

LEWIS ATTERBURY  
A BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RECTOR IN THE XVII  
CENTURY

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The recent bi-centenary commemoration in Westminster Abbey of bishop Francis Atterbury's death, revived for a moment public interest in a famous Jacobite and in the stock from which he sprung.

In 1620 the bishop's grandfather and namesake, Francis, son of Lewis Atterbury,<sup>1</sup> of Great Houghton (Northants), by Mary, daughter of Stephen Harvey, of Coates, on reaching the age of 16 matriculated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, proceeding B.A. in 1623 and M.A., 1626. After taking Holy Orders, he was instituted (April 16th, 1627) to the rectory of Milton Malsor (worth £16:13:10, *Lib. Inst. P.R.O.*) in his native county.

From the parish register we learn the name of his wife and the birth of a child destined to become father of the bishop and rector of Milton Keynes, "Lewes Atterbury Sonne of Francis and Elizabeth<sup>2</sup> was borne 18th and baptized 24th April, 1631." When aged 16, "Sonne Lewes" matriculated (April 9th, 1647) as a commoner at Christchurch, Oxford, and in the following month it chanced that the presbyterian majority in the Long Parliament enacted an Ordinance for the Visitation of the University. The Commission over which Sir Nathaniel Brent, a former warden of

<sup>1</sup> Northants Visitation, 1618; but the will of Lewis Atterbury, gent., of Great Houghton, Northants, was proved 16 Oct., 1631, by his relict, Elizabeth. (P.C.C. 105, St. John).

<sup>2</sup> An inscription in Milton Malsor church recording a wife of Francis suggests a second marriage. It reads: "Here lieth the body of Mrs. Alice Atterbury, relict of Francis Atterbury, M.A., formerly rector of this parish. She exchanged this life for a better June 21, 1704, in the 76 year of her age. (*Atterbury Correspondence*, p. 480).

Merton, presided, consisted of 10 presbyterian ministers and 14 laymen. When Lewis Atterbury appeared before the Visitors he replied, "I will submit to this Visitation authorized by Ordinance of Parliament."<sup>3</sup> In making this answer the youthful undergraduate was doubtless influenced by the definite presbyterian mentality of a father who had subscribed to "The Solemn League and Covenant."<sup>4</sup> The Commissioners satisfied with this submission advanced (Sept. 29th, 1648) the obliging commoner to a Studentship at the House. After taking his B.A. in 1650, further token of approbation followed in March, 1652, when, to the obvious annoyance of Antony Wood, Atterbury was "admitted or created M.A. by virtue of a dispensation from the Chancellor (Oliver Cromwell) with liberty to suffragate in convocation and congregation" (*Wood's Fasti Oxon*). Thus established in the University and favourably viewed by the new authorities, he now sought ecclesiastical preferment. The then valuable living of Great Rissington (co. Gloucester) falling void in 1656 by the institution of John Heyfield, a clerk with presbyterian sympathies, to Chesterton<sup>5</sup> Vicarage (Oxon). Atterbury sought the vacant cure. Success, however, depended on his ability to satisfy the committee generally called the "Triers," appointed in each county by the Protector in March, 1653-4, to enquire into the qualifications of all candidates for ecclesiastical office. Their real title was "Commissioners for the approbation of Publique Preachers," and the preamble of the Order stated that it was issued because "many weak, scandalous, Popish persons had intruded themselves into vacant cures." The candidate succeeded in his quest. The Commissioners satisfied with

<sup>3</sup> Camden Soc., vol. 29, N.S.

<sup>4</sup> The Testimony of Ministers to the Solemn League and Covenant in the county of Northampton. (*Bod. Pamphlets*, C. 15).

<sup>5</sup> Lambeth Admissions, no. 345.

"his holy life and good conversation . . . adjudged him to be a fit and proper person to preach the gospel . . . and do admit him to the rectory made to him by Edmund Bray esq., patron thereof."<sup>6</sup>

What happened after his institution in May, 1654, is obscure. It would seem that while the new rector satisfied the presbyterian Triers, he soon incurred the disapproval of a committee appointed in 1654 consisting exclusively of Independents and known as "The Ejectors," who deprived him of the benefice. However, other preferment awaited him in a county where either the personal influence of the Protector was stronger than in Gloucestershire, or there was less doctrinal rigidity personnel of the county commission. The records runs: "Mr. Lewis Atterbury admitted 11th day of March, 1656, to the rectory of Milton Kaigne in y<sup>e</sup> county of Bucks upon a presentation from his Highness the Lord Protector under his seal manual the day aforesaid and exhibited his certificate from Thos. White, Henry Langley, Henry Wilkinson, Ambrose Upton, Henry Smith, Abraham Dey."<sup>7</sup> A later entry in another hand dates the admission Sept. 11th, 1657, which is probably more correct. Two of the certifiers, the first and last, had a personal interest in the presenter. Thomas White, of Caldecote, in the parish of Newport Pagnell, married Elizabeth,<sup>8</sup> widow of Thomas Gifford, Atterbury's mother-in-law. Abraham Dey (should be Drye), an Independent preacher, enjoyed by the Protector's

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, no. 106. The Triers were guilty of a terminological inexactitude, having overruled the patron's presentation of Edmund Hall, his domestic chaplain.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid no. 677. The volume containing these admissions has only become available through its recent recovery by Mr. Claud Jenkins, present Librarian.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, Dr. Atterbury's elder son, bequeathed £50 for placing a monument in North Crawley church to his grandmother, buried May 23rd, 1687. (*Willis* no. 24, *Bodleian Library*). It is a tablet of white marble, with fluted pilasters, fixed on the N. wall of the chancel.

nomination the reversion of Rissington rectory void by Atterbury's supersession. Apart from this tribulation he lived unchallenged in his Milton rectory, having married Elizabeth,<sup>9</sup> daughter of the aforesaid Thomas Gifford by his wife, daughter of Edmund Harding, of Aspley Guise. To quote a precise date for the wedding is impossible in the absence of the contemporary<sup>10</sup> Milton register. Even if such were available, an entry of the marriage therein would be doubtful, as an Act passed in 1652 substituted civil registration before a J.P. for a religious service.

With the collapse of the Commonwealth in 1660, the ensuing Convention Parliament, composed mainly of presbyterians, immediately passed an Act which entitled every ejected incumbent to re-instatement in his living, provided he had neither justified the King's murder, nor declared against infant baptism. This was an attempt on the part of the presbyterians to get even with their old opponents, the sectaries and the anabaptists. The former were approvers of the execution and the latter opposed to infant baptism. While this Act did not affect Atterbury's tenure of Milton rectory, it did open the way to a claim for re-instatement at Rissington, a claim challenged by Edmund Hall,<sup>11</sup> whose presentation by Sir Edmund Bray,<sup>12</sup> had been disallowed by the "Triers" in 1653. Atterbury acted with promptness, proceeding to London he was well received at Court, and secured ratification of his title to Milton by institution under the Great Seal, and obtained the appointment of

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<sup>9</sup> So commemorated on an ordinary stone in Milton chancel (*ibid.*).

<sup>10</sup> My thanks are due to the Rev. G. H. Field, the present rector, for courteously giving access to the contents of the parish chest. In the Bodleian are transcripts from the missing register for the years 1659-60, 1661-5, 1671-3, 1574-81, 1682-7, 1689-91. Lewis, first son of the marriage is said to have been born at Caldecote, May 2nd, 1656. (Staines: *Newport*, p. 124).

<sup>11</sup> A notice of this eccentric divine appears in the Dict. Nat. Bio.

<sup>12</sup> Of Great Barrington, lord of Great Rissington manor.

chaplain to Henry, duke of Gloucester, but as the prince died in the ensuing September,<sup>13</sup> the post cannot have been profitable. In May, 1661, he petitioned the king for leave to hold Rissington in plurality (*State Papers Dom.*), and on Aug. 16th, 1662, conformed to the terms required by the Act of Uniformity, *viz.*, "Consent to the Prayer Book and abjuration of the League and Covenant." That his father, Francis, also conformed can be inferred from retention of his Northants benefice and presentation in 1665 to Maids Moreton rectory, Bucks, distant 10 miles from Milton Malsor where he continued to reside.<sup>14</sup> From this date onwards, apart from litigation with the rival claimant to Rissington, there is nothing to note until the deaths of his wife on Feb. 26th, 1669, of two children,<sup>15</sup> "E.A." and "I.A.," and of his father, buried June 21st, 1673, at Milton Malsor.<sup>16</sup> About this time serious controversy<sup>17</sup> arose concerning the locality, tenure and extent of Milton glebe lands, which harassed Atterbury for the rest of his life. A statement of his case is set forth on an old sheet of paper among the Tanner MSS (no. 130) in the Bodleian Library, from which we learn that in 1593 the then rector (Ralph Smith, the elder), exchanged for his lifetime a lordship of about 2,000 acres "for his commons for horses & coves and sheepe"; also 30 acres dispersed through the lordship with conditions of re-entry in case of non-fulfilment. The succeeding rector (Ralf Smith, S.T.P., the younger) had accepted

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<sup>13</sup> 1660, Sept. 13. Under this date Evelyn notes in his diary (vol. ii.) "the Duke of Gloucester died of ye small poxe in the prime of youth, a prince of extraordinary hope."

<sup>14</sup> Report of pluralities in Lincoln diocese, 17 Jan., 1666. The elder Atterbury resigned Maids Moreton 3 Jan., 1571. (Lincoln reg.).

<sup>15</sup> Commemorated on two small stones in Milton chancel. (*Willis*).

<sup>16</sup> Parish register.

<sup>17</sup> Henry, son of William Stafford, lord of the manor, sued in his minority as to locality of the glebe lands. (*Exch. Dep. Mich.*, 21 Car. ii., no. 4, P.R.O.).

the situation, with certain adjustments. The document then recites, "The following (*i.e.* Atterbury) Rector's Querie is, whether 56 years usage will bind him to confirme this inclosure (neither decreed nor ratified by Bishop or Patron) to the damage of the ch., which if not relieved looseth about £150 p.a., whiles the lordship doubleth its value. Tithes formerly worth 5s are now 1/4 the acre. The common before y<sup>e</sup> inclosure let for £10 p.a. now £5., p.a. The glebe hath 6 or 7 acres lesse in quantity than doth of right belong to it."

To the contention between rector and lord of the manor may be attributed the two terriers of Milton glebe drawn up during Atterbury's incumbency. An abbreviated transcript of the earlier, dated Oct. 20th, 1674, is preserved among the Browne Willis papers (nos. 99 and 12) in the Bodleian Library. It reads: "The Homestall<sup>18</sup> a square plot of ground containing 2 acres without which are contained in 3 roods of ground a garden & orchard enclosed with a stone wall having on the north side a freeboard<sup>19</sup> without the wall of 9 foot broad & 13 or 14 foot long on which freeboard elme trees & Timber trees do grow. The parsonage House built partly with stone & partly with timber in a Square Forme with a Pav'd Court in the middle thereof, all of which contain 2 Storys & disposed into 32 rooms, viz., a Hall, a Parlour, a Buttery, a Pantry, a Kitchen, a Laundry, a Dairyhouse, a Brewhouse, a Bakehouse, a Poltery house & all the rest for Lodgings etc., & covered with Tyle and slate; a Building of 5 Bays containing a Stable, a Barne, covered with Slate & Tyle. More Close or Chapel containing 1½ acres, Ryecroft Close 4 acres & 1 rood. In Wolston Mead, a plot of 3 acres. In Little Hame,

<sup>18</sup> The inclosure of ground immediately connected with a house. *E.D.D.*

<sup>19</sup> A strip of land lying beyond the boundaries of an estate but over which the owner of the estate has certain rights. *E.D.D.*

1 acre, 1 rood, 12 poles; in Much Dole a meadow of 10 acres; in Brook Furlong,  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre. Sum of meadow 6 acres, 1 rood, 12 poles. Arable land in the Northfield, Kingsbridge field, Tornfield, 26 acres, 2 roods. One pidgeon House at the backside of the Church. Commons for 4 horses & 30 sheepe."

William Wotton, the succeeding rector, pulled down the parsonage described above and "at his own charges built a good rectory" (*Willis no. 24*) in its place.

The Oxford Archdeaconry MSS at the Bodleian Library include the second terrier, in its original form, compiled and completed by Dr. Atterbury in August, 1693, before his death. The document, however, is far too lengthy for quotation.

During the long lawsuit over the glebe, "the Staffords in 1678 sold their estate worth 180<sup>li</sup> to y<sup>e</sup> present earl of Nottingham"<sup>20</sup> (*Willis no. 24*), a transaction singularly unfortunate for the rector. His opponent is no longer a local landowner but son and heir of Heneage Finch, then Lord Chancellor of England, who, should Willis be correct in his date, purchased the manor and appurtenances thereof in the lifetime of his father. The prestige accompanying the son of a deceased Chancellor probably influenced the decision of the justices at the Buckingham assize, June 23rd, 1684, when Mr. Atterbury,<sup>21</sup> of Cornwell, appeared for the rector, and Sir Thomas Turner, serjeant at law and Recorder of the City, represented the Earl. The Court "ordered and decreed that all the inclosure be settled and established as now they are to the earl of Nottingham, lord and owner of the said manor and should so enjoy . . . . all the glebe

<sup>20</sup> Daniel, son and heir of Heneage Finch, Lord Chancellor 1675 till his death, 1682; cr. Earl of Nottingham, 1681.

<sup>21</sup> Presumably Francis, younger brother of the rector, graduated at St. Alban Hall, Oxford, barrister of Gray's Inn, 1683. (*Foster Alumni Oxon.*). Reference to him may be found in *Gray's Inn Pension Book*, vol. i.

lands."<sup>22</sup> It need hardly be said that the rector did not accept defeat, but continued litigation which ultimately, if indirectly, caused his death.

Among the MSS<sup>23</sup> in the British Museum is an original letter written from Milton by Dr. Atterbury on Nov. 3rd, 1690, to his younger son, recently (1687) admitted to the diaconate but not priested until 1691. John Nichols in reproducing the letter<sup>24</sup> appears to have overlooked the postscript of a father worried by the querulousness of a son. It reads, "my opinion is you should now bend your studies towards divinity, the profession you have chosen & so be capable of somewhat in Oxford or London & if you wait God's time, it is the opinion of the Deane<sup>25</sup> of Gloucester & your other friends you cannot want preferment long."

The days of this militant priest now draw to a close. Within three years and six months of his induction (Aug. 4th, 1690) to a prebendal stall at Lincoln, he was drowned near home by passing the bridge at Newport Pagnell during a great flood as he returned from London, whither he had gone on legal business. His body was buried under the altar in Milton Church with the epitaph:

"Hic jacet Lodovici Atterbury. S.T.P.<sup>26</sup>  
Hujus Ecclesiae Rectoris,  
Quod reliquum est.  
Obiit 7 Die Decembris A.D. 1693."

By a will, dated Jan. 21st, 1690, Lewis, the elder son was appointed executor and heir of the manor of Parkes in Great Houghton, Northants, with reversion for want of heirs to Francis to whom his father

<sup>22</sup> British Museum. Add. MSS. Stowe colls. 795, F. 214-219.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. "Atterbury Correspondence," F. 102.

<sup>24</sup> Atterbury Correspondence edited by John Nichols, pub. 1789, vol. i.

<sup>25</sup> William Jane, 1685-1707.

<sup>26</sup> "S.T.P., 1660; doctor of laws by accumulation, 1687." (*Wood's Fasti*).



bequeathed a legacy of £800 and a mansion, with houses at Caldecote, Newport Pagnel, Cogenhoo and other places conditional to fulfilling contracts entered into with the testator's brother-in-law, Francis Gifford; should Francis prefer to sell, Lewis to have the refusal at £800; to each of the children of his sisters, Dore and Stannard, a book worth 20s., to his brother, sisters and mother (step-mother) a book worth 10s. each; to the poor of Milton Keynes £10 . . . . .

Under the notice of Dr. Atterbury in the *Dictionary of National Biography* will be found a list of his published sermons. His portrait in oils is an heirloom at Milton Keynes rectory.

The rector of Milton entrusted the education of his two sons to the tutorial supervision of a personal friend, Dr. Busby, the famous headmaster of Westminster School. In 1929, the register of admissions to the school was published, and errs in describing the mother of the Atterbury boys as a daughter of Francis (her brother) Gifford, of North Crawley. It is reasonable to assume that Dr. Atterbury was author of the inscription on his wife's grave, and would be fully aware of her paternity. The memoir in the register in common with a notice of Lewis, the elder son, in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.* is also mistaken, should Archdeacon Edward Yardley be correct in saying that he married Penelope, *sister* of Sir Robert Bedingfield. In the preface to the collected sermons (*vol. 1*) of the rector's eldest son, Yardley wrote "he married Penelope, daughter of Mr. John Bedingfield, brother to Robert Bedingfield, Lord Mayor in 1707," and that "John and Robert were sons of John Bedingfield gent., of Halsworth in co. Suffolk." Thus Penelope was *niece* and not *sister* to Robert Bedingfield. After admission to the diaconate by the Bishop of Oxford, Sept. 21st, 1679, Lewis was ordained priest in Buckden

Church by Dr. Thomas Barbour, Bishop of Lincoln, and the original certificate of ordination was in the custody of Archdeacon Yardley when he published the sermons of his friend. It reads:

“ Nov. 2. 1682

“ These are to certify those whom it may concern,  
 “ that Mr. Lewis Atterbury, Maister of Arts of  
 “ Christchurch in the Universitie of Oxon. was  
 “ ordained Priest by the now bishop of Lincoln,  
 “ Sept. 25, 1681. When it did appear by his good  
 “ Testimonials and his Examination, that he was  
 “ a Person (both for Life and Learning) capable  
 “ and worthie of Orders, and it did further appear,  
 “ by a good and pious Sermon he had preached  
 “ before the said Bishop, that he was able to  
 “ execute the ministerial Function with benefit to  
 “ any Congregation, to the Cure of which  
 “ Providence should call him.  
 “ This Truth being well knowne to me is testified  
 “ under the Hand and Seal of

Thomas Lincolne.”

*(Intro. to Atterbury's sermons, vol. 1, p. vii., collected and published by Edward Yardley, Archdeacon of Cardigan).*

A portrait of Lewis Atterbury the younger, engraved by Vertue, is prefixed to the first volume of the sermons.

Francis, the younger son of the Rector of Milton, because he would not adjust his political loyalties in a changing epoch nor relinquish one jot or tittle of his ecclesiastical principles, has gone down in history as a brilliant failure. He is, however, outside the scope of this monograph, save for the subjoined letter from his father and a minor (which might easily have proved a major) incident recorded by Antony Wood (*L. & T., vol. iii*) under date 1683: “after many

scollars were returned against the beginnige of terme, the small poxe then increased in Oxon and in the colleges. Four fell sick in one day at Ch. CH. [including] Francis son of Dr. L. Atterbury."

The letter in question was addressed to "Mr. Francis Atterbury, at his Chambers in Christchurch, Oxford."

Milton Keynes Rectory.

3 Nov. 1690

..... "I know not what to think of your uneasiness. It should [sic] unlike a Christian & savours neither of temper nor consideration.

I am troubled to remember it is habitual. You used to say "When you had your degrees, you would be able to swim without a bladder. You make yourself & Friends uneasy. cannot you trust Providence? Man's ways are not in himself.

"Do your duty & serve God in your station until you are called to something better . . . . What may we think of our station? You need not doubt but that I could wish you all the things you are capable of; but I can neither secure them to you by myself, but must leave all to time & Providence. I am not wanting in pains & prospects & deny myself more in toiling & sparing than you ever did or ever will do; & all, I see, to little purpose, when it has no better effect with you. It hath cost me several journeys to settle things with my brother<sup>27</sup>. . . . Besides I have obliged myself to be his bailiff as long as I live; & for Rissington, it cost me long & wet journeys, besides expence. Madam Bray<sup>28</sup> is very civil to me, without

<sup>27</sup> By referring to his will, the writer alludes to his brother-in-law, Francis Gifford.

<sup>28</sup> Frances, widow of Sir Edmund Bray, of Barrington Park, a daughter and co-heir of Sir William Ashcomb, of Alvescot, co. Oxon.

the dean<sup>29</sup> interposing. I met her at the Wells.<sup>30</sup> If she would give you the next turn, on my death or resignation, it would be somewhat but you may enjoy it better & without charge or loss of anything in Oxford, under my title . . . . . I know and have been assured that she would rather have me there than Chetwode<sup>31</sup>; & he hath another argument (besides his own expence to make him incline unto peace) in that I make him pay my charges & refund our main profits. If you can do anything to make him sensible of it, it may do well. For matching there is no way for preferment like marrying into some family of interest, either bishop or archbishop or courtier . . . . . but I may write what I will, you consider little & disquiet yourself much.

Your loving Father

LEWIS ATTERBURY.

Then overpage comes a postscript, which John Nichols apparently overlooked, "My opinion is you should bend your studies towards divinity, the profession you have chosen & so bee capable of somewhat in Oxford or London & if you wait God's time, it is the opinion of the Deane of Gloucester & your other friends you cannot want preferment long." (*Atterbury Correspondence in the Brit. Museum*).

The letter reveals the mind of a much worried man. It combines a note of severity with one of anxiety on the part of a father troubled by the querulousness of a son. Two lawsuits protracted and unsuccessful, each

<sup>29</sup> William Jane, Dean of Gloucester, 1685-1707.

<sup>30</sup> At Oxford, "to see the famous Wells, natural & artificial grotts & fountains, call'd Bushells wells at Enstone. There he had two mummies; a grott where he lay in a hammock like an Indian." *Evelyn's Diary*, vol. ii., p. 169.

<sup>31</sup> Eldest son of Valentine Chetwode, of Chetwode, by Mary, dau. of Francis Shute, of Upton, co. Leic. Rector of Rissington 1686; Dean of Gloucester 1707, and Archdeacon of York, holding both preferments until his death in 1720. (See *Pedigree of Chetwode of Chetwode*, by Stephen Tucker, 1884, p. 30).

fought to a finish in the civil and ecclesiastical courts of the kingdom, had inevitably imposed a heavy financial burden on the defeated litigant. He had failed in defending rectorial right at Milton; he had failed to substantiate his claim to the rectory of Rissington. The allusions in the letter to the latter parish are altogether baffling. The rival claimant to the rectory, Edmund Hall, ex-Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford, ex-parliamentary soldier, ex-chaplain to Sir Edmund Bray, the patron, after prolonged legal proceedings, during which the benefice had been sequestered, having established his claim, was instituted in 1679. He died in 1686, and Edmund Reginald Bray, the new patron, whose motto might have been "*Il n'y a pas de sentiment dans les affaires,*" ignored Atterbury and presented Knightley Chetwode, a blood relation of his paternal grandmother. A bitter disappointment, no doubt, after the favourable impression which Atterbury believed himself to have made on Madam Bray, the patron's mother. It was Atterbury's misfortune that, as he moved to the right, the younger Brays moved to the political left. Hence the appointment of Chetwode, the "Whig divine," odious to Tom Hearne, and to Antony Wood, "a conceited flourishing coxcomb."

What the Rector of Milton meant by writing in 1690 "if she (Madam Bray) would give you the next turn, on my death or resignation" is frankly unintelligible after Chetwode's institution in 1686. It is just conceivable, in view of the allusion to "my charges," that the writer was acting as a non-resident Curate-in-charge to a non-resident rector. Still, even so, he would not be in a position to give a title at Rissington to his son. As the postscript implies, Francis was then in Holy Orders. A senior Studentship at Christchurch had furnished a title for his admission to the diaconate on Dec. 18th, 1687, by Dr. Fell, Bishop

of Oxford. For some reason, by a curious coincidence, both the sons of Dr. Atterbury served an unusually long diaconate, and it was not until March 8th, 1690-1, three months after the foregoing letter was written, that Francis was ordained priest on the same title. To the latter part of his father's counsel Francis gave heed, for he soon afterwards married Katharine Osborne, a relative of Sir Thomas Osborne (1631-1712), the first Duke of Leeds, a great beauty, and possessed of a fortune amounting to £7,000.

A second letter of Dr. Atterbury's composition has survived. It is a pathetic plaint of a disheartened priest addressed to the Primate, and written apparently after a final dismissal of his suit for a restoration of the parcels alienated, as he believed, from the rectory glebe.

(Tanner MS 130, Bodleian Library.)

To his Grace of Canterbury.

A Paper being least trouble I presume upon this method of presenting you (according to duty) with the successe of my church in recompense of what was wanting, viz

(1) in Glebe six acres p. ann. ...	£6	0	0
(2) A barne ... ..	1	0	0
(3) Common let 30 years since for	£10	16	8

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Total 17 16 8

but now worth more.

I am to be allowed £15 0 0.

And whereas the exchange was imposed but temporary when made & hath not been confirmed & are now disowned by y<sup>e</sup> Bishop in his answer, because *in damnium ecclesiae* & Protested agst by the Patron of 2 Turns in three, because to y<sup>e</sup> losse of the church in Tithes £140 p. ann.

I hoped that y<sup>e</sup> Barons would have been pleased (after they had stopped my proceedings at the Common Law) to have releived (*sic*) me here. But (it seems) I am not to bee considered for that the enclosure is next term to bee established for ever & I am to take my tithes of the Pasture as they arise which at 2s per pound seems but to 1s. 4d. the acre instead if it had been continued in tillage the Tithes would have been worth 4s. p. ann. as I have fully proved.

The lordship at y<sup>e</sup> time of y<sup>e</sup> enclosure was let for £400, p. ann. hath beene since let for £1790 (being nearer £2000) & the church which had not y<sup>e</sup> enclosure proceeded would have been £400 is now worth £200, and thus a corrupt Patron & a complying Incumbent may perpetuate y<sup>e</sup> usings of any church. But I am tedious & shall only beg your pardon & blessing

& am Your Graces'

most dutiful son & Servant

June 28th.

LEWIS ATTERBURY.

for costs which have been £500 I am allowed £60."

Internal evidence suggests that the letter, though in Atterbury's handwriting, was a rough draft of his complaint to the Archbishop. The usual firmness and precision which characterizes the writer's signature is lacking, and the absence of date for the year in which he wrote is unlike his methodical and accurate mind.

The allusion to "the patron of 2 turnes in three" requires elucidation. Some time in the reign of Elizabeth, the Staffords<sup>32</sup> parted with the advowson

<sup>32</sup> The manor of Milton came to the Staffords and Chaworths in this wise. Thomas Aylesbury left two daughters (l.p.m. 1439) and co-heirs (a) Elinor married Humfrey Stafford, (b) Isabella married Thomas Chaworth. Each carried a moiety of the manor to their respective husbands, and the former family had for some generations a seat or mansion house at Milton. On the attainder of Humfrey Stafford, *tempo* Henry VII., the king, by *letters patent*, granted the manor and advowson to Sir Edward Poyning. But the Staffords being restored in blood soon came into possession again. (*Cole MS. Brit. Mus.*, vol. xxxv).

for two consecutive presentations, the nominal purchasers acting on behalf of a Ralf Smith (the elder). Following the "demise of Hugh Charnock," the aforesaid Ralf Smith, B.D., was instituted (Aug. 26th, 1585) at the presentation of John Nourse, George Mace, yeomen, and Michael Coles, gent., "*Patrons on purchase.*" The nominal purchasers then transferred their interest to the rector and his wife, Martha, and she, on her husband's decease (1683), "by reason of her *jus patronatus* granted her husband and herself by John Nurse," presented her son, Ralf Smith, S.T.B., who was duly instituted May 2nd, 1638. On the death of this last, the next presentation reverted to the Staffords, owners of the advowson. But as already related, the Protector intervened and presented Atterbury, who seems to have been unaware of the precise nature of the transaction between the Staffords and Ralf Smith.

Of the ecclesiastical presentments made during the incumbency of Dr. Atterbury, a few have survived among the Bucks Archdeaconry Papers (C. 231) in the Bodleian Library. Until the Great Rebellion parish priest, wardens and sidesmen joined in the presentments; from the Restoration onwards the wardens alone signed. Should, however, an Incumbent and his lay colleagues be on amiable terms, he probably aided in formulating for submission to the Ordinary, the annual report on parish affairs. Indeed one at least of the Milton presentments for the period is significant of rectorial inspiration. One other point may be noted, *viz.*, that at Milton, as elsewhere, any reparations required to the fabric of the church were invariably deferred until the Easter Visitation, when the presenting wardens were retiring and so bequeathed to their successors the odium of levying a church rate to meet the cost of making the necessary repairs.



The earliest extant presentment is dated in 1673 and reads:—"WEE present Elizabeth and Joane Thome for not coming to church to hear divine service & sermon."

Attendance at morning and evening prayer was compulsory, both under ecclesiastical and common law, and however much the discipline was disliked, parishioners had to be in church and remain until the end of the service. Under parliamentary statute (1 Eliz., c. 2, sec. 14) any parishioner failing to attend was liable to a fine of 12d for each default, and to secure obedience to the law was an obligation laid on the wardens. At this particular juncture wardens and magistrates, and others responsible for administering laws governing Sunday, had been placed in a difficult position by the King's publication of a Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, even though it was subsequently withdrawn.

1674. "Imprimis, wee presente a table touching y<sup>e</sup> degrees of marriage wanting.

Item, an Ile<sup>33</sup> belonging to the church used for a schoolehouse much out of repair, many tiles wanting; part of y<sup>e</sup> roof displaced which would fall if not supported by a prop; the glasse of all y<sup>e</sup> windows of it wanting; some battlements wanting upon y<sup>e</sup> Steple; the church hath many craks and one prop to support one of y<sup>e</sup> master beams.

Item. One of y<sup>e</sup> bells in y<sup>e</sup> Steple is craktd.

Item. Some glebe and other dues detayned from y<sup>e</sup> incumbent."

As to the first presentment, canon 99 required the provision of a Table of Affinity.

The second illustrates the not uncommon custom of the time of using part of a church for the village school. The third seems a shameless confession of

<sup>33</sup> *Ile*, i.e., a disused chantry chapel founded by the Chaworths and Staffords, *Tempo H. vi*. The rectors of Milton were presented to it. (*Cole MS.*, vol. xxxv).

failure on the part of the outgoing wardens to fulfil their statutory obligation to keep the fabric of the church in repair. If parishioners were compelled to attend their parish church, the fabric had to be kept wind and weather proof. The last presentment surely expresses sympathy with the rector defending, at great cost to himself, the integrity of the glebe pertaining to the benefice. A note appended in another hand, dated April 28th, 1679, records "what was amiss & wanting is now provided."

1676. "We presente Edward Luddington & William Gale for not receiving the communion last Easter."

Canon 112 required incumbents and wardens to present to the Ordinary all persons over 16 who failed to communicate at Easter. Hence the prayer book rubric which directs intending communicants to signify their names at least some time the previous day.

1684. "Wee presente William Lyne for an incestuous marriage with Elizabeth Wright his late wife's own sister."

The offenders could hardly plead ignorance of marriage law with the provision of a Table of Affinity in 1679. In those days either from complaisance, or disregard of canon 62, or for pecuniary gain, the directions of the canon were broken by the less strict clergy, among whom the then rector of Milton Keynes cannot be numbered.

1686. "Imprimis. We presente that we have no Box or Chest to putt y<sup>e</sup> alms of y<sup>e</sup> parishioners in; nor a hood for y<sup>e</sup> minister; also William Lyne for standing excommunicate for y<sup>e</sup> space of 12 months last past. Item. Edward Lodington for absenting himself from the parish church on Sundays 16 & 23 May and several others."

By canon 84, wardens were required to provide at the expense of the parish a strong chest with three keys for alms for the poor, and by canon 58 "a comely surplice with sleeves" for the parish priest, and if he was a graduate, the hood of his University. The question of marriage with a deceased wife's sister was, even in those far away days, a disturbing feature in church life. William Lyne appears to have been excommunicated for persistence in an irregular alliance, and continued impenitent in spite of the practical inconveniences which the sentence involved. He could not be a witness; if a plaintiff, he might find his case adjourned *sine die* unless letters of absolution could be produced, and if under the greater excommunication, he could not legally make a will; and by canon 65 he was to be denounced at public service twice a year. However, with this, the last extant presentment for the period under review, these obdurate parishioners, William Lyne and Edward Loddington, disappear from local history.

In closing a notice of Lewis Atterbury written beneath the roof which sheltered him at the end of his "long & wet journeys" to Rissington, the reader will have learnt from the narrative something bit by bit to the character and inclinations, the hopes and disappointments of this rector of Milton Keynes. To dismiss Dr. Atterbury for a quarrelsome, litigious person would be unfair. His civil contentions were fought not for himself alone, but as a trustee responsible for maintaining and bequeathing unimpaired the demesne lands of his rectory. Indeed, the lot of some parish priests to-day would be easier, had the parish but numbered an Atterbury among its incumbents. The "corrupt Patron & complying Incumbent" denounced in the protest to the Primate are not unknown in the records of too many parishes.

Again, to attach the contemptuous epithet 'time-server' to Atterbury would be not less unfair. Men must be judged not by what we, who live in a very different age, think they should have done, but by what the spirit of the age permitted them to do. Allowance must be made for the presbyterian atmosphere enveloping his early life. The religious and political discords separating prelatist and presbyterian did not cut so deep as those which divided both alike from the Independents, and ejection from his first and most lucrative benefice was the price Lewis Atterbury paid for an uncompromising loyalty to his early faith.