

## Letter to the Vicar of Grantham (1627, but this copy dated 1633)

John Williams

### Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 35331, ff. 54v–55v

54v

A copie of the B[ishop] of Lyncolnes letter to the vicar of Grantham./ 1633.

S[i]r w[i]th my hearty com[m]endac[i]ons when I spake w[i]th you laste I tolde you that the standinge of the com[m]union table was to me a thinge soe indifferente that vnlesse offence were taken by the Towne against yt I shoulde never remove yt. That w[hi]ch I did not then suspecte is come to passe

{gap: }

Your Alderman whome I haue knowne theise 17: or 18. yeres to bee a discreete and modeste man farr from the humor of innovation togeather w[i]th the better sorte of the towne have complayned against yt, and I haue w[i]thout takinge notice of you or any touche in one sillable upon yo[u]r reputac[i]on appointed the Churchwardens whome yt doth necessarily concerne vnder the diocesan to alter yt for the tyme as you may see by the copie inclosed./ Nowe for yo[u]r owne satisfaction and my poore advise for the future, I haue written unto you somewhat more att large then I use to expresse my selfe in this kynde. I doe therfore (to deale playnly w[i]th you) ~~{gap: torn}~~ of many things well, and disalowe of some other thinges in yo[u]r carriage of the {bu}sinesse. It is well done that you affecte decency & comlynnesse in the officiatinge of divine service: that you presiente yo[u]r selfe w[i]th the formes in his ma[jes]ties chapple, and in the Quyes in the Cathedrall Church: yf yo[u]r Quier (as those other) coulde contayne yo[u]r whole congregation, and that you doe the reverence appointed by the Cannons to the blessed name of Iesus, soe it bee done humbly not affectedly to p[ro]cure the devotion, not the derision of the p[ar]ishioners, and that you doe not mayntayne yt *rationibus non cogentibus* and soe spoyle a good cause by a badd argum[en]t: Those thinges I allowe and practise: but that you shoulde bee soe violente for an aulter att the upper ende of the Quier, that yo[u]r table oughte to stande aulterwise, that the fixinge therof in the Quier is canonicall, and that it oughte not to bee removed in the body of the church I conceive to bee in you soe many mistakinges: for that yf you should erecte such an aulter w[hi]ch I knowe you will not yo[u]r discretion [Left margin: \* Article 31. ] will prove the only holocoste to bee offred on the same for you subscribed \* [Left margin: # homely of the sacramente ] when you came to the place that the other oblation w[hi]ch the Papistes were wonte to offer upon there aulters is a blasphemous figmente and p[er]nitious imposture, # and also that wee in the church of Englande must take heede leaste our com[m]union of a memory [Left margin: # Canons of [th]e convocation 1571. pag:18./ ] bee made a sacrifice.# And it is not the vicar but the Churchwardens whoe are to p[ro]vide for the com[m]unicantes not an aulter, but a fayre ioyned table, And that the Aulters were removed by the Lawe and tables placed in there steede in [Left margin: ## Canon. 82. ] all or most churches of Englande appieres by the Queenes Iniunctions 1559. ## and soe confirmed in the pointe by the cannons still in force: And therefore [Left margin: #+ 10 Eliz: Iniunction for tables in the church./ ] I knowe you will not turne a table into an aulter w[hi]ch vicars were never inabled to sett upp.#+ but were once allowed w[i]th others to pull downe. For the seconde parte, that the com[m]union table is to stande aulterwise, yf it were in that place of the chauncell where the

aulter stooode I thinke some what may bee saide for that because the Iniunction .1559. did soe place yt, and I conceive yt to bee the most quaynte situation when it is not used, and for use to where the Quyer is mounted upp by stepps and open, soe that hee that officiates may bee seene and hearde of the congregation, but such a one I am informed yo[u]r Chauncell is not: but yf you meane by aulter-wise that the table shoulde stande alonge close by the wall, so that you may bee forced to officiate att th'one ende of yt (as you observed in greate mens Chappells) I doe not beleive that ever the com[m]union Table was otherwise then by casualtie soe placed [*Left margin:* \* An[n]o 3: Eliz. orders. 1561. ] in the country churches for (besides the country people woulde thinck them dressers rather then tables) Queene Elizabethes Com[m]issioners for causes [*Left margin:* & rubricke befor the com[m]union ] ecclesiasticall\* directed that the table shoulde stande not where the aulter but where the steppes of the aulter formerly stooode<sup>&</sup> The ministers

appoynted to reade

55r

reade the com[m]union (w[hi]ch you out of the book of the faste<sup>in</sup> of the firste of the kinge are pleased to call seconde service) are directed to reade the com[m]aundementes not att the ende but att the northside of the table w[hi]ch implies the end to bee placed [*Left margin:* \* trobles of Franckforde pag.30./ ] towards the greate easte wyndowe. nether was this a newe direction in the Queenes tyme only but practised in kinge Edwardes raigne \* For in the plott of o[u]r Leturgie sente unto Mr: Whittingham and Mr: Calvin in the raigne of Queene Mary the ministers are com[m]aunded to stande att the North=side of the table, and soe in kinge Edwardes Liturgie the ministers<sup>standinge</sup> ~~{gap: illegible}~~<sup>standinge</sup> in the midst of the aulter is chaunged into his standinge att the northside of the aulter 1552. And I beleieve it is used att this daye in most places of Englande./ What you sawe in Chappells & Cathedrall churches is not the pointe in question, but howe the tables are appoynted to bee placed in parrishe Churches: In some of the chapples and Cathedralls the aulters may bee yet standinge for ought I knowe; or to make use of their coveringes, or ornamentes tables may bee placed in there roome of the same lengthe and fashion the aulters were: wee knowe the aulters stande still in the Lutherane churches and the Apologie for the Augustine confession Act [*Left margin:* # Liturgie printed 1544. ] allowes yt./# The Aulters stooode in a yere or two of the raigne of kinge Edw:6. as appeares.\* / And it seemes the Queenes Com[m]issioners were<sup>\*Iniunction 1559.</sup> contente they shoulde stande, but howe is this to bee vnderstoode of the sacrifice<sup># 24: No:4:Ed:6. 1559.</sup> of the masse beinge abolished? They (call them what you will) are not more aulters but tables of stone or tymber # And so it was alleaged *Sublato enim relativo formali navet absolut et naturale tantu[m]* , and soe they [*Left margin:* # Actes and Monum[en]tes pag: 1212./ ] may bee used in kinges or B[isho]ps howses where there are noe people soe voyde of instruction as to bee scandalized.#/ For upon the beatinge downe of Alters 1550 all Dioces did agree upon receavinge Tables but not upon the forme or fashion of there tables: Besides that in the olde testamente one and the same thinge is termed an aulter and a table, an aulter in respecte of what wee there offer unto God, a table in respecte of what is there p[ar]ticipated by men: [*Left margin:* # mall:1:7. ] as for example by the priestes:# so that you haue Gods alter the same w[i]th the table the place is worthe the markinge. for it answers to the very obiection of hebr: 13: 10. w[hi]ch you made vnto some of yo[u]r fellowe ministers and one mr: Morgan; before you to Peter Martyr in a disputation att Oxforde: wee

haue noe alter in regarde of any oblation but wee haue an aulter in regarde of [*Left margin: # Actes & Monumentes pag: 1211./*] p[ar]ticipation and comunion.# Hee graunted unto us the use of an alter is to sacrifice upon, the use of a table to eate upon: and because com[m]union is an alter action most proper to a table as an oblation is to an aulter, therfore the church in our Leturgie callinge yt a table, doe not you call yt an aulter:/ In kinge Edwardes Liturgie 1449. it is every where putt, but in that of 1552. it is noe where called an aulter but the lordes borde, why? because the people beinge scandalized therby in country churches beate them downe de facto, then the supreme magistrates did beate them downe de iure, and [*Left margin: # Iniunction 1559.*] settinge tables in there roomes tooke away from us the children of the church [*Left margin: \* actes & monumentes pag: 1211.*] and com[m]on wealthe both the name and the nature of the com[m]on aulter#. as you may see \* referringe to the order of kinge Edwarde and his councell menconed. And I hope you haue more learninge then to conceave the Lordes table a newe name and soe to bee ashamed of the worde. For besides that Christe [*Left margin: % actes & monumentes pag:1211.*] himselfe instituted this sacramente on a table and not on an aulter<sup>%</sup> As Archb[ishop] Cranmer observes and others. It is in the Church att leaste 200. yeres more ancyente then the name of Aulter as you may see lernedly [*Left margin: 1.Cor:11:*] proved out of St: Paul, Origen, Arnobius or Al Arnaldus: yf you doe but reade a booke w[hi]ch is in your church Iewell againste Hordinge of masse artiele art 30. pag: 145. And whether this name of Aulter came into the church in a kynde of complyinge and phrase w[hi]ch the people of the Iewes as I haue reade in Chemnitius, Gerlard and other sounde Protestantes with yet such as suffer alters to stande, or that yt

55v

or that yt p[ro]ceeded from the oblations made on the comunion table for the use of the prieste and the poore, wherof wee reade in Iustice martyr, Ireneus [*Left margin: \* actes & monumentes pag: 1211./*] Tertullian and other ancyente writters, or because of the sacrifice of prayer and thanckes givinge \* as Cranmer and others thoughte, the name beinge soe many waies abolished in the church, It is fitter in my Iudgmente that the aulter (yf you will needes soe call yt) shoulde accordinge to the cannon stande table wise, then the table (to trouble the poore towne of Grantham) shoulde bee erected aulter wise. Lastly that the table shoulde stande in the higher parte of the Chauncell you haue my assente in opinion, but that yt shoulde bee there fixed is soe farre from beinge Can[n]onicall that it is directly againste the cannons. For what is the Rubricke of the Church but a cannon, and the Rubricke saithe yt shall stande in the body of the church, or in the Chauncell, where morninge and eveninge prayers are appointed to bee saide. yf therfore the morninge and [*Left margin: \* Iniunction Queene Eliz: 1559.*] eveninge prayer bee appointed to bee saide in the body of the church as in most country churches, where shall yt stande more Can[n]on[n]ically? \* And soe is the table to bee made removeable (when the com[m]union is to bee celebrated to such a place as the minister may bee most conveniently hearde of the comunicantes and so saith the Cannon in force, that in the tyme of the Com[m]union the table shalbee placed in soe good sorte w[i]thin the Church or Chauncell as therby the minister may bee most conveniently hearde. Nowe iudge you whether this table w[hi]ch like Dedalus his engines moves & removes from place to place, and that by the inwarde wheelles of the church cannons, bee fitly resembled by you to an aulter w[hi]ch stirres not an ynche, and that Can[n]onically. But yf you desire to knowe out of Eusebius, Augustine, Durandus, and the 9th councell of Constantinople howe longe com[m]union [*Left margin: \* Iewell ag[ains]t Hordinge of private masse: art:3. pag:144.*] tables haue stode in the midst of the church,\* reade a book w[hi]ch you are

bounde to reade and you shalbee satisfied./ The sum[m] of all is this. .1. you may not erecte an Aulter when the Cannons allowe only of a comunion table. 2.ly This table must not stande aulter-wise & you att the Northe ende therof, but table wise, and you must officiate att the northe side. 3:ly this table ought to bee layde upp, decently covered in the Chauncell only as I suppose, but oughte not to bee officiated on in the first or seconde service (as you distinguishe them.) but in that place of yo[u]r church or chauncell where you may bee most conveniently hearde and seene of all. 4:ly though p[er]adventure you bee (w[i]th him in Tacitus) master of yo[u]r owne, yet are you not of other mens eares ergo yo[u]r parrishioners must bee iudges Iudges of yo[u]r audibleness in this case. 5:ly whether side you or yo[u]r parrishe shall first yelde in this needlesse controversie, shall remayne, in my poore Iudgmente the more discreete grave or lerned of the two: and by that tyme you haue gayned more experience in the cure of soules you shall finde noe such ceremony profitable to christian charity: to w[hi]ch I com[m]ende you and am ever

yo[u]r lovinge Frynde Jo: Lyncolne./

To erecte an alter, is to derogates from Chr[ist] For where an alter is erected, yt p[re]supposeth a sacrifice to bee offred on that alter, as Papists p[re]tende they theron offer a p[ro]pitatory sacrifice of Chr[ist's] body. yf so then the alter is greater, then the offringe, for it sanctifieth the offringe as o[u]r savior Chr[ist] saith Math: 23 :19:20:21:22./&c. and by consequence Chr[ist] is sanctified by the alter./ *O amentes, or dementes & insani Papiste! /*

## Other manuscript witnesses

- British Library, Lansdowne MS 151, ff. 357r–359v
- British Library, Additional MS 29584, ff. 1r–2v
- British Library, Additional MS 74734, item K
- British Library, Harley MS 1219, ff. 41r–47r
- Beinecke Library, Osborn b173, unfoliated
- Beinecke Library, Osborn fb60, ff. 405r–411r
- Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 826, ff. 172r–173
- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson E 148, ff. 113r–116v
- Gonville & Caius College, MS 174/95, pp543–549
- The National Archives, SP 16/527, /56 [ff.127r–130r]

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<https://mpese.ac.uk/t/WilliamsLetterVicarGrantham1627.html>