

The Edwardine Reformation in a Hertfordshire Parish.

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THERE are many books which treat in detail of the revolution in religion carried out under Henry VIII and Edward VI. Authorities like Dr. Gairdner and Canon Dixon have dealt with it at length. But it is perhaps, even on this account, a matter of some interest to see how far this general course of events can be illustrated from our own local history. The illustrations may not bring forward anything which was hitherto unknown, but even if they leave the general form and outline unaffected they may serve to introduce some light and shade into one portion of the picture. The present article aims at no more. It simply seeks to show what happened in one Hertfordshire parish in the second year of King Edward the Sixth. The Churchwardens' Accounts of Baldock for that year which form the basis of the article have not, so far as the writer is aware, been published before. They are not mentioned in the list in Dr. Cox's *Churchwardens' Accounts* which gives full references to the accounts which have been published.

Before approaching the accounts however it may be as well to remind ourselves of some of the main features of that outline to which our light and shade are to be added. On 28th January, 1547, the old king had died leaving a precocious and delicate boy of nine to succeed him. It was an age of revolution, social, economic, political and religious, an age in which traditions and forms counted for little, and a firm or rather a ruthless hand for much—an age of new ideas and "new men." Nothing was more certain than that Henry VIII had been equal to the situation. It was just as certain that Edward VI would not be. Now the "new men" came into their own. Hitherto, for all the far-reaching changes in religion the parish church service had gone on as before and if a name or two was dropped who would notice that? Now there are new masters.

In the Lent following the death of the king, Barlow (Bishop of S. David's) and Ridley (then chaplain to Cranmer) preached at Paul's Cross, setting a new note. Images and ceremonies were denounced as futile and

idolatrous. At Court a sermon was preached to the effect that Lent itself need not be regarded as in any way obligatory. On February 10th the incumbent and churchwardens of S. Martin's, Ironmonger Lane, in the City, were proceeded against for removing images, substituting the royal arms for the crucifix and having texts painted on the walls, all without authority. In May the pulling down and smashing of images began in Portsmouth, and the protests of Gardiner (the Bishop) were unavailing for the Protector was against him. On March 8th of the following year an English "Order of Communion" was issued. The new *régime* has begun and we may turn to our accounts.

These are contained in two large sheets of paper folded in two into book form and stitched at the back, with a narrow strip of parchment to protect them where folded. There are thus four leaves and eight pages. Of these last the first two are blank. The five following contain the accounts written in a rapid cursive hand of the later style which becomes common about this time and lacks the leisurely care and beauty of the formal documents of a generation earlier. The last page is blank except for a much altered note of balances. There are frequent deletions made by dashing the pen once or twice through the item. Even the handwriting seems to mark a break with old traditions. The size of the pages is roughly twelve inches by ten. The serial numbers of the items do not belong to the original but are due to the writer.

The heading occurs at the top of the second leaf :—

Payments for thys yere¹) 1548 (
the sicond yere of Edward
the syxt by Wyllm chapman & John adams
geven the xxij day of September.

We enter at once into a bustle of activity. A considerable quantity of timber is bought, but contractors not yet existing, is bought standing and has to be felled and worked :—

1. In p'mis payd to Mr Barnyshe for vj trees	xliij s. ²
2. It.- the fallyng of the same trees	ij s.
3. It.- to Bond for hys help in ye woodde	iiij d.

¹ The words " thys yere " are struck out again.

² Here and throughout the sums shown should be multiplied by twelve to get some idea of the equivalent value at the present day.

4. It.- to Bond for makyng the pittes in the wood iij s. iiij d.
5. It.- to the same Bond for fylling of the same pyttes xij d.
6. It.- to Willm Carpynter for sewyng of xiiij tonne
of tymbre xxij s. iiij d.
7. It.- to Robert Sawer for brekyng of tymbre xij s. v d.

The surnames are interesting. It will be seen that a Carpenter saws and a Sawer "breaks" the wood. In a lease of this time occurs the name of one "Tomson alias Smyth" and contemporary accounts show him under both names as a smith. Surnames seem not yet to have been so fixed as they soon became.

After the timber comes building. "Lyme" and "tyle" are bought from various sources, with sometimes an extra charge for bringing them from a distance:—

11. It.- to Willm Chapman for caryng of one
lode of lyme frome Hychyne xij d.
47. It.- to Willm Chapman for y^e caryng of
v lodes of tymbre viij s. iiij d.

We shall have something to say about William Chapman in this connection later on.

Then we discover that the work is such as to require scaffolding:—

17. It.- to John Kyrbye for makyng of skaffoldes
iiij days worke with his tooles xviiij d.
18. It.- to Willm Cook to help syme x d.
19. It.- to Richard Hidde for helpyng to take down
the same skaffoldes & bearyng away ye tymbre ij d.
21. It.- to John Sparlyng for lyen to bynd skaffoldes vj d.
22. It.- to Willm Smythe for naylls for skaffoldes j d.

Further the work is sufficiently extensive to require the collection of considerable quantities of stones, presumably for rubble. So the poorer inhabitants set to work collecting them:—

51. It.- to Henry Flecher for gatheryng x lodes
of stones ij s. vj d.
52. It.- to Cowdale's wyffe for gatheryng xxx lodes vij s. vj d.
53. It.- to Waren Hankyn's wyffe for gather- of iij lodes ix d.
54. It.- to Kyrby's wyfe for gather- xviiij lodes iiij s. vj d.
55. It.- to Maryan Flecher for gat- of iiij lodes xij d.

And so on. It will be seen that sometimes the whole family seems to have turned out to gather stones and it must have been a rare windfall for "Cowdale's wyffe" who earned seven and sixpence. William Chapman was a churchwarden and could hardly go out gathering

stones. But it will be remembered that he owned a cart, and looking, we do not look in vain :—

62. It.- to William Chapman for his cart vj days xij s.

Twelve shillings! But the next item reveals that “on day’s careg he gave.” So did William Wynn who also possessed a cart :—

60. It.- for Caryin stones ij day wth his cart iiij s.

But the payment seems to have included wages in his case.

Then there was casual labour and according to the custom of the time the provision of meals for the workers :—

63. It.- to Ric. Head for vj days work wth his sonne iij s. iiij d.

64. It.- to thos work folke in bread and drynk vj d.

65. It.- to Edward wythen Wren for vj days worke ij s. vj d.

But it is time to ask what all this activity means.

It will be remembered that the death of Henry had freed the hands of those who longed for more sweeping changes in the Church and its worship and we have seen how within a few weeks they began to carry their desires into effect. The existing law was against them. Most of the Bishops were against them. It was Bonner of London who proceeded against the incumbent and wardens of S. Martin’s, Ironmonger Lane. Stephen Gardiner, of Winchester, tried to check the goings-on at Portsmouth. In fact both Bonner and Gardiner were a little too scrupulous—and by September they were in the Fleet Prison. The old king had gathered the reins so effectively that episcopal authority was practically non-existent. As channels for the transmission of royal commands and agents to enforce them the bishops might be useful enough. There it must stop. But Henry’s conservatism in matters of everyday religion had concealed this fact to some extent, so that men like Stephen Gardiner felt little anxiety during his life. When he was dead and things went further they found themselves defenceless. In fact readers of Dr. Gairdner’s *English Church in the Sixteenth Century* and the later and fuller *Lollardy and the Reformation* will remember how this scholar seeks to show that throughout the royal policy

was to punish "heresy"³ in appearance while encouraging it in secret. We shall not be surprised if reforming zeal is sometimes a little in advance of the law or tends to anticipate episcopal authority.

On September 3rd, 1547, a Royal Visitation began at Westminster. Injunctions were issued for the removal of images which had been abused for purposes of superstition. Popular feeling in many quarters went further. The distinction between abused and not abused was too much of a subtlety for them and by February 21st so much disturbance had been aroused that it was ordered that all images should go. Now we begin to follow the reason for the scaffolding at Baldock.

First the images :—

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| 83. | It.— pd to Henry Boreg for takyng down the ymages
& for mendyng the leade and clensyng the
guttur & for holy and Ive | xij d. |
| 100. | It.— for one day's work of the church wardens in
takyng down the tabernacles wyth y ^e Images | xij d. |

Then there were the walls. In many churches these were painted with various subjects, especially with figures of saints, so we find the visitors in London ordering churches to be whitewashed and the Ten Commandments written on the walls. All these items duly appear :—

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| 79. | It.— payd to Duffyn for wasshyng out the ymags
for iij days & a halfe | xxj d. |
| 14. | It.— payd to Duffyn James Dysley & Ryd Parker
for whytt lymyng y ^e church | xlviij s. |
| 46. | It.— to y ^e payntere that shuld have wryten y ^e church | ij d. |
| 111. | It.— for work for the payntere | ij d. |
| 20. | It.— to Henry Borage for makyng clean the church
after the whytt lymyng | xij d. |

The sums paid to the painter seem absurdly small and the phrase "shuld have wryten" is curious. One wonders if something went wrong with regard to the painting.

However this may be there is no such doubt about the roodloft. Baldock still possesses a good screen and to judge from the sepia drawing made about 1830 by J. Buckler, it was then in better condition still. But in 1548 the great rood crowning it would be a monument

³ The word is used as by Gairdner. See Preface to Volume III. of *Lollardy and the Reformation*.

of superstition so the way up to the loft must be stopped and any other necessary alterations effected :—

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|-----|---|----------|
| 32. | It.- payd to Rog ^r Fyelwood for closyng up all ye loftes | x s. |
| 33. | It.- to Kyrbye for ij days help w th Rog ^r | xvj d. |
| 37. | It.- to Thomas Pratt for naylls for the loftes | xiiij d. |
| 29. | It.- to John Kyrbye for iij days work at the Rood loftes | ij s. |
| 30. | It.- to Edward Rychardson for on days work
at the same lofte | iiij d. |

Apart from these explicit references there are many items referring to the purchase of nails and wood which occur in this part of the account and probably have something to do with the work on the rood-screen.

Now we turn to the pulpit. This was to be an important piece of furniture in days to come. In 1548 preaching was carefully controlled. Preachers had to be licensed and on April 24th a proclamation had forbidden any other preaching. Those who were not licensed must use the Book of Homilies issued in the previous July. Evidently the pulpit at Baldock needed a little attention :—

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| 78. | It.- payd to Robart carpynt ^r for mendyng the pulpite | viiij d. |
| 80. | It.- payd for tymbre for the pulpitte | vj d. |

while a more ominous entry reads :—

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| 84. | It.- delyvered to Jamys Hynde in old yvroy xxiiij pound ⁴ in
full contentacon and payment of & for makyng the lecture
on the pulpitte & for mendyng ij cofers one called the
poormens box thother the churches evydence lyeth in. | |
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This last item will come up again. In the meantime we can consider along with it another :—

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| 86. | It.- payd to the poor people on good fryday | xx s. |
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The day of compulsory poor rates was not far distant but already the injunctions of July, 1547, had required an alms chest to be set near the high altar for the benefit of the "poor and needy." This is no doubt the "poor-men's box" referred to, and would be the box pierced for coins and heavily clamped with iron which to-day stands at the foot of the pulpit stairs. Incidentally it is now the box "the church's evydence lyeth in" for it contains the old grants, leases, etc., together with the account we are considering. Provision for the poor

⁴ This would no doubt refer to worked ivories or fragments of them and "scrap" ivory would of course have a lower proportionate value than precious metals.

became necessary not merely because of the cessation of the relief once given by the monastic houses, but much more in consequence of the distress incident to the general economic transition which was taking place. Of course this distress was greatly aggravated by the period of speculation which followed the confiscation, for land to the (modern) value of some fifteen to twenty millions changed hands.⁵

An illustration of the process of confiscation may be mentioned in connection with another item:—

110. It.— to Leggatte & Parker for Caryin the lead
to the brotherhed iij d.

“The brotherhed” refers to the Guild or Fraternity of Jesus founded at Baldock in 1459, and the lead is no doubt for the “Brotherhedd Howse,” of which more in a moment. After the confiscation of monastic property it came to be realized that a lot of property was still remaining, some of it for the provision of masses, lights in churches and the like, some of it in the hands of guilds like that at Baldock. An Act of 1545 had given to the late king power to direct commissions under the great seal to take possession of such property. This power of course died with him, but the Parliament which met in November, 1547, passed a new Chantries Act giving to the Crown all colleges free chapels and chantries existing within the past five years, with all their lands and rents, all endowments for obits or anniversaries and the property of all guilds and brotherhoods from Easter following.⁶ So by 1548 the property of the guild at Baldock would have passed to the Crown and in 1550 it was the subject of a grant to John Cock, of Broxbourne. The *Victoria County History* seems to have gone astray at this point. It states that the guild was “of considerable wealth and after its dissolution its possessions were sold in 1550 for £860, a very large sum for that time.”⁷ It is a large sum, so large as to awaken suspicion, and reference to the grant⁸ shows that

⁵ For this figure and for a sketch of the situation see Tawney: *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, pp. 135 ff.

⁶ This summary of the Act is taken from Gairdner: *English Church in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 250.

⁷ *V.C.H. Herts*, III., p. 67.

⁸ *Pat. 4. Edw. VI.*, pt. III., m. 7 (pages 223 to 226 of 1925 edition).

beginning with the Baldock property it enumerates a long list of endowments included in Cock's purchase. In fact the whole list fills three closely printed pages, the Baldock items occupying less than a quarter of one. The beginning only need be quoted here :—

6 Sept. £860—7—10 paid in the Augmentations by John Cock of 1550. Brokkesbourne, Herts., esq.

Grant to the said John Cokk of the late guild or fraternity in Baldok, Herts and lands in the several tenures of (*etc.*) which belonged to the said guild: also the messuage called the "Brotherhedd Howse" in Baldok and the way land and path called "a pathway" in tenure of (*etc.*) and all other lands of the said guild (*at the end*) except lead bells and advowsons.

So John Cock did not get the lead we read of recently. The list contained in the grant is full of interest, revealing all sorts of little endowments in neighbouring churches and beyond.

Naturally there would be some sort of formal surrender made in 1548 to royal commissioners or visitors and it may be to this that these items refer :—

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| 71. | It.— at or beyng w th the comyssary at Hychin for ye dynere of y ^e ij wardens & Henry Morgan | xij d. |
| 72. | It.— one other tyme at Hychin w th the comyssary or dynere & a quart of malmsey | xviiij d. |
| 73. | wyth drynk besyde | vj d. |
| 74. | It.— to the comyssary's man for or byll making | vj d. |
| 76. | It.— to Henry Morgan for goyng twyse to Hychyn | vj d. |

Henry Morgan has come up in the world. In 1544 he earns twopence for helping to mend the organ bellows but in 1548 he proceeds magnificently to Hitchin with the wardens and is entertained at the public expense. He seems to have been the parish clerk and he certainly wrote these accounts for us :—

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| 103. | It.— to Henry Morgan for this our accompte wrytyng | ij s. |
| 112. | It.— to Henry Morgan for his wage | iiij s. iiiij d. |

It must however be said that he falls below the modern standard of scientific accountancy for two of his five pages contain figures which, like Dora Copperfield's, "will not add up," at least they steadfastly refuse to attain the total he has suggested for them.

It may have been noticed that nothing has been said about glass. Beyond one trifling payment it is not mentioned and it seems to have been left undisturbed for the time being. In 1643 however the orders of the

Parliament were carried out and it cost three shillings and fourpence to take down the glass "by Manchester's Comande."

Nor are church plate and vestments mentioned. A little money is spent in having the church linen washed but we hear nothing of the vestments for which a few years before Bruges satin and Venice gold were being bought. The church had rich vestments as we see from an inventory of "owlde stuff besyde the kynge's inventorie," of which the church still has duplicate copies. The day of confiscating church plate and vestments was not yet. But it was soon to come. The first steps were taken in 1551 and the work completed in 1552. Not infrequently the commissioners found that they were not the first on the scene. At Baldock, the parson, Andrew Chryswright, seems to have made off with a pair of candlesticks. Search was made for any heirs from whom they might be recovered but the candlesticks were never found.⁹

A final point which has to be considered is that concerning the cost of all these alterations carried out in "the sicond yere of Edward the syxt." There are several accounts of earlier date preserved along with that for 1548. One referring to 1544 shows the year's expenditure as £2 18s. od. This total the writer has checked and it is correct. Another account which includes more than one year but is unfortunately a fragment, the upper part having been torn off, shows expenditure for one year £3 10s. 6d., for a second year 11s. 8½d. We may take it then that an ordinary year's expenditure was about £3. Against this the account for 1548 shows a total of £18 6s. 4d. Some quotations already given will have shown that money was being spent very freely and that the wardens had no false delicacy in the matter of asking for their own expenses. Further the notes on the back of the account show (after three attempts and much alteration) the item "Remavneth clerly iij^{li} v^s ij^d." This is presumably a credit balance showing that at least £21 11s. 6d. was raised, or over

⁹ Cussans' *Hertfordshire*. Vol. II., Broadwater Hundred (1877) p. 14, quoting the return made by the Churchwardens to the royal commissioners.

seven times a normal year's expenses. The question is where did the money come from?

An answer is suggested by the item already quoted showing that church property was being freely used to meet expenses. In such days as those, with a great movement in progress which Canon Dixon has described as "a revolution of the rich against the poor," with royal and noble examples of unscrupulous rapacity constantly before their eyes, it is not remarkable if smaller men considered themselves at liberty to take a little something for their trouble. As for the future of the Church and Nation—well, in days of revolution nobody has much time to think about the future.

Note.—The writer desires to express his thanks to the Rev. C. W. Alington, Rector of Baldock, by whose courteous permission extracts from these accounts are published.