

TWELVE REASONS AGAINST THE DISTINCTIVE VESTMENTS

Church Association Tract 137

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1. It is a fact that there is not the slightest proof in Scripture, that any “distinctive vestments” were worn, or considered necessary for the due celebration of the Lord’s Supper, in the days of the Apostles. These “vestments” are purely and entirely an invention of a later age and of uninspired men. The gorgeous dress of the high-priest in the Mosaic dispensation was never meant to be a pattern to the Christian Church. It was part of a typical system, which was ordained for a special purpose, and was intended to pass away.
2. It is a fact that the use of these “distinctive vestments” is one of the many distinctive marks of the Church of Rome. That unhappy Church connects them closely with that crowning error and blasphemous delusion in her theological system—the Sacrifice of the Mass!
3. It is a fact that in the beginning of the English Reformation, when our Reformers were only half enlightened, the use of these distinctive vestments was expressly ordered. The first Prayer Book of Edward the VIth, put forth in 1549, contains the following words in the rubric before the Communion Service:—“The priest shall put upon him the vestment appointed for the ministration of the Holy Communion, that is to say, a white alb plain, with a vestment or cope.”
4. It is a fact that, as soon as our Reformers saw Scriptural truth fully and clearly, they expressly forbade the clergy to use these “distinctive vestments.” The second Prayer Book of Edward the VIth, put forth in 1552, contains the following words at the beginning of the morning service, “The priest shall wear neither alb, vestment, nor cope, – but he shall have and wear a surplice only.”
5. It is a fact that when the English Reformation was begun over again in the difficult days of Elizabeth, after Bloody Mary’s destructive reign, the only rubric put forth about the ministers’ dress, expressly omits to mention the distinctive vestments,” and only directs, in vague and general language, “such ornaments to be used as were in use in the second year of Edward VI.”—But that these “ornaments” did not mean the famous Popish “vestments,” as some assert now-a-days, is made as nearly certain as possible by two historical facts. One is, that in the first year of her reign, Elizabeth issued “injunctions” ordering ministers to “wear such seemly habits as were most commonly received in the LATTER days of King Edward VI.”—The other is, that in 1564, the Queen issued “advertisements,” in which it is ordered that “every minister saying prayers or administering sacraments shall wear a comely surplice.” Neither in the injunctions or advertisements are the alb, the cope, or the chasuble mentioned.—Cardwell’s *Documentary Annals*, vol. i. p. 193, 292.
6. It is a fact that in 1569, Archbishop Parker, the first primate under Elizabeth, issued “Articles of inquiry” for the whole province of Canterbury, containing the following question:—“Whether your priests, curates, or ministers do use in the time of the celebration of divine service to wear a surplice, as prescribed by the Queen’s injunctions and the book of Common Prayer?”—*Cardwell’s Documentary Annals*, vol. i. p.321.
7. It is a fact that in 1576, Archbishop Grindal, the second primate under Elizabeth, issued “articles of inquiry” for the whole province of Canterbury, in which he expressly asks “whether all vestments, albs, tunicles &c., and such other relics and monuments of superstition and idolatry, be utterly defaced, broken and destroyed.”—Parker Society, *Grindal’s Remains*, p. 159. The same inquiry

was made by Aylmer, Bishop of London in 1577, and by Sandys, Archbishop of York in 1578. Whether it is in the least likely that such an imperious Sovereign as Queen Elizabeth would have allowed such inquiries to be made, if the “ornaments rubric” legalized the vestments, is a question I leave to any one of common sense to answer!

8. It is a fact that the Canons of 1604 say nothing about “distinctive vestments,” as essential to the due celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The 58th canon simply orders that “Every minister saying the public prayers, or ministering the sacraments, or other rites of the Church, shall wear a decent and comely surplice.” This canon is the more remarkable, because the 24th canon orders the cope to be worn “in cathedrals” by those who administer the communion. However much we may regret that the “cope” is sanctioned in cathedrals, it must be remembered that the chasuble and not the cope, is peculiarly the sacrificial garment. The use of the chasuble is not ordered.

9. It is a fact that at the last revision of our Prayer Book, in the year 1662, nothing whatever was done to restore the “distinctive vestments,” and not a word was added to our rubrics that could justify the use of them.

10. It is a fact that for nearly three hundred years these “distinctive vestments” have never been used in the parish churches of the Church of England. Whatever some men may please to say, in the present day, about the lawfulness of alb, chasuble, or cope, there is no getting over the fact that all *custom* is dead against them, and that from the first days of Queen Elizabeth they have been disused and laid aside.

11. It is a fact that the attempt to revive the use of “distinctive vestments,” in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, is a thing of entirely modern date. It began with a party in the Church, which boldly avows its desire to unprotestantize the Church of England. It is pressed forward and supported almost entirely by those churchman, who, both in doctrine and practice, are making unmistakable approaches towards the Church of Rome, and regard the Lord’s Supper as a sacrifice.

12. Last, but not least, it is a fact that the principal advocates of the Ritualistic movement in the Church of England, distinctly and expressly avow that the “distinctive vestments” in the Lord’s Supper are not taken up and pressed upon us as a mere matter of taste, but as *sacrificial garments* and the outward expression of an inward doctrine. That doctrine is nothing less than the Romish doctrine of a real, corporeal presence, a real sacrifice, a really sacrificing priest, and a real altar in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. That this is the fact any one may satisfy himself by reading the evidence of Mr Bennett, the Vicar of Frome, given before the Royal Commissioners in 1867. (First report, p. 72.) Mr. Bennett, in reply to a question, distinctly told the Commissioners that “the use of the chasuble involved the doctrine of sacrifice,” and that “he considered he offered a propitiatory sacrifice in the Lord’s Supper.”

I lay these twelve facts before my readers, and commend them to their serious attention, I entreat them to mark, learn, and inwardly digest them. I unhesitatingly assert, in the face of these facts, that it is impossible to defend the use of the “distinctive vestments” in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, either by Scripture, the Prayer Book, the law of the land, or custom. Reason and common sense alike condemn them. I assert furthermore that it is no trifling matter to allow any clergyman to use these vestments, that the allowance will be the concession of a great principle, and that any effort that may be made, either in Convocation or Parliament, to obtain sanction for them, ought to be firmly resisted by every faithful Churchman.

For fuller information, see Church Association Tract. No. XXXIII.