecclesiæ Christi tractatio," fol. 16b, 17a ; London, 1552. Compare Bullinger, "Decades," vol. iv., pp. 228, 233, P.S.).

<sup>1</sup> These words "gratiæ collatæ" had been used in the translation of Dr. Mocket, chaplain to Archbishop Abbot, which was made in 1617. Mr. J. T. Tomlinson ("Misprinted Catechism," p. 6) says that his "book was forthwith ordered to be burned publicly, and Collier adds that he was accused also of mutilating the Homilies." He refers to Collier's "Ecclesiastical History," vii., p. 390. But I fail to find, either in Collier or in Fuller's "Church History," any word to lead us to suppose that this translation of the Catechism had anything to do with the condemnation of his book. Many charges were made against it. It touched "too close upon the regale." In the Thirty-nine Articles he omitted the first clause in the twentieth, concerning the "authority of the Church in controversies of the faith." And Collier adds : "This omission, amongst other things, might probably occasion the burning of the book" (vol. vii., p. 390). Fuller says : "The main matter objected against it was . . . contracting the power of the prince to enlarge the privilege of his patron." And he adds : "Although the imperfections and indiscretions of this translator might be consumed as dross in the fire, yet the undoubted truth of the Articles of the English Church therein contained, as flame-free and perfectly refined, will endure to all eternity" (vol. iii., p. 266 ; edit. 1837).

Anthony à Wood would have us understand that "the true cause which was conceived why the book was burned" was the omission of the first clause in Art. XX. He tells us, also, that Mocket published his



The same is probably to be said of the editions of 1733 and 1744 (of which copies are in the Bodleian; see Marshall, p. 38). It is certainly the same with the seventh edition, of which I have a copy, dated 1759. Here, again, the comma stands, but the words "collatæ nobis" leave no room for question as to the meaning.<sup>1</sup>

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collection "in a pious zeal for gaining honour to the Church of England amongst foreign nations." And he adds: "But this his zeal was so little accompanied in the constitutions of the said Church, or so much byassed towards those of Calvin's platform, that it was thought fit not only to call it in, but to expiate the errors of it in a public flame" ("Athenæ Oxonienses," vol. ii., c. 232; edit. Bliss).

Is there any evidence (I venture to ask) for connecting the condemnation of Mocket's book with his translation of this answer in the Catechism?

I find it not easy to believe it. Even À Lasco did not hesitate to write in the reign of Edward VI.: "Nemini dubium esse putamus, signa omnium Sacramentorum esse signa Divinæ erga nos gratiæ." And following up this saying, he recognises that "Signa ipsa Sacramentorum signa sunt collati in nos salutari beneficii in Christo" ("Brevis et dilucida de Sacramentis Ecclesiæ Christi tractatio," fol. 55b; London, 1552). Neither did he shrink from declaring: "Non igitur veram et salutarem Corporis et Sanguinis Christi exhibitionem ab usu Sacramentorum excludimus" (*ibid.*, fol. 44a).

And abundant testimony to this truth might be adduced from the writings of our English Reformed divines. Witness the following: "Neither do we say that the Sacraments are bare and naked signs of spiritual graces; but they do verily exhibit and represent Christ to as many as by faith are able and meet to apprehend Him" (Willet, "Synopsis Papismi," vol. v., p. 38; London, 1852).

The same truth was taught by later "Reformed" divines on the Continent. Witness the following: "Bene hoc quoque dicitur, modo recte intelligatur. Sacramenta sunt signa exhibitiva, hoc est, talia signa, per quæ Deus dona sua atque beneficia nobis confert atque communicat" (Ursinus, Op., tom. ii., c. 1464; Heidelberg, 1612).

"Hæc duæ res, nempe signum et res signata, uniuntur in hoc sacramento, non copulatione aliqua physica . . . sed significatione, ob signatione, ex exhibitione unius per alterum, hoc est, *unione sacramentali*, cujus nexus est hæc promissio pani addita, postulans fidem utentium" (Ursinus, "Explic. Cat., Quæst.," lxxvii., Op., tom. i., c. 266; Heidelberg, 1612). It is added: "Unde patet, eas res in usu legitimo semper conjunctim exhiberi, et percipi, sed non sine fide promissionis."

Nevertheless, if evidence can be adduced to show that when Mocket's book was condemned to the flames there was a judicial condemnation of his "nobis collatæ" as the translation of "given unto us," I will gladly not only acknowledge my error in questioning the fact, but will also willingly acknowledge that this evidence should carry no inconsiderable weight to be set in the scale on the side of the advocates of the comma. If I am wrong in my doubts, I sincerely regret having doubted.

<sup>1</sup> Against the Welsh and Irish translations may fairly be set the evidence of the French Prayer-Book sanctioned for the Channel Islands in 1678: "Un signe . . . d'une grâce intérieure et spirituelle qui nous est donnée."

(To be continued.)