

THE CHURCHWARDENS' ACCOUNTS OF
PRESCOT, 1523—1607.

Contributed by F. A. Bailey, M.A.

PART ONE

THE remains of an ancient paper book of accounts of the churchwardens of Prescott, Lancashire, covering the period 1523 to 1607, were restored to the church in 1938 through the kindness of Mrs. E. S. Weeks of Clitheroe, after having been, apparently, long lost and forgotten. The binding has gone, hence the leaves are loose, and some are missing. The pages are numbered, the surviving ones being 30 to 407, with a few short gaps. The loss of the first thirty pages, perhaps the most valuable portion, is a misfortune which may be borne with equanimity, in view of the remarkable circumstance of our having recovered so much of the remainder. The leaves were in considerable disorder, and many of the page-numbers had disappeared through the decay caused by damp; difficulty was therefore experienced in assigning some of the leaves to their exact place in the series.

This newly-found series is unfortunately not continuous with that already in the possession of the church, as the latter begins in 1637, and there is therefore a gap of thirty years, during which the rebuilding of 1610 occurred. Fifteen odd sheets of sixteenth-century accounts were discovered in the church by the present writer, and published, a few years ago;¹ these fall within the period of the newly-found series, and in some cases seem to fit into gaps, but their page-numbers, if any, have perished, and for the most part they appear to belong to the auxiliary

¹ *Prescot Records 1447-1600*, ed. F. A. Bailey (Record Soc. of Lancs. & Ches., Vol. 89) pp. 39-49.

accounts known first as the "wax book," and later as the "book of burials," of which more will be said later.

The mere fact that these appear to be the earliest extant churchwardens' accounts of Lancashire¹ is sufficient to invest them with interest. When it is added, that they cover an exceptionally eventful period in the history of English parochial life, there need be no further justification for publishing some account of their contents. My only apology, indeed, is for the incompleteness of such an article as this, of which the purpose is merely to draw attention to a selection of the more notable points. The accounts throughout are full of interesting detail, of both local and general interest, and it may be hoped that the full text will some day be put into print.

The parish of Prescott was of wide extent, covering over fifty-eight square miles, and including the townships of Prescott, Eccleston, Parr, Rainford, Rainhill, Sutton, Whiston, Windle, Bold, Cronton, Cuerdley, Ditton, Penketh, Great Sankey and Widnes. The first eight of these townships were known collectively as "Prescot side," and the remainder (the southern half of the parish) as "Farnworth side." The parochial chapel of Farnworth, in Widnes, was of ancient date, and, as will be seen, its relations with the mother church displayed the tendency to friction not uncommon in such cases. It had its own wardens, and kept a separate Register, which is extant from 1538 on.²

The living of Prescott was a vicarage, the Rectory having been appropriated to King's College, Cambridge, in 1448. Both college and vicar, however, are but rarely mentioned in these accounts. The great tithes, and the profits of Prescott manor, were farmed out to the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, whose park of Knowsley was adjacent,

¹ In the list published in 1913 by Dr. Cox, the earliest Lancashire accounts are those of Wigan, which begin in 1561 (*Churchwardens' Accounts*, p. 47).

² The first volume of Farnworth Register (1538-1612) has been transcribed by the present writer for publication by the Lancashire Parish Register Society, and is now in the press.

PRESCOT ~ ~ PARISH

Parish boundaries - - - - -
Township do.

Wigan.



and whose relations with Prescott were intimate. From other sources, we know that Lord Derby championed the privileges of Prescott men to exemption from tolls in Liverpool,¹ and allowed them preferential rates for "kye-gates" (pasture) in Knowsley Park.² It is interesting to find that, though not actually resident in Prescott parish, the Earls of Derby were called upon to assist the churchwardens from time to time. In 1546-47 we find an item of one penny "payd when we went to Latham³ to speake to my lorde for a clerke." In 1549-50 two of the wardens spent 5d. when they "went to Lathum to obteyne my lordes letter for the forthering of the free scolle." Requisition was even made upon his lordship's cellar in 1576-77, when a penny was spent "at suche tyme as there was no wyne, to one to goe to Knowsleye to gett wyne to serve folkes with."

There are references to the Earls of Derby also in their capacity as Commissioners for the Crown, and these will be noted in due course.

King's College was, as patron, responsible for the upkeep of the chancel, but the task at first was delegated to the Stanleys as farmers of the Rectory, and was by them passed on to the occupants of Prescott Hall, who received an annual allowance of £12, traditionally called the "Proctor's Fee," for this and other services. When the College took over the leasing of the Hall in 1569, this allowance was continued.⁴ In the accounts of 1606-7 there is a note as follows: "Mr. Malbon [Thomas Malbon of Prescott Hall] is to be demaunded and required for reparacion and triminge of the chansell, accordingly as he is allowed by the Kinges Colledge." However, Malbon

¹ *Liverpool Town Books*, ed. J. A. Twemlow, Vol. 2, 1935, pp. 83, 356.

² *Prescot Records*, p. 300.

³ Probably Lathom House, then Lord Derby's principal seat. Lord Derby had, however, a second residence in Lathom, called New Park, and, in addition, Knowsley Hall near Prescott. (See *Liverpool Town Books*, Vol. 1, p. 279 n.)

⁴ For the leases of Prescott Rectory and Hall, see *Prescot Records*, pp. 1-23. The primary duty of the Proctor was, of course, the collection of the tithes or tithe-rents.

seems to have been reluctant to admit the obligation, to judge from the following passage extracted from a manorial valuation of 1614 (translated) :—

“ Thomas Malbon also receives from the lord a certain rent, profit, sum or payment of twelve pounds a year, called *le Procters Fee*, but they (the jurors) do not know what title or claim he now has to the same. Mr. Layton¹ and other predecessors of the said Thomas Malbon formerly enjoyed *le Procters Fee* in consideration of repairing the chancel of Prescott Church, and were accustomed to carry and settle the annual rent of the Rectory of Prescott at King's College in Cambridge.”²

The early accounts, to 1555, reveal that the parochial business arrangements underwent considerable development. At first there were only two churchwardens, but from 1546 onward there were four, who (as later accounts explicitly state) represented the various townships of “ Prescott side,” namely, one for Prescott, Whiston and Rainhill, one for Sutton, one for Windle and Parr, and one for Eccleston and Rainford. The earliest accounts do not tell us on what date the wardens' year of office began. From 1546 until (apparently) 1553 the date was Easter, but from 1553 onward it was St. Catherine's Day (25 November). In 1528 and 1529 we are told that the actual appointments were made on 15 October and 11 November respectively, and it may be that St. Catherine's Day was the old-established date, which was abandoned for a few years only after 1546 in favour of Easter.

There is no indication of any rota or other method of defining the obligation to serve as churchwarden. As will be seen, the wardens were nominated at first by the gentry, then, from 1555 onward, by the “ Eight Men.” They seem to have been chosen from the body of professional men, yeomen, craftsmen and traders below the

¹ John Layton, who died in 1569, and his sons Thomas, who died in 1581, and Philip, occupied Prescott Hall from 1558 until c. 1600 (*Prescot Records*, pp. 10-23).

² MS. roll in the possession of Mr. W. A. Cross, Deputy Steward of the Manor of Prescott.

rank of "gentleman." In the earlier period (to about 1550) they are quite frequently styled, here as elsewhere,¹ "church reeves." Men called upon to take office could not, normally, refuse without forfeiting a penalty, as in 1534, when 20d. was "receuyd of William Sutton for to defend hym for beyng the churche reue," and 1577, when 2s. was "received of George Bower because he refused to be churche warden according to custome." These penalties were, in comparison with places in other parts of the country, extremely moderate.²

In the earliest years the appointment of the wardens, and the audit of their accounts, appear to have been practically under the control of the local gentry, as the following passages testify:—

1523. "Memorandum, that the second day of Marche, anno domini millesimo quingentesimo vicesimo secundo [1522/3], before John Eccleston esquier³ and other gentilmen of the paroch of Prescote, ther is delyuerd to the handes of Henre Madok and Thurstan Lyon, chosen churchwardeyns of the said paroch for this yere cummyng, in parte of resayt of other summes folowyng. . . ."

1527. "This accompte was made and takyn afore Mr Halsall⁴ and other the gentilmen of the paroch and . . . Brech,⁵ Thomas Penket⁶ and other of the gentilmen of Farnworth side, vppon saynt Edwardes daye [18 March] . . . anno xviiimo H. viij [1526/7]."

1528. "Memorandum, that Mr Eccleston with the aduysse of the parysshe elected and chose Rauf Holland of Prescote, wright,

¹ J. C. Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts*, 1913, p. 3.

² Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6, gives examples of fines of 10s. and more in this period.

³ Lord of the manor of Eccleston-by-Knowsley, and the leading personage resident in Prescott side of the parish. He succeeded his grandfather, Ralph Eccleston, in 1522, and died in 1541 or 1542.

⁴ Possibly Henry Halsall, fourth son of Sir Henry Halsall of Halsall (see Herald's Visitation of 1567, *Chet. Soc., O.S.*, Vol. 81), to whom there are later references in this paper. He resided at Prescott Hall as Proctor for Lord Derby.

⁵ Possibly Richard Bruche of Bruche, who held land in Sankey. He succeeded his father Hamlet in 1509 at the age of six (*Record Soc.*, Vol. 12, pp. 21, 25) and died in 1560.

⁶ Thomas Penketh, who held the manor of Penketh.

and Alexandre Roughley church wardenes of the parysse church of Alhallowes of Prescote, the xv day of Octobre, the xx yere of the regne of Kyng Henre theght."

1543. "The contys of Robert Webster and Jamys Watmought, church wardens of Prescot, herd, alowyd and concluded by Mr Thomas Eccleston,¹ Mr. Henre Halsall and other of the gentellmen of Prescott syde, and Thomas Salter and John Aputlon, church wardens of Farneworth syde, for iij yeres past, that ys to say, xlj, xlij and xliij yere of our Lord, etc. . . . [Signed] per me Henricum Halsall; per me Ricardum Lancaster."²

The statement that in 1528 the churchwardens were "elected and chosen" by Mr. Eccleston "with the advice of the parish," suggests that the appointment was made at a public meeting of parishioners. The references to such meetings occur only occasionally, and nowhere is the actual meeting-place mentioned, though we may presume that here, as elsewhere, the vestry was used. The following incidental references to the vestry are found:—

1537-38. Item, for nayles to a bord [table] in the revestree	j ^d
1555-56. Item, to the glaysers, for mendyng off ij windowys in the rewestrye	xij ^d
1557-58. Item, for dyghtyng the leade over the revestrey	. . .

Although the meetings were open to the public, it is probable that in practice only a number of the leading parishioners attended. As will be seen later, the accounts were audited in 1555 by "the gentlemen and other the parishioners," and in 1558 by four of the gentry, who are named, and "others of the honest of the parish."

The incidental reference in the 1528 extract to the dedication of the church is of interest, as in modern times the church has always been known as St. Mary's. There

¹ Son and heir of John Eccleston, noted above. He succeeded in 1541 or 1542, and died in 1558 or 1559. (Prescot court rolls.)

² Richard Lancaster, esquire, of Rainhill Hall. He succeeded his father Richard in 1535, aged about 14, and died before 1567.

is other evidence, however, that it was formerly dedicated to All Saints.¹

As to the character of the accounts themselves, there are several points of interest. During the earlier period, the receipts consist of the following various types: church rates, or "leys" as they are invariably called; collections made on certain holy days during the winter months; a special collection at Easter; the sale of goods belonging to the church; fees for burial within the church; offertories placed in boxes; and special donations in money or kind made by individuals. A few remarks may be made about each.

The first record of the imposition of leys occurs in the very first year, 1523-24. There is no evidence as to how long previously the practice may have been established. The levying of leys even at this date is, however, notable, as it disproves the statement of Dr. Cox that "in pre-Reformation days . . . enforced church rates were unknown."² There is no doubt that the leys of 1523-24, and later, were compulsory, as a certain fixed amount was due from each township of the parish. The total amount due from Prescott side was £4, the area being divided into four "quarters" each paying 20s. The "quarters" were: Prescott, 10s., Whiston, 5s. and Rainhill, 5s.; Rainford, 10s. and Eccleston, 10s.; Windle, 10s. and Parr, 10s.; and Sutton, 20s. From various references it appears that the collection of the leys was made by the constables of the respective townships.

Farnworth side too was divided into "quarters," for we are told in 1539-40 that 19s. had been received "for Bold quarter," and in 1555-56, after a reference to 16s. 10d. received for two leys of Cuedley, there is a note that the same amount was owing "in Cronton belongyng to the sayme quarter." A ley from the whole of Farnworth side

¹ Record Soc., Vol. 30, p. 184; *Prescot Records*, p. 132.

² Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

totalled £3 16s. The money was paid over by the churchwardens of Farnworth to those of Prescott, but there is abundant evidence that the payment was neither prompt nor willing. According to a memorandum in a sixteenth-century hand on a leaf of paper bound up with Farnworth Register, the amounts due from the individual townships were: Bold, 16s. 10d., Widnes, 16s. 10d., Cuerdley, 8s. 9d., Cronton, 8s. 1d., Ditton, 11s. 2d., Penketh, 5s. 8d. and Sankey, 8s. 8d. It is observable that the leys of Cuerdley and Cronton together, and those of Ditton and Penketh together, total in each case 16s. 10d., which is the amount also paid by each of the townships of Bold and Widnes. It would seem, therefore, that each township or pair of townships contributing 16s. 10d. formed a "quarter": but what of Sankey, with its isolated payment of 8s. 8d.?

The anomalous position of Great Sankey is the subject of an interesting early seventeenth-century manuscript published in 1882 in William Beamont's little-known pamphlet on Sankey.¹ This tells us that

"The chapelry of Farneworth consisteth of four quarters, whereof Sonky is none. But the inhabitants of Sonky have for time past all memory of and whereof noe contrary prooffe can be made . . . repaired to the church of Warrington, being a parish church within a mile of Sonky, and for that liberty have payed the third sheafe of their tythe to Warrington, and to the clarke every plow land iiijd., every half plow land ijd. and every cottage jd., but the inhabitants of Sonky never did pay or contribute in any taxation or ley or otherwise to the maintenance or use of the chappel of Farneworth. And the inhabitants of Sonky so repairing to Warrington church have for tyme beyond all men's memory there received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, baptised their children, buried their dead, and the minister from Warrington upon such occasion hath come to Sonky to visite the sicke and to church their wives."

¹ *The Chapelry of Sankey in the Parish of Prescott, Lancashire, 1882.* It was published anonymously, but it is stated to be by Beamont in the catalogue of the Athenæum, Liverpool.

The manuscript also states that "Sonky men have bene pulled forth of the formes in Farneworth chapel," and that "The payment of the church dutyes out of the towne of Sonky to the mother church of Prescot be answerable to Prescot side and not to Farneworth side, for the inhabitants of Farneworth pay a peny for a plow land, which the inhabitants of Prescot and Sonky doe not."

It thus appears that the people of Farnworth side paid leys to their own chapel as well as to the mother church, excepting those of Sankey, who paid to Prescot and Warrington. Their irregular position was doubtless a source of controversy, and accounts for the erection of a separate chapel-of-ease in Sankey shortly before 1650.¹ It appears also that the ley was assessed upon the basis of the ploughland, half ploughland and cottage.

Conclusive proof of the compulsory nature of the leys lies in the fact that compulsion had actually to be used time after time against the protesting inhabitants of Farnworth side. Only the threat of suspension of their chapel, and sometimes the actual enforcement of it, could make them pay. Rarely if ever was the money paid except after one or more of the wardens had journeyed several times to demand it. The following extracts from the accounts of 1523-24 will illustrate the state of affairs:—

Item, paid for costs of sir Ric' Potter [priest], Robert Bethum and Willyam Coney when they went to Chester for the decree	iijs ij ^d
Item, for costs to Bewseeey, Farnewurthe and Bold, Frodsham and Weryngton	xj ^d
Item, paid to Peres Bernes, for copyeng of bull and instrumente	iiij ^d
Item, to sir Henre Sherdeley [priest], for his costes at ij tymes to Farnewurth	vij ^d
Item, paid and delyuerd to Edward Hetton and Robert Bethum, for theyre costes to Lychfeld	iiij ^s xj ^d ob.

¹ *Commonwealth Church Survey* (Record Soc. of Lancs. & Ches., Vol. 1), pp. 77-8.

Item, paid to sir Henre Sherdeley, for his costs and a cytation and suspension for Farnewurthe	xiiij ^d
Item, paid to Jamys Watmogh, to gif sir Henre Sherdeley for costes to Chester to Mr Official	ij ^s j ^d
Item, paid in cost to Farnewurthe to speke for the gablerope ¹ and the ley	ij ^d
Item, paid in cost to Bold and Farnewurthe iiij tymes	iiij ^d

The journeys to Chester and Lichfield were for procuring necessary powers from the diocesan authorities, as at that date the parish lay within the see of Lichfield and the archdeaconry of Chester. (The see of Chester was created on 4 August, 1541.) The visits to Bold were doubtless for the purpose of consulting Sir Richard Bold, of Bold Hall, an important personage interested in Farnworth, where he possessed a chantry chapel within the chapel-of-ease.

The leys were clearly unpopular, and in this period were only levied on special occasions to meet some particular expense. We are told that the ley of 1523-24 was "for werkyng of the irne werk of the hengyng of the belles." A further ley was imposed in 1529, after a visitation held at Leigh, "when the church wardenes were sited for the insufficiense of the ornamentes of the church, and for byyng and sellyng in the church and yorde."² More leys were levied in 1537 and 1539. A double ley was raised in 1555 to pay for extensive repairs to the fabric; the circumstances of this case are treated in a later stage of the present article. Another double ley was exacted in 1558 for the same purpose, the church "being now in decaye." At least two years usually elapsed before the payments had all been received.

The source of income next to be considered, the collections on certain days, appear in all the early accounts. Between 1523 and 1539 collections were regularly made on

¹ "Gablerope, a large thick rope, a cable" (Halliwell). It was required for hauling up the bells.

² In this period the market at Prescot was held on Sundays (*Prescot Records*, p. 310).

St. Catherine's Day (25 November), St. Stephen's Day (26 December), "New Year's Day" (1 January, not 25 March),¹ and St. Anthony's Day (17 January). In most of these years, they were also made on the Sunday after New Year's Day, on "the Twelfth Day" (Epiphany) and on the Sunday after St. Anthony's Day. More rarely, they were made on the Sunday after St. Catherine's Day, on Christmas Day, on the day after St. Stephen's, and on the Sunday after Twelfth Day. These receipts were, as is occasionally stated, "towards the light," that is, for provision of wax and making of candles. The money taken on the feasts of St. Catherine, St. Stephen and St. Anthony appears to have been for the benefit of those saints, presumably for lights to burn before their images or side altars. The collection on New Year's Day, always much the largest in amount, is described frequently as "our Lady's new year's gift."

No references to these collections appear between 1539 and 1554, a period in which, as will be shown later, the finances of the parish became much disordered. Some of them were revived between 1554 and 1559, namely, that on New Year's Day (regularly) and those on Christmas Day, the Sunday after New Year's Day, Twelfth Day and St. Anthony's Day (occasionally).

The gathering at Easter is first mentioned in the accounts of 1534-35. The proceeds are commonly referred to as "the wax money" or "wax silver;" in 1537-38 we find the fuller title of "the waxe silluer of Sanct Marye candyll." A payment of tenpence or (after 1546) a shilling was annually made to a parishioner "for sitting at Easter" to receive this money. The employment of a paid collector differentiates it from the collections on other special days noted above; it also differs from

¹ Although, from the late twelfth century until 1752, the official beginning of the year in England was Lady Day (25 March), the date of commencement of the ancient Roman year, 1 January, was retained in popular estimation as the New Year, doubtless on account of the traditional festivities associated with it. (*Handbook of British Chronology*, ed. F. M. Powicke, 1939, pp. 374-6.)

them in the fact that a contribution, fixed at twelve shillings, was received from Farnworth side. The amount for Prescot side varied usually between twenty and twenty-five shillings, an amount far larger than the other collections except that on New Year's Day, which realised about fifteen shillings. The money was probably taken at the church door, as is known to have been the case in some other parishes,¹ but it is not clear whether it was a levy or a voluntary offering. In 1556-57 we are told that the sitting at Easter, "to gether the waxce bocke and money," lasted for five days. This method of receiving the contributions, and the fact that Farnworth paid a fixed regular sum, suggest an obligatory character, as in the fifteenth-century case of the "paschal money" at St. Edmund's, Salisbury, which was "paid by all parishioners of houseling age."²

A reference to a payment called "devotion money" occurs in 1523-24, running as follows:—

Item, receyued of devocion money of Raynhill town, by the hands of Henre Penketh and Thomas Johnson	ij ^s xj ^d
Item, receyued of devocion money of Raynforthe, by the hands of Henre Roby	iiij ^s ix ^d

There are no further references to this as such. Although collected, like the leys, in the different townships, it appears to be quite distinct, as the ley of that year is fully accounted for elsewhere. It follows the statement of receipts from collections on holy days, where, later, the "wax money" taken at Easter would appear, and it seems not unlikely that the latter may have been a revival of the former, but whether there was any relationship or continuity between the one and the other is impossible on the evidence to say. At St. Edmund's, Salisbury, the special Hocktide collection was termed, in 1532-33, the "devocyon of the people."³

¹ Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

² *ibid.*, pp. 55, 99.

³ *ibid.*, p. 64.

Of the occasional receipts from the sale of church goods, which were either surplus or discarded, the following are examples :—

1523-24. Item, the said wardeyns haue sold to Miles Hayward ix peces of the old tymbur of the bell frame, the price	ij ^s
1530-31. Item, resaywit of James Watmough for sparres	vj ^d
Item, resaywyt for ij stone and a half of leyd, of Alles Colley	xx ^d
1558-59. Item, resavid for the hold steps ¹ of the bellis	xij ^d

A notable case, which will be mentioned later in more detail, was the sale in 1548-49 of the iron, brass and pewter of the church, probably in anticipation of an order for its confiscation by the Crown.

The income in fees for burial within the church was in normal times a regular if somewhat variable feature. Its importance as a steady source of revenue evidently outweighed its dangers to public health, as the practice was continued throughout the sixteenth century. The charge made was 2s. only, although, as Dr. Cox says, "the usual fee for burial within the church was 6s. 8d. throughout England,"² and the latter amount was certainly charged at Liverpool in this period.³ The term "laystall," used at Liverpool, does not appear in these accounts. The name of the person interred is stated in every case—a point of interest to the genealogist. An item of 1524-25 records the "buryall of sir Rauff Denton prest afore the Rode."

The references to collecting-boxes appear only occasionally, and may be cited in full :—

1525-26. Item, receyvyth owt of the box brokyn money wheche was sold for	ij ^s viij ^d
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¹ The steps were the fixed metal blocks on which the gudgeons rested.

² Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

³ *Liverpool Town Books*, Vol. I, p. 430.

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1528-29.	Item . . . resceyued in the churche boxe	
	the day and yere aboue said [11 November, 1529]	iiij li.iiij ^s v ^d
	In the boxe	ij ^s j ^d
	Item, paied to James Watmought, for mendyng of the	
	boxe	ob.
1550-52.	Receaved owt of the poure mans box	xiv ^d
1553-54.	In primys, of Sanct Nycolas bouxce	xvj ^s . . .
1556-57.	Item, resauyd . . . of Sant Nycolas bowxse	xiiij . . .
1558-59.	In primys, resavid . . . for Sanct Nycollas	
	money	xiiij ^s x ^d
1559-60.	Item, gyuyn by Henry Lyon to the box	ij ^d

There are hardly sufficient data here on which to base conjecture. The amount received from the church box in 1528-29 is astonishingly large, and the date (11 November or Martinmas) precludes the theory that the money can be identified with the gatherings on special days, already noted, which all came at later dates. Nor is it possible to infer whether the "church box," the "poor man's box" and the "Saint Nicholas box" were all three, or two of them, the same.

By Act of Parliament in 1536 (27 Henry VIII, c. 25), churchwardens were directed to raise money for poor relief by "gathering . . . voluntary alms . . . with boxes every Sunday, holiday and other festival day, or otherwise."¹ It would, however, be unsafe to assume that church boxes for the benefit of the poor did not exist before this date. No payments for poor-relief are recorded in these sixteenth-century Prescot accounts, but, since the box-receipts are not usually recorded, it is possible that, then as now, the responsibility for alms-giving was held to rest on the clergy.

Special donations by individuals, both of money and in kind, were of fairly frequent occurrence. The very first surviving entry in the accounts affords an interesting instance, as follows:—

¹ *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. 3, p. 559. See also S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government*, Vol. 7, 1927, p. 46.

"Thes ben the names of knyghtes and gentilmen of the paroch of Prescot that gaf trees towardes to (*sic*) the bellframe and floryng, anno millesimo quingentesimo vicesimo tercio [1523].

In primis, Sir Thomas Gerard, knyght,¹ a tree. Item, Sir Richard Bold, knyght,² a tree. Item, John Eccleston, esquier, a tree. Item, John Eltonhed, gentilman,³ a tree. Item, John Ogle, gentilman,⁴ a tree. Item, Henry Trauers, gentilman,⁵ a tree. Item, vxor Peter Wetherbe,⁶ a tree. Item, Robt Lyon,⁷ a tree."

In the following year sums were paid "for fallynge and swarynge [sawing] a tree in Sutton gyff by Mr. Norres"⁸ and "for saynge of a tree in bordes . . . of the gyft of Mr Terbock,"⁹ both for the bellframe. Among the other gifts recorded are :—

1524-25. Item, receyvit of sir John Northman [priest] towardes seyntus bell	x ^d
Item, receyvit for the price of an arke [chest]	vj ^d
1536-37. Item, resyvyd for a gowne, of the gyfte of the wyffe of Raynold Autdelay	viiij ^s
Item, resyvyd a chalys, of the gyfte of sir Perys Lan- caster [priest]	
1537-38. Item, gethert in the paryche to the payntyng of Sanct George	iiiij ^s j ^d

¹ Sir Thomas Gerard of Brynn held the manor of Windle in addition to that of Ashton. He succeeded his father Peter in 1494, aged 6, and after a "turbulent and lawless" career died at Berwick in 1523. (V.H.L. Vol. 4, p. 143.)

² The leading personage resident in the parish as a whole, Sir Richard had his seat at Bold Hall, and held lands in both Prescot and Farnworth side. He died in 1528.

³ John Eltonhead held the manor of Eltonhead in Sutton under Lord Derby. He died in 1526.

⁴ John Ogle appears to have held the manor of Whiston under Sir Richard Bold. The purchase of the manor was formally transacted by his grandson, John, *c.* 1600. He died in 1563.

⁵ Henry Travers appears to have held the manors of Ridgate in Whiston and Hardshaw in Windle.

⁶ The manor of Halsnead in Whiston appears to have been divided between the families of Pemberton and Wetherby. Biographical details are wanting.

⁷ A Robert Lyon held lands in Eccleston at about this date. (V.H.L., Vol. 3, p. 367 n.)

⁸ This may refer to Henry Norris of Speke, who died in 1524, or his son William (later knighted), who died in 1568. They held lands in Sutton which were sold to John Ogle *c.* 1543. (*Norris Deeds*, Rec. Soc. of Lancs. & Ches., Vol. 93, p. 208.)

⁹ Thomas Tarbock of Tarbock, who died in 1554. He held a message and six acres in Ridgate, Whiston. (V.H.L., Vol. 3, p. 180.)

- 1546-47. Item, rec' of the gyfte of William Lawe
towards the churche light ij^s iiij^d
Item, payd for fetchyng a calfe gyven by Mestres
Pemberton of Halsenett [Halsnead] towards the light
of the sepulcre ij^d
Item, payd for fetchyng a tree gyvyn by Mr Eccleston
to make lattes and an aysyng borde [gutter] to the
porche vij^d
1559-60. Item, gyuyn by Robart Qwyttlowe for suche
thyng as is nedefull to the church vj^d

The expenditure of the churchwardens covered a wide field, and is recorded in minute detail. It may be broadly separated into two classes: first, the maintenance of the church with its furniture and other accessories, and secondly, the personal costs of the wardens and others in the performance of "church business." The first includes repairs to the fabric—walls, windows, roof, chapels, vestry, belfry and so on; provision of "light;" repair and replacement of vestments, banners and suchlike ceremonial requisites; provision of sacramental and other vessels; upkeep of bells, organs, clock, altars and other adjuncts to the fabric; purchase of bread and wine; and supply of essential books. The second class includes travelling expenses to answer citations and attend visitations, most commonly at Wigan but also at Warrington, Leigh, and other places, and to demand the leys due from Farnworth.

A feature of these accounts which calls for remark, is the complete absence of references to the "church ale," which has been described as being "by the end of the fifteenth century, the most universal churchwardens' resort for eliciting the bounty of the parish."¹ Whether this expedient had never been customary here, or whether it had been discarded with the introduction of the compulsory ley, cannot be ascertained; all that can be said with certainty is that its absence was due to no distaste

¹ Bishop Hobhouse, cited by Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

for ale. The item of 5d. paid in 1524-25 "for a potte of ale to the helpers and hevers of the tymbre in to the steple," is a characteristic entry bearing witness alike to the spirit of common service and to the medium regarded as most appropriate for its acknowledgment.

We cannot look to such a source as this for much insight into current religious ideas and feelings, but we can obtain evidence of changes in what may be called the externals of public worship, namely, altars, rood, lights, vessels and incense, vestments, images, books, the Easter sepulchre, and the chapels and chantries. It will be of interest first to compile a selection of extracts relating to each of these subjects before the end of the reign of Henry VIII, and then to examine the subsequent changes year by year. During Henry's reign, of course, important developments affecting the Church as a whole took place, notably the assertion of royal supremacy, the abolition of monasteries, and the swelling tide of theological controversy, which had no slight popular repercussions; but there were few alterations in the churches themselves, such as would be reflected in the churchwardens' accounts, before the reign of Edward VI.

ALTARS.

- 1523-24. Item, paid . . . for takyng down of the bell
and mendyng of the rode awlter ix^d
Item, paid to an Irych bisshoppe, for halowyng of
foure superaltareis¹ iij^s
1529-30. Item, for the payntyng of a clothe² to the
he auter xiiij^d
1536-37. Item, for makyng a clothe afore the hey alter xx^d

The "Irish bishop" may be identified with the "suffragan" who, as will be noted presently, is mentioned as having consecrated some vestments in the same year.

¹ Superaltar, a portable stone slab consecrated for use upon an unconsecrated altar, a table, etc. (O.E.D.)

² Painted cloths were used as hangings in lieu of tapestry.

It was a common practice of English bishops (some of whom had other interests than their episcopal duties) to delegate some of their functions to suffragan bishops, frequently holders of Irish sees who preferred not to risk their lives beyond the Pale.¹ Geoffrey Blyth, who was Bishop of Lichfield 1503-1530, held the office of Lord President of Wales 1512-1524, and therefore required a suffragan in this period. The identity of this suffragan is unknown: perhaps the bishop's kinsman Robert Blyth, who was Bishop of Down 1520-c. 1541, and who is known to have acted as suffragan in the diocese of Ely 1539-1541,² had been given the appointment.

The cloth "afore the high altar" may have been the Lenten veil, which has been described as "a great curtain or sheet of stained (painted) linen or other material" used to shut off the high altar and its surroundings during Lent.³ The rood altar, and other side altars, will be further considered in the section on Chantries.

ROOD.

References to the rood altar, which doubtless was situated in the rood loft,⁴ and to the burial of a priest "afore the rood," have been noted. Items concerning the provision of special candles for the rood, and "amending the rood light," are included in the next section. There remains:—

1524-25. Item, paid to John Halsall, for stoppyng the
rode wyndowe, and for nailes to the same ij^d

The "stopping" of the window was, perhaps, the provision of a wooden shutter for use in an unglazed aperture.

¹ I am indebted to Prof. J. A. Twemlow for pointing out this explanation.

² *Handbook of British Chronology*, pp. 191, 243.

³ J. C. Cox and A. Harvey, *English Church Furniture*, 1907, p. 83.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 96-7.

LIGHTS.

The references to candles of various types are so abundant that the following extracts should be regarded only as samples.

1523-24. Item, paid for iij pounds of wax to poynt v sureges ¹ before the Rode, the price le pound ix ^d ob	ijs iiij ^d ob.
Item, paid for making the said sureges	iiij ^d
1524-25. Item, paid to Thurstan Fairehurst for iij pound rouche waxe ² and for a pound a quartron and a half of other waxe	iijs vj ^d ob
Item, payd to Paton the waxemaker, for his labure	xviiij ^d
Item, for the burde [meals] of the said Paton ij daies, and drynk to hym and his helpers	x ^d
Item, to sir Richard Potter, for his labour and table to helpe them breke and temper the waxe	vj ^d
Item, paid for wekeyorne [wick yarn]	ij ^d
Item, paid to Thomas Potter, for fire	iiij ^d
1525-26. Item, payd to Gefferay Sheryngton, for ij dosan of wax, price eury li. vj ^d ob, sum	xiijs
Item, payd for costes and karyyng of the same wax	iiij ^d
Item, payd to sir Ryc' Potter prest and Robt Webster, for castyng and temberyng, iij dayes	viiij ^d
Item, for thar burddes	vj ^d
Item, payd to Thomas Wytestonys, for making shurges ij dayes	viiij ^d
Item, hys borde	iiij ^d
Item, payd to sir Ryc' Potter prest, for amyng and making the shurges, iij dayes	vj ^d
Item, in borde	vj ^d
Item, payd to Thomas Potter, for fyre and house rowme	iiij ^d
Item, payd to the wyff of Olyuer Frythe, for weke yorne	ij ^d
Item, payd for gresse and whyte candylles	j ^d ob
Item, payd to John Deyne, for planyng the vax borde	ij ^d
1528-29. Item, paid to James Holt, for getheryng the droppeyng of waxe	j ^d ob
Item, paid for waxe more then was getherd in the churche	iiij ^d
1529-30. Item, to Van [Evan] Denton, for pykyng of the shurges the last yere	j ^d

¹ Serge (fr. F. *cierge*), a wax candle or taper, esp. a large wax candle used in religious ceremonies.

² Rouche, a variant of rough, i.e., in the natural or crude state. (O.E.D.)

1530-31. Item, for a pond of virgen wax, ¹ to Brockefeltes servant	vij ^d
Item, to sir James Traues, for maykyng of a shurge with flowres afore the Rode	iiij ^d
Item, for half a pond of waxe to Jhon Wobster, to mayke flowres of	iiij ^d
1533-34. Item, payd to Edward Chaydocke, ij pond of vergynwax	xij ^d
Item, ij dosaynd of roche waxse	xiiij ^s
Item, for caryhyng thereof from Wegayn	iiij ^d
Item, for wyte candylles to syng matyns with in the Crystynmaistyme	ij ^d
1534-35. Item, when the wax lyght was taken doune and maltyd	ij ^d
Item, for mette and drynke, wycke [and] gresse when the lyght was in making	ij ^s v ^d
Item, for making of Seynt Marycandell and wyck yourne	xiiiij ^d
Item, for making of Seynt Mare candeles	xiiij ^d
Item, for wax to Judas lyght	viiij ^d
1536-37. Item, payd for gresse and fyr to make the lygth with	vj ^d
Item, payd for mete and drynke when the lythe was in making, to sir Ryc' Potter and me, and for owr drynkynges betwene melys	iiij ^s
1537-38. Item, for throwyng [moulding] smale candels	iiij ^d
Item, to Ales Balye, for redde yorne to the surges	j ^d
Item, at maltyng the wax, for ale	j ^d
1538-39. Item, for amendyng the Rode lygt	v ^d
Item, to the wyfe of Rafe Houghton, for bredde and ale at pascall making	ij ^d

In the provision of lights, as well as church furniture, vestments and even repairs to the fabric, the wardens pursued as far as possible the method of purchasing the necessary materials and having the work done under their personal supervision. The "fire to make the light with" is mentioned time after time, but whether it is related to a supposed custom of renewing all lights at Easter from a "holy fire,"² or whether it was merely for melting

¹ Virgin wax, orig. fresh, new or unused bees-wax; later, a purified or fine quality of wax, esp. for making candles; white wax. (O.E.D.)

² Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

and tempering the wax, is not disclosed. Two special candles are frequently mentioned, the Paschal candle, an exceptionally large column of wax kept burning by the high altar from Easter to Ascension Day,¹ and the St. Mary candle, which may have burned before a special image of the Virgin. The purchase of "wax to Judas light" is of interest. "The Judas," says Dr. Cox, "about which much would-be learning has been wasted, was a wooden painted stock to imitate a candle. . . . A most appropriate name; Judas was apparently an apostle, but he was in truth a sham, and gave forth no light."² This explanation is most probably correct, if we assume that the false shaft was provided with a genuine top.³

By a royal injunction of 1538, the burning of candles and tapers before images was forbidden, save for "the light that commonly goeth about the cross of the church by the rood-loft, the lights before the sacrament of the altar, and the light about the sepulchre."⁴ The imperfect state of the accounts in the succeeding years (to be discussed presently) renders it difficult to determine whether the injunction was obeyed in this parish. As will be seen, there is a reference to "St. Mary candle" in 1547-48.

VESSELS AND INCENSE.

The allusions to the vessels used for sacramental and for more utilitarian purposes may be grouped together.

1524-25. Item, paid to Thomas Wodes, for fecchyng a hoggshed and a grete standyng vesell . . . from Knowsley, and bryngyng . . .⁵ vj^d

¹ *ibid.*, p. 161.

² *ibid.*, p. 166.

³ The "wax to Judas light" is identified with the paschal candle by the editor of *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, Vol. I, 1877, p. 421, who states: "The paschal candlestick was usually of brass, with seven branches from the seventh or middle of which a tall thick piece of wood, painted like a candle, and called the Judas of the Paschal, rose nearly to the roof, and on the top of this was placed at Eastertide the paschal candle of wax." (Cited in O.E.D.)

⁴ J. H. Blunt, *Reformation of the Church of England*, Vol. 2, 1896, p. 82.

⁵ Parts of this entry are illegible.

Item, paid to sir Richard Potter, for resyn to cense	j ^d
1525-26. Item, payd to Merget Shay, for scoryng pottes and pannes	j ^d
Item, payd to Robt Cokeson of Wegan, for a new cresmatore [chrismatory] to the church, price	ij ^s vj ^d
Item, payd to the seyd Robt, for ij pypes to putt in extrema uncio, ¹ price a pece iiij ^d , summa	viiij ^d
Item, payd for ij li. ensens, price	vj ^d
Item, payd to Robt Cokeson, for xij yerds of chenyng to henge vp the sacrementes ouer the auter, ² price	ij ^s ij ^d
Item, payd to Jamys Holte in festo Purificacionis Marie, for encens	j ^d
1528-29. Item, paid for a li. of franke ensens	iiij ^d
1529-30. Item, for faychyng a pon at Knowesley	j ^d
1530-31. Item, to a tynkeler, for maykyng chenes to the sensers, and mendyng them	ij ^d
1534-35. Item, for yourthen [earthen] pottes to the churche	j ^d
1536-37. Item, payd for mendyng of the sense sheppe ³ and ij sensers	iiij ^d

The entries of purchases of incense are exceptional, and this bears out the theory that the incense was as a rule provided by the curate.⁴

VESTMENTS.

Together with vestments, we may include other articles made from fabrics.

1523-24. In primis, paid . . . to Edward Bower, for ijj yards of white fustian to make stoles and fannones [maniples] of	ij ^s
Item, paid for shapyng, sowyng and threde to the same	x ^d
Item, to the suffragan, for halowyng theym	iiij ^d
Item, paid . . . for vij payre of gloves	vij ^d

¹ The consecrated oil for administering extreme unction.

² The reserved host was suspended in a pyx.

³ The principal censer was commonly known as the ship or boat.

⁴ E. G. Atchley, *Incense in Divine Worship*, 1903, pp. 359-60, cited by Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

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Item, paid to Mergett Lathum, for mendyng three albes, and for threde	ij ^d
Item, paid of the buriall money to Jamys Page, for payntyng ij clothes and a banner	iiij ^s
1524-25. Item, paid to Mergett Lathum, for makyng of twoo rochettes for the clerk and Robt Holte	viiij ^d
1529-30. In primis, payd for halfe a yarde of ryght [? pure] satyn, price	iijs ^s iiiij ^d
Item, to Sed Webster, for mendyng a vestemente with the same satyn	viiij ^d
Item, for a knot of threde	ob
Item, for cost of Cryst[ofer] Ley when he bought the satyn	j ^d
Item, for the payntyng of a clothe to the he auter	xiiij ^d
1530-31. Item, viij yardys of flaxun to mayke sir Henre Sherdeley a surpplys of	iiij ^s
Item, for the maykyn of the same surpplys	xij ^d
1536-37. Item, payd to the vestment makyr, for mendyng of ij copys [copes]	ijs ^s iiiij ^d
Item, for makyng a clothe afore the hey alter	xx ^d
Item, to Jamys Taylyer, for bokyram and threde and sylke for to mend ij copys withe	iijs ^s v ^d
1537-38. Item, to Merget Lathum, for amending albes and other vestures	v ^d
1538-39. Item, to Elsabeth Lathum, for amending a vestment	j ^d
Item, vxor Laurens Holt, for wassing kyrke clothes	xviiij ^d
Item, for amending the best sute ¹	vj ^d
Item, for halowyng ij corporas [corporals]	ijs ^s
1541-42. Item, to William Hychen and hys seruantes, for mendyng of the churche stuff, and mett and dryng for them	iijs ^s ix ^d
Item, Alys Bayle, for xx yardes crule [crewel] to mend the vestementes with	xij ^d
Item, for iij quarters saten bryges [Bruges satin] to mend a westyment wyth	viiij ^d
Item, for vj yardes of grene bokeram to lyne the best cope with, and for thred and sylke	iijs ^s vij ^d
1542-43. Item, for iij gyrdels for the prestes to syng masse with	iiiij ^d

¹Suit, a set of church vestments. (O.E.D.)

IMAGES.

The direct references to images are few, but, as Dr. Cox says, "where there were lights there would certainly be an image,"¹ and we may therefore suppose that, besides the Rood with its attendant figures of St. Mary and St. John, there were separate images of the Virgin, St. Catherine, St. Stephen, St. Anthony and St. Nicholas. The following actual allusions occur:—

1537-38. Item, for nayles and setting a bord ouer
 Sanct George ij^d
Item, to the paynter, for payntyng Sanct George vij^s
Item, gethert in the paryche to the payntyng of
 Sanct George iiij^s j^d

The St. George may have been an equestrian figure, slaying the dragon. There was a "remarkable development" in the early sixteenth century, says Dr. Cox, in the cult of the national patron saint.²

At a later date, 1556-57 and 1557-58, there are, as will be seen, allusions to the "apostles' light," suggesting that here as in other places images of the apostles graced the rood-loft.³

BOOKS.

1534-35. Item, for a skyne to couer bokes wyth ij^d
1540-41. Item, payd to sir Rauff Worseley [priest],
 for hyllyng [covering] ij of the churche bokes ij^d

No books in the time of Henry VIII are mentioned by name, either as existing in stock or as new acquisitions. From 1536 onward, injunctions for the provision of Bibles in churches were issued at intervals, and an item of 1548-49, cited later, referring to a lectern for the Bible, indicates that a copy had been procured by that date. One leaf of the accounts containing part of the payments in 1537-38 is, however, missing.

¹ Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

² *ibid.*, p. 145.

³ *ibid.*, p. 180. Also Cox and Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

EASTER SEPULCHRE.

1523-24. Item, paid to the said Jamys [Page], for payntyng the pascall Cryst and trayle	iiij ^s
Item, paid to Rauff Holland, for wurchyng three peces about the sepulcre, by the space of three dayes	ix ^d
1538-39. Item, to sir Ryc' Potter, for a payntyd [cloth] to the sepulcre	viiij ^d

The "pieces" made by Holland, who was a wright or carpenter, were probably carved wooden panels. The "paschal Christ and trail" were, perhaps, the carved figure of the Risen Christ with attendant angels, enclosed within a wreath, and placed above the Sepulchre, of which some examples survive elsewhere.¹ On the other hand, the allusion may be to an image of Christ which was placed within the Sepulchre, and "in whose breast they did enclose, with great reverence, the most holy and blessed Sacrament."²

CHAPELS AND CHANTRIES.

As Prescot Church was almost entirely rebuilt in the early seventeenth century, our knowledge of the medieval structure has hitherto been very small. The light thrown by these accounts on the fabric as a whole is reserved for future consideration. Here it must suffice to note the evidence as to chapels and chantry altars. References to the vestry have already been cited.

1523-24. Item, paid to a tynkler, for mendyng the ledds ouer Sancte Jamys chapell	vj ...
1529-30. Item, to Wylliam Sherlocke, for mendyng ouer the chapell	iiiij ^d
1530-31. Item, payd to Wyllyam Sherlocke, for mossyng the north syde of the chyrch ouer howre Layde Chapell	v ^d
1547-48. Item, rec' of Rauff Houghton of Sutton, for a forme pease in owr Lade Chapell on the northe syde	xij ^d

¹ Cox and Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 76 and the illustration facing it.

² H. Batsford and C. Fry, *The Greater English Church*, 1940, p. 113.

1584-85. Item, paid . . . for ij plates of iron and
xvij nayles to the roofo of the chappell called the
Ladies Chappell vij^d

The last item, though of later date, is included to complete the references. The chapels of Our Lady and St. James are not, as far as is known, mentioned in any other extant sources.

The theory has been advanced that the present clergy vestry, which is the only surviving part of the ancient structure, and is apparently of fifteenth-century date, was originally a chantry chapel "founded by Sir John Bold, of Bold, Knight, about the year 1410."¹ The evidence respecting this chantry is, however, conflicting. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, the Chester Subsidy Roll of about the same date, and the Chantry Returns of 1546 and 1548, all agree in enumerating three chantries within the parish.² Of these one, founded by "the ancestors of Sir John Bold," was "in the chapel of Farnworth;"³ another, founded by Sir Thomas Gerard, was "in the chapel of Windle;"⁴ and the third, founded by Sir John Bold, is the one in question. The Subsidy Roll describes it as *Cantaria apud capellam de Jesu ex fundacione Johannis Bolde*; the *Valor* uses almost identical words. In 1546 it is called "The chauntrie in the chapell of Jhesu within the paroch of Priscott . . . of the fundacion of John Boulde knight decessed . . . and distant from the paroch church ij myles." The *Victoria History* accordingly notes it in the section on St. Helens, while admitting that "the exact position is unknown;" and offers an alternative suggestion that it was an oratory in

¹ F. G. Paterson, *History of Prescott*, 1908, p. 55.

² *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (Record Commission), Vol. 5, p. 220; Chester Subsidy Roll, Record Soc. of Lancs. & Ches., Vol. 33, p. 30; Raines, *History of Chantries within County Palatine of Lancaster* (Chet. Soc., O.S., Vol. 59), p. 78.

³ It survives as the Bold Chapel in Farnworth church.

⁴ The chapel-of-ease, St. Helen's, was in Windle, but the chantry was apparently a separate chapel, of which some ruins remain, at Windleshaw. This chantry chapel is the subject of an article by the Rev. A. Powell in Vol. 39 of these *Transactions*.

Bold.¹ Canon Raines, in a footnote, says the distance of three miles is an error, the chantry being actually in the parish church. Raines referred to the Return of 1548, and his statement is confirmed by an examination of the original document, which describes it as "The chauntrie at the alter of Jhesu within the parishe church of Prescotte, off the foundacion of Sir John Boulde, knighte, deceased." In the light of this, the theory that there was a separate Bold "chapel" at Prescott may be definitely rejected, and the question becomes, instead, whether there was a side altar, dedicated to Jesus.

No allusion to an altar of Jesus at Prescott is contained in the churchwardens' accounts, or in any other known source apart from that just noted. This in itself proves nothing, as the churchwardens were not directly concerned with the separately-endowed chantries. One might ask, why should Sir John Bold, whose seat was at Bold Hall, within Farnworth side, and whose ancestors had established a chantry in Farnworth chapel, found another chantry at Prescott? There was only one Sir John Bold, who died in 1436 after having served as Sheriff of Lancashire and Constable of Conway Castle.² He is known to have founded a chantry at the altar of St. Augustine in the friary of Warrington. Moreover, he procured in 1404 a grant of free warren in his "demesnes" of Bold and Prescott, which suggests that he was then in possession of Prescott Hall, perhaps as farmer of the Rectory under the absentee rector. He may well, therefore, have founded a chantry in Prescott church. In 1535 the priest serving the Jesus chantry was a Richard Byland, of whom nothing further is known. In 1546 and 1548 there was "none incumbent but at the pleasure of the Lady Boulde," the widow of Sir Richard.

It would seem, curiously enough, that there were three

¹ V.H.L., pp. 376, 405 n.

² For this and following particulars of Sir John Bold, see V.H.L., pp. 404-5.

other side altars in Prescot church, served by chantry priests, which are not mentioned in the *Valor*, the Subsidy Roll and the Chantry Returns. These were apparently maintained by local guilds or fraternities, and were dedicated to Our Lady, the Rood and St. Catherine respectively. The evidence respecting them, and the transfer of their "stocks" or funds (consisting chiefly of cattle) to the use of the grammar school in the reign of Edward VI, has been treated elsewhere.¹ These "stocks" were in the care of separate wardens, and normally, therefore, no reference is made to them in the churchwardens' accounts. In 1546-47, however, 14d. was "payd for costes of Peter Eccleston [a churchwarden] to Chestre anendes Saynt Katheryns stocke." Eccleston's journey was probably made in consequence of the Act of 1545 (37 Henry VIII, c. 4) for the appropriation of chantry funds, and may well have been related to the project—of which more will be said presently—for augmenting the funds of the school. In 1555-56, 4d. was spent on "paper to make bokes for the wardens of the stocks," at a time when, as we shall see, an effort was being made to revive these chantries. A list of sums received "for the stocks" from townships and individuals, dated 10 February, 1558/9, has been preserved on a separate leaf with the churchwardens' accounts.²

We come now to what may be called the period of reformation and counter-reformation changes, during which it seems desirable to examine the accounts of each year in some detail, with a view to observing the effects in this parish of the religious legislation of Henry VIII and his successors. This may involve a certain amount of repetition of similar items, but the repetition is necessary as a means of enabling the reader to envisage as clearly and fully as possible the state of affairs at a particular date.

¹ *Prescot Records*, Appendix F.

² It has been published in *Prescot Records*, p. 52.

First, we must note a rather perplexing series of deficiencies in the accounts between 1541 and 1546. During the previous decade, there had been a fairly constant revenue of from three to five pounds each year. In 1541-42 the recorded revenue drops to the absurdly small sum of 4s. 5d., of which 3s. 4d. was a gift from an individual parishioner, and the remaining 13d. was for the sale of two stones of lead. For the following year, no receipts at all are recorded. Then follows a statement of audit by the gentry and the Farnworth churchwardens, for the three years ending in 1543, which has already been cited, admitting that 30s. 7½d. was owed to the wardens by the parish. Although Thomas Eccleston, esquire, is stated to have been present at this audit, the acknowledgement of indebtedness to the wardens is signed only by Henry Halsall and Richard Lancaster. After this, *one leaf* is missing, and then, on the next leaf, follow the accounts of 1546-47. It is inconceivable that the accounts for 1543-44, 1544-45 and 1545-46 would all have been entered on this one missing leaf, as normally at least one, and frequently two or three leaves, were used for each year's accounts. As portions of the two previous leaves have been torn away, it is possible that this leaf was deliberately removed. At all events, taken in conjunction with the drying-up of the revenues in 1541-42 and 1542-43, the evidence is strongly indicative of a hiatus of at least two years in the accounts, in which years, presumably, the wardens raised and spent nothing.

Comment on this extraordinary state of affairs is difficult. It may be prefaced by a few brief notes on contemporary local circumstances, though space does not permit any account of the general character and effects of the ecclesiastical legislation of Henry VIII. Suffice it to say that these changes, in conjunction with causes of a more political, social or economic nature, produced a state of unsettlement everywhere, but

particularly in the northern counties. The creation of the new see of Chester in 1541 has already been mentioned. Dr. John Bird, the new bishop, was a temporizer who, when deprived by Mary in 1554 for having married, repudiated his wife and was made suffragan under Bonner, Bishop of London. Such a man is not likely to have exerted a powerful influence upon the parish. In 1541, also, a new vicar was appointed, following the death of Simon Matthew, B.D., vicar since 1529. Matthew had been a divine of some note, and a moderate reformer of the school of Cranmer;¹ he had, however, held several benefices, and was non-resident. The new vicar, Dr. Robert Brassey, was of conservative religious views, and appears to have resided at Prescott prior to his appointment in 1556 by Mary as Provost of King's College.

A third appointment made in 1541 was that of Edward Mainwaring, sixth son of Sir John Mainwaring of Peover, who succeeded William Moore of Bankhall, esquire, as Steward of the Manor of Prescott.² This last appointment was made by Lord Derby as farmer of the Rectory, which included the manorial rights in Prescott township. Neither Moore nor Mainwaring seems to have resided at Prescott, the everyday duties of the steward being performed by Henry Halsall of Prescott Hall, as their deputy.³ Halsall's local influence, as representative of Lord Derby, must have been great, and his interest in the church is shown by the references to him (already noted) as one of the gentlemen who audited the churchwardens' accounts.

Lancashire was then a conservative—not to say backward—county, long retaining individual characteristics, such as local measures, customs and dialect, and resentful

¹ Sermons by him were published (Cooper, *Athenae Cantabrigienses*, Vol. I, pp. 78, 533.) He aided in compiling the "Institution of a Christian Man" in 1537 (J. H. Blunt, *Reformation of the Church of England*, Vol. I, 1892, p. 445 n.).

² *Prescot Records*, pp. 96, 126 n.

³ He is actually called "deputy steward" in the court rolls of 1536, 1538, 1546 and 1552. (*Prescot Records*, pp. 86, 90, 103, 118.)

of innovations imposed from without. As a whole it was strongly attached to the old-established forms of religious observance. The spirit of feudalism, too, survived into the modern age, and gave a peculiar local importance to the powerful house of Stanley, which, alone among the noble families of England, was permitted a hereditary succession to the newly-created office of Lord-Lieutenant.¹

Edward Stanley, third Earl of Derby (1509-1572), succeeded to his title in 1521, at the age of twelve, and, whilst in wardship, was placed in the household of Wolsey. To the training and example of the great Cardinal he may have owed, among other things, his taste for living in the grand style and his sense of duty as a servant of the Crown—characteristics which impressed, favourably or otherwise, the more uncultivated and unruly natives of the north-west. In a period of great public unrest he stood for the preservation of law and order. During the formidable northern rising of 1536, the Pilgrimage of Grace, he was commissioned to levy forces for the king in Lancashire, Cheshire, North Wales and Staffordshire. That the revolt did not assume serious proportions in this area was due, in all probability, to his energetic action.²

A son-in-law of the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Derby inclined to the more conservative side in religion. He refused to associate himself with the advanced legislation of Edward VI,³ and gave support to the anti-Protestant policy of Mary.⁴ How far he was guided by private convictions, and how far by public policy, cannot be easily determined. Nor can we estimate how far he may have been influenced by his personal knowledge of the state of opinion in the north-west. There is, indeed, very

¹ G. S. Thomson, *Lords Lieutenants in the 16th Century*, 1923, p. 52.

² See the introduction to *Derby Correspondence*, ed. T. N. Toller (Chet. Soc., N.S., Vol. 19, 1890).

³ He was one of five peers who voted against the Act for establishing the Prayer Book of 1552 on its third reading (Lords' Journal, Vol. 1, p. 421).

⁴ As shown by his actions in connexion with the arrest and trial of George Marsh in 1554 (V.H.L., Vol. 3, p. 162 n).

little evidence of the reactions in south Lancashire to the religious changes of Henry VIII. We are told by one authority that the clergy here conformed easily, and that the laity were "equally docile,"¹ but this is admitted to be an argument *a silentio*, due to the paucity of sources of information, and is not convincing. The disturbances in other parts of the north, and the "most obstinate and contemptuous" spirit prevailing in Prescott and other Lancashire parishes as late as 1584,² afford a strong presumption to the contrary. A population exacerbated to the point of refusing the customary voluntary contributions to the parish church,³ presents an explanation of the state of the Prescott churchwardens' accounts between 1541 and 1546 to which it is difficult to suggest an alternative. Conjectural as it certainly is, it is supported, as we shall see, by further evidence of a similar nature in the accounts of a few years later.

Although, prior to 1539, new wardens were as a rule appointed each year, we find that the same pair, James Watmough and Robert Webster, continued in office for the four years 1539-43 and, perhaps, during the next three years, for which, as noted above, no accounts are preserved. This extended tenure of office is a further indication that these were times of exceptional difficulty.

In 1546, a new departure is apparent, in that four wardens, representing the "quarters" of Prescott side, were appointed, the year of office being reckoned from Easter. It may be presumed that this was the result of a deliberate effort to reconstitute affairs on a stable and harmonious basis. The new wardens were Peter Eccleston, Robert Worsley, John Kenwrick and Robert Webster, and they too continued to hold office until, after a renewed period

¹ W. A. Shaw, *Ecclesiastical History of Lancs. from the Reformation*, V.H.L., Vol. 2, p. 44.

² State Pap. Dom., Vol. 163, no. 84, cited by T. E. Gibson, *Lydiat Hall*, 1876, p. 222.

³ Whether one may infer a cessation of church-attendance on a large scale at this time is a further question.

of crisis, they were apparently superseded, as will be seen, in 1553. It is notable that Webster, one of the previous wardens, was among those newly appointed in 1546, a fact which indicates that this was not a case of the supersession of the representatives of one faction by those of another. The accounts themselves reveal no immediate change of policy, and the opening item in 1546-47 of 12s. 4d. "payde to Robt Webster and James Watmough, for suche some of money as the parisch did oughe vnto theym when they made their last accomptes," is sufficient evidence of continuity.

The following are among the items of expenditure in 1546-47:—

Item, payd for waxe at Chestre	xviijs
Item, payd to Hugh Tatlocke and dyuerse other for waxe	ixs
Item, payd for bredd and wyne to saye masse withall	xij ^s v ^d ob
Item, pd for makyng the churche light and the sepulcre light	vjs
Item, pd for meate and drynke to Robt Webster, Robt Worseley and Elsabeth Latham when the light was in castyng, fascyonyng and makyng	iiij ^s vj ^d
Item, pd to the said Elsabeth for temperyng of the waxe	vj ^d
Item, pd to the same Elsabeth for weke yorne	vj ^d
Item, pd for turves, greyse and blacke yorne	v ^d ob
Item, pd to Robt Webster for throwyng of the saynt Marye candyll	viiij ^d
Item, for mendyng of albes and syrplees	ij ^d
Item, payd when we went to Latham to speake to my lorde for a clerke	j ^d
Item, payd for fetchyng a calfe gyven by mestres Pemberton of Halsenett [Halsnead] towards the light of the sepulcre	ij ^d
Item, spente at Leigh when we dyd appeare afore the bisshopes officers	iiij ^d
Item, pd for a baner	vj ^d
Item, payd for costes of Peter Eccleston to Chestre anendes saynt Katheryns stocke	xiiiij ^d
Item, pd for payntyng of a baner	xij ^d

Item, payd for costes of Peter Eccleston, sir John Webster and Robt Worseley in laboryng to my lorde to speake for a clerke	viiij
Item, payde to Edwarde Stockeley for syttyng to receyve the wax syluer at Ester	xij ^d

The above payments, and the others of that year, are entirely in keeping with those of the pre-Reformation period in general. Apart from the loss of the gild-chantries, there is no indication as yet of any important change in the religious life of the parish.

The receipts of that year, too, show little change from the normal, being as follows :—

In primis, receyved at Ester for waxe syluer at Prescot	xxij ^s v ^d
Item, rec' of the gyfte of William Lawe towards the churche light	ij ^s iiij ^d
Item, receyved of Thomas Salter, for waxe syluer from Farneworth syde	xij ^s
Item, rec' of the same Thomas for parcell of an olde leye	ix ^s
Item, rec' for parcell of an olde ley in Parr, of Alen Lont	xviiij ^d
Item, rec' for our Ladyes new yeares gyfte	vij ^s iij ^d
Item, rec' for the buryall of James Worseley	ij ^s
Item, rec' for the buryall of John Standische, the greate bell rope, gyven by Georg Standisch his sonne	

There are eight other receipts of 2s., and one (for a child) of 1s., for burials, making a total revenue of £3 10s. 6d.

The accounts of 1547-48 are of a similar character, the receipts amounting to 52s. 7d., and the payments to 57s. 10½d. Those of 1548-49, however, contain notable fresh features. The receipts are :—

In primis, receyved at Ester for wax syluer of Prescott	ix ^s iiij ^d
Item, receyved for iren which stode and was in the churche, as appeareth hereafter. [There follow 18 amounts received from individual parishioners, totalling 30 ^s 8 ^d]	
Item, rec' for brasse and pewter in the churche	iiij ^s iiij ^d
Item, rec' of Adam Bancke of Wegan, for ij candelstekys	v ^s

The total revenue was, therefore, 49s. 4d. Among the items of expenditure we find:—

In primis, payd for costes when Peter Eccleston and Robt Worseley were at Chester abowt a clerke	vij ^s v ^d ob
Item, payd when the said Peter and Robert were at Walton at a syttyng theare	ix ^d
Item, pd when the churchwardeyns were at Wegan before the kynges visiters there	xix ^d
Item, pd for costes to Laurence Potter, Roger Colley, Edwarde Parr and William Watmough, cyted to apeare at Wegan for the parish	ij ^s viij ^d
Item, payd when the said churchwardeyns were at Leigh	iiij ^d
Item, paid to Peter Eccleston for expenses of his horse at dyvers tymes in rydyng abowt busynes of the parish and the church	xvj ^d ob
Item, payd when the said Robt Worseley and Peter Eccleston were cyted to Wygan before the kynges surveyors there	vj ^d
Item, pd to Robt Derbyshire for takyng downe the iren in the church and for weyng the same	iiij ^d
Item, pd to the same Robt for weynge and cuttyng the said iren	ij ^d
Item, pd for meate and drynke of Robt Worseley, Robt Webster and Robert Derbyshire when the iren was taken downe	vij ^d
Item, payd to Robt Webster for throwyng the saynt Mary candell	viiij ^d
Item, pd to Elsabeth Latham for mendyng surples	j ^d
Item, payd to John Webster for makyng the lectourne in the church for the bybell	j ^d
Item, payd for bred and wyne for the priestes to saie masse wythall	xij ^s x ^d

The interviews with the King's "visitors" and "surveyors" at Wigan may have been the cause of the decision to dispose of the iron, pewter and brass.¹ The policy of "spoliation," already applied to the chantries, was extending itself now to the common goods of the

¹ Instances of the sale of plate to forestall the royal commissioners are given by Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-1.

parish. Meanwhile, as shown by the references to the St. Mary candle and the mass, the old forms of worship were maintained. Lawrence Potter and the three others cited to Wigan were not churchwardens, but probably sidesmen ("synodsmen") who are frequently mentioned in these accounts during the reign of Elizabeth by the name of "the sworn men."

The receipts of 1549-50 consist merely of eight burial fees and one penny for "smalle kandles," totalling 15s. 9d. The payments include :—

Item, spende when Peter Eccleston and Robt Worseley went to Lathum to obteyne my lordes letter for the forthering of the free scolle	v ^d
Item, in expens when Robt Worseley went to Farnworthe for money due for the wax	ij ^d
Item, in expen' for making smalle kandles att sondry tymes	iiij ^d
Item, payed for weeke yorne	j ^d
Item, payed for the costes of Peter Eccleston, Robt Worseley and Robt Webster when they appered at Golborne Coppe when they presented the church goodes	v ^d ob
Item, payed to Robt Webster, for making tapers and other smalle kandles	ij ^s
Item, in expen' att the making therof	iiij ^d
Item, payed for bread and wyne to celebrate with	xij ^s iiij ^d
Item, payed for a bottell of pewter	viiij ^d
Item, payed to James Watmoug, for reparing the organs	iiij ^d

The expenditure amounted in all to 19s. 11d. The wax money for which Worsley went, apparently in vain, to Farnworth, was evidently outstanding from the previous year, and for the current year the wardens received the wax money (i.e., the Easter collection) neither from Farnworth nor from Prescott itself. Tapers and small candles are made, but there is no reference to the accustomed "St. Mary candle." An interesting innovation in phraseology occurs in the reference to bread and wine

“to celebrate with,” not, as before, “to say mass with.” The latter term was, however, recognised by the first Prayer Book (1549), which speaks of “The Supper of the Lorde and the Holy Communion, commonly called the Masse.”

The next statement of accounts covers the two years 1550-51 and 1551-52. The receipts consist only of thirteen burial fees, 14d. “owt of the poure mans box,” and 3s. “off Rych Rygbye for leayd,” totalling 30s. 2d. The payments include :—

Item, for a communion bocke bowght at Chester	iiij ^s iiij ^d
Item, for costes of mete and drynck of me and my horse the same tyme	ij ^s
Item, the costes of mester Peter Eccleston and Robart Worsley at a visitation befor my lord [Lord Derby] at Ormskyrck	ij ^s
Item, for costes at the takyng downe of alterstones and castyng of yearth, and a table to mynester on	v ^s
Item, at a visitation in Ormskyrcke before mester Boldes brother ¹ and other the Kynges commysioners by me Peter Eccleston and Robart Worsley	x ^d
Item, for my costes at Chester to bye a communion bocke	xiij ^d
Item, to sir Edward Garnet and Wylliam Kereson for to writ a part of a communion bocke, for ther costes	ij ^s
Item, payd for a communion bocke at Alsolday [All Souls Day]	viiij ^s
Item, the costes of Peter Eccleston and Robart [Worsley] at aparance before my lorde at Knosley	ij ^s
Item, that I Robart Worsley haue leyd downe for a surples to sir Edward Garnett	ij ^s

The “communion book” was what is commonly known as the First Prayer Book of Edward VI, incorporated in the Act of Uniformity of 1549 (2 and 3 Edw. VI, c. 1), which provided for it to be brought into use on or before Whitsunday (9 June), 1549. That the Prescott church-

¹ Probably Francis Bold of Cranshaw, brother of Richard Bold of Bold Hall. He was a commissioner for chantry lands in 1552 and 1554 (V.H.L., Vol. 2, pp. 97-8).

wardens did not procure copies until 1550 or 1551 is a somewhat striking instance of lag between the enactment and the execution of legislation.

For the years 1552-53 and 1553-54 Peter Eccleston and his colleagues produced no accounts at all. Instead, we find the following abrupt statement :—

Anno domini M^{mo} D^{mo} fyfty and twoe and fyfty and iij, Peter Ecclyston, Robt Webster and John Kenwrycke notter receyued ner payd nothyng.

Then follows this belated and unfavourable note of audit :

Memorandum, Accomptes taken of the fornamed church wardyns in the paroche church of Prescottt the vth day of Februarij, anno primo et secundo regni regis Philippi et Marie etc. [1554/5], of all thynges in this boke beffore writen and all thynges conteyned in this same boke charged and allowed. And the paroche is in debt to the said church wardynes the sum of xxxj^s viij^d ob. This accompt is not throughly allowed by the gentylnen and other the parichoners.

Unfortunately we are not told on what exact grounds the "gentlemen and others" were dissatisfied. The falling-off of the receipts after 1547, culminating in their complete disappearance in 1552 and 1553, must reflect a serious crisis in the affairs of the parish. That this crisis was related to the contemporary religious changes is an almost irresistible conclusion. The new regime instituted in 1546, in consequence of an earlier and similar crisis, had in its turn broken down. It cannot be said to have had a fair trial. Had the religious situation remained stationary at the point reached in 1546, there is every indication that Peter Eccleston and his colleagues would have succeeded in their task. But they were overwhelmed by the rapid current of events. Their position was unenviable. On the one hand was the Government, increasingly adapting its policy to the views of the extreme reformers ; on the other, a bewildered and angry populace, incensed at the successive and high-

handed inroads on their time-honoured rites of devotion. The situation is one which tempts the imagination: but the sober historian can only regret the meagreness of the facts.

The churchwardens' references to their meetings with Lord Derby are of interest. His lordship seems to have been resident on his Lancashire estates in this period,¹ and, whatever his private feelings, he doubtless felt constrained, as a Privy Councillor and as Lord-Lieutenant, to counsel prudence and restraint, and compliance with the law.

Then came the death of the young king, on 6 July, 1553, and at once the religious outlook was transformed. Policy reverted not merely to the position of 1546, but substantially to that of the pre-Reformation era. The churchwardens, as the agents (however unwilling) of the Edwardian changes, found their position untenable. Whether they resigned, or whether, as seems more probable, they were repudiated, is uncertain; but certain it is that another set of churchwardens took office as from St. Catherine's Day (25 November), 1553. These were James Watmough, Roger Colley, Ralph Houghton and Evan Pyke, and presumably they were appointed at a special vestry meeting on that day. The old wardens' year of office was not due to end until Easter, 1554, and there was thus an overlap of four months. That the old wardens did not voluntarily relinquish their office is suggested by the order of entries in the account-book, the accounts of the new wardens, for 1553-54, being entered up after the note of audit of the old wardens' accounts, dated 5 February, 1554-5. Not until then, apparently, did the new wardens obtain possession of the book. The comment inserted, that the old wardens' accounts were "not throughly allowed," is a further indication

¹ He presided in person at Prescott court leet in 1549, 1550, 1551 and 1552. (*Prescot Records*, pp. 110ff.)

that the change-over was not effected without dispute.

James Watmough, the new principal warden, had held office previously, from 1537 onward, during the earlier period of financial difficulties. He now served for a further period of four years, from 1553 to 1557, though his three colleagues did not remain the same. As will be seen, he carried out the restoration of the old system of worship, although at first the continuing lack of revenues put the parish heavily in his debt.

The following are among the payments in 1553-54 and 1554-55 :—

1553-54

In primis, to Wylliam Stopforth, for the church goodes bought before my lord of Derby at Latham	xiij ^s
Item, in expences in the paroch besynes by the space of xxij days at candelmas terme ¹ for the obtaynyng of an indenture and oblygation that the church and chappell goodes shuld be restored to that vse wych they where fyrst gyven vnto	xxxj ^s
Item, payd to Wylliam Jarod, for takyng payne in the said business at the same tyme	xxvj ^s viij ^d
Item, for neyls to meynd the church dowre and the sepulcoure	ij ^d ob
Item, payd for a corde, iren and wyre to the pascall	iiij ^d
Item, for makyng our boke and in laboryng in the parysshe busenes dyuerse tymes at metynges fo the parisshe causes	xx ^d
Item, expendit at Wygan when the church revis were cyted to appere before Mr Chancelere	vj ^d
Item, payd for viijth yardes of halland cloth to make a alter cloth and on towell	vj ^s viij ^d

1554-55

Item, for mendyng of the sanctus belle	ij ^d
Item, to John Crossebe, for goyng to Farnorth to gyffe warnyng to the churche [reeves] to be mosstet to here the countes of the church wardens	ij ^d

¹ This would probably be the medieval equivalent of Hilary Term. Candlemas was the feast of Purification, 2 February, and the feast of St. Hilary was 13 January.

Item, when the churchrevis were sieted to appere at Leyghe before Mr Chanciler	viiij ^d
Item, for the dynyers of the churche wardens and the churche wardens of Farnorth syde [and] syche as came with thym to here the accountys, and to se what reparasyons the churche ded wante	[blank]

A portion is missing from the payments of 1554-55. For both the above accounts, no receipts are recorded, although headings for them are entered in both cases.

The recovery of such church goods as had passed into private hands was apparently no easy matter. Lord Derby and others had been commissioned by the Privy Council, in a letter dated 29 October, 1553, to see to their restitution in Lancashire.¹ The above items indicate that the goods had to be paid for—perhaps rebought at the price at which the churchwardens had sold them—and that legal proceedings were found necessary, early in 1554, against individuals who had proved refractory.

From 1554 onward, there is a change in the manner of keeping the accounts. The main account book, with its numbered leaves, seems to have been reserved for the receipt and expenditure of the leys. A separate set of accounts, known as the "wax book," was kept each year in respect of the other moneys received; it was written on exactly similar paper sheets, but the leaves do not appear to have been numbered.² "Wax book" and ley accounts were evidently kept separately from 1555 onward, doubtless as a result of the resettlement of the ley question made in that year, which will be described presently. Broadly speaking, the ley accounts were mainly concerned with the fabric and its essential adjuncts, whilst the "wax book" dealt with the furnishing of the ritual and sacramental requisites. Fortunately, the

¹ Acts of Privy Council, Vol. 4, p. 360, noted in V.H.L., Vol. 2, p. 98.

² Direct evidence is wanting, owing to the tattered state of the sheets. The quantity of sheets is, however, much too large to fit into any gap in the numbered series.

"wax book" for the period 1554-59 was preserved in the same parcel as contained the remains of the ley book.

The receipts in the "wax book" of 1554-55 are:—

In primys, of sanct Nycolas bouxce	xvj ^s ...
Item, att Crystemas, appon Newyers day and twelthe day	ix ^s ...
Item, resauyd for waxce sylluer for Prescot syed att Ester	...
Item, for Farnothe syed for waxce money resaved by John Torbock	...
	Summa liij ^s viij ^d
Resaved in the yere abovesayd for buryalles [six items follow].	

The individual sums above are wholly or partially fallen away. The payments appear to be incomplete, and those preserved relate chiefly to purchases of wax. The following may be noted:—

Item, for ix pond of waxce bought in Chester	viiij ^s v ^d
Item, for mett and dryngk wen the lyght was in making at Crystenmas	v ^s
Item, for wyett condells	j ^d
Item, for ale at the laying vppe of the tre in the cancell	...

The last item is curious, as no other references to "the tree" are made. It can hardly refer to repair of the chancel, as that did not concern the wardens, and would not in any case have been a matter for the "wax book." The latter reason, and the absence of further particulars, discourage the theory that it relates to a restoration of the rood beam. A possible explanation is that it relates to the ancient May Day rites.¹ Again the word "tree" might have been used to mean a wooden cross or crucifix.

Two notes of audit, each covering the two years 1553-54 and 1554-55, and made probably on or after St. Catherine's

¹ The court roll of 1599 mentions that "heretofore ther hath bene falen in Prescott woode certeyne pooles yearly to be set vpp in the towen" (*Prescot Records*, p. 274).

Day, 1555, are preserved on separate sheets. One is as follows:—

The accountes taken of Jamis Watmough, Roger [Cowley], Rawff Howghton and Van Pyke, churchward[ens of] Prescot, hard, allowed and concluded by theyght [men] whose names be vnderwritten, for ij yeares past, [that is] to say, MDliij and liiij^o

Edward Parre × ¹	Robt Whitlow ×
Richerd Denton ×	Henry Coney
John Terbock ×	John Accurs ×
Hugh Wygan ×	Hugh Grene ×
Rawff Heyward ×	

The parish oweth vnto James Watmough, ix li xix^s vj^d.

The other is almost identical in form, but omits Robert Whitlow from the list of names, and states that “the parochie is indetted vnto Jamys Watmoughe, as apereth by [this] boke, v li. iijs. vd. ob.” The first appears to be from the “wax book,” and the second from the ley book, so that altogether the parish owed Watmough over fifteen pounds, which was, for the times and circumstances, an enormous amount.

It is in these notes of audit in 1555 that the first mention appears of the Eight Men, a body which from now onward became responsible for “hearing, allowing and concluding” the accounts and appointing new churchwardens. In course of time, the Eight Men came to be, in effect, a select vestry, and were so called at the time of the abolition of the office about 1830, when the manner of their origin had apparently been forgotten.² Fortunately, a copy of the document by which the office was created, namely, a decree of the Bishop of Chester, dated 5 August, 1555, is in existence.³ From this we learn that the parishioners of “Farnworth side” had repudiated their liability to contribute to the upkeep of

¹ The crosses against these names are apparently in lieu of signatures, as they vary individually. There is no mark against Henry Coney.

² From a Counsel's Opinion in the possession of Mr. W. A. Cross of Prescot.

³ A decree of 1620, incorporating the text of that of 1555, is published as an Appendix to Paterson's *History of Prescot*.

the mother church, and that in consequence of the default of these "and other parishioners of the said mother church of Prescot, there is so great ruins and deformities and delapidations in the roofs, ornaments, walls and windows that unless speedy remedy be taken the said church is in a short time likely to fall down to the ground." The Bishop therefore made order as follows:—

"That henceforward the parishioners aforesaid on some Sunday or festival between the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel and the feast of All Saints, whereof public notice to be always given by the Vicar of the said church or his deputy, there shall be a meeting at the said church of Prescot, and by the consent of all of the major part then present, at least eight honest men of the said parish shall be elected, viz., at least one in every village, which eight men so elected, or the major part of them, shall have authority for that year . . . of hearing and approving or disapproving and disallowing, and also of determining, the accounts of the churchwardens for the time being.

And the said churchwardens shall publicly make in the said church, in the presence of all that have a mind to be then present, a full and faithful account yearly on some Sunday betwixt the feast of All Saints and Saint Catharine, to be appointed by the said eight men and to be publicly proclaimed by the curate of the parish in the said parish church, and after such account so as aforesaid heard and determined, the said eight men, or the major part of them, shall within ten days next after the feast of Saint Catharine nominate and elect the same or other honest men of the said parish to execute the said office of churchwardens, and if any of the parishioners so to be named and elected . . . shall refuse and decline to take upon them the said office of churchwardens, so they be not compelled to it twice within three years, they shall pay to the use of the said church two shillings, and moreover be liable to ecclesiastical punishment.

And moreover the said eight men, or the major part of them, shall tax and assess each of the inhabitants and parishioners, according to their estates, possessions and abilities, what they shall pay and contribute to the amendments and repairs of the said mother church, and to the deficiencies of the ornaments of the same. And if any of the parishioners or inhabitants in the parish shall without reasonable cause refuse or delay to pay to the churchwardens the said sum . . . after canonical admonition,

that then it is our will that they and every one of them who shall rashly transgress this our decree shall be *ipso facto* excommunicated until they shall comply with the premises, which we do hereby command to be denounced by the Vicar or Dean Rural (for the time being) of Warrington. . . .

And because we have certain intelligence that the inhabitants on Farnworth side, and other places in which there are chapels erected within the precincts of the said parish,¹ are more tardy and negligent in contributing to their said mother church of Prescot, because they have divine service celebrated in the same chapels, wherefore we injoin and command you the said Vicar and Dean, jointly and severally, that on our behalfs ye admonish all and every the inhabitants in the said villages where such chapels have been and are situate, whom we do also by the tenor of these presents admonish, that they give assistance to the necessities of the said mother church according to the assessments and tax of the said eight men . . . or otherwise that the said chapels and oratories . . . be *ipso facto* suspended and interdicted from the celebration of divine service in the same, until the said inhabitants shall contribute in all things to the said mother church as they are bound to do, inhibiting all and singular chaplains that they do not presume during such suspension to celebrate in the said chapels under the penalty of the law."

A curious feature of the above decree is that the Eight Men are apparently intended to represent the whole parish, one for each township, on the assumption that there were eight townships in the parish. Actually, however, there were fifteen townships, and the Eight Men (as the churchwardens' accounts repeatedly state) represented the eight townships of Prescot side. This arrangement, so advantageous to the mother church, was probably the result of a misunderstanding at Chester, and in a further decree dated 15 January, 1619/20, the Bishop made an amendment ordering that in future six of the Eight Men should be selected from Prescot side, and two from Farnworth side.²

¹ At that date there were three chapels-of-ease within the parish, at Rainford, Windle (i.e., St. Helen's) and Farnworth. As the V.H.L. points out (Vol. 3, p. 374 *n*) they were all situated on the road, anciently called Chester Lane, from Lathom and Ormskirk to Widnes.

² Paterson, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

The Eight Men are regularly named in the accounts, and during this period are definitely subordinate to the local gentry. The latter did not themselves undertake the office, but, as the dominating figures at the vestry meeting, had no doubt a good deal of control over the appointments. The Eight Men were, in fact, drawn from much the same class as were the churchwardens.

For 1555-56, as explained above, there are two separate sets of accounts. In the first, the receipts consist of two whole leys, from both Prescott and Farnworth sides, amounting to £15 12s. The receipts in the "wax book" are:—

In primis, on New Yeres daye and on the Sondaye	
after, and on the xijth daye	x ^s viij ^d ob
Item, vpon Sanct Antons daye	x ^d
Item, for wax mone at Ester vpon Prescote syde	xxj ^s vj ^d
Item, for wax sylluer vpon Farneworth syde	xij ^s
[Also four burial fees]	Summa, lijs xj ^d ob

The first set of payments is concerned primarily with repairs to the fabric, which, as the episcopal decree of 1555 makes clear, had fallen into a sad state of disrepair. The list is exceptionally lengthy, with much interesting detail. A large part of the money was spent on glass, lead, iron, stone and wood for the repair of the windows, which had obviously suffered extensive damage, presumably at iconoclastic hands in the previous reign. Other items reveal the difficulties experienced in obtaining the leys of Farnworth side, despite the episcopal decree, and necessitating a resort to the authority of Lord Derby. The following is a small selection of extracts:—

Item, for xij ston of leyde	xiiijs
Item, for xiiij pound and a di. of olde pewter to make soder off	vij ^s x ^d
Item, for makyng and pessyng and stretching of bars and locketes [crossbars] of irron for the glace wyndows	ij ^s ij ^d
Item, payd to the same glasser [Richard Russell] for xxxth fote and quarter of new glasse, at ix d. the foote	xxiijs v ^d

Item, for setting of ix skore foote and on fote and di. of old glase . . . at iij ^d every foote	xlvs ^s iiij ^d ob
Item, to the same glaser for mendyng broken holys in the wyndows	xvij ^d
Item, for castyng off yearth from the churche walles	iiij ^d
Item, payd for a syve	ij ^d ob
Item, for costes off Jamys Watmough and Henry Conay for laboryng to Farnewurth concernyng churche leys and to speake wyth Laurence Malbon [mason]	viiij ^d
Item, for setting lx fote off old glasse	xvs ^s
Item, for xxvj fote off new glasse and wurkyng hyt	xix ^s vj ^d
Item, for the expenses off one off the churche revs for overseyng the glasers and to se them do there dewtye by the space off vj weakes	xij ^s
Item, to the glaysers for mendyng off ij wyndowys in the rewestrye	xij ^d
Item, the churche wardyns, for laboryng to Wygan to the vysitation	xx ^d
Item, to Laurence Malbon, for cumyng to Prescott at the request off the churche wardyns to se how thay cold agre wyth hym for pontyng the churche and other necessarys belongyng to the churche	vj ^d
Item, for the costes fo Jamys Watmogh in laberyng to Farnorth and to Bold for to calle for the leys of thayr syde	iiij ^d
Item, the same Jamys another tyme, in laberyng for the same leys by my lordes comandement to haue an anssware of thaym, and for my hors and myselve	vj ^d
Item, the same Jamys, his hors and hym sellue in laberyng an other tyme for the same leys of Songke [Sankey] to Mr Boutteler ¹	vj ^d
Item, the same Jamys and Tomas Gernet an other tyme in laberyng for the same lees to Farnothe	vj ^d
Item, payd for helpyng the masson vp wyth stonis and for naylis to make his tronnges ² with	iiij ^d
Item, payd for a nesshyn [an eshin or pail] to care water and syffe to syfte lyme and sond with	v ^d
Item, payd to John Terbock for xxxviiijth pounds of iren to make hockys [hooks] of to the stepull	iijs ^s xj ^d
Item, payd for colys to werke the same irne with	iiij ^d

¹ Thomas Boteler of Bewsey (later knighted), lord of the manors of Warrington and Sankey. He was born in 1516, succeeded in 1550 and died in 1580.

² Perhaps a variant of *trone*, a post or log (Halliwell), hence scaffolding.

Item, for a collock [large pail] to draw mortar in, to Van Gernet	iiij ^d
Item, payd for irne to mende the clocke with, and for mendynge of the same	iiij ^d
Item, payd the xjth day of September for the dyners of Jamys Watmogh and Henry Coney when parte of thes bocks were makynge	vj ^d
Item, payd the xiiijth day of September for the deners of the same Jamys and Henry, for makynge more of the same bockes	vij ^d
Item, xxijth day of September, for the denners of the wardins of this side and wardins of Farnorth side, and the company that came with thaim to se the accotes of the wardens of Prescot syde	[blank]

It is evident, from the three items last quoted, that the compilation of the accounts was a lengthy business, and that the expenditure was carefully scrutinised by the representatives of the unwilling contributors of Farnworth side.

The second set of payments for 1555-56 relates chiefly to the purchase of wax, and includes :—

Item, to James Talyer, for iij quare of paper to make the regester bocke for the kirk and other necessarys pertaynyng to the same	. . .
Item, to Robart Webster, for makynge of the Sanct Mary candelles and other small candelles and for meatte and drynke	. . .
Item, to the same Robert, for makynge viij surges for the hey allter	. . .
Item, to Robart Webster, for makynge the sepullcre lyghtes and the pas[cal and] other lyghtes to sett vpon the he allter	. . .
Item, to Jane Wodes, for wasshyng of xvij peces of the chyrche clothes	. . .
Item, to Wylliam Mollenex, for payntyng a cloth to the he a[ltar]	. . .
Item, for wyne to saye masse with	. . .
Item, for paper to make bockes for the wardens of the stockes	iiij ^d

Item, for meate and drynke to syr James Jackson when he came to be hyred the fyrst tyme	xjd
Item, the same daye, to ernes[t] sir Robart [Nelson] with	vjd
Item, to Bryan Ley, which was payde to Kereson, for herknyng vs of a prest	iijd
Item, for makyng vj taperes, ij att the dedycatyon and iiij att the fest of All Sanctes ¹	vjd
Item, for syngyng bredes [wafers]	ijd
Item, for threde and fo makyng of an albe	iiijd
Item, for paper to make a bocke for the vnite and for the reiester bocke	iiijd
Item, for enteryng into the corte bockes the surrender of Robart Worsley	ixd
Item, for enteryng the wyll of sir John Sherdelay into the corte bockes, of the gyffe of the howses [<i>sic</i>] that Edwarde Holande dwelleth in	iiijd

The earlier amounts in the above list are lost through damp. The total expenditure is £2 7s. 9½d.

The references to the "corte bockes" are interesting, as the entries in question were made in the roll of the court leet of Prescot held on 5 June, 1556.² This records, first, the surrender of a "messenger or burgage" by Robert Worsley to the use of James Watmough of Eccleston and Thomas Garnet of Whiston, churchwardens, and their successors, for the benefit of the parish church, and, secondly, the admittance of Henry Coney, Thomas Shaw, James Watmough and John Accors, as wardens of the stock of Our Lady, to the use of the profits of a messenger in the occupation of Edward Holland, in accordance with the will of John Sherdelay, priest, made in 1514. This latter entry, and the purchase of paper for the accounts of the wardens of stocks, afford evidence of the revival of the old religious gilds. There is, indeed, a contemporary copy of an order by the Queen at about this date, and preserved at King's College,³ for the restoration

¹ A canon of 1536 provided that the dedication should be celebrated uniformly on the first Sunday in October. (Blunt, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 490.) The old dedication day at Prescot was the feast of All Saints (1 November).

² *Prescot Records*, pp. 131-2.

King's College Muniments, i. v. 11.

of "certain stocks of kyen and other things" to the use of maintaining priests at Prescot, which may well relate to the three gild-chantries previously noticed. (Appendix 2.) The endorsement of this document with the names of five local gentlemen, who may have assisted in its execution, is a further indication that an attempt was actually made to put it into effect. The reference to St. Catherine's altar in 1556-57, and to the rood altar in 1557-58, cited below, afford additional confirmation. The statement that "Mary did not restore a single chantry"¹ may therefore require qualification.

Two sets of accounts, similar to those of 1555-56, are preserved for 1556-57, though the first set is incomplete, the receipts and some of the payments being missing. The payments include:—

Item, for paper to make the paroche bocke of	j ^d
Item, xvij stone and a d. of leade to the rode loft wyndo and to mende other places ouer sanct Kateryns allter . . .	xvij ^d
Item, payde . . . for threde and viij yardes of cloth toward the making of the surpys and rochett	iiij ^s

The second set consists of receipts "apon Newyeres day for our Lades newyers gyft," "of Sant Nycolas bowxse," "appon Sanct Anttonne day," of "waxe money," and of eight burial fees. The following are among the payments:—

Item, payd to Robt Webster for making of lyght before the Rode and Sanct Nycolas	xxij ^d
Item, for wyne to saye masse with [this item occurs several times]	. . .
Item, for making of xvj surges	. . .
Item, to the wyffe of Thomas Pycavance, for a li. of wax to make small candeles of to saye masse with and to syng matyns with on chryst[mas] daye	. . .
Item, for whyte candelles to ryng with ² and to do serves with	. . .

¹ W. A. Shaw, in V.H.L., Vol. 2, p. 47.

² i.e., to afford light to the bellringers.

Item, for makyng of iiij surges to the alter	. . .
Item, for ij pondes of waxse throwyng to serue at matyns with on Chrystynmas day and the other holy days and to say masse with	. . .
Item, payd to Robart Webster, for throwyng of ix pondes of waxse in the sanct Marye kandyll	. . .
Item, for makyng of iiij shurges, ij for Sanct Antones awter and othe ij for the perche ¹ before the hegh auter	iiij ^d
Item, for throying of ij pondes of wax in the postelles lyght and to say masse with	iiij ^d
Item, for meet and dryngke at the castyng of parte of the waxce and amying of hit and temperyng, and for fyre and greess	ij ^d .
Item, for mendyng of a vestment and a tynnakle [tunicle], and thryd	vj ^d
Item, for wyke yorne . . . and naylys to the sepulker	ij ^d
Item, for iiij hunderthe and di. of syngyng bread [wafers], to John Terbock	v ^d
Item, for a bouxce to care oyntmente	ij ^d
Item, for castyng and wrytyng of the waxce bocke, and for the deners of thos that dyd cast and wryt the same bocke	vj ^s
Item, payd to Edward Holland, for syttyng [at] Ester by the space of v dayes to gether the waxce bocke and money, and for meet and dryng the same tyme	ij ^s iiiij ^d
Item, payd to Henry Wayssyngton, for goyng to Oxceforth to serve the p[re]veceall ² apon docter Smyth	xij ^d
Item, paid to Edward Stockeley, for drawyng instrocsyons for the churche materes	viiij ^d
Item, payd to Jamys Stopfford, for to be solyster [solicitor] for the churche materes in the doche [Duchy] chamber, and to laber thayme at Ester terme	. . .

Some of the amounts have fallen away through damp. The three last-quoted items would be puzzling, but for information from other sources, which proves that they relate to a suit brought by the churchwardens against Dr.

¹ Perch, a bar to support a candle or candles (O.E.D.).

² Perhaps a form of "privy seal," i.e., a writ. An instance of the use of a Privy Seal writ for a citation in the Duchy Chancery appears in *Liverpool Town Books*, Vol. 2, p. 81. I am indebted to Prof. Twemlow for this explanation and reference. See also R. Somerville, "Duchy of Lancaster Council and Court of Duchy Chamber," in *Royal Historical Soc. Transactions*, 1941.

Richard Smith of the University of Oxford, for the payment of money due from him as executor for Gilbert Latham, Archdeacon of Man, who by his will¹ dated 10 October, 1544, and proved on 21 June, 1552, had provided for "a free gramer scole to be foundyt at Preskott, the master to have yerely for his stipend vij li." (See Appendix I.) An account of the circumstances of this case has been published in these *Transactions*² and need not, therefore, be repeated here. Conclusive evidence was given that the "stocks" of the chantry gilds had been "converted for the mayntenance of a scoolmaster" at Prescot, by order of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, during the reign of Edward VI. The visit of the churchwardens to Lathom House, noted in the accounts of 1549-50, "to obteyne my lordes letter for the forthering of the free scolle," shows that Lord Derby's goodwill had been instrumental in procuring this grant. Since, apparently, a school already then existed at Prescot (a "schole howse" being mentioned in the court roll of 10 June, 1547),³ we must attach significance to the word "free," used both in Latham's bequest and in the reference to Lord Derby's letter. A "free grammar school" was a school at which grammar (i.e. Latin) was taught free of charge.⁴ Prior to this time, the school may not have been free, and the object both of the bequest and the grant may have been simply to make it so. In making the bequest, in 1544, Latham of course had no idea that the gild stocks would have become available for the purpose before his death: in fact, he would probably have disapproved of such a grant, as his friendship with Dr. Smith, a prominent anti-Reformer,⁵ and the tenor of his will,

¹ 18 Powell, P.C.C., at Somerset House.

² See *Prescot Grammar School in Elizabethan Times*, by F. A. Bailey, in Vol. 86 (1935).

³ *Prescot Records*, p. 105.

⁴ A. F. Leach, *Schools of Medieval England*, 1915, p. 245, etc.

⁵ Smith refused to conform under Elizabeth and died at Douay in 1563. (D.N.B.)

suggest that his sympathies were with the old order. That he did not alter his will as a consequence of the grant may have been due to ignorance of the transaction, as he had probably for long been out of touch with Prescott affairs. Similarly, when the churchwardens sought to obtain the grant, in 1549, they were probably quite unaware of Latham's intended benefaction.

When Latham died in 1552, Dr. Smith was abroad, having fled on account of his opinions, and a grant of administration of the will was made to the next of kin. Shortly after, on the accession of Mary, he returned, and evidently then took over his duties as executor. He caused £60 to be delivered to Thomas Eccleston, as part of the endowment of £140 needed to provide the annual stipend authorised by the will. The suit, brought by the churchwardens of 1556-57 in the Duchy Chancery against Smith and Eccleston,¹ was for the delivery to them of the £60 in the hands of Eccleston and of the remaining £80 due from Smith. (Appendix 3.)

That this dispute had deeper causes than the regard for "private commodity" imputed in the churchwardens' petition is almost certain. Eccleston and Smith's refusal of their demand for the money may well have been due to serious doubts as to the validity of their claim. School funds were as a rule vested in schoolwardens, feoffees or governors, not churchwardens, and in the Elizabethan period Prescott school certainly had wardens of its own.² Why, then, were the Prescott churchwardens so concerned to secure the Latham fund? A possible solution is afforded by the contemporary order for the restoration of those gild stocks which, in the previous reign, had been transferred to the school. To effect this would be to jeopardise the free school, unless Latham's bequest could be secured as compensation.

¹ Duchy of Lanc. Pleadings, 40, Vol. 8, T. 18.

² *Prescot Records*, pp. 140, 161, etc.

Thomas Eccleston figures, curiously enough, not only as Smith's coadjutor in administering the bequest, but also as one of the two local gentlemen commissioned, with Dr. Brassey, to see to the restoration of the stocks. Like the later heads of his family, he was evidently an adherent of the old religious order. That he did not accede to the wishes of the churchwardens is in the circumstances somewhat surprising, though there are many possible reasons. He may have desired to make conditions, as to the management of the school, unacceptable to others concerned. It is even possible that, in the interval since Latham's death, he had been maturing plans for the foundation of a separate school in Eccleston, for we know that his son Henry, who succeeded him in 1558, promoted a like project in later years.¹

There is no further information as to this litigation. The death of Thomas Eccleston so shortly after its initiation, and Smith's second flight to the continent, in the same year, probably resulted in a decision in favour of the churchwardens. It is of interest to note that, with the final dissolution of the gild chantries, the stocks, too, came again into the possession of the school.

Reverting now to the examination of the accounts, we find only the "wax book" preserved for 1557-58. The receipts are similar to those of the preceding year, save for the additional item "for torchys at buryalles, iiiij^s jd," which may be related to the plague of that year.² Among the payments for 1557-58 are:—

In primis, to Robart Webster off Prescot, for syngyng- brede	viiij ^d
Item, to the same Robart Webster, for maykng lyght for the alters agaynst All Sanctes day	xij ^d
Item, to John Deane, for mendyng the auctor in the rodde loft	xvj ^d

¹ See Vol. 86 of these *Transactions*, pp. 3ff.

² R. S. France, *History of Plague in Lancs.*, in Vol. 90 of these *Transactions*, pp. 31-2.

Item, to a boye in Chester to seke the chaunsellers man	ij ^d
Item, to the chaunsellers man	iiij ^d
Item, to sir James [Jackson], for dyghtyng of ymages	j ^d
Item, for a cruett ¹	iiij ^d
Item, for makyng the sepulker lyght and the pascall and [the] parowche lyght beffore the rode and Sancte Antonye and [sm]all candylles for the apostelles lyght and for meate and dryngke and fyre and gresse and for temperyng the same lyght	vij ^s
Item, to Edward Stockeley, off the churche goodes	vj ^s viij ^d
Item, spend in goyng to Farneworth v tymes for the wax money	vj ^d
Item, spend at that tyme the church lyght was in makyng, by the space of ij days and ij nyghtes	v ^d
Item, to the wyffe of Ryc Gyller, for throwyng iij pond and iij quartrons of wax in small candylles at sundrey tymes to serue the churche with	vj ^d
Item, for throwyng the Sancte Mare candyll, and for meate and drynke, fyre and gresse to Ather Bower and the temperer	xxj ^d
Item, spend at Ormschurche when I dyd go to speke with Gylbart Brekeale, to get hym to cum to Prescott to se ovr lyghtes agayns Ester	ij ^d
Item, spend . . . at that tyme we dyd agrei with Gylbart Brekeale for the lyghtes makyng	. . .
Item, for paper to make the wax bocke with and other nedes	. . .
Item, skowryng the senseres and the chandelers aganyst Ester	. . .
Item, for rosyn to be insence	. . .
Item, for makyng the waxse boke and syttyng v days to gether yt, and for his meate and drynke	. . .
Item, to Elisabeth Pyke, for mendyng a olde albe	j ^d
Item, for v yardes of flaxen to make a nalbe off, price eche yard vij ^d ob, the sum	iijs ^s j ^d ob
Item, for shewyng the amyce wyche Bartholo[mew] Hetly wyff gave, and for tagges to yt	. . .
Item, for a bowtell to kepe wyne [in] the churche	v ^d ob

The above account brings us to the end of the reign of Mary, as the queen died on 17 November, 1558, to be

¹ Cruet, one of a pair of vessels containing wine and water for use in the celebration of the Eucharist.

succeeded by her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth. The extracts quoted in the preceding pages afford clear proof of the full restoration in this parish of the Catholic way of worship under Mary. A striking feature of the reign as a whole was the steady improvement in the finances of the parish, contrasting with the difficulties and crises of the closing years of Henry VIII and the reign of Edward VI. In part, this was due to the episcopal degree of 1555, which authorised the collection of leys for urgent repairs to the fabric. But apart from this, there was a revival of the old regular, normal sources of income, the voluntary contributions on saints' days, which bespeaks an atmosphere of greater harmony and content. The evidence has obvious limitations, and we must be cautious in drawing wide conclusions: nevertheless, as far as it goes, it tends to confirm the view that in this region the ancient rites and ceremonies, condemned by the Reformers as "superstition," were strongly rooted in popular affection.

The first note of audit since 1555 appears at the end of 1558, and runs as follows:—

Accontes taken the xvjth day of Dyssember in anno domini MDlvijth by Mr Henry Eccleston,¹ Mr Rychard Eltonhed,² Jamys Pemerton generoso,³ Wylliam Holland generoso⁴ and others of the honest of the parish, the said countes beyng maid by the churche wardenes, there dothe remayne in money ouer thaire paymentes weche thay mayd deliuiere thereof the some of

xxvj^s v . . .

And also in new waxsse, xiiij li.

Item, more remaynyng in the parishe handes, as shall [appear] here after, of buryalls [five items].

¹ Son and heir of Thomas Eccleston, already noted. He succeeded in 1558 or 1559, and died in 1598.

² Grandson and heir of John Eltonhead of Eltonhead in Sutton. He succeeded in 1526, aged 24.

³ Son and heir of George Pemberton. He held the manors of Halsnead in Whiston and Burtonhead in Sutton.

⁴ A branch of the Holland family held the manor of Sutton, and William was its head in 1567 (V.H.L., Vol. 3, p. 357). Doubtless he is the "Willm Holland gent." buried at Prescot in 1575 (Lancs. Parish Register Soc., Vol. 76, 1938, p. 132). See also B. Holland, *The Lancashire Hollands*, 1917, chap. 10

The above makes no mention of the Eight Men; they may have been among those "others of the honest of the parish" who were present. They are, however, mentioned in connection with the following year's audit, which runs:—

The accomptes of Henry Coney, Thomas Assheton, Edward Holland and John Rotherforthe, churche wardens of Prescott, taken the xxth day of Januarij 1559 [i.e. 1559/60] for one yere laste passed, before the viij men, with the consent of the gentilmen of the parishe.

Names of the viijte men: Ric' Denton, Hughe Parr, Edmonde Colley, Evan Glest, Rauff Hayward, Robt Whitlaw, Ric' Harden, George Dayne.

At whiche tyme the said wardens weare founde in arrearages to the parishe, videlicet iij^s iij^d ob

Memorandum, at the same tyme Robt Prescott, Ric' Bower, Hughe Greene and Edward Cowper weare elected bie the viijte men to be church wardens for this present yere.

[signed]	Edward Halsall ¹	Wylliam Holland
	Ryc' Eltonhed	John Ogle

The election of the new churchwardens at this meeting is surprising, because their year of office officially began on St. Catherine's Day (25 November), nearly two months earlier. Similar entries in later years indicate however that this was the usual practice.

A few months later there is a further reference to the Eight Men, when a special meeting of parishioners had been called to consider the urgent question of repairs to the church.

ix^o die Maij [1560]

At whiche daye it is ordered and agreed by the churche wardens and viij men with thadvise of Mr Vicarr and the gentlemen and other parissoners, beyng then assembled to gethers abowt the reparation of the churche and other matters, that whereas ij seuerall leyes have heretofore ben layed through the whole

¹ A natural son of Sir Henry Halsall of Halsall, born c. 1517. He was a barrister, and built himself a house in Eccleston. Recorder of Liverpool, 1573 onward, and Mayor of that town in 1579 and 1586. (See the Introduction to *Liverpool Town Books*, Vol. 2, 1935, pp. xiff.)

parishe aswelle for the reparacion of the said churche as for other necessaries apperteynyng vnto the same, whereof parcell is al redie gathered, and the rest remaneth as yet not payed, that all suche somes of money as do remayne vnpayed shall be levied, gathered vp and deliuered vnto the churche wardens of the same churche on thisside and before the feast daye of the ascension of our lord next ensuyng, towards the reparacion of the same churche beyng now in decaye, vpon parcell thereof ensuyge.

[signed] William Whitloke vicar¹ Edward Halsall
John Ogle Rauffe Soutton²

After the commencement of the new reign, there was no immediate change in the character of the entries in the accounts, though the indications of an altered regime were not long delayed. Two sets of accounts are preserved for 1558-59. The receipts in the "wax book" consist of "sanct Nycollas money," "our Lade newyeres gifte," "the waxse money at Ester," and the exceptionally large number of twenty-two burial fees; and the payments include:—

Item, to Essabell Gye, for fatcheyng a M ^{mo} bredis [1000 wafers] at Crosbe	iii ^d
Item, payd for the M ^{mo} bredis	ix ^d
Item, to the wyffe of Rychard Gyler, for throyng of the Sanct Mare candell, vppon hir costes	xviii ^d
Item, for makyng the sepulker lyghtes, the passecall and the parishe lyghtes, and x surges for to serve the heye awter with, and mete and dryngk, with fyre and greesse	vij ^d iiiij ^d ob
Item, to John Crosbe, for mendyng the prosession gate ³	xxiiij ^d
Item, for payntyng of ij stondersces ⁴ afore the awter	iiiiij ^d

¹ Dr. William Whitlock succeeded Dr. Robert Brassey as vicar in 1558, and died in 1583. He was a prebendary of Lichfield and the author of works on the history of that town. He became an adherent of the new order of religion. (D.N.B.)

² Doubtless the "Raufe Sutton of Rishton Spenser, co. Staff." who mar. Margaret, da. of Henry Lathom of Mossborough (Chet. Soc., O.S., Vol. 82, p. 107). He was Steward of the manor of Prescot under Lord Derby from 1556 to 1573 (*Prescot Records*, pp. 131ff). He acted in Liverpool as an officer of Lord Derby in 1560-62 (*Liverpool Town Books*, Vol. I, pp. 138, 164, 171, 229).

³ Probably the main path across the churchyard. Locally, in this period the word "yate" was used for gate, and "gate" for road.

⁴ Standard, a tall candlestick.

Item, payd to Thomas Grene, for ij bordes to make stayes for the lyghtes	x ^d
Item, for naylis to make the stays of the surges and the bell whelys	iiij ^d
Item, to the wyffe of Ryc' Gyller, for throwyng of the pascell lyghtes with other to serve the churche with	iiij ^d
Item, expsent vpon sir Robt Nelson, Edward Holland [and] Wylliam Caryson at Hyton to get a cope of a commynion bocke	iiij ^d
Item, for bred and wyne sythens the communion tyme	xiiij ^d
Item, to Edward Houghton, for makyng a stondert for the letteren [lectern] to the byble	ob.
Item, for mendyng of the parishe syrplis, and wassing of hit	ij ^d
Item, for a coppe to serve the communion with	viiiij ^d
Item, for a sawte [psalter ?] to Wylliam Caryson to serve the churche with	xij ^d

The last six items conclude the accounts, and indicate that the change-over from the "mass" to the revived "communion" probably took place somewhat later than the date, 24 June, 1559, prescribed by the Act of Uniformity of 1559 (1 Eliz., c. 2).

The second accounts of 1558-59 concern the receipt and expenditure of two leys. The payments relate mainly to the bells, and will be considered in the second part of this paper.

As a result of the "purified" system of worship, the expenditure on wax for candles, serges and tapers practically ceased. The term "wax book" therefore became a misnomer, and "book of burials" was shortly substituted. There are two sets of accounts for the year 1559-60, the first of which records for the receipts, besides burial fees, only seven shillings "recewyd at Easter for brede and wyne," sixpence "gyuyn by Robart Qwyttlowe for suche thyng as is nedefull to the church," and twopence "gyuyn by Henry Lyon to the box." Among the payments, we have :—

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In primis, to Edward Stockeley, for syttyng at Ester for brede and wyne	ij ^s vj ^d
Item, payd to Ewan Garnett for pullyng downe the hegh alter	vijj ^d
Item, spent by Robart Prescott, Rychard Bower, Hug Grene and Edward Cowper when we toke downe the other thre alters	xiiij ^d
Item, to Wylliam Keryson, for syngyngbrede	vj ^d
Item, for x botelles off wyne	xx ^d
Item, to John Laytun, ¹ for the homelye bocke	ij ^s
Item, for the change off a new bootell for the old to kepe wyne in to serue the churche with	vijj ^d qua
Item, for halff a quare off paper for the regester bocke	ij ^d
Item, payd for paper when the gentyllmen off the parochē dyd sytt about the church busynes	j ^d

The description of the Easter collection as "for bread and wine" instead of as "wax money" is notable. The "other three altars" were presumably those of the chantry gilds restored in the reign of Mary.

The purchase of a new communion cup in 1558-59, and a new bottle for wine in 1559-60, are reminders of the introduction of the practice of administering the communion in both kinds.

The other accounts of 1559-60 concern receipts of arrears of the two leys of the previous year. The payments chiefly relate to the fabric, and only two items need here be noted:—

Item, spent apon Robart Prescott, Ryc' Bower, Hug Grene and Edward Cowper [the wardens] at the visitation at Wegan, and for theyre horse meate	ij ^s vj ^d
Item, spend by Edward Cowper and Hug Grene at Farnworth, when the went to aske the old money for breade and wyne	iiij ^d

The "old money for bread and wine" was, of course, the "wax money," towards which Farnworth side had been

¹ John Layton of Prescot Hall had to settle Lord Derby's annual rent to King's College at Cambridge or London (*Prescot Records*, p. 17). He may have procured the homily book for the churchwardens on one of his journeys.

accustomed to make an annual contribution of twelve shillings.

At this point, with the establishment of what was to prove a permanent, if not universally acceptable, order in the Anglican Church, the first part of this survey of the Prescott wardens' records may be concluded. The primary object of the writer has been to consider what might be called the business management of parochial affairs in the mid-sixteenth century. Special reference has however been made to such indications as are available of the results upon the parish of the religious changes of the early Reformation period; this subject has been treated, it is hoped, in an objective and unbiased spirit. The concluding article will carry on the story through the reign of Elizabeth and into that of James I, a period of considerable interest in the evolution of the churchwardens' duties, and in the efforts made to overcome resistance by the conservative elements to the new religious order.

APPENDIX.

I. THE WILL OF GILBERT LATHAM.¹

In the name of God, Amen. I, Gilbert Lathum preist, calling to remembraunce the sentance of Saynte Paule (*Ad Hebreos*), *Non habemus hic ciuitatem manentem sed futuram inquirimus*; and also considering the certente of death, and howe vncertayn we be of the owre of deathe; therefore I, now being in helth of bodye and of good

¹ Gilbert Latham, B.A. 1512-13; M.A. 1516; B.D. 1523-24. Fellow of St. John's 1513. Proctor 1517-18. Fellow of Jesus for a time, till 1518. R. of Swanscombe, Kent, 1526-46. R. of Gt. Shelford, Cambs. to 1527. R. of Elton, Yorks. 1533-46. Master of St. Katharine's-by-the-Tower 1536-46. Archdeacon of Man 1546. Will (P.C.C.) proved 1552, "of Prescott, Lancs.; Blore, Staffs.; Kirk Andrew, Isle of Man, etc." (Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*.)

remembraunce, do ordeyne and make my last will and testament this day, being the tenthe daye of October in the yere of our lorde a thousande fyve hundreth fourtie and foure, in forme and maner as here after dothe folowe.

First, I comytt and betake my soule vnto the greate marcy of the blessed Trinite, humble desiring the blessed Virgen Marie and all the sayntes of heaven to praye for me: I do constitute and make myne executours Mr Richard Risley, parson of Streatham in the Ile of Ely, and Mr doctor Smyth of Oxford. I bequeath vnto my lady Mary¹ my best gilt cupp with the image of Ih[es]u on the cover. Also, I bequeathe vnto myne executours, vnto either of theym a gelding, and to either of them a gowne and three poundes apece in money, to se my last will truly fulfilled and performyd. I will also that fyve poundes shalbe disposed for me the tyme of my buriall, yf I departe at Stoke College, the deane being there present to haue two shillings, and euery chanon there present to haue xxd., and euery vicar to haue xvjd., euery clerke to haue xijd., and euery querester to haue iijjd., and the rest of the some to be distributed amonges poore people. I will also fyve poundes to be disposed at the monthes daye at the said College, orells when yt shall please God to call me vnto his mercy.

I giue vnto my brother Thomas Lathum one gilt siluer cup with the cover and xiiij spones of siluer with knops gilt, to remayne to hym and his heires after hym. I giue vnto my said brother tenne poundes in money, vnto his wife fourtie shillings, vnto my godsonne his heyre foure poundes, and to his syster foure poundes. I give vnto my said brother two of my best geldinges, with brydels and sadels. I bequeath vnto my cosyn Hugh Lathum one siluer cup with a cover gilt, and fourtie shillings in money. Also I do bequeathe tenne poundes

¹ Perhaps the Princess Mary, daughter of Henry VIII, and subsequently queen.

vnto the mariage of his foure doughters. Also I bequeath twentie poundes to the mariage of Elizabeth Traves my systers doughter. Also I bequeath vnto Margery Laylonde and Elyn Gye myn awntes doughters, vnto either of theym sixe poundes.

Item, I giue vnto Thomas Coldok fyve markes, and to Richard Bowman my seruante foure markes and a gelding. Item, I bequeathe vnto euery on of my seruantes fourtie shilling, ouer and beside suche wages as is due vnto theym at the tyme of my death. And I will that euery one of theym haue burde wages¹ for one moneth, after xxd. the weke.

Further, I bequeathe vnto my parishe churche of Swannescompe in Kent a westment with all thinges therto belonging. Also I bequeathe a westment with all thinges therto apperteyning vnto Blore churche in Stafforthshere. Item, I bequeath also a chalice with a paten gilt, and a westment with thappurtenances, vnto my churche in Man named Kyrke Andrewe. Also I wyll that my bookes shalbe distributed vnto poore scolers afore the discrecion of my executors.

Further, the rest my goodes which be not bequested nor lenntt furth, I will that they be solde, and the money disposed to the porest of my kynsfolke, and amonges the poore people of the parishes where I was beneficed and hadd cure of theire sowles, and parte of the money to be disposed to repaying of high wayes and mariage of yonge women.

Item, I giue to Randall Ratclif fyve markes. Item, I give to Richard Wardall fourtie shillings. Item, I will that myne executours shall fownde perpetuallye three scolers, one in Christes College, a nother in Jesus College, and another in Brasunnose in Oxford. Item, I will a free grammer scole to be foundyt at Prescott, the master to

¹ Board wages, wages allowed to servants to keep themselves in victual. (O.E.D.)

haue yerely for his stypend vij li. Item, I giue to George Gylson sixe pounce. Item, I giue to tenne bedwomen¹ at Sainte Katheryns amonges theym tenne pounes. Item, I giue to three gentilwomen amongst them three angelles. Item, I giue to sir Willm Betyll a gowne, a jacket, a horsse and a sadell, and fyve markes in money. Item, to Laurence Addock and John Lydgatt, three pounes apece. Item, to be bestowed in Preskot parishe and Hyden [Huyton] parishe amonges my kynsfolke, twentie pounes, after their necessitie and pouertie. Item, for a prest to singe at Prescott for my father and mother and me and my frendes, by the space of three yeres, twentie pounes. Item, I will that in case a scholemaster can not be gotten to contynue for vij li. a yere, then the said vj li. (*sic*) to be given to the exhibicion of sixe poore scholers in Cambridge and Oxforde.

To Edmonde Lathum, fyve pounes. To John Laurence, my Receyvour of Seynt Katheryns, a cupp with a cover gilt. The whiche John and Edmond of this my will I make myn ouerseers. To sir Richard Not my preest, xls. To sir Raff Prescott and sir John Culpe, euery one as moche. To sir George Wheiston, three trentalls.² To the said Edmonde Lathums foure brothers, euery one fourtie shillings.

[Probate]

Vicesimo primo die mensis Junij, anno domini millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo secundo, emanauit commissio Edmundo Lathum proximo consanguineo dicti defuncti ad administranda bona eiusdem ad viam intestatam pro eo quod Ricardus Rysley executor etc. renunciauit et Ricardus Smyth executor eciam a regno recessit, de bene et fideliter administranda eadem, ac de pleno inuentario etc. exhibendo. Ad sancta dei euangelia jurato.

¹ Beadswoman, fem. of beadsman, a pensioner bound to pray for the souls of his benefactors.

² Trental, a set of thirty requiem masses, or the payment due for it.

2. ORDER FOR RESTORATION OF PRIESTS AT PRESCOT,
c. 1556.

Philippe and Marye, etc. To our trustie and welbeloued Roberte Brassye clerke, provoste of our Colledge in Cambridge, the vicar of the parishe church of Prescotte now for the tyme being or which hereafter shalbe, Thomas Eccleston and Thomas Parre¹ esquiers, and to euery of them, greating. Whereas we be creadible enformed that certen stocks of kyen and other things have ben geven to the vse and maynteynance of certen priests to be resydenste and serving in our said parishe church of Prescotte, to thentente to doe diuine servyce and administration of sacraments and sacramentalls in our said parishe church; and that the same are by certen personns conceiled and wrongfullie deteyned, and the reuenewes of the same not yet employed to the said vse, nor anie priests yet nominated, electe or agreed vpon for the same. We therefore, for diuers consideracions vs moveing, we woll and desier youe foure, thre or two of youe at the leaste, whereof ye the said Robt Brassye or vicar nowe for the tyme being or which hereafter shalbe to be one, at tyme and place conveniente by youe to be limited and appointed, doe call before youe all and euery such personne and personnes as ye shall seme (*sic*) mete and conveniente, ye doe enquier of all and singler the premisses aswell by viewe, othe, evidence, examinacion of wytnes, as otherwise; and that ye doe enquier in whose hands the said stocks or any parte or parcell thereof are nowe remeyning, and the names of the said seuerall personns; and that ye do conuerte and imploye the said stocks and goods, or cause the same to be conuerted and employed, with the reuenewes thereof, to the vse abovesaide; and also that ye doe nomynate, electe and appointe suche

¹ According to his will, dated 15 September, 1558, Thomas Parr held "manors, meases and lands" in Parr, Sutton and Windle (Chet. Soc., O.S., Vol. 54, p. 118).

discrete priests as ye by your wisdomes shalbe [deemed] mete and conveniente for the said services ; and further that if anie personne or personnes which hathe or dothe conceyle anye parte or parcell of the said stocks or goods, refuse to deliuer the said stocks and goods and the reuenewes thereof, or to abyde such reasonable order as ye foure, thre or two of youe, whereof ye the said Robt Brasseye or the said vicar nowe for the tyme being or which hereafter shalbe be one, shall by your wisdomes and discrecions seme mete to be had in the premisses ; that then ye or two of youe at the least, whereof the said Robt Brasseye or vicar of our said parishe to be one, vpon a certen paine doe commaunde and enioyne euery of the saide personns so refusing to doe as is aforesaid personallie to appere before our Chauncelor and Cownsell of our said Duchie of Lanc' for the tyme being, in . . . Westminster, at such daie and tyme as youe lymitte and appointe them and euery of them, then and there to stande to and abyde such order as by our said C. and C. for the tyme being shalbe taken of, for and concerning the premisses, sendyng also vnto our seyd C. and C. for the tyme being a certyffycat vnder your seales of the hole matters of dysobedyens that youe shall fynde every such person and persons, and of hys and ther demeanors in every behalf, so as we and our seyd Cownsell, vnderstandyng of hys and ther seyd dysobedyens by your seyd certyfficat, may from tyme to tyme take ordr for the furdr correccyon and ordryng of every such dysobedyent person and persons as shall seme mete and conveyent, reteynyng wyth youe neverthesse thys our commysson, for the furdr trying owt and ordryng of the premysses from tyme to tyme as by your dyscressyons shall seme mete and conveyent to be doon untyll the ende and for the term of twentie yers next ensuyng the date herof, and that then youe fower, three or two or youe at the lest, wherof you the seyd Robert Brassy, our seyd vyker of our seyd parysh

church to be one, by your wrytynge inclosed vnder your seales, wyth these our letters and all othr your facts and doings touchyng the premysse, you doo certefye our seyde C. and C. of our seyde Duchy of Lancaster for the tyme being, so as the same may remeyne amongst the records of our seyde Duchy for a parfyt presarvacyon and testimony of the same your dooings and procedyngs for ever. Fayl yee nott herof as wee trust your zeale, etc.

[Endorsed] Ric' Lancaster, Ric' Eltonhead, Willm Holland, Henrie Eccleston and Thomas Lancaster gent.¹ And to se the said preistes deulie to execute the said service. xxx^{tie}

3. PETITION BY THE CHURCHWARDENS, TO PROCURE
THE LATHAM BEQUEST TO THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
1556 OR 1557.

To the right honourable Sir Robarte Rochester knight, Comptroller of the quenes ma^{ts} most honourable household and Chauncellor of the Duchie of Lancaster :²

Shewith and compleynyth vnto youre goode maister-shippe youre dayly oratoures John Tarbocke, Richarde Denton, James Watmowe and Thomas Garnett, churchwardens of the parishe church of Prescott³ . . . That where one Gylberte Lathum clerke, by his laste will and testamente made [10 October 1544] . . . amongst dyuers other things, did wyll that his executors of his goodes and catells shulde cause seven poundes yerely to be assured to and for the kepinge and maynteynaunce of

¹ Thomas, son and heir of Richard Lancaster of Rainhill, was head of the family at the Herald's Visitation of 1567.

² Sir Robert Rochester was Chancellor of the Duchy from 1553 until his death in 1557.

³ These men were churchwardens for the year 1556-57.

one skole maister to teache and kepe a free grammer skole in the said parishe churche (*sic*) of Prescott . . . for ever, and . . . did constytute and make one Richarde Smythe clerk doctor of dyuynytye and Richarde Rysley clerke his executors . . . And after, the said Gylberte Lathum dyed, leavyng to his said executours goodes and catelles to the value of one thowsande marks and aboue. After whose death the said executours did take vpon them the admynstracion of the said goodes and catelles . . . and, myndinge to perfourme the said legacye and bequeste . . . did delyuer into thandes of one Thomas Eccleston of the said paryshe, esquier, to thuse of the said parishioners, the summe of three skore poundes . . . in parte of payment of the said summe of seven skore poundes towardes the purchase of seven poundes yerely . . . for the fyndinge and kepinge of one skolemaister for to kepe and teache the seid grammer skole. And soe it is (right honourable sir) that the said Thomas Eccleston (not regardinge the godly vse and intente . . . but myndinge more his owne pryuate comoditie) haith converted the seid summe of three skore poundes to his owne vse, and will in noe wise suffre the same to be employed to thuse and intente declared . . . although your said oratours . . . haue often and many tymes requyred aswell the said Thomas Eccleston to delyuer vnto them the said summe of three skore poundes, and alsoe the said Mr Doctor Smyth to delyuer and paye the summe of foure skore poundes resydue of the said seven skore poundes . . . yet neverthesse the said doctor Smyth, hauyng sufficyent of the goodes of the seid testator in his handes to accomlishe the same, also the said Thomas Eccleston hauynge the seid three skore poundes in his handes as aforesaide, haue boeth vtterly denyed and refuced the premyssees to doe, contrary to all equitye and conscyence. Wherefore [etc. Undated].

