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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

The Prayer-Book Dictionary and the Ornaments Rubric.

BY THE REV. CANON NUNN, M.A.

THE publication of the new Prayer-Book Dictionary has come as a boon to the Church. Its appearance is particularly opportune. The Reports of the Houses of Convocation of Canterbury and York have, after long delay, been recently completed.

The Report of the Sub-Committee of the Upper House of Canterbury led the way. The preparation of an historical memorandum was committed to five Bishops, whose views, however, had been previously in various ways given to the world.

The conclusions reached were in accordance with the prepossessions of the Committee.

The chief conclusion reached by them was announced in the following terms :

“ We feel bound to state that our own study of the facts leads us to the conclusion that the Ornaments Rubric cannot rightly be interpreted as excluding the use of all vestments for the clergy other than the surplice in parish churches, and in cathedral and collegiate churches, the surplice, hood, and cope.”

They were not prepared to pronounce for or against the use of vestments, so they allowed themselves to suggest that an Act of Uniformity might admit of diversity.

This illogical position was supported by a number of arguments founded upon maimed quotations, and much confused and incomplete information, largely coincident with, if not derived from, statements made by the late Mr. James Parker, or from the more recent works of Dr. Frere.

The Report was adopted by the Upper House, and resolutions approving of a “ diversity of use ” were passed. The Report was hailed with acclamation by those who had adopted

the use of vestments. They claimed it as a spiritual pronouncement, which justified the position that they had long taken up.

The Lower House of Canterbury adopted the conclusions of the Report without much public discussion, and with few dissentients. This was to be expected from the composition of the House, which is chiefly made up of Deans, Archdeacons, and representatives of Chapters. There are seventy-five Archdeacons alone, and only some fifty-six proctors for the clergy.

The Lower House of York followed to a large extent the example of Canterbury, though its composition is more favourable to the representation of the beneficed clergy.

When the Upper House of York was reached, there was some show of an independent consideration of the questions raised. But certain proposals were made by way of compromise or concession. It was suggested that a white vestment or chasuble might be permitted, if accompanied with "safeguards." But no proper examination of the conclusions and arguments of the five Bishops was attempted.

After long delays, the proposal for a white vestment was set aside. The voting was equal for and against.

Had the York Convocation followed the example of Canterbury, there would yet have remained the Houses of Laymen to be consulted, and finally the approval of Parliament would have of necessity been required, according to the King's Letter of Business.

The Church was, however, spared the misfortune of the possibility of its being reported that "the Church of England by representation" had resolved to seek to go behind the Reformation. The old saying, "*Clerus Anglicanus, stupor mundi*," might in that case have received a new interpretation.

But by the strenuous action of five of the northern Bishops time for reflection was secured. The Prayer-Book Dictionary has now done for the Church the work that ought to have been done in Convocation. The Report of the five Bishops has been thoroughly examined and sifted. We speak of it as the work of the five Bishops.

Some admirers of the Report would assign to it greater importance. The Rev. Paul Bull, of the Community of the Resurrection, of which Dr. Frere is the Superior, writes thus in one of the "Manuals for the Million": "In 1907 the House of Bishops appointed a Committee of six of the most learned bishops in England to investigate the question. After examining all the evidence, these six Bishops report that vestments cannot rightly be excluded."

The Rev. Dr. Dearmer, who is reckoned, along with Dr. Frere, among the "experts," writes thus: "The Sub-Committee of the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury has presented its Report on the Ornaments Rubric drawn up by seven of our most learned Bishops, in which the new knowledge has been most ably summarized."

As a matter of fact, the Report of the Lower House of Canterbury described the Report of the five Bishops as "drawn by two members of the Bishop's Sub-Committee."

The Report thus variously described is examined with scrupulous care in the Prayer-Book Dictionary by the chief editor, Canon Harford, in two articles, one on the "Ornaments of the Minister," and another on "Ritual Law."

Before, however, this examination is made, opportunity is given to the advocates of the vestments to state their case. The Rev. Vernon Staley, a well-known authority, presents an article on the question of the Ornaments Rubric, describing the *brima facie* case, as usually set forth. In support of this, it is commonly alleged that the Rubric means what it says. "The Ornaments Rubric is a sufficient guide." In this article it is admitted that, notwithstanding the efforts of some to advocate a previous date, the Rubric refers to the ornaments of Edward I.'s Prayer-Book. The Rubrics of this book are given in full, and it is maintained that whatever may have been done subsequently to modify these Rubrics, the present Rubric, made in 1662, carries us back to the First Prayer-Book. The article concludes by referring to a work of Dr. Percy Dearmer for a description of the vestments which the writer holds to be lawful, and to the

Report of the five Bishops as conclusive authority in the matter.

The other side of the argument is then taken up. It is pointed out by Canon Harford that, as maintained in the Ridsdale Judgment, the Ornaments Rubric was originally a note of reference to the Act of Uniformity of 1559, which Act is the first item in the contents of our present Prayer-Book, though very commonly omitted by the printers.

The Act governed the Rubric as it appeared in 1559, and governs it still. The Rubric, therefore, cannot be "taken by itself." It must be viewed in its historical setting.

The section of the Act upon which the whole controversy turns is, as is well known, the proviso contained in the 25th and 26th Sections. It runs as follows :

"25. Provided always and be it enacted, that such ornaments of the Church and of the Ministers thereof, shall be retained and be in use, as was in this Church of England, by authority of Parliament, in the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth, until other order shall be therein taken, by the authority of the Queen's Majesty, with the advice of her Commissioners appointed and authorized under the Great Seal of England for causes ecclesiastical, or of the Metropolitan of this Realm.

"26. And also, that if there shall happen any contempt or irreverence to be used in the Ceremonies or Rites of the Church, by the misusing of the orders appointed in this Book, the Queen's Majesty may by the like advice of the said Commissioners or Metropolitan, ordain and publish such farther Ceremonies or Rites, as may be most for the advancement of God's glory, and the edifying of His Church, and the due reverence of Christ's holy mysteries and sacraments."

The question to be decided is whether the Queen ever took "other order" in the matter of the ornaments, and, if she did, when was it taken, and in what manner.

It is now generally admitted that the Mass vestments disappeared almost immediately after the passing of the Act. This is acknowledged even by Dr. Frere. "It is highly unlikely that chasubles were used except in some inconspicuous places, partly because there is no evidence of use, and considerable evidence of general disuse ; partly because of the general destruction of ornaments in the first year of Elizabeth, both by unauthorized action, and also by the highly authoritative action of the

Royal Visitation." The Royal Visitors gave instruction in the parishes as to the disposal of the Mass vestments and ornaments. There is no instance of their ordering a chasuble, the sacrificial garment to be reserved for use. In some cases the vestments were destroyed, in others sold, or turned to other uses. Yet the Visitors spared some of the copes. The cope had been allowed at the service of the Holy Communion under the First Prayer-Book of Edward VI. It was, in fact, the Protestant alternative to the chasuble introduced by that book. It was not authorized by the old service books. It was authorized by the Act of Parliament, which established the First Prayer-Book.

The question then arises whether the removal of the Mass vestments was by the order of the Queen or in defiance of the proviso, which directed that they should be "retained" until such other order. The proviso had been inserted in the Act by the special direction of the Queen. Without it she would not have consented to the passing of the Act. That she, within the following year, permitted all the vestments, except some copes, to be removed from use and generally destroyed, without taking action against those who removed them, cannot for a moment be thought. The Queen's consent must have been given. We must expect to find that "other order" had been taken, under which the vestments were removed. Nor is it difficult to find the requisite order.

A careful historian, who wrote in 1838, before the days of the "Oxford Movement," thus describes what took place:

"The Act of Uniformity authorized all such habits as were statutely used in the second year of King Edward. Had nothing further been provided, a figure, venerable, but somewhat gaudy, would have been presented by the clergy in their eucharistic ministration, though at no other time. A subsequent clause empowered the Crown to make new regulations in this case. Elizabeth saw the expediency of resorting immediately to this authority. Her first year did not close before a Commission under the Great Seal issued Injunctions, which relieved clergymen from the necessity of appearing in Communion offices

or on any occasion, otherwise than had been required of them in Edward's fifth year. They were to wear ordinarily an academical dress, in their ministrations a surplice."¹

It had been resolved that the Second Prayer-Book of Edward VI. should be re-enacted with certain alterations. Those who were engaged in the work of preparing for this step clearly expected that the "other order" of the Queen would not long be delayed. Sandys, afterwards Bishop, wrote thus to Parker two days after the passing of the Act with reference to the proviso: "Our gloss—*i.e.*, interpretation—upon this text 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." These words were written on April 30. The Uniformity Act had been passed on April 28. The Royal Assent was given to it on May 8. The Act was to come into operation on June 24, and the Injunctions were given to the Commission on the same date.

We learn some important things from Sandys' letter. He understood that the Act ordered the ritual use of the Ornaments for the brief space of time before the issue of the "other order." But he thought that the clergy "meanwhile" would not be compelled to wear the vestments, the intention being simply that they should remain in evidence for the time, so that no one could carry them away. Their ultimate destination was to be fixed by the Royal Visitors, and the churchwardens were ordered by the 47th Injunction to prepare an inventory of the ornaments. But while this Injunction prepared the way for the removal of the ornaments of the Mass, the 30th Injunction ordered the ministers to use "the habits and garments and such square caps as were most commonly and orderly used in the latter year of King Edward the Sixth"—*i.e.*, in the year of the Second Prayer-Book.

Upon this Injunction a curious question arises: Did the Queen simply mean to reimpose the Rubric of 1552, under which both chasuble and cope were forbidden? Had this been

¹ Soames, "Elizabethan History," p. 26.

her intention, nothing would have been easier than to leave the Rubric as it was in the Second Prayer-Book.

But, judging by her actions, the Queen would appear to have desired to retain the use of the cope as a garment suitable for display, of which, as Bishop Burnett tells us, she was very fond.

This question of the favour shown to the cope should be fully discussed. Dr. Frere tells us truly that the "cope wearing" furnishes the "real clue" to the question of the Ornaments Rubric (*Church Quarterly Review*, October, 1912). When he goes on to say, "the continuous wearing of the cope has all along been an attempt to preserve as much as possible of the original order which authorized the vestments of 1549," he misstates the case.

The Queen had ordered the retention of the vestments, not of "as much as possible" of them. Her Visitors ordered their removal, making an exception in the case of some copes. There is no suggestion in the history of the times that the visitors desired to spare any of the Mass vestments. The retention of the Protestant alternative, the showy cope, was, as a matter of fact, favoured by the Queen. She herself countenanced the use of the cope at great functions, and it is possible that the indefinite language of the 30th Injunction was intended to leave an opening for this use. Her Visitors spared some of the copes, being probably guided in their selection by the character of their decoration. The Bishops in their subsequent "Interpretations" of the Injunctions seem to have regarded the cope as permissible, and in the Advertisements issued in 1566 the cope was finally recognized as allowable in cathedrals and collegiate churches.

Canon Harford goes somewhat fully into the question of the Injunctions, and further examines with great care the mistakes of the five Bishops with respect to the Advertisements, upon the validity of which the Privy Council grounded their condemnation of the vestments.

The two articles deserve the most attentive perusal.

How, then, we may ask, is this exposure of their mistakes received by Dr. Frere and his friends?

An article has appeared in the *Church Quarterly Review* for October, written by Dr. Frere, in which, while commending the Dictionary in certain aspects, he endeavours to belittle its conclusions on the ornaments question. There is no detailed objection to any of Canon Harford's statements of fact, or of his arguments; but an attempt is made to show that the opponents of the vestments are not agreed upon certain points, and on this ground they are, it is suggested, to be regarded as confuting one another.

"The three views," he writes, "are incompatible with one another, and the arguments in favour of them are mutually destructive."

The "three views" are as follows:

1. That the vestments other than those of 1552 never were legal, the familiar printed Rubric (of 1559) having no statutory authority, and being, in fact, inoperative.

2. That the law was altered by the Injunctions of 1559, especially the 30th, and its administrative enforcement in the Royal Visitation.

3. The Privy Council has decided that the law was first altered by the Advertisements of 1566.

"Thus," he adds, "the opponents of the legality of the Edwardine vestments are divided. They cannot agree as to the date at which they became illegal."

It is ingenious to represent the three parties holding these views as three opposing bodies in internecine combat. But will this description bear examination? The first of these views—*i.e.*, that the 1552 Rubric forbidding chasuble and cope, and ordering the use of the "surplice only," was intended to stand—does not appear to be tenable. The proviso must have been intended to make some change possible. The new Rubric simply repeated the substance of the proviso. There is no justification for describing it as a "fraud Rubric." The words to "be in use" must have had reference to ritual use. When Sandys said, "we shall not be compelled to use them," he could mean nothing else than "wear them."

The advocates of the vestments are never tired of attacking this contention that the Rubric of 1559 was a "fraud." They gain an easy victory. Those who hold this view should examine afresh the second section of the Act of 1559. This section rescinds Mary's Act, and restores the Second Prayer-Book, "*with the alterations and additions therein added and appointed by this statute.*"

Now, one of these alterations is, without doubt, that provided for in the proviso. It is a common thing to find that those who advocate the theory of the fraud Rubric pass lightly over the second section, and append to the clause re-enacting the Second Book the words of the *third* section, which prescribe to the clergy the use of the Second Book of Common Prayer, "with one alteration or addition of certain lessons to be used on every Sunday in the year, and the form of the Litany altered and corrected, and two sentences only added in the delivery of the Sacrament to the communicants, and none other, or otherwise."

The words "none other, or otherwise" are taken from the first Act of Uniformity (1549), prescribing the use of the First Book. The words in this Act (1559) must mean the same—*i.e.*, that no other book is to be employed.

The suggestion that the (1552) Rubric forbidding the use of anything but the surplice must be joined up to the words of the proviso, so as to make it unmeaning (if the words "be in use" are to be taken in their obvious sense), is not to be entertained.

We may, therefore, put aside the first of the three views and confine our attention to the other two, and ask, whether the "other order" was first given by the Injunctions, and the Visitation that enforced them, or by the Advertisements.

The alternative as put by Dr. Frere misstates the case. It is not held by those that oppose the use of the vestments that "the law was *altered*," either by the Injunctions or by the Advertisements.

They maintain that the law was *carried out* both by the Injunctions and the Advertisements. In dealing with the case the Privy Council Judges did not say that the law was first

altered by the Advertisements. They said that they were "not able to satisfy themselves either that the Injunctions pointed to the vestments now in controversy, or that they were issued with the advice required by the section of the Act of Parliament."

But they proceeded to say that they were "clearly of opinion that the Advertisements were a taking of order within the Act of Parliament by the Queen with the advice of the Metropolitan." Having some doubts as to the Injunctions, doubts which might have been removed had the new light since thrown on the subject been available, they preferred, without pronouncing upon the Injunctions, to rest their judgment upon the Advertisements alone.

It will be seen that Canon Harford has satisfied himself that "other order" was taken under the Injunctions and the consequent action of the Visitors. With regard to the Advertisements, it is plain that they confirmed and further explained the order given in the Injunctions and at the Visitations. So far from the two orders being opposed, they are complementary and confirmatory.

The facts upon this point are briefly summed up in the words of the chief of the Revisers in the year 1662, when the present Rubric was settled :

"Now, these Injunctions are allowed and confirmed by the Queen's Advertisements" (cap. i., art. 3), "and those Advertisements are authorized by law" (1 Eliz., cap. 2, sect. penult.—*i.e.*, the proviso. Bishop Wren, "Parentalia," p. 75).

It is, perhaps, too much to expect that these misrepresentations of the views of the Privy Council will cease to be made, however often they may be corrected, but the correction should follow sharply on the heels of the offence.

