

**ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE LITURGY:
BEING THIRTEEN DRAWINGS OF
THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY
COMMUNION IN A PARISH
CHURCH**

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Illustrations of the liturgy: Being thirteen drawings of the celebration of the holy communion in a parish church by Clement O. Skilbeck & Percy Dearmer

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CLEMENT O. SKILBECK & PERCY DEARMER

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Alcuin Club Collections

XIX

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CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION
IN A PARISH CHURCH

BY

CLEMENT O. SKILBECK

*With Notes descriptive and explanatory, and an Introduction
on "The Present Opportunity," by*

PERCY DEARMER, D.D.

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LANTERN SLIDES

The Committee of the Aleuin Club has been asked to prepare lantern slides of the illustrations in this book, in order that the book may thus be used to supply notes for a lantern-lecture. These slides can be hired from the Hon. Sec., Aleuin Club, 102 Adelaide Road, London, N.W., for the sum of 3 shillings the set, with 1 shilling for insurance and postage. A few extra slides are added to this set.

Other slides are noted at the end of this volume.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE LITURGY

INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY

IN the year of the Coronation of King George V many must have learnt how beautiful an Anglican Service can be if only the Anglican rules are adhered to. The rite in Westminster Abbey last June was so impressive because it was not spoilt by that traditional slovenliness and inadequacy, which obscure the character of other collegiate or cathedral services.¹ Had the King been anointed and

¹ At a slight risk perhaps of being misunderstood, I here subjoin a criticism which, overstated though it be, does yet give vent to an opinion, that, as the reader will know, is very common among artists and writers. There is a deep-rooted notion in the Church that the so-called "moderate" compromise of the cathedral type, though admittedly indefensible on principle (while the Prayer Book remains as it is), yet is necessary because the nation will not be patient of any other—that the nation in fact likes it. The truth would rather seem to be that the nation tolerates but does not admire this compromise, and is chilled by a certain drab formality and an absence of the atmosphere of prayer in our cathedrals; because people need sympathy, and breadth of outlook, rather than that merely negative moderation of which the Church has had so much. At any rate the following quotation from a well-known novelist (and just now our popular novelists are our popular preachers) will at least serve to suggest the possibility that the nation may be growing to like this type of service less every year:—

"He had already established a fund to provide for the education of the deans and chapters of the cathedrals, with a view to prevent in the future a recurrence of the hideous artistic mistakes made by these dignitaries in the discharge of their respective offices. He had noticed, as a good many other people of discrimination do daily, that the moment a dignitary of an English cathedral opens his mouth either to read, to sing, or to pray, the divine influences engendered by the architecture and the hallowed associations of the building, and by the music of the choir are rather more than neutralized, and sensitive worshippers of God through the medium of art go away shocked: so he had determined to make an effort to prevent the continuance of so gross a state of things. It was also his hope to produce by a conference of poets, who were also literary men, a Church Hymnal which should be worthy of being regarded as poetry, in place of the doggerel, ancient and modern, which

crowned in accordance with the usual ceremonial compromise, how mean and meagre the ecclesiastical side of the function would have appeared! But on the occasion of a Coronation the English Church has always awoke from her æsthetic lethargy, and even in the worst times has risen to the effort of carrying out a great part of the Ornaments Rubric. So it was this year—with many added touches of beauty which came to the Abbey from the liturgical revival of our time: no laws were wholly broken, no rubrics wholly disregarded, the service in the main was rendered faithfully to the English Use; and as a consequence every beholder, of every nation and form of religion, was stirred and impressed. Nor was this all. The whole nation, nonconformist as well as conformist, was satisfied—nay, it was delighted, touched, kindled. People who generally object to beauty in connection with the worship of God made no objection on this occasion—partly, no doubt, because they are used to ceremonial in connection with royal functions, but partly also because they knew that it all was lawful and done under authority: indeed the two reasons overlap—such public ceremonial must, they know, be lawful, and they never dream of questioning it. There is no slur of “disloyalty” about such ceremonial; and the English nation loves it exceedingly. Now, in the case of many parish churches, it is precisely this slur, not undeserved, that has largely prevented the Church Revival from establishing itself in the hearts of the English people.

If the Church of England to herself would be but true! Here was an occasion on which she was; an occasion on which little was omitted, and nothing without authority interpolated; an occasion on which the Ornaments Rubric was observed—and the result was a service which the Church of England could set before the whole world, for the whole world to respect and admire. No other part of Christ's Church could have done it better, if so well.

cannot but be offensive to a heaven which has endowed men—some men—with ears sensitive to a false rhyme, a ridiculous metre, and a mixed metaphor. And he was sanguine enough to hope that, by the introduction of an element of culture (reasonably endowed) the Church might eventually produce a poet.”—Frankfort Moore, *The Food of Love*.

Indeed, where else could it have been done so well? For here was a ceremonial majestic, even gorgeous, and yet simple all the way, and speaking simply to the hearts of men; and here was a ritual written in our great vernacular, for all to understand, for all to love, as its stately phrases echoed in their hearts, and still will echo in many a heart for years to come. Some of the phrases peculiar to the Coronation Service are indeed among the noblest epigrams of all literature: such as this, which is accompanied by the ceremonial of the girding with the Sword:

"With this Sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order: that doing these things you may be glorious in all virtue; and so faithfully serve our Lord Jesus Christ in this life, that you may reign for ever with him in the life which is to come."

Or this, at the ceremonial of the delivery of the Sceptre with the Dove:

"Be so merciful that you be not too remiss; so execute justice that you forget not mercy. Punish the wicked, protect and cherish the just, and lead your people in the way wherein they should go."

The later additions are as English prose not less admirable: such is Sancroft's—"When you see this Orb thus set under the Cross, remember that the whole world is subject to the Power and Empire of Christ our Redeemer."

And this, at the ceremonial of the Presenting of the Holy Bible, which dates from the Revolution:

"Our gracious King; we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is wisdom; this is the royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God."

And the Eucharistic Service itself, in which the Coronation rites are imbedded, the Service which is used day after day in all our churches, what can rival it for beauty of diction? Many are busy searching for faults just now with

a view to revision; and faults there are, just as there are faults in the Latin Canon of the Mass, which is indeed such a skein of confusion that scholars have not yet succeeded in disentangling it, and which is dry and jejune as compared with the Eastern rites. The English Liturgy is in some points inferior to the older services of both East and West, as it is to the Scottish and American Liturgies.¹ But it shares with these last, and with the English Bible that forms so large a part of our services, this peculiar distinction:—the language in which it is written is a language at the finest point of its development, whereas both Greek and Latin service-books belong to a language that was past its prime. And to this must be added the fact that, *when the Prayer Book is obeyed*, as it was at the Coronation, the Ornaments Rubric fixes our ceremonial as well as our ritual at a point before the abounding degradation of a *rococo* period had set in.²

Here, at the Sacring of King George V, was, in fact, all the gain of the Reformation, with almost none of its losses³—none, rather, of those losses inflicted by the individualism of subsequent generations upon that Reformation Settlement, which was set forth in the first English Prayer Book and enshrined as a legal enactment for us still by the Ornaments Rubric.

¹ When the English Prayer Book is revised, there can be no doubt that the English Liturgy will by general consent be approximated to the Scottish and to that of the First English Prayer Book, by the removal of these acknowledged blemishes.

² For the Ornaments Rubric, see the Report of the Sub-Committee of the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury, No. 416, *The Ornaments of the Church and its Ministers*; S.P.C.K., 1908. Also the Alcuin Club Tract, No. 1, *The Ornaments of the Rubric*, by J. T. Micklethwaite. Also W. H. Frere, *The Principles of Religious Ceremonial*; Longmans, 1906, cap. xiv. Also F. C. Beles, *The Ornaments Rubric*; Mowbrays (Churchman's Penny Library), 1908.

³ The Coronation Service was much altered in 1685, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: most, perhaps all, liturgiologists would prefer to see it in great measure restored to the form which survived till after the Restoration. See, e.g., Leopold G. Wickham Legg, *Suggestions for the Reconstruction of the Coronation Ceremonies* (Church Historical Society. No. LXVII); London, S.P.C.K., 1902. There were some more obvious defects. The bishops, for instance, did not wear their mitres, which they could lawfully have used.