

GREAT MIGRATION TOUR TO ENGLAND
5 TO 15 AUGUST 2008

TOUR TALK

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WILLIAM LAUD

William Laud was born in Reading in 1573 and entered St. John's College, Oxford, in 1589, receiving his B.A. in 1594 and his M.A. in 1598. He became a Fellow of St. John's and held a number of other offices there. Although he was more of a politician than a theologian, his inherently conservative approach to life made him a lifelong opponent of the then dominant Calvinist group in the Church of England. In time he became associated with the Arminian party in the church, those who opposed the strict predestinarian doctrines of the Calvinists, holding instead that man could attain saving grace at least in part through his own labors.

Because of his anti-Calvinist position, Laud did not rise as rapidly in the church as others of his abilities did. For example, he held offices at Oxford and a prebendary at Westminster, for example. In 1616 James I appointed Laud to the position of Dean of Gloucester, where he immediately became notorious by insisting that the altar table be moved from its east-west orientation in the nave (tablewise) back to the east end of the chancel in a north-south orientation (altarwise). This was calculated to infuriate the Puritans, and was a warning of what his policies would be as he moved up the ecclesiastical ladder.

As the Arminian party began to grow in strength in the latter years of the reign of James I, Laud was finally inducted as bishop of St. David's in 1621, then to the diocese of Bath and Wells in 1626, of London in 1628, and then Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. During the latter years of James he also attached himself to the royal favorite, the Duke of Buckingham, but managed to survive the demise of that shooting star and gain the full confidence of King Charles I.

Even before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury, Laud was clearly the leading force in the Arminian party, but not until he became archbishop was he able to fully implement his anti-Calvinist and anti-Puritan policies throughout the kingdom. During the tour we will be concentrating on his years as Bishop of London, a diocese which then included all of Essex and Hertfordshire, and the influence he had in driving many Puritan ministers from his diocese, and many followers of those ministers, to New England.

Although now nearly seventy years old, the biography of Laud by Hugh Trevor-Roper remains one of the most important and most accessible studies of this central figure of the first half of seventeenth century England: Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud: 1573-1645* (London, 1940).

MINISTERIAL ECONOMICS

In Tour Talk #5 we discussed the Puritan Lords and in passing promised that this topic would lead to the related group of men known as the Feoffees of Improvements. Before discussing this group, however, we need to examine the different ways in which ministers of the Church of England were compensated in the early seventeenth century.

Each ecclesiastical parish had attached to it two important property rights, the advowson and the benefice (or living). The advowson was “The ‘patronage’ of an ecclesiastical office or religious house; the right of presentation to a benefice or living” (this and other definitions given here are from the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary*). In other words, upon the vacancy of a church office, some person or corporation had the right to name the successor to that office. The person holding the advowson (a word derived from the same root as “advocate”) might be a bishop or a college at Cambridge or Oxford or a lord of a manor or a borough, among many possibilities. The advowson could be devised and inherited and could be bought and sold.

The benefice or living comprised the various sources of revenue available to support a particular church office, including mainly the glebe lands and the tithes. The glebe lands were those lands controlled directly by the holder of a church office, while the tithes were payments in money or in kind owing to the church office by other landholders in the parish. Tithes came in several varieties, some of which will be referred to below.

We now come to a group of terms which are all entangled with one another. The “holder of an ecclesiastical benefice” was termed the incumbent. “A parson or incumbent of a parish whose tithes are not impropriate” is called a rector. If the tithes are impropriate, then the incumbent is the vicar. Impropriation is the “annexation of a benefice or its revenues to a corporation, office, or individual, especially ... to a lay corporation or a lay proprietor.”

Now, to attempt to entangle this knot of definitions. The person who controlled the entire benefice, including the glebe and all the tithes, was called the rector. If the rector was a lay person or a corporation, then the most common arrangement was that the rector took for himself the “great tithes,” which were the tithes from grain, hay, wood and fruit, and the remainder of the benefice would go to a vicar, who would actually have the “cure of souls,” that is, who would actually perform the ecclesiastical duties. The lay rector might be the lord of the manor, and so live locally, or might be an absentee landlord, such as a college or bishop. In other cases, the rector might be the minister, that is might himself have the cure of souls. Whoever had the cure of souls would be the incumbent, whether vicar or rector. The lay rector was not an incumbent. (As an aside, the term “rectory” might refer only to the house occupied by the rector, as it does now, or it might refer to the whole financial package, including the rectory house, the glebe and the tithes.)

The impropriation of a benefice might take place in many ways, but for our purposes the most important was the redistribution of church wealth at the time of the English Reformation, when thousands of benefices formerly controlled by the religious houses fell into the hands of laymen, including, in time, many of those we have described as Puritan Lords.

Finally, there were two important classes of minister who fell further down the economic ladder. In general terms the curate was anyone entrusted with the cure of souls, and so might include the incumbent rector or vicar, but for our period the word had a more restricted meaning: “A clergyman engaged for a stipend or salary, and licensed ... to perform ministerial duties in the parish as a deputy or assistant of the incumbent.” A curate did not receive any portion of the tithes directly, although his stipend generally was paid from the tithes by the rector or vicar. A curate might be hired in a large parish where one man could not carry out all the ministerial duties. Also, if the incumbent was a pluralist, that is held more than one living, he might need to hire a curate for those parishes in which he did not reside.

A lecturer’s duties “consist[ed] mainly in delivering afternoon or evening lectures,” or sermons. This office became especially important to the Puritans, for whom sermonizing was far more important than the various ceremonies associated with the Catholic church. Hiring a preacher was a way for the Puritans to promote their own goals through an officer who, at least until the rise of Laud, could not be as easily controlled as the holder of an ecclesiastical benefice.

Don’t be concerned if all this is not immediately clear. We will be using and further exploring all of these terms throughout the course of the tour.

An excellent resource on this subject is Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church: From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford, 1956). Hill was, during the second half of the twentieth century, one of the most important investigators of the English Revolution and its origins. Unfortunately, the volume cited here is no longer easy to come by.

GREAT MIGRATION IMMIGRANTS FROM SANDON

On the last full day of our tour, Thursday, 14 August, we will make a brief stop at the parish church at Sandon, immediately to the west of Great Baddow, where we will have had dinner at Pontlands a few days earlier. Although our interest in Sandon is partly architectural, a few New England immigrants did have connections with this parish.

1) **Humphrey Turner** married Lydia Gaymer at Sandon on 24 October 1618. Turner also resided at two other English parishes of interest to us. His wife had been baptized in 1602 at Terling and the couple had their first child baptized there on 24 March 1621, a few years before Thomas Weld was instituted as minister of that parish. We do not know where their next two children were born and baptized, but their fourth known child,

daughter Lydia, was baptized at Little Baddow on 17 February 1629/30 [NEHGR 151:286-90; Pilgrim Migration 466-70].

2) **Thomas Sharpe** of Chelmsford sailed for New England in the Winthrop Fleet in 1630 but returned to England in April of 1631 after a brief residence in Boston. Back in England, he settled at Sandon where his last two children were baptized, daughter Mary on 28 October 1633 and daughter Tabitha on 24 January 1635/6 [GMB 3:1655-56; TAG forthcoming]. On 29 November 1636, Thomas Sharp, his wife and his son Thomas, along with one other Sandon resident, were presented at the ecclesiastical court for various Puritan infractions, such as not kneeling at communion [NEHGR 21:178].

GREAT MIGRATION IMMIGRANTS FROM LITTLE BADDOW

From Sandon we will travel the few miles further northeast to Little Baddow, where we will spend the remainder of the day. This was the parish where Thomas Hooker and John Eliot operated their school in the late 1620s. Neither Hooker nor Eliot appears in the Little Baddow parish register, but at least three other early New England immigrants do, and they would almost certainly have interacted with Hooker and Eliot. Of these three, we have already met Humphrey Turner in the section just above on Sandon.

1) **William Vassall** had two children baptized at Little Baddow, son William on 2 February 1626/7 (who apparently died soon) and daughter Anna on 20 April 1628 [GMB 3:1871-75]. Vassall had married Anna King at the nearby parish of Cold Norton on 9 June 1613 and their first child was baptized there. On 12 April 1630, immediately before sailing for New England, Vassall was residing at Prittlewell, Essex. He came to New England with the Winthrop Fleet in 1630, but had returned to England by August of that year. He came to New England again in 1635 and settled at Scituate. This choice of residence may reflect an earlier acquaintance with Humphrey Turner, who had settled at Scituate by 1633 and whose residence at Little Baddow had probably overlapped that of Vassall there a few years earlier.

2) **Thomas Rawlins** had two children baptized at Little Baddow, Nathaniel on 16 September 1627 and Thomas on 7 June 1629 [Eva Belle Kempton Anc 1:374-85]. These were just the years when Hooker and Eliot were at Little Baddow, and Rawlins may have been attracted to the parish by these two ministers. By 1630 Rawlins had migrated to New England and settled at Roxbury [GMB 3:1557-60].

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