

The Cup in the Communion Office.

A QUESTION has been raised as to what, if any, is the law of the Church of England as regards the "vessel" that is to be used by the communicant for the purpose of "drinking" the wine at the service of Holy Communion. Is it permissible under the Prayer Book as it stands to use individual cups for individual communicants in the administration of the wine; or does the Church of England prescribe only the use of a common cup? This paper seeks to maintain that the common cup, and that only, is the use directed by the law of the Church of England.

The matter must obviously be decided by the Rubrics, unless they are so ambiguous that other factors must be considered in order to elucidate them. The Rubrics must govern the practice. The practice can only be invoked if there is doubt as to what the Rubrics mean.

The Rubrics do not seem to me to leave room for more than the common cup in the administration of the wine. They are definite and unqualified. Throughout they speak of "*The Cup*" as if there were no question of it being other than the one cup used throughout the service. In the ordering of the Holy Table the priest is directed so to order it "that he may with the more . . . decency break the Bread before the people, and take *the Cup* into his hands." This presupposes the one cup of the celebration. In the Rubric of the Manual Acts we read: "Here he is to take *the Cup* into his hand." Again, the Rubric for directing the use of words in the administration of the wine is explicit: "And the Minister that delivereth *the Cup* . . . shall say." Finally, the Rubric which provides for the method of consecrating additional elements when the first supply is exhausted gives definite direction "for the blessing of *the Cup*." This fourfold repetition of the same phrase, "*the Cup*," according to the ordinary use of language, presupposes a common cup for communicating communicants, and not individual cups for individual communicants.

This obvious interpretation of the Rubrics

(1) is in keeping with other Rubrics dealing with the Communion Service; and

(2) is in harmony with the past history of the development of the Rubrics; and

(3) above all is borne out by the general principles upon which our Prayer Book legislation is based.

1. The administration of the wine in the Holy Communion by a common cup and not by individual cups for individual communicants is in keeping with other Rubrics associated with the Communion Service.

For example :

(a) In the Office for the Communion of the Sick the Rubric directs: "At the time of the distribution of the Holy Sacrament, the Priest shall first receive the Communion himself, and after minister unto them that are appointed to communicate with the sick, and last of all to the sick person." The direction that the sick person shall receive last is so marked that it must have had a reason. There was evident fear of spreading infection. But no infection could be spread by the distribution of the bread, for the sick person does not touch the Paten that contains the bread. It remains that *the Cup* was intended, the one common cup, which for good and sufficient reasons would, by this Rubric, be ministered to the sick person last.

(b) Also, the Rubric, following the Order of Communion itself, which directs how the elements are to be consumed after a celebration, is in harmony with the use of a common cup more than it is with the use of individual cups for individual communicants. It is as follows: "If any" of the Bread and Wine "remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the Church, but the Priest and such other of the communicants as he shall then call unto him, shall, immediately after the Blessing, reverently eat and drink the same." It is easy to understand how they are "to drink the same," if it refers to the unconsumed wine left over in the common cup: it is not so easy to interpret it on the other theory.

2. But I wish especially to emphasize the fact that the interpretation of the Cup prescribed by the Rubrics as a common cup is in harmony with the past history of the development of the Rubrics.

The Prayer Book as we have it to-day is the last of four stages of development, viz., the Prayer Book of 1549 (commonly called the First Prayer Book of Edward VI.), that of 1552 (known as the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI.), the Elizabethan Prayer Book of 1559, and the final revision under Charles II, the Prayer Book of 1662, which is our Prayer Book of to-day. In all alike *the Cup* is the

phrase used, and the interpretation of *the Cup* in our present Prayer Book, as meaning one common cup, and not individual cups for individual communicants, gains support from the consideration of certain facts connected with the use of the phrase in the earlier editions named.

(i.) The first point to which I would draw attention is the Rubric in the Prayer Book of 1549 which directs: "Then shall the Minister take so much Bread and Wine as shall suffice for the persons appointed to receive the Holy Communion . . . putting the Wine into *the Chalice*, or else in some fair or conveniente *cup*, prepared for that use (if the Chalice will not serve)." I may say in passing that there is no real distinction between the Chalice and the Cup here mentioned. The Chalice is probably here used to designate the Pre-Reformation cup, which was frequently small because denied to the laity; and had often to be replaced by a larger cup when the laity as well as the clergy had to be communicated.

But the phrase "fair or conveniente cup" is noteworthy because it and its context is borrowed *litteratim et verbatim* from the Order of Communion of the previous year, 1548, with one important difference of great significance for our purpose. In the Order of Communion of 1548, the priest was directed "to bless and consecrate the biggest Chalice or soome faire and convenient *Cup or Cuppes* full of wine." There is to me no doubt that even in 1548, though using the phrase "Cup or Cuppes," the Church never contemplated anything but the use of a common cup passed by the priest from communicant to communicant, and certainly not individual cups for individual communicants. The directions in the same Rubric of 1548 makes this abundantly clear, for in the immediate context two rules are laid down: (a) the cup or cuppes are to be "full of wine," and (b) the priest is directed, "that daie not to drinke it up al himselfe, but taking one only suppe or draught leve the reste upon the Altare covered." Evidently the cup contemplated is a cup so large that it contains more than what one communicant would be expected to drink upon communicating; otherwise why should the priest be bidden to take "one only suppe or draught"? (c) This is further confirmed by the Rubric in the same Order of Communion, 1548, which provides for the consecration of additional wine, directing: "If it doth so chance that the wine hallowd and consecrate doth not suffice or be enough for them that doo take the

Communion, the priest after the firste Cup or Chalice be emptied, may go again to the Altar, and reverently and devoutly prepare and consecrate another, and so the third, or more likewise." I need not enlarge upon this. The word "emptied" carries its own message.

Yet in spite of all this cumulative evidence of its intention to prescribe a common cup, the Church deliberately, one year later, in 1549, omitted the words "or cuppes," directing only "some fair or conveniente cup," determined, as I interpret it, to remove any danger of irregularity being introduced through ambiguity of expression as regards a common cup.

(ii.) This intention of the Church of England to use a cup from which more than one was to drink is emphasized by the somewhat quaint direction of the Rubric in this same Prayer Book of 1549, which governs the *administration* of the "fair and conveniente cup" already named. It directs, "And the Minister delivering the Sacrament of the Blood and giving to every one to drink *once and no more* shall say," etc. The phrase "giving to every one . . . once and no more" evidently had in mind the use of *the Cup* large enough to be shared by many in common and intended for that purpose.

(iii.) This intention is actually expressed in words in a subsequent Rubric of the 1549 Book, which enters into particular directions for the action of an assistant priest if such were available to lighten the duties of the celebrant in any Service of Holy Communion. This Rubric is careful to say: "If there be a Deacon or other Priest, then shall he *follow with the Chalice*, and as the Priest ministereth the Sacrament of the Body, so shall he (for more expedition) minister the Sacrament of the Blood in the form before written." It needs little exercise of the imagination to picture the action which this Rubric is desired to effect. The assistant carrying *the Cup* is to "follow with" it, and "for more expedition" administer it to the communicant to whom the celebrant has just administered the Bread.

In reading to-day these Rubrics which might be said to be precise and minute to a fault, we must remember that they were providing directions for what was then a novelty in the Church of England of that age, viz., the administration of the Cup to the laity, and therefore it was felt necessary to give meticulous rules which later experience would soon make superfluous. They are,

however, useful guides to show that it was the mind of the Church to use a common cup.

(iv.) In all subsequent changes the Church has shown no sign of intention to depart from the use of the one common cup then laid down. In 1552 the last named Rubrics were omitted, as also were all the Rubrics providing for the Manual Acts, and for a hundred years and more no direction was given about the Manual Acts. But yet through all these years one strong Rubric remained about *the Cup*. The Rubric for the administration of the wine said: "The Minister that delivereth *the Cup* shall saye," and its interpretation must be guided by the mind of the Church as shown more fully in the Prayer Book of 1549, of which the 1552 Book is a modification.

In 1662 three Rubrics were inserted or reinserted, all of which made the direction to use *the Cup* more emphatic. These were the direction for ordering the elements, "that he may with the more readiness and decency . . . take *the Cup* into his hands"; the direction for the Manual Acts, "Here he is to take *the Cup* into his hand"; and the direction for "the blessing of *the Cup*" when additional wine is needed. There was also one most significant insertion of the words "to anyone" in the existing Rubric so that henceforward it said: "The Minister that delivereth *the Cup* to anyone." I do not presume to explain why these words "to anyone" were then added, but I do say that having been added they make it yet plainer that the Church intended to use *the Cup* for more than one communicant. (It is also to be noted that this same Prayer Book of 1662 retained the Rubric of 1552 requiring that there be no communion "except four (or three at the least) communicate with the Priest.") I ought to add that there was one other Manual Act Rubric inserted in 1662 which is sometimes quoted, erroneously as I believe, to show that the Church had changed her mind at this juncture and had ceased to require the use of a common cup. I shall deal with that Rubric shortly, contenting myself with saying that the facts already adduced are abundant testimony that the Church has constantly at different stages of her history since the Reformation, shown her intention to require the use of a common cup in the Holy Communion.

3. The last point that I urge is that the interpretation of the Rubrics as requiring a common cup, and not permitting individual cups for individual communicants, is alone in harmony with the principle

of uniformity consistently maintained by the Church in her formularies, as laid down in the Preface to the Prayer Book, "Concerning the Service of the Church." I need not enlarge upon the resolution there expressed, that instead of the "great diversity" that there had been "heretofore," "from henceforth all the . . . Realm shall have but one use." I only say two things : (i) Until by legal process that principle is withdrawn it still holds as the law of the Church of England, and (ii) it would be strange if any alteration in this respect was made by the Prayer Book of 1662 which expressly re-enacted this Preface that first appeared in 1549, and was afterwards contained in 1552.

Yet the Rubric to which I alluded above is sometimes quoted as if it actually did this very strange thing. The Rubric, one directing the Manual Acts, says : "And here to lay his hand upon every vessel (be it Chalice or Flagon) in which there is any Wine to be consecrated." This Rubric is actually quoted as giving authority for the use of individual cups for individual communicants instead of the common cup, because in the phrase "every vessel" it allows scope for an unlimited number of vessels besides the common cup. I would only say in passing that this Rubric never mentions an unlimited number of vessels to be drunk from, but only vessels "in which there is any wine to be consecrated."

But the argument that I wish to press is, that such an interpretation of this Rubric is only tenable if the Rubric is unambiguous and susceptible of only one meaning. For if that Rubric permitted the introduction of individual cups for individual communicants it would run counter to the expressed declaration of the Church "that from henceforth all the . . . Realm shall have but one use." It would create diversity of the most flagrant kind in connection with one of the most solemn acts of our holy religion. We are also asked to believe, on that assumption, that the Church did this without giving any reason for this startling new departure. Usually in legislation when we depart from existing law we show that the maintenance of the law as it stands is either impossible or inexpedient, and that therefore a change is demanded. No such explanation is attempted or hinted at here. But in addition we are asked to believe that the Church made this tremendous innovation in a revision in which she was already doing the very opposite, namely, reaffirming her will that *the Cup* be used, by the three new Rubrics,

and the modification of the fourth, which I have detailed above. We are asked to believe too much. The setting of that Rubric in the place in which it is found, and under the circumstances of its enactment, renders such an interpretation absolutely impossible in law.

Furthermore the Rubric can be adequately interpreted without involving the Church in such a maze of historical and liturgical inconsistencies. It is seeking to remove legally, as far as possible, all inconveniences connected with the administration of the Communion to a large number of communicants such as it was fondly hoped would flock to the Holy Table in the enthusiasm of the Restoration, when the old Church of England again emerged out of her suppression. It provides that in addition to consecrating the wine in the Chalice, it is legally permissible to consecrate wine in the Flagon, or even also the wine in any other vessel in which, like a Flagon, there might be wine to be consecrated, afterwards to be poured into *the Cup* for purposes of administration.

This is a case in which, supposing that there were any ambiguity of interpretation, which I deny, it would be right to support the new interpretation by reference to contemporary practice. But there is no tittle of evidence in contemporary practice to show that either the revisers themselves, or any of their contemporaries, ever departed from that uniformity which the Church laid down as a principle of her legislation. They all used, and continued to use, the common cup. The onus of proof rests with those who hold the contrary view, and no such proof is forthcoming.

For these reasons, drawn [from study of the Rubrics alone, and without reference to the authority of the New Testament, or the example of the Primitive Church, which in my judgment leads to the same conclusion, I maintain that the law of the Church of England as regards the administration of the wine requires the use of a common cup, and does not permit, as it stands now, the use of individual cups for individual communicants.

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