

# THE NORTH SIDE OF THE TABLE

Church Association Tract 088

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To a plain man it must seem marvellous how any doubt could exist as to the meaning of the words "the priest standing at the north side of the table." On the face of the rubric they seem intended to regulate the position of the clergyman, *not* that of the table; and if any question were raised as to the meaning of "North side" one would naturally reply in the words of the Rt. Hon. Sir R. J. Phillimore, Dean of the Arches, "I think I must take the *primâ facie* meaning of the rubric, and consider it as the north side *of the whole table*."<sup>1</sup>

That common-sense view was also adopted by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Purchas Judgment—"Their lordships are of opinion that 'north side' means that side which looks towards the north." And again in the Ridsdale case they said "It is the duty of the minister to stand at the side of the table which, supposing the church to be built in the ordinary eastward position, would be next the north, whether the side be a longer or shorter side of the table . . . : it is accurate, both in scientific and in ordinary language, to say that a quadrilateral table has four sides." Facciolati's Dictionary defines 'side' as "the part between the front and back."<sup>2</sup> And Ritualistic writers, from the Ordo Romanus and Caerimoniale Romanum down to Mr. F. G. Lee, habitually distinguish between the front of the altar and its 'sides.' Dr. John Mason Neale, for instance, says the corporal (*i.e.* "fair white linen cloth") hung down "at the sides, *not at the front*, as may often be seen nowadays in the Church of England."<sup>3</sup>

Nor would any candid inquirer find it difficult to understand why the 'North' was chosen to be the clergyman's standpoint. Not certainly from any magical virtue in the points of the compass, but because churches in England being built east and west, a clergyman who had the table to the south of him *could* no longer interpose his body between the Supper of the Lord and the guests who partake of it, or hide from them those sacramental actions which our Lord bade His followers to "Do in remembrance of" Him, and which He was careful to 'do' therefore before their very eyes.

That such is the plain and obvious meaning of the rubric is proved not merely by an absolutely unbroken and continuous usage during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but by the fact that those who violate the law by standing at the West front of the Lord's Table cannot among themselves as to the pretext which shall be put forth for doing so. At first, the *Ecclesiastic* urged that the celebrant might go to the north-west *corner*; this was followed by Mr. F. G. Lee's diagram in the "Directorium Anglicanum," 1865.

According to which we were asked to believe that one-fifth part of *one* of the sides of the table looking *westward* was the "*north side of the table*" itself! Mr. Blunt, however, in his "Annotated Prayer Book,"<sup>4</sup> and Archdeacon Freeman in his "Rites and Ritual,"<sup>5</sup> taught that the front is to be divided into *three* vertical sections, of which the left-hand one is the north 'side'! Then came Dr. Littledale who maintained that the two 'sides' meant the *two* halves of the front divided by "an imaginary line."<sup>6</sup> Lastly came Messrs. Walton and Scudamore who admitted that the notion that "side of the table" meant that section of one of its sides which happened to lie at one side of the celebrant, or of a crucifix, or of an "imaginary line," was "absolutely unknown to English Ritualists during the three last centuries, and conspicuously at variance with the facts of our Church history."<sup>7</sup>

Since that outspoken rebuke in 1866 the previous theories seem to have been silently dropped, and later writers on the Ritualistic side have adopted the Walton-Scudamore theory as being *the* 'correct' view. This theory is that at the time when the North Side rubric was originally sanctioned (*viz.* in 1552, 1559, and 1662) the Lord's Table was "ALWAYS, EVERYWHERE, UNIVERSALLY" oblong<sup>8</sup> in shape, and was invariably placed with its longer sides from east to west, so that the

tables being now-a-days turned the other way, “there now is NO north *side*” (in the sense assigned by these gentlemen) and consequently

“WE ARE AT LIBERTY TO STAND WHERE WE WILL.”<sup>9</sup>

Unhappily, this ‘liberty’ of the celebrant, involves the bondage of the congregation who stand committed by the public, overt, and formal acts of their ‘persona’ if they say ‘Amen’ to such a “giving of thanks” as is, in fact, a colourable imitation of the Romish Mass. Hence, an inquiry into the grounds of this latest ‘correct’ fashion, really concerns every Church-goer. It will be seen that it rests upon a double assumption—1<sup>st</sup>, that oblong tables were directed by authority to be ranged lengthwise down the axis of the Church; and 2<sup>nd</sup>, that the word ‘side’ was *designedly* employed to exclude the *ends* of the tables. Unless these statements of fact can be made good, the theory that there is “now *no* North side” must perish from its intrinsic unreasonableness. Mr. Walton’s disgust with the rubric itself as a “mere antiquated rubric,” which is to be treated as “practically repealed” in order to “place us in harmony with the *better* mind of the Church in *preceding* centuries,” shows that his mind is out of sympathy with that of the framers of the rubric.

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Not a scrap of evidence has yet been produced to show that in 1552, or 1559, anybody, whether Puritan, Papist, or Churchman, attached the smallest importance to the supposed contrast between the ‘side’ and the ‘end’ of the table, or to the direction in which the table itself looked. As to its shape, Dr. Stephens in his “Notes on the Book of Common Prayer,”<sup>10</sup> says: “No form of table has been prescribed by the statute, and therefore it may be square or of any other rectilinear figure, or even circular, where of course you cannot have any ‘side’ in the sense which it is contended ‘side’ here bears. The meaning of ‘at the north side’ therefore seems really to be simply ‘to the north’ of the table.” This view was emphatically adopted by the Supreme Court of Appeal in the Folkestone case, when, after listening to a long argument to prove the contrary, they said:—“The figure and the position of the table are not fixed either by nature or by law.”<sup>11</sup> Dr. Lewis, in his “Reformation Settlement” (pp. 111, 112), and Mr. Pugin, in his ‘Contrasts’ (p.30), says that the Edwardian tables were in fact ‘square,’ and this shape in many cases was probably adopted to increase their unlikeness in ‘form’ to the oblong altar. The Papists called these tables “oyster boards,” which is the very term used by Bp. Pierce, in derision of the *square* table set up by the church wardens at Beckington.<sup>12</sup> Such a table may yet be seen at Fraisthorpe, in Yorkshire. That the Edwardian tables were not likely to be uniform in shape may be easily inferred from the story which Foxe tells (Act. and Mon. vii.-288) of the parson of Adisham, Kent, who on Sept. 3rd, 1553, after the accession of Mary, was attacked by a Popish parishioner who threatened, “If he say any service here again, I will lay the table on his face. And in that rage he with others took up the table, and laid it on a chest in the chancel, and set the trestles by it.”

The wonder is that the Reformers did not boldly revert to the primitive practice of placing the minister behind the table facing the congregation, as in Leonardo da Vinci’s well-known picture of the Last Supper. Cranmer had employed Holbein to depict just such a ‘supper’ in his Catechism, issued in 1548, and this was the more significant because in order to make room for it he had to strike out the original illustration in which a priest, “standing in the midst,” is placing a wafer in the mouth of a communicant kneeling in front of an altar decked with lights “after the old sort,” as Gardiner jeeringly boasted.

Cranmer in reply, pointed to the substituted picture as a proof that in 1548 he ‘misliked’ those very details.<sup>13</sup> Facsimiles of both these woodcuts are given to show that the distinction between ‘altar’ and ‘table’ was not then supposed to consist in the ‘endwise’ or the ‘lengthwise’ arrangement of the latter. In John A’Lasco’s church in London, the table was similarly placed (A.D. 1550) with its ends north and south. So, too, Pullain’s church at Glastonbury (A.D. 1551) had the table placed “in sight of the congregation,” the minister facing them, the elements being placed at the *ends* (cornua) of

the table. So, too, Coverdale (Bp. of Exeter in 1551) in his translation of the Danish Liturgy, the first edition of which was published before 1546, describes the priest as "standing afore the table" *when addressing the congregation*, but the two priests who distribute the bread and wine as standing one at one 'end,' the other at the other.<sup>14</sup> The very same arrangement was adopted by the English Puritans at Frankfort in 1554.<sup>15</sup> "In the church of the Walloon congregation, in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, there is to this day the table at the west end of the church, with a bench all round it for the communicants to sit at; but the table stands across the church, north and south," says Archdeacon Harrison.<sup>16</sup>

Possibly there may have been good practical reasons in 1552 for seeking to secure uniformity by the compromise of "shouldering the people," as Dr. Littledale calls it, which, while doing least violence to the feelings of the older men, would yet secure the needful publicity demanded by the nature of a sacramental rite. In 1553 a French translation "par Francoys Philippe Serviteur de Monsieur le Grand Chancelier d'Angleterre" was published containing the rubric in question "le Prêtre étant debout auprès de la table, du coté du Nord;" words which remind the reader of Levit. i.-11.

The substitution of tables for altars had, however, been effected long *before*<sup>17</sup> the introduction of the "North side rubric" in 1552. To show this, let us "briefly trace the

#### HISTORY OF THE TABLES UNDER EDWARD VI.

The altar recognised by the first Prayer Book of Edward (1549) was therein described three times as a 'table,' and twice as God's 'board,' so that the bishops who favoured the Reformation at once proceeded to translate this verbal metonym into literal fact. In 1549, the official of the Archdeacon of Caermarthen ordered the altar to be "pulled down" and "taken away:" though Bp. Ferrar finding "great grudge of the people," and "fearing tumult" (it was during the Devon rebellion) commanded the vicar to "set up the Communion table (*for the time*) near the place where it was before;"<sup>18</sup> even then, however, it appears from the deposition of Griffith Donne, town-clerk of Caermarthen, that the vicar celebrated "afore the midst of the altar" as required by the rubric, *but* "with his back toward the table," "with his back eastward."<sup>19</sup> The first Prayer Book only came into use on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1549, yet before December "the altars in *many* churches are changed into tables."<sup>20</sup> In 1550 Wm. Salesbury published his "Baterie of the Pope's botereulx," in the Preface to which he praised Rich, the Lord Chancellor, for his activity in pulling down altars.<sup>21</sup> On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1550, Hooper preached before the king "to turn altars into tables,"<sup>22</sup> and before that Ridley had destroyed the altars in the Diocese of Rochester.<sup>23</sup> On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1550, "he brake down the wall standing by the high altar's side."<sup>24</sup> in St. Paul's Cathedral. This 'wall' probably supported a canopy, and corresponded to the curtains described by Durand in the thirteenth century as "on either *side* of the altar."<sup>25</sup> In the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the synod of Cambrai ordered "curtains, called wings," to hang at the "*sides*" of the altar.<sup>26</sup> And the Lords' Committee in 1641 complained of the Laudian bishops "making canopies over the altar so-called, with traverses or curtains on each *side*, and *before* it."<sup>27</sup>

Not content with this, Ridley next substituted a table. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1550, the "table was set in the quire where the high altar stood."<sup>28</sup> Holinshed says this example was "shortly after followed throughout London."<sup>29</sup> At his Visitation in June, 1550, Ridley

"Exhorted the curates, churchwardens, and questmen here present to erect and set up the Lord's board after the form of an honest table, decently covered, in such place of the *quire or chancel*, as shall be thought most meet by *their discretion and agreement*, so that the ministers, with the communicants, may have their place separated from the rest of the people; and to take down and abolish all other by-altars or tables."<sup>30</sup>

King Edward notes in his Journal, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1550, that the sheriff of Essex enforced Ridley's orders "which touched the plucking down of superaltaries, altars, and such like ceremonies and

abuses,” and on Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, 1550 “there were letters sent to every bishop to pluck down altars.”<sup>31</sup> The letter itself witnesses that on Nov. 24<sup>th</sup>, 1550, “the altars within the *more part* of the churches of the realm” were already taken down.<sup>32</sup> Day, Bp. of Chichester, received, this letter Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>, and was imprisoned for disobeying it, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 1550.<sup>33</sup> The Order was judicially enforced in the Consistory Court of Goodrich, Bp. of Ely (one of the framers of the Prayer Book) on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1550.<sup>34</sup> The last of the old popish bishops appointed by Henry VIII. was deprived on Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1551, so that all resistance from that quarter ceased, more than twelve months before the second Prayer Book came into use, viz., Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1552. Meantime, on Easter Eve, 1551, the *Greyfriars’ Chronicle* (p. 69) relates: “then was the table removed, and set beneath at the vail *north and south*.” *Wriothesley’s Chronicle*, however (p. 47), gives a somewhat different version: “this year against Easter the Bishop of London altered the Lord’s table that stood where the high altar was, and he removed the table beneath at the steps into the midst of the upper quire in Paule’s, and set the ends east and west, the priest standing in the midst at the Communion, on the *south* (*sic*) side of the board.” This, of course, was before the ‘North side rubric’ had been enacted. Stow, who describes the same event, does not note either of these peculiarities (p. 551). As Dean Milman in his “Annals of St. Paul’s” observes (p. 227) “the accounts do not quite agree” and the practice appears to have varied. By this time a ‘table’ (*tabula vel mensa*, as Bp. Goodrich calls it) made of one or more ‘boards’ resting upon an open ‘frame,’ or upon trestles, had been substituted everywhere for the solid structure of masonry having a fixed slab with five incised crosses. The ‘form’ of such a movable table placed anywhere at the ‘discretion’ of the parochial authorities, distinguished it at a glance from the altar which it had supplanted. No wonder that the most extreme diversity of practice resulted from attempting to use the Liturgy of 1549 at such a table. Bp. Cosin describes how there were “some standing at the west side of the altar with their *faces turned towards the people*, others at the east, others at the south, and others at the north, that at last they agreed to set forth this rule,” viz., “the *north* side of the table.”<sup>35</sup>

The rule had the merit of being entirely new, since no part of the Mass had ever been said at the north side, whereas the south (or ‘right-hand’) had been the usual place for the opening part of the pre-Reformation rite. The position at the “north side” secured also that the face of the celebrant should be seen, his words heard in the mother tongue, and the sacramental ‘action’ or rite be visible to all whom it might concern.<sup>36</sup>

These were the only points upon which stress was then laid.<sup>37</sup> No direction to set the tables with their ends or sides all one way can be discovered in the reigns of Edward or Elizabeth, that is while the framers of the “North side rubric,” still lived. We have bishops like Hooper and Ridley describing the various modes of counterfeiting the Popish Mass,” but the placing the table ‘altarwise’ was not one of them: we have Romanists ridiculing the divergencies of Protestant practice, but placing the table lengthwise, though certainly novel, was not noted as one of them. Until 1552 the table was limited to some place in the *chancel*: under the second Prayer Book it might be placed in which ever part of the “church or chancel” was used for other public offices: but in neither case was the Edwardian table removed at the close of the service as the letter of the law under Elizabeth and James I. seemed to require. Ridley’s own way of obeying the new rubric of 1552 is shown by the entry in *Wriothesley’s Chronicle* (p. 79): “After the feast of All Saints’ (*i.e.*, Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1552) ‘the table of the Communion was set in the lower quire *where the priests sing*.” On August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1554, the Venetian Ambassador wrote a description of the then disestablished Anglican rite. He said “They suppressed every sort of light in the churches . . . in the place where the choir used to be they had a table, covered with a cloth, on which they put common bread and wine, making the communicants kneel *round* it.”<sup>38</sup>

#### UNDER ELIZABETH.

When the second Prayer Book of Edward was restored in 1559, the “Holy Table” came back with it, as matter of course, and at the same time a Royal Injunction was issued directing that the table in

“Every church be decently made, and set in the place where the altar stood . . . and so to stand, saving when the Communion of the Sacrament is to be distributed; at which time the same shall be so placed in good sort *within the chancel*, as whereby the minister may be more conveniently heard of the communicants in his prayer and ministration, and the communicants also more conveniently, and in more number, communicate with the said minister. And after the Communion done, from time to time the same Holy table to be placed where it stood before.”<sup>39</sup>

By this further Order of 1559, the Queen (so far as in her lay) abrogated the liberty to move the table into the *body of the church*; and her design was no doubt aided by the (certainly illegal) introduction at the same time of an unauthorised ‘rubric’ in *place of the one enacted by Parliament*.

<p><i>The Rubric as ENACTED “by Authority of Parliament” in 1559.</i></p> <p>“The Morning and Evening Prayer shall be used in such place of the Church, Chapel, or Chancel, <i>and the minister shall so turn him, as the people may best hear</i>. And if there be any controversy therein, the matter shall be referred to the Ordinary, and he or his deputy shall appoint the place, and the Chancels shall remain, as they have done in times past.”</p>	<p><i>The Rubric substituted by . . . ? in the printed Prayer Book of 1559.</i></p> <p>“The Morning and Evening Prayer shall be used <i>in the accustomed place</i> of the Church, Chapel, or Chancel, except it shall be otherwise determined by the Ordinary of the place: and the Chancels shall remain, as they have done in times past.”</p>
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This new ‘Erastian’ fraud-rubric directed the priest to use the Morning and Evening Service “in the accustomed place,” a phrase which was probably intended to indicate the customary stall at the lower end of the chancel. The unpublished “Interpretations of the bishops” in 1561, proposed to suggest that “the table be removed out of the choir into the body of the church, *before the chancel door*; where either the choir seemeth to be too little, or at great Feasts of receivings.”<sup>40</sup> Still, in the same document the order of the Injunction for “placing the Communion-board” was reaffirmed.<sup>41</sup> In 1561 the Queen issued a further Order directing “that there be fixed upon the wall, over the said Communion-board, the tables of God’s precepts,”<sup>42</sup> and the Royal Advertisements of 1566 specified “the East wall over the said table.”<sup>43</sup> In 1562 it was proposed in Convocation, “that the table from henceforth stand *no more* altarwise, but stand in such place as is appointed by the Book of Common Prayer.”<sup>44</sup> The object of that proposal was to get rid of the Order appended to the Injunctions: for, by the *rubric* itself, the table might permanently remain “where Morning and Evening Prayer be appointed to be said.” Nothing, however, came of the suggestion. At Abp. Parker’s Consecration “the table adorned with a carpet and cushion was placed at the East.”<sup>45</sup>

In 1565, among the returns sent to the Metropolitan in consequence of the celebrated letter of Q. Eliz. (dated Jan. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1565), under which the Advertisements of 1566 were ultimately issued, is one from Canterbury Cathedral, reporting that

“The Common Prayer daily throughout the year, though there be no Communion, is sung at the Communion Table, standing north and south where the high altar did stand. The minister, when there is no Communion, useth a surplice only, standing on the east side of the table with his face toward the people. The Holy Communion is ministered ordinarily the first Sunday of every month throughout the year, at which time the table is set east and west.”<sup>46</sup>

It is not stated how the officiants were placed at the time of the actual celebration: but it is stated that “the priest which ministereth, the pystoler and gospeller, at that time wear copes.”

Now if anyone will try to imagine the effect of placing three-priests in copes at the ‘side’ of a table arranged *lengthwise*, he will see that the sacramental action would be practically concealed from the spectators. It is probable, therefore, that the Canterbury celebrant placed himself at the east

end of the table, which is the position actually taken up in each of the four Jersey Churches which have retained the lengthwise arrangement of their tables.<sup>47</sup>

We are not to suppose, however, that this “Canterbury Use” obtained generally. On the contrary, this is probably the *only* known instance in which Morning and Evening Prayers were said at the Lord’s table. “*Commonly* the minister’s seat is at the lower end of the Chancel,” says Bp. Middleton.<sup>48</sup> Again, the saying the Ante-Communion on “the east side of the table” was a clear violation of the rubric; and appears as a peculiarity at Canterbury. In the Lansdowne MSS. bound up in the same volume with the Queen’s letter (and standing next to it in the volume) is a sort of synopsis of the “Varieties in the service, and the administration used,” dated “Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>, 1564” (*i.e.* 1565 New Style). The following extract from it illustrates our subject:—

“*Table.* The Table standeth in y<sup>e</sup> body of y<sup>e</sup> church in some places, in others hit standeth in y<sup>e</sup> chauncell.  
In some places the Table standeth Alterlyke distant from y<sup>e</sup> walle a yarde, in some others in y<sup>e</sup> midst of ye chauncell north and south.  
In some places the Table ys joyned, in others hit standeth uppon Trestells.  
In some y<sup>e</sup> Table hath a carpet, in others hit hath none.”<sup>49</sup>

This shows that the Canterbury certificate was but one ‘variety’ out of many which at that time co-existed side by side in the Church of England.

And it is especially to be noted that the Advertisements, when issued in 1566, left these ‘varieties,’ *so far as regards the place and position of the Table*, entirely unchanged. That this was done advisedly is shown by the fact that Bp. Bullingham, one of the framers of the Advertisements, visited King’s College, Cambridge, in 1565, and deprived the Ritualistic Provost who had “used Mr. Woolward very extremely (who was afterwards Fellow of Eton) because he would not execute the service at the Communion with his face toward the east and his back toward the congregation<sup>50</sup> according to the manner of the Mass.”

Provost Baker bolted to Louvain. But no change was ordered as to the position of the *table*.

The Romanists who attacked the Protestant Church service never allude to the ‘endwise’ innovation: while the Puritan strictures show that the usage in at least many Elizabethan churches was exactly like the Victorian Use.

John Rastell, replying (A.D. 1564) to Bp. Jewel said, “Your order of celebrating the Communion is so unadvisedly conceived, that every man is left unto his private rule or canon, whether he will take the bread into his hands, or let it stand at the end of the table.” This implies that the bread was placed at the ‘end’ where the celebrant must also have been standing; for at that time there was no rubric authorising him either to ‘order’ the elements, or to perform what are now called the “manual acts.”<sup>51</sup> Lower down Rastell speaks of the minister as “looking toward the South.”<sup>52</sup>

The same thing is shown also by the reply of Dr. Fulke (Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge) A.D. 1579, to Kastell saying, “He demandeth, why we take not the bread into our hands, before we consecrate it as Christ did? As though Christ appointed at what moment we should touch it, or, that Mr. Rastell is able to say, that Christ spake nothing of his institution *before* he touched the bread; or as though we did not use ordinarily before we make the exhortation unto the Communion to take the bread and break it, and with the cup set it before us, and not *let it stand* at the end of the table, as he belyeth us, as though we were ashamed to follow Christ.”<sup>53</sup> Again (p. 720), “And he will know of us wherefore we appoint the priest to stand on the Northside. [*sic.*] Verily for the same reason, that the Primitive Church did choose to pray toward the East, viz., to avoid the superstition of the

Jews, that prayed to the West, as we do to avoid the superstition of the Papists that use to pray to the East, otherwise all quarters of Heaven, of their own nature, are indifferent for us, to turn ourselves unto in our prayers, either public or private.” In the same volume (p. 399) in his Reply to D. Heskins, he contends that the primitive table though ‘improperly’ called an ‘altar’ was a “table and nothing like the popish altars which are of stone and set against a wall, for they stood in the midst of the Church.”

Thos. Dorman (A.D. 1564) in his book “A Reproof” against Jewel, speaking of the Communion says (p. 110), “Your minister’s face one while to be turned towards the South, another while towards the North.” No hint being given of any “eastward position.”

In 1556, Miles Haggard, in his “Displaying of Protestants” (p. 80), says:

“How long were they learning to set their table to minister the said Communion upon? First they placed it aloft where the high altar stood. Then must it be set from the wall *that one might go between*: the ministers being in contention on whether part to turn their faces, either toward the West, the North, or South. Some would stand southward, some northward, and some westward. Thus turning every way they missed the right way.”

Haggard’s “right way” meant, of course, the “eastward position”; and he represents the ‘contention’ as relating solely to the place of the table, and the aspect of the minister, *not* to the position of the table itself with regard to points of the compass.

While the Papists thus ridiculed ‘varieties’ in placing the holy table, the Puritans complained that the Elizabethan tables were used exactly as we now see them.

Cartwright in his reply to Whitgift (A.D. 1573)<sup>54</sup> complains that after Morning Prayer, the minister, “for saying another number of prayers, climbeth up to the farther end of the chancel, and runneth as far from the people *as the wall will let him*.” and again, in his second reply, A.D. 1577 (p. 186), “the minister readeth some in the hither, some in the upper part of the chancel, as far from the people *as the wall will let him go*.” In 1589 was published “A Collection of certain slanderous Articles given out by the bishops against such faithful Christians as they now unjustly detain in their prisons,” which, under Art. 7, denounces “new apocrypha lawes and Injunctions added, to the priest to stand at the north end of the table.”<sup>55</sup>

So in 1590, the Puritan Barrow, by way of abusing the Prayer Book, in his “Brief Discourse of the False Church” (p. 101) says:—

“By their Service Book . . . in the public Communion the priest (arrayed in his ministerial vesture) is placed at the north end of the table, and there is to read his certain. He is there nurtured when to turn to the table, when to the people, when to stand, when to kneel, what and when to say. The people (after they have offered to the priest) are in their place to kneel down to say and answer the priest at his turns and times, as is prescribed in their Mass Book; where (after Sir priest hath taken a say, and begun to the people) he delivereth unto them as they kneel,” &c.

Here, it is to be noted that the Puritans do not complain that this was any violation of the rubric; nor did the Elizabethan Puritans complain of the practice itself except on the ground of *distance* from the congregation. “When the Puritans obtained their will, it was not a simple turning of the Communion tables east and west, instead of north and south, that they desired and effected. In Hooker’s parish of Bishopsbourne, when a Puritan got possession of his parsonage, ‘it was not long,’ says Izaak Walton, ‘before this intruding minister made a party in and about the said parish, that were desirous to receive the sacrament as at Geneva: to which end the day was appointed for a select company, and forms and stools set about the altar or Communion table for them to sit and eat and drink.’”<sup>56</sup>

The Injunction of 1559 did not require the removal of the table, except where the Morning Prayer was said “in the body of the church,” or where from the size of the chancel its permanent site there would be inconvenient. Nevertheless, year by year a larger number of churches adopted reading-desks, and an increasing number of tables were removed into the nave. But it is a mistake to suppose that *all* the tables when placed against the east wall were ranged from north to south, or that *all* the table when moved into the nave were placed east and west. Dean Howson says: “*I can see no reason for taking either of these things for granted.* The point of importance is whether the priest<sup>57</sup> stands with his face to the south or his face to the east.” Archdeacon Harrison says: “There was no Order of the Church, as seems now very generally supposed, for a lengthwise position of the table in the body of the church.”<sup>58</sup> Of the few remaining examples of the lengthwise position of the table, some as Llangybi, Llanharmon, and Ogleworth had one end in contact with the east wall; while others as Hawarden,<sup>59</sup> Mallwyd,<sup>60</sup> and Wiggenahall,<sup>61</sup> stood ‘free’ from the wall had their ends North and South.

#### UNDER JAMES I. AND CHARLES I.

Although no hard and fast line was intended by the framers of the rubric who appointed the table to stand “where morning prayer and evening prayer be appointed to be said,” seeing that they introduced *at the same time* the new rubric “the chancels shall *remain*,” yet the result was that when reading-desks multiplied, the tables ‘stood’ near to them, and as the wardens would not take the trouble to remove them from time to time, they remained for the most part near to the reading-desk. So early as August 1562 Bp. Pilkington ordered prayers to be said, and the table to “stand in the body of the church” throughout the diocese of Durham.<sup>62</sup> And this was followed by a further order in September 1567 from Robert Swift, “the Ordinary” to place round it “certain forms or desks” which the churchwardens immediately after did “take up and remove” together with the table itself; for doing which they were excommunicated! This illustrates the conflict between the rubric and the Injunction, as interpreted by opposite parties in the Church. In 1564 we read of a reading-desk at Darlington “near the chancel door.” And in 1569 Bp. Parkhurst orders desks everywhere in the diocese of Norwich; even in the smaller churches “outside the chancel door.”<sup>68</sup> Grindal in 1571 orders a “decent low pulpit,” except in “very small churches” where the minister might still keep to his “accustomed stall in the choir.”<sup>64</sup> In 1574 Abp. Whitgift preferred the east end of the church,<sup>65</sup> and in 1584 it was still matter of dispute as to “the unfit place prescribed for the ministers’ standing in prayer at the east end of the house” between the Puritans,<sup>66</sup> and Dr. John Bridges,<sup>67</sup> who was afterwards Bp. of Oxford.

So long as the desk remained just outside the chancel, the table would naturally be placed in the crossing where the junction of the central alley with the transepts or aisle-pathway left ample room for the table to be placed crosswise. But every day the practice of bringing the prayer-desk lower down the church was becoming more common, longer and more frequent sermons necessitated substantial seats, and the growth of Puritanism within the church led to the introduction of high pews to screen those who refused to kneel, or to make the canonical obeisance at the reading of the Gospel. The growth of pews was rapid and universal; special seats for communicants clustered round the table when placed in the middle alley, so that for mechanical reasons it became necessary, or at my rate, convenient that the table should stand lengthwise with its ends pointing down the middle alley. For the same reason, too, the tables were often made unduly narrow.

To this cause, rather than to any deliberate design, the general placing of tables lengthwise, at the close of the 16th Century, is to be attributed.

However desirable in itself that arrangement might be, it led, in practice, to grave inconveniences. Out of the time of administration, the “Holy table” was often used as a stand for hats, and even as a seat—“an ordinary seat for maidens and apprentices,” wrote Abp. Bramhall, A.D. 1633. Still worse profanations by dogs are mentioned in Bishops’ charges; and in one parish (Tadlow) a dog

ran away with the communion loaf. Besides this, the pews occasioned great awkwardness in the distribution.

“Because the people usually sit in their seats, and cannot be discerned whether they kneel or not while they receive, and because the minister cannot possibly come with any convenience at them which are *placed farthest in their seats*, to deliver the Sacrament to them, unless every other seat should be left void.”<sup>68</sup>

In 1641, Ephraim Udall, Sector of St. Austin’s, wrote—

“We press the action of breaking the bread against the Papist. To what end, if not that beholders might thereby be led unto the breaking of the Body of Christ . . . which all shall see if there be a competent number at the table, and few shall see if they sit in pews so high as the pews in London.”<sup>69</sup>

Udall was not a Laudian, and his testimony is corroborated by one of the bishops appointed by King William III., Bp. Gardiner of Lincoln, who, in his “Advice to the Clergy of the Diocese of Lincoln,” A.D. 1697, p. 22, says—

“Finding great inconvenience in *consecrating in so strait a place as an ally of the church*, and delivering the bread and wine in narrow seats, over the heads and treading upon the feet of those that kneel . . . one cannot but wonder that the parishioners in any place should be averse to receive in this order, and that rectors should not take care to fit their chancels for this purpose; but some lie wholly disused, in more nastie manner than any cottager of the parish would keep his own house; others are employed for keeping school, by reason of which the seats, pavement, and windows are commonly broken and defaced.”

These last words curiously resemble the memorable description given in Queen Elizabeth’s letter of January 22nd, 1561, in which she complained to Abp. Parker of the

“Negligence and lack of convenient reverence used toward the comely keeping and order of the said churches, and especially of the upper part, called the chancels . . . by permitting open decays, and ruins of coverings, walls and windows, and by appointing *unmeet and unseemly tables with foul cloths* for the communion of the sacraments, and generally leaving the place of prayers *desolate of all cleanliness*,” &c.<sup>70</sup>

It is necessary to realise this state of things in order to understand that the actual condition of English churches in the seventeenth century is not evidence of the intention of the framers of the rubrics. The country churches, “pewed up to the eyes,” were almost invariably arranged with their tables lengthwise in 1627, when a fierce controversy on this trumpety question broke out. Yet Andrewes, who became bishop in 1605, had his chapel arranged with a cushion on the north end of the table, and “kneeling stools covered and stuffed” at each end.<sup>71</sup> He described the officiants as “the one at one end, the other at the other, representing the two cherubims at the mercy seat.”<sup>72</sup> Even in the fancy service which he drew up for the consecration of Jesus Chapel in 1620, though the bishop knelt in front of the table at the preliminary dedication prayers, yet the whole of the Communion office was said “to the north of the Holy table” (*ad sacrae mensae septentrionem*).

Abp. Laud’s chapel had “two low stools to kneel on at each end of the altar,” and the service book is shown at the north end;<sup>73</sup> and Laud said that the chapel at Whitehall was arranged like his own. Of parish churches, we know that St. Margaret’s Westminster, St. Martin’s in Campis, St. Michael’s in Crooked Lane, St. Saviour’s, besides four named churches in Norwich and several in the county of Norfolk, had their tables railed in time out of mind.<sup>74</sup> Wren says there were “very many parish churches wherein it had never been otherwise” (p. 75). Among those which had the table with its ends north and south were the Abbey at Westminster, the Cathedral at Lincoln, and the private chapel of Bp. Williams, at Bugden. Only three or four Cathedrals, in fact, are known to have had the lengthwise arrangement. But Laud, in addition to placing the table sideways, wished to range it *in contact with* the east wall, and to “to rail it in” there so as to prevent its removal at Communion

time as pre-scribed by the Injunctions of 1559, by the rubric, and the 82nd canon of 1604. This illegal exaction he enforced by methods most cruel and unjust,<sup>75</sup> and his narrow-minded and impolitic violence contributed, as is well known to the downfall of both Church and State. Yet it is clear that Williams was not actuated by conscientious motives in his opposition to Laud, for he not only retained the 'illegal' situation of the table in his own cathedral, chapel, and abbey, but altered his Visitation Articles of 1635, by striking out the inquiry

"Whether is it so used out of time of Divine Service, as is not agreeable to the holy use of it; as by sitting on it, throwing hats on it, writing on it, or is it abused to other profane uses."

For which he substituted in 1641 (*i.e.*, after the Canon of 1640 had been passed)—

"Doth your said Communion Table stand in the ancient place where it ought to do, where it hath done for the greatest *part of* these sixty years *last past*, or hath it been removed to the east end, and placed altar wise, by whom, and whose authority hath it been so placed."<sup>76</sup>

Yet when his earlier series was issued Laud had already been publicly engaged *for twenty years* replacing the tables at the east end; and in 1631, Kent, Archdeacon of Sudbury, had inquired, "Doth it ordinarily stand up at the east end of the chancel, where the altar formerly stood; the ends thereof being placed north and south."<sup>77</sup> Four months after the Canon cited below had been ratified by the King, on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1640, the Alderman's Court, at Grantham, defended the placing of the table north and south by reporting to the House of Commons that "the present Bp. of Lincoln' (Williams) 'at his last Visitation caused the Epistle and Gospel to be read at the communion table placed as it now stands, and sat at the North end thereof, and found no fault, nor gave any direction to the then church-wardens to alter it."<sup>78</sup>

In the struggle between the rival courtiers, Laud and Williams, the latter was getting the worst of it. He lost his post as Lord Keeper in 1625, and began to oppose the Church administration of his rival by publishing anonymous pamphlets in 1627, and then by acting as Chairman of the Sub-Committee of parliamentary 'Divines' in 1641. Collier says, "He now changed his opinion in some measure,"<sup>79</sup> and Barnard, the biographer of Heylin, says he wrote "against science and conscience, so dear is the passion of revenge." However that may be, the point to note is that Williams only claims "the greatest *part of* these sixty years last past," *i.e.*, up to A.D. 1581. The House of Lords in their Order dated March 1st, 1640, similarly specify "the greater *part of* these three-score years last past," yet "three-score years" from 1640 only brings us back to A.D. 1586:

thus admitting that *for the first thirty years or so* of Queen Elizabeth's reign the 'altarwise' position had been maintained. It is obvious that the customs of A.D. 1580-1640, when varying from those of A.D. 1559-1580, can be no evidence whatever as to the meaning of the framers of the rubric in 1552 or 1559. And against these statements must be set such cases as St. Giles', Cripplegate, in which the parishioners refused to obey the order of the House of Commons on the ground that "it had continued so for eighty years;" and Lambeth, where the Vestry insisted that rails were "no innovation."<sup>80</sup> The actual usages of country churches in 1627 (when Williams wrote) were as far as possible from being samples of exact rubrical observance. Yet the purely verbal and grammatical arguments of Abp. Williams' anonymous pamphlet in 1627, though rejected by Convocation, rebutted by Heylin and Pocklington, and given up as untenable by his friendly biographer Bp. Hackett,<sup>81</sup> are cited by Ritualists as though, with those of Peter Smart, they formed conclusive evidence of the true interpretation of the Prayer Book! "*Tempora mutantur, et nos.*"

The two Convocations in 1640 passed the following canon which, though not binding in law, must be taken for what it may be worth as evidence of contemporary usage and practice.

"That the standing of the Communion-Table side-way under the east-window of every chancel or chappel, is in its own nature indifferent, neither commanded nor condemned by the Word of God, either expressly, or by immediate deduction, and therefore, that no religion is to be placed therein, or

scruple to made thereon. And albeit at the time of Reforming this Church from that gross superstition of Popery, it wan carefully provided that all means should be used to root out of the minds of the people, both the inclination thereunto, and memory thereof; especially of the Idolatry committed in the Mass, for which cause all Popish Altars were demolished; yet notwithstanding, it was then ordered by the Injunctions and Advertisements of *Queen Elizabeth* of blessed memory that the holy Tables should stand in the place where the Altars stood, and accordingly have been continued in the Royal Chappels of three famous and pious Princes, and in most Cathedral, and some Parochial Churches, which doth sufficiently acquit the manner of placing the said Tables from any illegality, or just suspicion of Popish superstition or innovation. And therefore we judge it fit and convenient, that all Churches and Chappels do conform themselves in this particular to the example of the Cathedral or Mother Churches, saving always the general liberty left to the Bishop by Law, during the time of Administration of the holy Communion. And we declare that this situation of the Holy Table, doth not imply that it is, or ought to be esteemed a true and proper Altar, whereon Christ is again really sacrificed; but it is, and may be called an Altar by us, in that sense in which the Primitive Church called it an Altar, and no other.

“And because experience hath showed us, how irreverent the behaviour of many people is in many places, some leaning, others casting their hats, and some sitting upon, some standing, and others sitting under the Communion table in time of Divine service: for the avoiding of these and the like abuses, it is thought meet and convenient by the present Synod that the said Communion tables in all Chancells or Chappels be decently severed with Rails, to preserve them from such or worse profanations.”

A book of Visitation Articles, compiled by Heylin, was also ordered by the 9th Canon of 1640, to be used *in every diocese*, and was issued by Juxon, enforcing the ‘sideways’ position of the table. Williams, indeed, stood then absolutely alone among the bishops in his advocacy of the ‘lengthwise’ position as being required by law. Abbot and Davenant, Morton and Hall, were in this matter at one with Laud.

In 1636, Laud and Wren were concerned in a revision of the Scotch liturgy, which proposed to alter the rubric thus *“the holy table . . . shall stand at the uppermost part of the chancel or church, where the Presbyter standing at the north-side or end thereof,”* &c.<sup>82</sup> It has been suggested by Ritualists that this was intended to give an alternative (the *or* being disjunctive), so that the ‘Presbyter’ might stand *either* at the ‘end’ or at some unknown point to be called the ‘north-side’! But this gratuitous conjecture is refuted by the facts—

(a) That Laud’s friend, Heylin, was the chief opponent of Abp. Williams’ ‘side’ theory; and Petley’s Greek version of the Prayer Book, dedicated to Laud in 1638, renders the rubric, Ἄρκτοθι ἀπο τῆς τραπέζης, “Northward from the table.”

(b) That Laud was never accused by his Puritan assailants of turning his back to the people at Holy Communion. On the contrary, their charges were that this Scotch rubric would enable the Priest to “come from the north end of the table,”<sup>88</sup> and “not only to *turn his shoulder* as he was by his north stance in all his former action, but his very back by this new change of place,”<sup>84</sup> referring to the new rubric at the consecration prayer, then also inserted. This latter was declared by the Puritans to be “without warrant of the Book of England,” and Laud admits that it was so, but pleads that the tables were often narrow, and “he protested in the presence of Almighty God he knew of *no other intention* herein than this,” viz., “that the priest may use both his hands with more ease and decency about that work.”<sup>85</sup>

(c) Pierce, Bp. of Bath and Wells (“a great creature of Canterbury’s”) assigned as one reason why the table should stand in the altar place, viz., “that the table standing thus, the *face of the minister would be better seen*, and his voice more audibly and distinctly heard than if he stood upon a level in the midst of the chancel.”<sup>86</sup>

(d) Wren (Laud's co-reviser) said, "Custom of speech led them (the framers of the rubric of 1552), to call the north end or north part of the table the north *side* thereof."<sup>87</sup>

(e) It is infinitely improbable that an alternative would be introduced at a time when 'uniformity' was being rigidly exacted. On the other hand, Smart at Durham, and Williams at Lincoln, had made such a controversial use of the word 'side,' that the framers of the Scotch liturgy would naturally desire to exclude all possibility of it for the future by adding 'end' as the true interpretation of the conventional term "North-side."

## UNDER CHARLES II.

On the very eve of the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1659, the earliest commentary on the Prayer Book was published by a layman, Hamon L'Estrange, who may be taken as the type of the orthodox churchmanship of his day. In his "Alliance of Divine Offices," reprinted in the "Anglo-Catholic Library" (p. 244), he says:—

"So that out of Communion time the table is to stand Altarwise, as we, and only we do phrase it; for Altar-wise is an idiom peculiar to us English, not known abroad in foreign parts; and they who can find Popery in that position have better eyes than ordinary. Altars with them do not observe one regular position: some are placed in the middle of the choir; some at the upper part, end-ways North and South; and if eye-witnesses may be trusted, the chief Altar in St. Peter's Church at Rome, stands in the midst of the Chancel. As for the Priest standing at the North side of the Table, this seemeth to avoid the fashion of the Priest's standing with his face towards the East, as is the popish practice."

L'Estrange reprinted this in 1690 and 1699.

At the Restoration, the Prayer Book came immediately into use. As the Preface to our present Prayer Book expresses it, the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity, with the Advertisements of 1566 and the Canons of 1604, were "laws never yet repealed," because none of the 'Ordinances' of Parliament subsequent to the year 1640 were held to have any legitimate place in the Statute Book. Hence so early as May 10th, 1660, the Prayer Book was restored at Westminster Abbey; mid on August 23rd, all the Colleges at Oxford, save three, had again adopted it. At least four editions of the Prayer Book were printed during 1660-61, *before* the Convocation revision was taken in hand. The Presbyterian incumbents preached against the Prayer Book, but in Royalist and 'churchy' neighbourhoods its use was restored forthwith.

As Canon Simmons observes,<sup>88</sup> the "triumph of Puritanism did more for uniformity than all the high-handed proceedings of the Court of High Commission, or even the conciliatory tone of the Laudian canon. The altar-wise position of the table, hitherto the rallying point of contending parties within the Church, now became the common symbol of episcopacy and of the Prayer Book, down-trodden for a while by rival sects. As a natural result, on the king's return, one of the first manifestations of Royalist and anti-Puritan feeling was to place the communion tables in the churches as the canon of 1640 had appointed." He mentions that among 'dispursements' in churchwardens' accounts of that period such items as "righting table, setting up rails," occur. Evelyn enters in his diary, under date "April 6th, 1662" (i.e., *before* the Act of Uniformity had passed) 'being of the Vestry, in the afternoon, we ordered that the communion-table should be set (*as usual*) altarwise, with a decent rail in front, as before the rebellion."<sup>89</sup>

In 1661 we have Zachary Crofton complaining of

"That order in which it was of late (*and beginneth afresh to be*) used among us, in His Majesty's Chapel Royal, Lambeth Palace, the cathedrals, and *many* parish churches, whilst the table must be made in the frame of an Altar, railed in, and advanced as a holy enclosure; fixed at the east end of the church," &c.<sup>90</sup>

From the other side comes the same testimony. Dean Durel, the executor of Bp. Cosin, and the official translator of the Prayer Book into French (if not also, as Mr. Charles Marshall contends, authorized by Convocation as the translator of the same book into Latin), published a "View of the government and public worship of God in the Reformed Churches" in 1662, in the table of contents of which he said, "It is indifferent in itself which way the communion table standeth so that the public order of the Church be not violated. When it is in the midst of the church, *Presbyterianwise*, it standeth Altar-wise, and not when it standeth against the wall at the upper end of the church." This retort he repeats (p. 31), and again in 1688 he urged it in his "Vindiciae Eccl. Anglicanae," p. 224.

On April 23rd, 1661, at the coronation of Charles II., we read<sup>91</sup> of a wall on the back *side* of the altar," and yet of a gallery, pulpit, and the celebrant as being on "the north *side* of the altar."<sup>92</sup>

So much for the practice<sup>93</sup> which the Revisers found in actual existence when the "north side" rubric came up for final consideration. Of the bishops, no fewer than fifteen had been parties to the passing of the canon of 1640 above cited, viz., Juxon, Pierce, Wren, Skinner, Roberts, Warner, and Duppa in the upper house, and Sheldon, Hacket, Ironside, Griffith, Frewen, King, Laney, and Lloyd, who (in 1640) had been members of the lower house of Canterbury Convocation.<sup>94</sup> Brian Walton, the learned author of the Polyglott, who as Bp. of Chester took part in the Savoy Conference, had been articulated in Parliament for placing his table 'Altarwise.'<sup>95</sup> Of the other divines who represented what might be called the "Conservative party" at the Savoy Conference, Heylin and Cosin held strongly the view that the term "north side" was applicable to the end of the table, and both of them habitually distinguish between the West side and the North side. Pearson, as Archdeacon of Suffolk, had asked in his Visitation, 1639—

"Is the same table placed conveniently, so as the minister may best be heard in his administration, and the greatest number may reverently communicate? *To that end*, doth it ordinarily stand up at the east end of the chancel, where the Altar formerly stood, the ends thereof being placed North and South."<sup>96</sup>

Hacket, another of the Savoy divines, in his Life of Archbishop Williams (p. 109), takes the same line as Durel and L'Estrange.—"For to set the table under the east window of the chancel, is this to set it Altarwise? Verily it is a mere English phrase, or rather English error."

Bp. Sparrow, who took part as one of the 'coadjutors' at the Savoy Conference, described in his 'Rationale,' published in 1655 (p. 381) the arrangements in an ancient Basilican church (in which, by the way, the celebrant stood behind the altar, facing the people), thus:—

"On each *side, or wing*, of the Altar, in the transverse line which makes the figure of the Crosse, stand two side tables."

Bingham's plates show what the bishop meant, and clearly no part of the west front could have been occupied by such credence tables as are described by Sparrow.

The subject of the position of the table does not, however, appear to have come up for discussion at the Savoy Conference, except in the indirect form of an objection made to the (then illegal, though printed) rubric as to the "accustomed place." The 'Ministers' desired that the rubric "may be expressed as in the book established by authority of Parliament," but the bishops answered, "We think it fit that the rubric stand as it is, and all be left to the discretion of the ordinary."<sup>97</sup> Not content, however, with this indirect control, the bishops appear to have designed to make compulsory the *fixture*, of the table at the east end, and for this purpose they attempted to remodel the rubrics at the beginning of the Communion office, in imitation of those of the Scotch liturgy of 1637. This will be readily understood by comparing in parallel columns the Scotch book with Cosin's "Durham Book" from which, by the courtesy of Canon Tristram, we are enabled to reproduce the rubric in facsimile, line for line, and word for word.

Scotch Liturgy (1637). Cosin's Durham Book.

<i>Scotch Liturgy (1637).</i>	<i>Cosin's Durham Book.</i>
<p>"The holy Table having at the Communion-time a carpet and a fair white linen cloth upon it, with other decent furniture, meet for the high mysteries there to be celebrated, shall stand at the uppermost part of the chancel or church, where the Presbyter, standing at the North-side or end thereof, shall say the Lord's Prayer," &amp;c.</p>	<p>The TABLE always standing in the midst at the upper <i>end of the</i> <del>part</del> of the Chancell (or <math>\wedge</math> Church where a chancell is wanting) &amp; being at all times <del>decently</del> covered with a <del>silke</del> carpet of Silk shall also have at the Comunion time a faire white linen <i>paten upon it. with the other decent furniture</i> <del>spread over it</del> <i>chalice</i> &amp;c. <i>niture meet for the high Mysteries there to be celebrated.</i> And the PRIEST standing <i>side or end</i> at the North <del>end</del> of y<sup>e</sup> table shall say the Lord's Prayer with the Collect following.</p>

Here it will be noticed<sup>98</sup> that the rubric, as written out by Cosin proposed to prescribe the "north end," but that on second thought, he had substituted "side or end." Sancroft's book (in the Bodleian), which is a "fair copy" of Cosin's with still later recensions, had (as Mr. Parker tells us)<sup>99</sup> a small blank space left for one or other of the two words, which ever might ultimately be preferred (but *not* for both), so that both the word 'side' and the explanatory "(or end)," which Sancroft enclosed in a parenthesis, had to be squeezed into the gap in *smaller* writing. At a yet later stage the following rubric seems to have been agreed upon in Convocation:—

"¶ *The Table at the Communion time having a fair white linen cloth upon it, shall stand in the [most convenient place in the upper end of the Chancel (or of the body of the Church where there is no Chancel)]*  
*And*  
*the priest standing on the north [part] of the table," &c.*

In these words the rubric was accordingly written out in the MS. Prayer Book signed by the two Convocations, and in the black letter Prayer Book of 1636, in which the alterations made by Convocation were marked up. Both changes were duly noted in that list of 'Alterations' prefixed to the Government photozincograph, which, it is believed, was originally written by Pearson about Dec. 15th, 1661, for the use of the King in Council. Had the rubric remained as thus altered, it would have made the removal of the table "at Communion time" illegal; and it is a strong proof of the Laudian sympathies of the Convocation of 1661 that such a rubric should have been enacted by them. But a higher Power interfered. In Sancroft's handwriting, the old wording of the rubric of Edward's *Second* Prayer Book has been written between the lines of the manuscript 'annexed' to the Statute of Uniformity, and the words noted above in brackets were struck out with the pen; corresponding alterations being of course made in the printed black letter book of 1636.<sup>100</sup>

What was the meaning of this reversal at the last moment of the proposed change in the language of the rubric? The probability is that the King in Council, fearing to throw an apple of discord among churchmen, refused to sanction any alteration which might lead to a renewal of the old conflict in country parishes, where the people had been familiarised with the practice of placing the table at

communion time in the midst of the Church. The proposed change of north 'side' into north 'part' had, no doubt, been designed to prevent a renewal of the Williams-Smart contention as to the placing of the table. We know exactly the meaning which was attached by the leading revisers to this word 'part.' In the Latin versions of the Prayer Book by Haddon, in 1560, Vautroller, 1574, Mockett, 1617, and Durel, 1670 (as in that of 1703 and 1865), as also in Bp. Andrewes' "Form of Consecration of a Church or Chapel," A.D. 1620, the word 'side' was always rendered 'partem.' Bp. Wren argued "in 2 Eliz. when they best understood their own meaning, the Queen causing the liturgy to be translated into Latin, the rubric before the Communion Service reads it *Ad septentrionalem mensæ partem stans*, and not *Ad septentrionale latus*, so that North-part, North-side, and North-end were all one."<sup>101</sup> In his suggestions for revision, written in 1660, Wren proposed to say simply, "the priest standing at the north of the table."<sup>102</sup> Heylin, who was a Savoy Commissioner, and was consulted constantly during the last revision,<sup>103</sup> said, "I presume that no man of reason can deny, but that the northern end or side, call it which you will, is *pars septentrionalis*, the northern part."<sup>104</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that by north 'part' they merely intended the north 'side or end.' Yet a little reflection would show that *any* change of terms would be impolitic as seeming to admit that there had been force in the Smart-Williams contention; and, moreover, the word 'part' would be likely to introduce a fresh crop of ambiguities, sanctioning even such a position of the celebrant as that advocated by the Non-conformist clergy at Lincoln Cathedral in 1886, than which nothing could be more foreign to the wishes of any churchman in 1661. For a like reason the word 'side' was retained in the proposed revision of 1689, and by the disestablished Church of Ireland in 1877, because it secured entire freedom as to the arrangement and placing of the table, provided only that the officiant have the table to the South of him. Every 'side' is a 'part,' though not every 'part' is a 'side'; and every end is 'a side,' though not every side is an 'end.' The genus ('side') is wider than the species ('end'). Hence Cosin's proposal to change the word side into 'end,' was wisely rejected, as tending to restrict the liberty which had been enjoyed since the year 1552.

We have shown already that during the two years from May, 1660, till May 19th, 1662, when the Act of Uniformity passed, the tables in the churches were placed indifferently either way, and there is no room to doubt that the phrase "north side" was designedly retained as being applicable to either position of the table. Shepherd in his "Elucidation of the Common Prayer." (1798), p. lix., says that at the Restoration "no positive injunctions concerning these matters were enforced by authority." At any rate, it is quite certain that 'side' was not then supposed to exclude 'end,' for immediately after the issue of the new Prayer Book of 1662 we have the following official inquiries put forth by its framers.

Bishop Wren, than whom no man stood higher in the esteem of the Prime Minister, Lord Clarendon,<sup>105</sup> at whose house ('Ely House,') the Revision Committee met, and whose suggestions for the revision of the Prayer Book were adopted in some two hundred instances,<sup>106</sup> pointedly refers, in his Visitation Articles, 1662, to the "Feast of St. Bartholomew *last*," and "The *late* Act of Uniformity," and asks

"Is the same table placed conveniently, so as the minister may be best heard in his administration, and the greatest number may reverently communicate? *To that end* doth it ordinarily stand up at the east end of the chancel, where the altar in former times stood, the ends thereof being placed north and south? (*Rit. Rep. App* 557-2)

Again, Archdeacon Pory, an active member of the Revision Committee of Convocation and the official editor of the new "Prayer for Parliament," in his Articles for Middlesex refers to the service for May 29<sup>th</sup>, which was not issued till May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1662, *i.e.*, nearly *four months after* the Prayer Book had been subscribed by Pory himself as a member of Convocation.<sup>107</sup> He, too, demands whether the table is set "as appointed by the Canon" of 1640, and adds, "the Minister standing as he is appointed at the north side, or end of the table when he prepares to celebrate the Holy

Communion, and calling on those who do intend to communicate to draw near and take that Holy Sacrament,” &c.,—words which occur, be it observed, only *after* the Consecration prayer.<sup>108</sup> “Placed at the east end of your chancel, with the ends north and south,” was the official direction given in 1671 by another of the revisers, Lucy, Bishop of St. David’s.<sup>109</sup> The inventory of Bishop Cosin’s chapel made in 1667, included “two Prayer Books, two kneeling stools for the north and south *parts* of the alter,”<sup>110</sup> which again illustrates the use of the word ‘part’ as equivalent to end. That Cosin preferred the ‘end’ is shown by his proposal to substitute that word in the rubric; and he, like Wren, habitually distinguished between the north ‘side’ and the west front of the table.<sup>111</sup> Even Mr. Walton admits that “in the numerous post-restoration London Churches, the table-wise fashion was never introduced.”<sup>112</sup> Now these facts are wholly irreconcilable with the theory that the revisers of the Prayer Book in 1662 insisted that communion tables should be placed with their ends east and west, or that the word ‘side’ was expressly designed to ensure that equivocal advantage. As Bp. Chr. Wordsworth said “the rubric was purposely framed so as to suit both positions of the table.” For both positions were then in use. Within the next half century, however, the lengthwise arrangement had almost disappeared. In 1681 Barnard said that “in most country churches, to this day, the table is *set* in the hither end of the chancel;”<sup>113</sup> but as the Elizabethan chancel screens had been destroyed by order of Parliament, the crosswise placing of the table would then be practicable enough. Bennet, in 1708, Nicholls, in 1709, and Wheatly, in 1710, all use the words north ‘side’ and ‘end’ as convertible terms. Nicholls, commenting on “*the chancels shall remain*” said, “Since the Restoration . . . the dispute has very happily died; and the tables have generally been set altar-wise, and railed in without any opposition thereto.” Archdeacon Sharp, in 1753, referring to the Heylin-Williams controversy, said “the dispute is now dead, and it is to be hoped will never be revived.”<sup>114</sup>

Until the reign of Charles I. no one attached any importance to the lengthwise, or crosswise arrangement of the table; and at the Restoration, as we have seen, the word ‘side’ was retained with the deliberate intention of leaving that point entirely free. There is not in the statute book a plainer rule or a more simple direction than that which requires the priest to stand “at the north side of the table.” It is therefore the duty of all loyal churchmen to insist on the observance of a rule which has its foundations not merely in the distinctive traditions of the English Reformation, but in the fundamental distinction between God’s sacramental gift to man, and man’s self-devised offering to God; between the function of an ambassador *for* Christ,” and that of a pretended mediator and ambassador *to* Christ; in short between the Sacrifice of the Mass and “the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion.”

#### Endnotes:

- 1) Fourth Report of Ritual Commissioners, p. 250.
- 2) “Pars inter frontem et posticum”; an illustration is given from Cicero, Philip. iii. c. 13, “A tergo, a fronte, a lateribus tenebitur.”
- 3) “Ad latera, non ad frontem.,” Tetralogia, p. 221.
- 4) p. 160.
- 5) p. 71.
- 6) “North Side,” p. 15.
- 7) Walton’s Letter to Carter, 3rd edition, pp. 35, 46, 47.
- 8) Dr. Johnson defines ‘oblong’ as a parallelogram “whose sides are unequal.”
- 9) Scudamore, Notit. Euch., p. 194. Walton’s Letter, pp. 36, 46, 47.

- 10) p. 1125.
- 11) Perry's Report, p. 743. Even Abp. Williams, in his "Letter to the Vicar of Grantham," said, "All dioceses did agree upon receiving tables, but not so soon upon the form and fashion of their tables." Foxe, Act. and Mon., vi.-6; Burnet, Hist. Ref., ii.-327.
- 12) 'An exact square.' The official "certified the Bishop that it was like an Oyster Table," Speeches and Passages of this happy Parliament, 1641, p. 320.
- 13) See Dr. Burton's "Preface to Cranmer's Catechism," p. xx.
- 14) See Coverdale's Works, P.S., vol. I., pp. 424-476. Coverdale was a leader of Elizabethan Puritanism as shown not only by his refusal to wear even a surplice at the consecration of Abp. Parker, but by his being summoned for nonconformity before the Archbishop. See Parker Corr., p. 270. Zurich Letters, ii.-121. Coverdale's Remains, p. 532.
- 15) Liturgia Sacra seu ritus Ministerii in Ecclesiâ Peregrinorum, pp. 22, 92.
- 16) Charge, 1875, p. 68. Men of views so diverse as the late Bp. Christopher Wordsworth and Bp. Thirlwall were favourable to this "westward position," which would have brought back the usage of the Church of England not merely to that of the Primitive Church, but even to the earlier English use. Bede tells us how at Canterbury the altar was placed in medio pene suo;" and at Norwich Cathedral, at Stow and Little Bytham, in Lincolnshire, and elsewhere, seats *behind* the altar formed part of the original structure.
- 17) Heylin's wilful mistakes as to the dates of these events (copied by Collier, and censured by Burnet) are corrected by his editor, Canon Robertson, Hist. Ref., p. 207.
- 18) Foxe, Act and Mon. vii.-6, where Foxe has misprinted 'Church' for 'Chancel.'
- 19) Harl. MS. No. 420, p. 112, Dorso.
- 20) Hooper, Dec. 27, Orig. Lett., p. 72. At St. Laurence's, Reading, the high altar was sold for 6s 8d in 1549. Keary's Hist., pp. 25, 27. At St. Martin's, Leicester, the New Table was set up with "posts" in 1551. North's Chronicle, 111.
- 21) Brit. Mus., c. 25, b. 17.
- 22) Early Writings, p. 488.
- 23) Orig. Lett., pp 79, 466.
- 24) Foxe, vi.-7.
- 25) "Cortinis quae sunt in utroque latere altaris" (Lib. iv., cap. 39) Durand describes the Bishop-celebrant as standing until the Offertory, "*not before* the altar but removed from it, at its right *side*" (cap. 11). Dr. Rock, in his 'Hierurgia,' ii., p. 742, describes the illuminated frontispiece to a life of Thomas à Becket, as showing an altar "at the *sides* of which are suspended two veils." Durand is quoted by more than one of the Edwardian Reformers, so that they were familiar with the term 'side' as describing the 'ends' of the altar.
- 26) Martene and Durand, Ampliss. Collect. Vii.-1298.
- 27) Card. Conf. p. 272.
- 28) Wriothsley's Chronicle, ii.-41.
- 29) Chron. iii.-1024. Stow, p. 551.

- 30) Works, p. 320, the disuse of the side-altars had been ordered on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1549.—Card. Doc. Ann. i.-66.
- 31) Burnet, Hist. Ref., II-ii.-24, 31. Strype's Cranmer, ii.-250.
- 32) Doc. Ann. i.-89.
- 33) Strype's Cranmer, ii.-250-255.
- 34) See CHURCH INTELLIGENCER, vol. iii.-100
- 35) Cosin's Works, v.-458.
- 36) The Roman rule as to the 'right' and 'left' hands of the Crucifix had not then been received in England.—Maskell, Ancient Lit. p. xix., note 19. "Lay-folk's Mass Book," p. 174. The theories of Messrs. Lee, Blunt and Freeman, proceeded therefore upon a mistaken assumption. It may be added that before the Reformation the 'end' of the altar (or altar- 'nook') did not mean its side, but the part marked as "corner" cornu) in Mr. F. G. Lee's diagram. See Becon's Works, iii.-282. Simmons' "Lay-folk's Mate Book," p. 179.
- 37) Hooper, in May, 1551, required that "the Minister in the use of the Communion and Prayers thereof turn his face towards the people." As to the table, he merely required it not to be "decked *behind* and before, as the altars were wont to be decked."—"Later Writings," pp. 128, 142.
- 38) Venetian State Papers, p. 556.
- 39) Doc. Ann., i.-202.
- 40) Doc. Ann. i.-205.
- 41) See Mr. Parker's 'Letter to Selborne,' p. 97; Perry on Purchas, J. p. 285, both of whom correct Cardwell's extraordinary misprints.
- 42) Robertson's Heylin, ii.-361.
- 43) Doc. Ann. i.-292. Compare Canon 82.
- 44) Card. Synod. ii.-498.
- 45) Doc. Ann. i.-243.
- 46) Strype's Parker, 183. MONTHLY INTELLIGENCER, IX.-324.
- 47) Walton's Letter, 1st edit. p. 64.
- 48) Rit. Rep. App. 426-2, 6. Z. L., ii.-361.
- 49) Lansdowne MS. viii. fol. 16. Strype prints it from Cecil's papers, but misprints the word '*altarwise*.'
- 50) The word 'congregation' in the Lansdowne MSS. viii.-53 has been carelessly misprinted 'table' by Strype.
- 51) Yet in 1583, Bp. Middleton forbade the celebrant to "handle, lift up, or show unto the people the bread and wine, but shall *let it lie still* upon the Table, until the distribution thereof, and *then* to break it." Rit. Rep. App. 426-3. Our present rubric is of course quite different; but the ritual fraction is not ancient or 'Catholic.' Scudamore, Not. Euch. pp. 610, 659. Palmer's Orig. Liturg., ii.-77, 78.
- 52) Heylin, Hist. Ref., ii.-428.

- 53) "D. Heskins, D. Sanders, and M. Rastell, &c., overthrown," p. 781.
- 54) Lib. i., p. 134.
- 55) There are two copies of this in the British Museum, T 1013/10 and 1013/8
- 56) And. Harrison's Charge, p. 67.
- 57) "Before the Table," 1875, preface xiii., and p. 50 note. "Position of Priest," 1877, p. 19. Macmillan.
- 58) Charge, 1875, pp. 63, 73. Dr. Featley testified that at Lambeth the Table had stood at the East end time out of mind "nor was it then turned altarwise;" its removal he dates but "twenty years before," March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1643. Walker's Sufferings, p. 76.
- 59) Howson's "Position of the Priest," p. 40.
- 60) "Until 1854, the Holy table stood in the body of the Church, the ends North and South, close to the central alley." Walton's Letter to Carter, 1<sup>st</sup> edit., p. 63.
- 61) Canon Swainson's "Rubrical Question of 1874," 2<sup>nd</sup> edit. p. 24.
- 62) Depositions and Ecclesiastical Proceedings at Durham, p. 118.
- 63) Robertson, p. 54.
- 64) Remains, p. 132.
- 65) Works, ii.-463.
- 66) "Brief Declaration," p. 65.
- 67) "Defence of the Government," p. 627.
- 68) Laud's Letter to Abp. Williams, Works, vi.-350.
- 69) "Communion Comeliness," p. 4.
- 70) Parker Corr., p. 132.
- 71) See plate in "Hierurgia Anglicana, p. 9. 'The table was 1¾ yards long, and 1 yard broad.
- 72) Minor Works, p. 150.
- 73) Prynne's Canterburie's Doom, p. 122.
- 74) Wren's 'Parentalia,' p. 77.
- 75) His invoking the power of the Crown to prevent the suit of the parishioners of St. Gregory's from running its legitimate course to the Court of Arches and the Delegates was a gross perversion of Justice.
- 76) Rit. Rep. App. 551.
- 77) Rit. Rep. App. 527-37. In. *B. M.* No. 698 h./30 20 is a similar inquiry from the Archdeacon of 'Norwich,' A.D. 1638. Wren, Davenant, Dappu, Mountagu, Pearce, Pearson, and Juxon make the same demand.
- 78) State Papers, Dom. Charles I., p. 204.
- 79) Eccl. Hist. viii.-94.

- 80) Walker's "Sufferings of the Clergy," pp. 25, 76. Nalson, ii.-491.
- 81) Life of Williams, p. 109.
- 82) The hyphen between 'north' and 'side' is found *only* in this Scotch liturgy; and no comma preceded the explanatory words "or end." In modern Prayer Books the hyphen is an interpolation by the printers. In the three editions by Whitchurch, in 1552, "Northsyde" was printed as one word = northwards.
- 83) "A large Supplement of the Canterburian's Self-Conviction," p. 105.
- 84) "Comparison of the Liturgy with the Mass Book," 1641, pp. 44, 58.
- 85) "Hist. Troubles," p. 118.
- 86) Heylin's Life of Laud, p. 272.
- 87) 'Parentalia,' p. 75, cf. p. 104.
- 88) *Contemporary Review*, vol. iv., p. 97.
- 89) Compare also entry, "March 22, 1678."
- 90) Altar Worship, p. 114.
- 91) Hierurgia Anglicana, pp. 290-303.
- 92) It may be added that Sancroft (who was intimately concerned with the last revision of the Prayer Book at every stage) officiated, as Archbishop, at the coronation of James II., and in the official plan (published with the imprimatur of the Earl Marshal), the 'prospect' of the "east end with the furniture thereof" shows a cushion for the Abp.'s service book at the north end of the table. At the coronation of our own Sovereign, she was directed by a rubric to pass "through the door on the south *side* of the altar," viz., in the Eastern wall *behind* it.—Maskell, Mon. Rit. iii.-138.
- 93) In various engravings of this period, the table is represented as placed with its ends north and south, as in Bp. Sparrow's Rationale (1664 and 1668); Domus Carthusiana (1677); Dean Comber's Companion to the Temple (1679); Burnet's Hist. Reformation (1683); which gives a (possibly contemporary) representation of Edward VI. receiving the eucharist from a bishop placed at the north side (*i.e.*, end) of the Table, upon which end the elements are also placed.
- 94) Lewis, Ref. Sett., p. 467.
- 95) Lathbury, Hist. Pr. Book, p. 185.
- 96) Perry, "Lawful Church Ornaments," p. 392.
- 97) Card. Conf., pp. 314-351.
- 98) Canon Tristram is responsible for the above extract only down to the word "celebrated." The latter part is taken from Mr. Parker's Hist. Revis., p. 182.
- 99) Hist. Revis., p. 182.
- 100) See Fourth Report of Rit. Commission, p. 17. Lord Selborne, "Notes on the Liturgy," p. 67, shows that the correction was probably first made in the printed book.
- 101) Parentalia, p. 75.

- 102) Jacobson's Fragments, p. 74.-cf. 75, 83. Duport's Greek version of 1665, dedicated to Abp. Sheldon, had 'Ο ιερευσ προς τα βορεια της Τραπεζης εστωσ. The modern Greek of 1821 has Ο ιερευσ στεκομενος κατα το προς τον βορεια μερος της τραπεζης.
- 103) Barnard's Life, p. 181.
- 104) "Coale from the Altar." p. 24.
- 105) Kennet's Register, pp. 15, 21, 27.
- 106) See CHURCH INTELLIGENCER, vol. iii., p. 129.
- 107) Dr. Lewis says Pory's Visitation was held in August, 1662. Ref. Sett., p. 494. Mr. T. W. Perry contends that Pory's Articles *must* be earlier than the Prayer Book because they ask for catechizing "before Evening Prayer." But Henchman in 1664, and Barlow in 1679, have the same enquiry (Rit. Rep. App., 632-v., 645-v.); while Sandys in 1571 had asked for catechizing "before or *at* Evening Prayer" (Brit. Mus. 698 h/30 20). Mr Perry's test is therefore worthless, except as evidence of the 'animus imponentis.'
- 108) Rit. Rep. App., 625-6, 629-9.
- 109) Rit. Rep. App., 615.
- 110) Cosin Corr. Surtees Soc., vol. 55
- 111) See Cosin's Works, iv.-390, v.-161. High Commission of Durham, Surtees Soc., p. 218. Cosin Corr., ii.-113.
- 112) Letter to Carter, p. 63, first edition.
- 113) Life of Heylin, p. 110.
- 114) Treatise on the Rubric, p. 69.