

The Ornaments Rubric.

THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER AND THE E.C.U.

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WE suppose that the Bishop of Manchester is to be complimented on having been considered a sufficiently competent authority to engage the attention of the legal committee of the English Church Union. Their Council have issued a "Criticism and Reply"¹ to his lordship's recent "Open Letter" to the Primate, in which he seriously challenged the *ex parte* conclusions contained in the "Report of the Five Bishops" of Canterbury Convocation on the Ornaments Rubric.

This curiously worded pamphlet certainly reflects far more credit on the ingenuity and casuistry than on the ability and accurate knowledge of the legal committee of the E.C.U. It abounds in unwarrantable assumptions, glaring inaccuracies, flagrant misrepresentations, and careful suppression of facts; and the Bishop of Manchester is certainly to be congratulated if his weighty contention encounters no more serious or damaging opposition than is afforded in these twenty-four pages. One or two examples will sufficiently illustrate the style of argument employed throughout. The natural conclusion stated in the "Report," that the omission in prayers and rubrics of a ceremony or ornament previously used was "the general method employed" by the compilers of the Prayer-Books for its abolition or prohibition, is contemptuously dismissed in this pamphlet as an "untenable theory." Thus, not only are we told that the Ornaments Rubric was definitely framed as "the controlling guide" of what ornaments were to be retained and used and as "a guide for the interpretation of other rubrics," but that it is also "a directory to supply omissions as to *ceremonies* which

¹ "The Ornaments Rubric and the Bishop of Manchester's Letter: A Criticism and a Reply." Published by direction of the Council of the English Church Union. London, 1913.

might, through paucity of rubrics, be found in the various parts of the book" (p. 4). It is a matter of no importance, apparently, that the Ornaments Rubric *makes no mention at all* of ceremonies, and that the Preface "Of Ceremonies," inserted in each Prayer-Book since 1549, distinctly gives the reasons why, in the successive revisions, some of the ancient medieval ceremonies have been *abolished* and others *retained*. The silence regarding this "Preface" is also the more remarkable since the E.C.U. writer actually appeals, in support of his singular contention, to a rubric ("Of Ceremonies") in the 1549 book, which permitted the optional use of such previous customs as "kneeling, crossing, and knocking upon the breast," failing, however, to point out that the significant *omission* of this very rubric from the later books renders its quotation worse than useless to establish his theory!

When we are distinctly told in the Preface that the "unprofitableness" or "superstitious abuse" was the reason for the "cutting away" and "clean rejecting" of some of the accustomed ceremonies which were omitted in the successive liturgies, it is surely plainly impossible to plead, for example, for the reintroduction of the chrismatory when the ceremony of anointing the baptized person with oil has been definitely discarded? Apart even from historical considerations, it would be manifestly illogical and absurd to construe an ambiguous note concerning the retention and utilization of certain former *ornaments* "of the Church and minister" as superseding a general and definite statement of the reasons for "abolishing and retaining" different *ceremonies* in the reformed Prayer-Books.

Moreover, this startling theory that the Ornaments Rubric is "a directory to supply omissions as to ceremonies" is directly at variance with the article concerning *uniformity* of worship issued by the Royal Visitors in 1549, which distinctly forbids the minister "to use any other ceremonies than those appointed in the King's book of common prayers" (*i.e.*, the Prayer-Book of 1549) (Cardwell, "Documentary Annals," p. 75).

Again, we have the amazing assertion that the Elizabethan

rubric for the "Communion of the Sick," "did not remove the need for Reservation," as it could not take away "the sick man's right to the Viaticum which rests, not on any rubric of any service book, but upon the *universal law and custom of the Church*" (p. 6). Apart from the "minor" difficulty of discovering this entirely mythical "universal law and custom of the Church" (since our Article XXXVII. repudiates all jurisdiction of the Roman Church with its Canon Law), we have always understood that the only allegiance binding on English clergy was that required to the known law of this "Church and Realm" as expressed in the Prayer-Book and Articles. Article XXVIII. speaks with no uncertain sound concerning Reservation, while the rubric in the service for the "Communion of the Sick" concerning "spiritual" communion is obviously devised to meet every case where the sick person from any cause is deprived of the privilege of receiving the sacred symbols of Christ's Body and Blood. How can it reasonably be asserted that our Church "did not remove the need for Reservation" when she has inserted a rubric which explicitly states: "But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the Curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, the Curate shall instruct him, that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the Cross for him, and shed His Blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving Him hearty thanks therefore, he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth."

In face, also, of the post-Communion rubric, ordering the immediate consumption of any remaining "consecrated bread and wine," it is surely impossible to discover anything but complete condemnation for the administration of a so-called Viaticum "under all circumstances."

We can only suppose that the E.C.U. author, in appealing

to the requirements of medieval Canon Law, as well as to an extraneous "law and custom of the Church," has overlooked the clear direction given in the "Preface" to the first three Prayer-Books, "that the curate shall need none other books for their public service but this book and the Bible."

In a similar strain, we are told that even "the obligation of the (ornaments) rubric does not rest on the Act of Uniformity, but on the law and custom of the Church" (p. 21). For the purpose of his argument it is of course convenient and necessary for the writer to ignore the fact that the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity (from a proviso of which our present Ornaments Rubric is manifestly derived) still governs the liturgical worship and practice of the Anglican Church, and is, moreover, as much a part of the Prayer-Book as the Baptismal or^d Communion Offices. The obligation of the Ornaments Rubric certainly does rest, as the writer well says, "on the law and custom of the Church," but this is not, as the E.C.U. asserts, a nebulous and illusory standard determined by the special idiosyncrasies of each insignificant priest, but is clearly defined by the limits laid down in the Elizabethan and Caroline Acts, which establish our present Liturgy.

In view of the foregoing "arguments," it is not surprising that we are calmly informed that the medieval Mass service and our own Communion service are "substantially identical," or that the rubrics of the Second Book no more excluded the presence of non-communicants than those of the Sarum Missal did (p. 14).

It would appear that this liturgical "expert" has not even taken the trouble to read the first exhortation in the Communion Office of the 1552 Book, where to "stande by as gazers and lokers on them that doe communicate" is described "as a neglecting, despysing and mocking of the Testament of Christ," and the people are warned "rather than so doe" to "depart hence and give place to them that be godly disposed." Had he done so he could not presume to interpret the following rubric placed before the Invitation: "Then shall the priest say to

them that come to *receive* the Holy Communion," as permitting or contemplating the presence of non-communicants, or as "clearly recognizing that there might be non-communicants present" (p. 14).

We are glad, however, of the candid admission that "the Church does not provide a service for non-communicants," and that "the ideal has always been that those present should communicate" (p. 14).

The learned judgments of the Privy Council concerning the taking of "other order" by Queen Elizabeth are of course quietly ignored, while the conclusions of Mr. James Parker on this subject are appealed to as final and infallible, notwithstanding their complete refutation through the marvellously careful and exhaustive knowledge and research of Mr. J. T. Tomlinson! Moreover, a flagrant *petitio principii* begs one of the main questions in dispute by categorically asserting that the Elizabethan rubric (of 1559) uses "to all intents and purposes the same words" as the proviso in the Act (p. 11). An ingenious attempt is also made to misconstrue the evident meaning of Sandys' letter to Parker (written from London, April 30, 1559) concerning the effect of this proviso, by declaring "that there can be no question that contemporary opinion as stated by Sandys considered that the proviso meant that the ornaments used prior to 1552 were to be retained and used until further order" (p. 18). Sandys, however, clearly states that "*our* gloss" (or interpretation)—*i.e.*, as the whole letter abundantly proves, the construction put on the proviso by the *entire* reformed party, anxious to restore the Second Book, and not, as the E.C.U. writer asserts, merely the "extreme exile party" of "Puritans" (to which Sandys did not belong!)—"is that we shall not be forced to use them, but that others in the meantime shall not convey them away, but that they may remain for the Queen." In short, Sandys' letter furnishes strong evidence that the whole Reformed party, as their subsequent action proved, interpreted this proviso, not as referring to the *ritual use* of these ornaments, but as a prohibition against their unauthorized embezzlement.

On the same two or three pages of involved suppositions and assumptions we are actually informed that the "Act of Uniformity (1559) must not be taken as prescribing or forbidding any specific things," when the Act itself, in the strongest possible language, forbids any clergyman to use in Church "any other Rite, Ceremony, Order, Form, or Manner of celebrating of the Lord's Supper, openly or privily, at Matins, Evensong, Administration of Sacraments, or other open Prayers than is mentioned and set forth in the said Book" (*i.e.*, the revived Book of 1552) under pain of, for the last offence, total deprivation and life imprisonment.

In face of the fact that the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity distinctly specified the three single alterations in the 1552 Book which Parliament re-enacted, and that these did *not* include the Elizabethan Ornaments Rubric, it is calmly stated that the Elizabethan Book, *when presented to Parliament*, "contained amongst other things the new Ornaments Rubric!" (p. 12).

The Puritan objection at the Savoy Conference to this unauthorized rubric is naturally made much of (p. 6), but the fact that the Bishops, in the 1662 Revision, did in the end very materially alter this rubric in response to this request, is carefully passed over.

Moreover, the E.C.U. apologist, with but scant ceremony or deference, charges the Bishop of Manchester with being "clearly quite inaccurate" in declaring that the Bishops referred to the Puritans, who took exception to the old Elizabethan rubric, "to their defence of the surplice," and asserts instead that "they referred them to their defence of ceremonies in general" (p. 20). A closer examination will, however, prove that this distinction is a mere quibble, and that the Bishop's premiss is not substantially inaccurate, for the revising Restoration Bishops referred the Puritans to the reasons they gave against their (the Puritans) eighteenth general exception—*i.e.*, to the obligatory imposition of ceremonies (Cardwell, "History of Conferences," p. 351).

Now, the Puritans had specifically complained of the enforce-

ment of the three ceremonies which had for the last one hundred years been the great bone of contention between them and the Church party—viz., the use of the surplice, the sign of the Cross in Baptism, and kneeling at Communion; and the Bishops, in their reply, deal *with these ceremonies only*, defending each of them in turn. It cannot be contended that the defence of the sign of the Cross or kneeling at Communion could have any reference to the supposed “ornaments” of the Elizabethan rubric complained of by the Puritans. Thus, the Bishops, in refuting this complaint by appealing to their answer to the “eighteenth general,” must have referred them to their defence of the other remaining ceremony—viz., the surplice, and by their complete silence as to the other vestments, referred to by the Puritans (cope, alb, etc.), they proved that they did not consider them to be enjoined by the rubric.

Towards the end of this remarkable pamphlet the author graciously condescends to instruct us, with a truly innocent artlessness, as to what he facetiously terms the “true” interpretation of the present rubric. To accomplish this highly laudable object he ingeniously “reads into” it both words and a meaning which it does not at present possess. Thus, the rubric speaks plainly concerning the utilization and retention of “such ornaments of the Church and minister at all times of their ministration” as were authorized by Parliament in the second year of King Edward VI.—*i.e.*, by the Edwardine Act of Uniformity, which established the 1549 Prayer-Book. But by a “judicious” insertion of a few extra words, and by a careful rearrangement of punctuation, the rubric is made to refer to the Royal Injunctions of 1547, which permitted for the time the continuance of most of the old medieval ornaments. As these Injunctions were issued before the repeal of the statute of 31 Henry VIII., c. 8 (legalizing royal proclamations), they are actually claimed—according to this “true” interpretation—to be “the authority of Parliament in the *second year* of Edward VI.,” referred to in the rubric, notwithstanding the awkward but undoubted fact of their issue in the *first* year of that reign!

The object, however, of this truly "scientific" interpretation is innocently confessed in the concluding sentence, when the writer informs us that on any other view "altar lights and altar crosses would have to be excluded."

Ingenuity and casuistry, however, surely pass all bounds when this truly elastic rubric is actually made to include the use of all, or practically all, the ornaments which had existed in accordance with the old medieval Canon Law.

The fact that this truly illogical and transparently partisan plea of claiming medieval Canons and the Injunctions of 1547 as "the authority of Parliament" referred to in the rubric has been twice explicitly condemned by the judgments of the Privy Council (once in 1857, actually on the appeal of Mr. Liddell, a member of their own party), is conveniently ignored by this E.C.U. "legal" authority.

The Ornaments Rubric of 1662, thus carefully explained and "interpreted," was the all-sufficient guide and directory concerning ornaments and *ceremonies* (even superseding all rubrics) for the Restoration clergy. The curious fact, however, which does not seem to have occurred to this E.C.U. writer, is that the Bishops, who drafted this rubric, and therefore ought surely to have understood its requirements at least as well as a liturgical expert of the twentieth century, neglected altogether to enforce the use of the ornaments of the old medieval Canon Law, or even those required by "the universal law and custom of the Church," and instead construed its meaning as an obligation for the *exclusive use of the surplice only for all ministrations*, which use was universally enforced for the next two hundred years.

The E.C.U., however, by issuing this "illuminating" pamphlet, have certainly done a distinct service to Churchmen, for they have once more revealed in a striking manner the transparent baselessness of their so-called authority for attempting to re-introduce and impose discarded medieval doctrines and practices on the English Church.