

**ALTARS PROHIBITED BY
THE CHURCH OF
ENGLAND, PART II, PP.
51-75; PART I, PP. 3-47**

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Altars prohibited by the Church of England, Part II, pp. 51-75; Part I, pp. 3-47 by William Goode

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WILLIAM GOODE

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BY

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

PART II.

BY

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RECTOR OF ST. ANTHONY, LONDON.

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"ALTARS PROHIBITED," &c.

PART II.

In reply to the authorities given in the preceding pages in proof of altars being prohibited by the Church of England, it has been alleged, that there is a rubric in our Prayer-book which sanctions them. The rubric is, "And here is to be noted, that such ornaments of the Church and of the ministers thereof, at all times of their ministration, shall be retained, and be in use, as were in this Church of England, by the authority of Parliament, in the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth;" the corresponding rubric in the preceding Prayer-books from the year 1559 being, "And here is to be noted that the minister at the time of the Communion, and at all other times in his ministration, shall use such ornaments in the church, as were in use by authority of Parliament, in the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth, according to the Act of Parliament set in the beginning of this book."

It is contended, that in the words "ornaments of the church," are included the altars which were in use in the second year of Edward VI.

The argument is hardly worth an answer, for who would seriously contend for such an application of the word "ornaments," but with the view of gaining some

object by it? But its unsoundness may easily be proved. For, in the first place, have we any reason to suppose, that those who inserted the words in the Liturgy of 1662, affixed such a meaning to them? Did they re-introduce altars, or as far as we can ascertain, desire to do so? The rubric, be it observed, is not merely *permissive*, but *preceptive*, and therefore if, as is alleged, they introduced these words *de novo* in *this sense*, there would have been some indication of it in their acts. But, on the contrary, there was none.

Secondly, it appears from Bishop Ridley's "Injunctions" and "Reasons," (see pp. 7, 34—6, above), that even in the second year of Edward VI. altars were not "in use by authority of Parliament" as distinguished from tables, but that while the Liturgy and Act for Uniformity of that year were still in force, Bishop Ridley gave directions for the substitution of tables for altars throughout his diocese, which were followed up by an order of council to the same effect for the whole kingdom; "which thing," as the divines justly remark, who addressed Queen Elizabeth on this subject (as stated above, pp. 36 *et seq.*), "they would not have done, if altars had been established by authority of the said Parliament." (p. 40, above.)

Lastly, the matter is put beyond question by the following facts: The rubric, though somewhat different from the rubric of the Elizabethan Prayer-book, precisely corresponds with the direction of the Act for Uniformity of Queen Elizabeth, which runs thus,—“ 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, &c." (Gibson's Codex, i. 271.) Now the Prayer-book required to be used by this Act is, the second book of Edward VI., in which the word "altar" had been changed into "table." And when the Queen was addressed shortly after by the leading divines of the Reformation, exhorting her not to sanction the altars that had been re-erected in the reign of Queen Mary, they intimate to her, that to allow altars would be to "break ecclesiastical laws, established by Parliament," "seeing there be special words in the Book of Service allowed by Parliament, and having force of a law, for the placing and using of a table at the ministration of the communion, which special words cannot be taken away by general terms." (See p. 39 above.) Accordingly, in the Queen's Injunctions, issued soon after, the fact is distinctly recognised that "the law" prohibits altars.

But if the direction that the ornaments of the church were to be the same as were in the second year of the reign of King Edward VI., referred to the altars, so far from altars being prohibited, they would have been required by the law, and therefore such was not the meaning of the words, nor consequently of our rubric, which is exactly the same.

And hence we obtain a full and complete answer to another futile argument in favour of "altars," from the direction of the rubric, that "the chancels shall remain as they have done in times past." For this direction in precisely the same words, was in the first Prayer-book of Elizabeth, that very book to which the divines that addressed her at the beginning of her reign, appeal as requiring a table and prohibiting an altar for the administration of the holy communion; and, moreover,

is to be found in the second Prayer-book of Edward VI., when the altars had been removed.

The question as to what constitutes a *table* and what an *altar*, is merely the question of one who wishes to obscure the subject. When God commanded Moses to make an *altar* and a *table* for the Tabernacle, amidst all the particular directions given as to the *materials*, &c., to be used, it was not thought necessary to give any instructions as to the difference of form between the two. "Thou shalt make," it is said, "a table of shittim wood, &c., and thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, &c., and thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are *on the four feet thereof*." (Exod. xxv. 23—26.) Taking for granted that it was understood to be a horizontal plane standing upon feet as its supporters. And similar directions are given respecting the *altar*, its form being supposed to be well understood. (See Exod. xxvii. 1—8, and xxx. 1—4.) And we may observe, that this was not less an altar for not being cemented to the foundation on which it stood, or the building in which it was placed, for in the Tabernacle it was not thus fixed, but had rings in it for staves, by which when the Israelites were on their journey it was carried. Whatever, then, might be the reason for the distinction between the two, there was a difference in their form by which the one was distinguishable from the other. They were two different things, intended for different purposes. The table was a horizontal plane, resting upon a frame to which it was attached, supported by feet, and unattached to the building in which it was placed. The altar was an erection from the ground, not necessarily fixed to the ground, but formed as if it were built from the ground.

The distinction may evidently be traced back to the earliest age, when the very phrase used of *building* an altar unto the Lord shows the general character of its form, and that it was different to what a table would be. Nor would the two ever have been confounded together, nor in fact were they, but from the rise of Romish false doctrine. There are still in existence some of the tables in use during the earliest period of the Christian Church, but these are called and *used* as *altars* by the Romanists, *consistency with their present doctrines requiring them to do so*. Consequently, as far as *names* are concerned, it would be difficult to draw a precise distinction between the two. But is this confusion, so easily to be accounted for, to be perpetuated by us? Are we to determine that two things really distinct from each other are identical, because Romanists and Tractarians find it convenient for their purposes at times to call each by the name of the other. When forced by the regulations of our church to make use of a *table*, they call it an *altar* before the people, to introduce the doctrine of a sacrifice; and when having contrived to smuggle an altar into one of our churches, they are called to account for it in an ecclesiastical court, they stand out that their altar is nothing but a table. The consciousness of some parties who are very active in this matter at the present time of the difference between the two, is shown in the following passage. "With respect to the latter," i. e., altars, say the Camden Society, "we say, if circumstances do not permit you to have a fixed altar of stone, do not attempt one of wood, but let your altar be a moveable table."* They prefer a fixed altar of stone, but if that cannot be obtained they recommend not an *altar of wood*, but a *table*, showing that they regard an altar of wood and a

* Ecclesiol. iii. 6.