

The Permissive Use of Vestments and Reservation.¹

WHEN I had the privilege of being invited by your committee to read a paper before this society, and proposed a subject, I was asked by your secretary if I would be willing, instead of the suggested subject, to deal with the question of Prayer-Book Revision on the lines of my recent article in the *Record*.

To this request I gladly acceded for the following reasons :

1. The trial through which we are now passing is making, and will increasingly make, the fullest demand upon the spiritual resources of the nation. The Church in this land must be strong and united as it has never hitherto been if an adequate response is to be given to this demand. The men who through daily peril have come into close touch with the fundamental realities of God and their own soul, duty, and death, will return to us as a leaven of life for the nation if the Church is fit to receive them and to use them. What, then, are they to meet with when they come home after the war? A national Church involved in miserable wrangling about ecclesiastical garments and other accessories of worship, or a great, united army of the living God, doing its utmost against unrighteousness and ignorance and error? We should therefore welcome every opportunity of trying to understand one another, in order that by mutual concessions, on the basis of honesty and loyalty to our Church, we may remove existing causes of dissension, and line up shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy.

2. The Birmingham Clerical Society, consisting as it does of men of all shades of opinion, is just the kind of body that can most hopefully discuss possible grounds of reconciliation, and help to shape a wise policy that shall be generally acceptable.

The substance of the proposal which I have made in the *Record* is that we should put an end to the state of confusion now prevailing in the Church of England by rendering lawful,

¹ A paper read before the Birmingham Clerical Society, September, 1915.

but not compulsory, the use of vestments; and that, in order to safeguard the distinctive doctrine of the Church, a declaratory rubric of a very definite and specific character should accompany the rubric permitting such use.

To this suggestion strong objection has been raised, both by Evangelical clergymen and also by a highly influential body of Evangelical laymen whose opinion, as the Archbishop of Canterbury has freely acknowledged, is deserving of the most careful consideration.

The ground of their objection is that the use of the vestments of the Roman Mass would conspicuously deface the primitive character of the Anglican service, and would give countenance to the introduction of other Romish doctrines and practices that were rightly rejected by the Reformers as incompatible with Holy Writ. In a word, it is the symbolical character of the vestments—that they signify Romish doctrine—which renders them objectionable.

This contention has much to be said in its favour. The very simplicity of our Anglican Communion Service is, for many of us, one of its greatest merits; and it is also true that we run great risk of fostering Romish error within our Church if, without a very definite and adequate safeguard against such error, we permit the use of accessories of worship which are so intimately associated with distinctively Romish doctrine. There are, however, on the other hand, certain considerations that ought to have weight with us.

1. It is not at all clear that all who use vestments do so for the sake of the Romish doctrine that may be associated with them.

In a recent speech at the Salisbury Diocesan Synod, Chancellor Bernard said: "I cannot shut my eyes to the growing demand for more ceremonial in the great central Christian act of worship, for more approximation to ancient order, for more freedom. It does not proceed, as is sometimes represented, from Romeward tendencies, but from that kind of religious temperament which needs fuller outward expression than is at

present given to it, and has already taken it in its own ways, sometimes extravagantly and disobediently. . . . I wish those friends with whom I am personally in sympathy would realize that the true danger to the Reformation settlement is not in such concessions as these, but in attempting to enforce uniformity where we know by experience it cannot be enforced."

Testimony to the same effect is borne by other men of wide experience. Ought we not to hesitate to act upon an assumption which may be more general than the facts of the case really warrant?

2. The present condition of ecclesiastical anarchy cannot continue. And yet to enforce the existing law against all who are breaking it is out of the question; the Church as a whole would shrink from such a course, even if the episcopal veto were abolished to-morrow. There seems to be no way of obtaining order except to recognize and make room for that diversity of self-expression in worship to which Chancellor Bernard has referred, and to fall back upon the honesty and loyalty of the clergy in general not to allow this concession to become a door to let in the errors of Romish doctrine which the Church of England has definitely rejected.

3. If, as I shall presently endeavour to show, there is reason for believing that in many instances vestments are used by men who hold Romish doctrine, the reasonable course for us to adopt is to devote our energies to dealing with the doctrine and with those who propagate it; not to spend our strength in attacking the vestments because they are used by these men as the outcome and sign of their doctrine.

The atmosphere of a village is laden with smoke arising in part from many harmless hearths, but in part also from a fire which is ravaging the village. The villagers do not concentrate their energies upon blowing away the smoke, but they discover the houses that are burning and do their best to put out the fire there. Some of the smoke, indeed, is the outcome and sign of the destructive fire; but even in that case it is the fire that receives their attention, not the smoke.

Speaking generally, the clergy are intelligent men who are able to discriminate between distinctively Roman and distinctively Anglican doctrine ; they are also honest men, incapable of wilful duplicity ; they are also loyal men, true and faithful to the Church whose ministers they are. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this general assertion, but the statement nevertheless represents the facts as a whole. It is, therefore, on the clergy as a body that we must rely for an advance out of our present miserable situation ; on their intelligence, their honesty, their loyalty—an advance that shall result in a new condition of things in which it may be possible for those who like it to use lawfully a more elaborate vesture and ceremonial than is now permitted, and for our Church nevertheless to retain in all their integrity those Scriptural doctrines which distinguish her from the Church of Rome.

But if the latter of these two results is to be secured, and secured so definitely that those of the clergy who are not loyal members of the Church of England, but hold and teach distinctively Roman doctrine, shall find it impossible to misrepresent the concessions as to ritual, and shall even be constrained to leave us altogether, it is imperative that we should be prepared to embody in a new declaratory rubric a statement of doctrine which shall be so definite that its point cannot be evaded, and which, whilst adding nothing to the doctrine which is already expressed in the Prayer-Book and Articles, shall yet have this special merit, viz., that it shall plainly declare what is the mind of the Church to-day.

Let me now try to show the need for this re-affirmation of doctrine.

I have before me, as I write, a large number of service books and manuals published for use in the Church of England, varying in bulk from 647 pages to 19 pages, many of which have obtained a considerable circulation, and all of which in one way or another give expression to doctrine which is as definitely condemned by the Church of England as it is definitely taught by the Church of Rome. Passing over such things as transub-

stantiation,¹ adoration of the Sacrament,² the invocation of saints and angels, and a very pronounced mariolatry,³ I ask you to concentrate your attention upon that doctrine which, although it may not so strikingly appeal to the popular imagination, nevertheless lies at the very root of the difference between the Church of England and the Church of Rome—viz., the doctrine that in the Holy Eucharist the Lord Jesus Christ is offered as a sacrifice for sin.

Let me quote a few passages on this subject from the books I have mentioned.

1. From "Divine Service" I take the following statements and prayers :

(a) "The bread by anticipation is called a 'pure, unspotted, undefiled host,' because all the prayers that go before and follow the consecration have reference to the moment of consecration, when the Victim becomes present and is offered to God" (p. 85).

(b) "The sacrifice of the altar is necessarily pleasing to God of itself, since the Victim there offered is 'that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, whom God the Father hath sealed,' of whom He also said, This is My beloved Son" (p. 85).

(c) "*Requiem*.—A method of offering the Holy Sacrifice for the rest and peace of the faithful departed. *Secret Collects*: (i.) *For a woman deceased*—'Let the soul of Thine handmaid N., O Lord, be delivered from all sins by this sacrifice, without which none can be set free from transgression: and grant that by this service of atonement she may obtain everlasting mercy.' (ii.) *For many deceased persons*—'We beseech Thee, O Lord, favourably to behold this oblation which we offer unto Thee for the repose of the souls of Thy servants: and grant that that which Thou hast vouchsafed shall be healing to the quick may likewise become help and pardon to the dead . . .'" (p. 111).

¹ "Let us Pray," pp. 32 and 64; "Catholic Prayers," pp. 3 and 106; "Divine Service," p. 378.

² "English Catholic's Vade-Mecum," p. 79; "Let us Pray," p. 27, etc.

³ "Christian's Companion," p. 62; "May Blossom," throughout; "Catholic Prayers," p. 182; "Emmanuel," p. 12, etc.

2. From "The English Catholic's Vade-Mecum" :

"O Holy Father . . . receive this pure sacrifice which I, Thine unworthy servant, offer unto Thee . . . by the hands of Thy priest, for my numberless sins, offences, and negligences, for all here present, and for all faithful Christians, quick and dead . . ." (p. 45).

3. From "Let us Pray," a book of instructions and prayers, published by the Society of SS. Peter and Paul, which is simply a copy of a Roman Catholic book entitled "Simple Prayer-Book" :

"The bread and wine are changed by the operation of God the Holy Ghost, at the consecration, into the Body and Blood of Christ, who then offers Himself again to His Eternal Father for the salvation of mankind." . . . "Both on Mount Calvary and in the Mass the Victim (that which is offered) is the same—the Body and Blood of Christ; and the Priest is the same—Christ our Lord, who offered Himself on Calvary through the executioners who put Him to death, and who offers Himself in the Mass on the Altar through His priests, who say the words of consecration. So the sacrifice of Calvary and the Mass are the same sacrifice, only the manner in which they are offered is different. On Calvary our Lord's Blood was really shed, and He really died; in the Mass His Blood appears to be shed, and His death is represented" (pp. 12, 13).

We may note, in passing, the strange intellectual blindness of those who teach such doctrine as this; for since the sacrifice of Calvary is *the death* of Christ, how can the Mass be the same sacrifice if in it there is only *an appearance of blood-shedding* and *a representation of death*, and not the reality in either case?

4. From "A Book for the Children of God" :

"And still His body is given; still His Blood is shed: not over and over again, but *eternally*. The Sacrifice of Calvary lives on in the Sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is not one Sacrifice and Calvary another. It is the same Sacrifice" (p. 119).

5. From "The Christian's Companion" :

"After the Consecration you may say, 'O Eternal Father,

accept this Holy Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ Thy Son, which was once offered to Thee upon the Cross, and is now offered upon our Altar " (p. 30).

6. From "A Catechism for Catholics in England," a work which is "inscribed to the Archbishops and Bishops of the Provinces of Canterbury and York, with unbounded reverence and regard for their holy office":

"What is the Christian Sacrifice?"

"The Christian Sacrifice is the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ really present on the Altar under the forms of bread and wine, and offered to God for the living and the dead."

"Is the Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross?"

"The Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist is the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross, for Christ, who offered Himself once for all on the Cross, and now presents Himself before the Father in heaven, also presents Himself by the hands of His priest in the Holy Eucharist on earth" (p. 35).

7. From "Children at the Altar":

"When present at this service . . . (1) We join with the priest in offering the Christian Sacrifice. (2) We worship our Lord Jesus Christ on His Altar-Throne" (p. 5).

"Jesu, in Thy dear Sacrament
Thy Cross I cannot see;
But the Crucified is offered there,
And He was slain for me" (p. 41).

These extracts are, I think, sufficient to show that a considerable section of the clergy of the Church of England—the men who use such service books and circulate such manuals—are habitually teaching the doctrine that in the Lord's Supper the Lord Jesus Christ is being perpetually offered to God the Father as a sacrifice for sin. Whatever inconsistency and self-contradiction may be involved in their statement of this doctrine, the fact of their asserting it is beyond question.

In sharp contrast to this whole conception of the Lord's

Supper, I desire now to state the doctrine of the Church of England, and the clear teaching of Holy Scripture on which that doctrine is based.

I cite first the 31st Article of Religion, and ask you to note carefully both its title and its contents :

“ *Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross.*”

“ 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 the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.”

In this Article two points are to be specially emphasized :

1. The Oblation of Christ is declared to have been *finished upon the Cross*. This declaration of our Church condemns any and every assertion to the effect that the sacrifice of Christ is in any sense continued or perpetuated, or reproduced in any way whatsoever. It was “finished upon the Cross.” There was then an end of it. The *fruits* of it are eternal, but *the Oblation itself has ceased*.

2. Asserting in the most comprehensive and explicit terms the *uniqueness* and *perfection* of the sacrifice of Christ *upon the Cross*, our Church in this Article condemns “the sacrifices of Masses” as blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits, on the ground that Christ was therein said to be offered for the living and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt. It doesn't the least bit matter what name we give to the ceremony, nor what the circumstances attending it may be. The thing which is so scathingly condemned is the alleged offering of Christ in it as a sacrifice for sin ; and it is so condemned because it practically denies the *finality*, and therefore the *perfection*, of the atoning sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross.

And this Article does not stand alone. Equally clear—and in some ways more forcible still—is the teaching conveyed by the Prayer of Consecration. The distinction between the Lord's

Table, at which the Holy Communion is celebrated, and the Christian's altar, on which the sacrifice of Christ for the sin of the world was offered, is most effectively, though undesignedly, exhibited in the rubric before this prayer and the opening sentences of the prayer itself.

The Rubric.—"When the priest, standing before *the Table*, hath so ordered the bread and wine . . ."

The Prayer.—"Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of Thy tender mercy didst give Thine only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death *upon the Cross* for our redemption; who made *there* (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world . . ."

Here we note three most significant assertions :

(i.) The officiating priest at the Holy Communion stands before *a table*.

(ii.) It was *on the Cross* that Christ offered the sacrifice of Himself.

(iii.) That sacrifice was *one*, and *once offered*; it was also *full, perfect, and sufficient* for the sins of the whole world. It cannot, therefore, be offered again in any sense whatever, nor can it be continued.

Indirectly, but no less definitely, is the same truth taught in the two exhortations when the minister gives warning of his intention to celebrate the Holy Communion.

In the former of the two it is stated that the Sacrament is to be received "in remembrance of His meritorious Cross and Passion; whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins." From this it appears that the Lord's Supper is not the sacrifice of Calvary, nor a continuation of that sacrifice, but *in remembrance* of it; and it is not in or by the Sacrament that we obtain remission of sins, but by Christ's meritorious Cross and Passion, and *by that alone*.

In the second exhortation the memorial character of the Sacrament is again emphasized: "And as the Son of God did vouchsafe to yield up His soul by death upon the Cross for

your salvation, so it is your duty to receive the Communion *in remembrance of the sacrifice of His death.*" Attention is also directed here to the fact that the sacrifice of the Cross was the sacrifice of Christ's death. Now, death, at all events, is a fact about which there is finality. The process of dying may be regarded, if you please, as continued or perpetuated, but the act of death is one and final. By defining the sacrifice of Calvary as the death of Christ, our Church effectually disposes of any notion of the continuance of that sacrifice. Death cannot be continued. It is a single, momentary experience. If words are capable of conveying ideas, it is clear that the teaching of the Church of England is that the oblation of Christ for the sin of the world is a thing that happened once in the past, and that there is no continuance whatsoever of it in the present time.

And this doctrine of our Church is in strict accordance with the teaching of the New Testament. Here I may be permitted to quote briefly from a book on the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Communion, a revised edition of which I have recently published.

In chap. vi., which deals with the sacrificial aspect of the Holy Communion, an exhaustive examination is made of the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews in which the words "We have an altar" occur; and it is shown that these words, in their context, cannot possibly refer to the Communion-table, but can only be interpreted of the Cross of Christ. The chapter concludes as follows :

"We thus see that there is nothing whatever in the New Testament to suggest or to support the idea that in the Holy Communion there is anything of the nature of a sacrifice, except the offering of praise to God, alms for the poor, and similar acts of service or of fellowship, all summed up in the offering of ourselves as a living sacrifice. Even in the highly figurative language of the Revelation there is no mention of anything that can suggest the idea of a continuous presentation in heaven of the sacrifice of Christ, with which a eucharistic sacrifice on earth may profess to be in union. The altar in

heaven is not an altar of burnt sacrifice, but a golden altar of incense (Rev. viii. 3), symbolical of the prayers of God's people, not of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The vision of the Lamb as it had been slain, *in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures*, is but the expression in emblem of that which the choir of the redeemed express in song—the triumph and the glory of the self-sacrifice of Christ. It is not the presentation of Christ's passion before God which is symbolically depicted in this scene, but the praising of Christ's passion by those whom it has won, and the victory of Christ's passion in unsealing the sealed book of the mystery of life.

“The idea that in heaven our blessed Lord, as the High Priest of the good things to come, is standing at the heavenly altar on behalf of all (Paschasius Radbert, quoted by Gore, “The Body of Christ,” p. 189), is an idea that is wholly contrary to the teaching of the New Testament and the Creeds. Consider, for example, this representative passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews: ‘And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins: but He, *when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God*; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet’ (x. 11-13).

“So also the Nicene Creed: ‘And ascended into heaven; *and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.*’

“The offering of the atoning sacrifice that alone can take away sin, whether as regards the accomplishing or the presentation of that sacrifice, has been so perfectly, and therefore so finally, completed that nothing more of it remains to be done in heaven or on earth. The Eternal Father does not need to be reminded of it. It is only we sinners, for whom that sacrifice was offered, that need to remember it continually for the saving and the satisfying of our soul. Therefore, ‘to the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding He

hath obtained to us, He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries as pledges of His love, and *for a continual remembrance of His death*, to our great and endless comfort.'"¹

It must, I think, be now plain to most of us that the doctrine of a eucharistic sacrifice for sin, which we have seen expressed in the books to which reference has been made, flatly contradicts the plain teaching of the Church of England, and also that of the New Testament on which alone it is based. That teaching acknowledges one sacrifice for sin, and only one—a *sacrifice as final as death*: a sacrifice, therefore, which cannot be continued or perpetuated; a sacrifice that can never be repeated in any sense, because the work to be accomplished by it has once for all been fully and perfectly completed.

It is not my intention to discuss here the ethical position of the Anglican clergy who, in the face of this, habitually teach the doctrine of a eucharistic sacrifice for sin. It will, however, be evident to most people that if, for the sake of peace and order, and as a reasonable concession to the legitimate desire for greater dignity and more elasticity in worship, it is thought desirable to permit the use of vestments, this concession is certain to be misrepresented, whilst these men remain in the Church, unless the true eucharistic doctrine of the Church is securely safeguarded by a declaration which shall expressly repudiate this error of a eucharistic sacrifice for sin, and reaffirm that particular element of Anglican doctrine which the use of vestments would otherwise be claimed to discredit.

The declaratory rubric which I have suggested is as follows: "Although the use of the above-mentioned vesture is made permissible as an aid to the devotion of some within the Church, and as in their sight lending dignity and solemnity to their worship, it is nevertheless explicitly declared that no countenance is in any way given, either by the use of such vesture, or by any other changes in this Order, to the doctrine that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is offered in any sense whatsoever a sacrifice for sin. For we are taught in Holy

¹ Ford, "New Testament Doctrine of Holy Communion," pp. 43-45.

Scripture that the death of our Saviour Christ upon the Cross is the one, only, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world ; which sacrifice itself can never be repeated, nor does it need to be supplemented by any further sacrifice for sin."

The value of this declaration is that it focuses into one pointed statement, to be placed in the very forefront of the Order of Administration of the Lord's Supper, the doctrine of the Church of England that the sacrifice of Calvary is the one, only, and final offering for sin, and that there is therefore in the Lord's Supper no sacrifice for sin.

In doing this it emphasizes in other important matters the difference between Rome and ourselves. For since there is in the Lord's Supper no sacrifice for sin, there is obviously no need for a miracle to be wrought by God the Holy Ghost in order to lay on the "altar" the Divine Victim who would be required for such a sacrifice. Transubstantiation is thus rendered superfluous, and so are all the theories, named or unnamed, which are akin to it. Moreover, since there is no further sacrifice for sin, there is no need for an order of sacrificing priests to minister at the Lord's Table ; for there is nothing there for sacrificing priests to do. The Christian minister, we may remind ourselves, is, according to the New Testament, the "overseer," or the "elder," or the "minister," of the congregation ; he is never spoken of as a sacrificing priest (*ιερεύς*).

This declaration would also furnish an exceedingly helpful test by which an honest man could settle for himself whether he could conscientiously remain a beneficed or stipendiary clergyman of the Church of England ; and by which a Bishop could assist a doubtful clergyman of his diocese to make his position clear.

It has been said to me that it is hopeless to expect the adoption of such a rubric as this. But why ? In face of the teaching which I have shown to be prevalent in the Church *in spite of the statements to be found in the Prayer-Book and*

Articles, the need for such a rubric is imperative ; for it would simply be suicidal on the part of loyal churchmen to permit the use of vestments, having regard to the significance that is notoriously attached to them; without a safeguard at least as adequate as this rubric would afford. And no honest and loyal churchman can take exception to its terms, for it contains no new doctrine ; it merely concentrates attention upon the existing doctrine of the Church of England that relates to this particular subject, as the Prayer-Book in many places exhibits it.

The acceptance of such a rubric as this, accompanying the permissive use of vestments, would draw together into one strong, united body the hosts of Church-people whose tastes may be infinitely various as to the accessories of worship, but who have this in common, that they are genuinely loyal to the doctrine of their Church.

On the subject of reservation of the Sacrament very few words will suffice. In some of the manuals from which I have already quoted, forms of devotion are supplied for the service of "Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament" and for "Visits to the Blessed Sacrament." It is hardly necessary to say that these Roman devotions are unlawful in the Church of England. If, therefore, it is thought fit to permit reservation for the more speedy administration to the sick, it is imperative that this should only be where the administration to the sick immediately follows the celebration in church ; and that the carrying of the reserved elements to the sick shall be absolutely without ceremony or publicity, so that no opportunity may be afforded for adoration of the Sacrament.

Considering, however, the gross abuses, contrary to the spirit and the letter of Anglican doctrine, which now prevail in certain parishes in this matter of reservation and adoration of the Sacrament, it is far preferable that a very short Order of Administration for the Sick should be compiled, to be used in cases of urgency, and reservation continue to be wholly prohibited.