

Dr. LEWIS ATTERBURY

A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RECTOR

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LEWIS ATTERBURY was the son of the Rev. Francis Atterbury, Rector of Milton Malsor in Northamptonshire. He was born there on the 18th April, 1621, and baptized on the 24th of the same month.¹

He became a student of Christ Church, Oxford, in 1647, and submitted to the authority of the Visitors appointed by Parliament. He took his B.A. degree on 23rd February, 1649, and his M.A. on 1st March, 1651, by dispensation from Oliver Cromwell, at that time Chancellor of the University.²

In 1654 Atterbury was instituted Rector of Broad Risington in Gloucestershire, a living which he held until 1657, when he was instituted to the Rectory of Milton Keynes, Bucks. At the Restoration he had the title to his benefice confirmed by King's Title, under the Great Seal (14th December, 1660).³

On the 25th July, 1660, Atterbury was appointed chaplain to Henry, Duke of Gloucester, the third son of Charles I, but this appointment was of short duration, for his patron died of smallpox in London at the end of the same year, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.⁴ On 1st December, 1660, the degree of D.D. was conferred upon Atterbury⁵.

Lewis Atterbury was married at Newport Pagnell, Bucks., on the 3rd May, 1655, to Elizabeth Giffard, of Caldecote, a hamlet of Newport, the ceremony being performed by Thomas White, a Justice of the Peace.⁶ White was Lord of the Manor of Caldecote, and was most probably the guardian of Elizabeth Giffard. He was certainly closely connected with the family, for two years later he married, at Newport Pagnell, Elizabeth Giffard's mother, and thereby became Mrs. Lewis Atterbury's stepfather.⁷ Thomas White was a man of some importance locally; he died on 26th September, 1670, and is buried at Newport, where a tablet was erected to his memory.⁸ Elizabeth, Lewis Atterbury's wife, was the daughter of

¹ Milton Malsor Register. He is there called Lewes, son of Francis and Elizabeth Atterbury.

² Anthony à Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, 3rd ed., ed. Philip Bliss, IV, 395 (1820).

³ In *D.N.B.*, II, 233, it is stated that he had the titles of both livings so confirmed. But this is evidently an error, as Atterbury had resigned the Risington living on his appointment to that of Milton, and in 1657 another Rector, Abraham Drye, was instituted at Risington.

⁴ In the Chapel of Henry VII. A. Murray-Smith, *Westminster Abbey*, 27th ed. (1932), 61.

⁵ Anthony à Wood, *loc. cit.*

⁶ Newport Pagnell Register, II; F. W. Bull, *History of Newport Pagnell* (1900), 126.

⁷ Newport Pagnell Register, II, 2nd April, 1657.

⁸ As to the family of White, see F. W. Bull, *op. cit.*, 175; W. H. Rylands, *Visitation of Bucks.* (Harleian Society), 127. The inscription is given by Lipscomb, *History of Bucks.*, IV. 288, and by Bull, *op. cit.*, 177.

Thomas Giffard, of North Crawley, Bucks., and his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Edmond Harding, of Aspley Guise, Beds. He died in 1638, and is buried at North Crawley, where there is a monumental slab in the chancel.⁹ His widow, Elizabeth (the mother of Atterbury's wife), was buried in the same grave or vault, and the inscription states that she was 'afterwards married to Thomas White, Esq., of Caldecot'. From this statement the writer in the *Victoria County History* makes the false assumption that White was 'her second husband'. Actually, however, he was her third husband, for in the entry of her marriage with Thomas White she is stated to be 'Mrs. Elizabeth Bolton, of the Parish of St. Gregory, London'.¹⁰ She survived her third husband seventeen years, and she was buried with her first husband, as already mentioned, at North Crawley.¹¹

Elizabeth Atterbury died at Milton Keynes, and was buried in the chancel of the church there. The Burial Register for the years 1665 to 1670 is missing, but Lipscomb states that there was a freestone tablet on the south side of the chancel, inscribed as follows:

' SUBITUS CONDITUR ELIZABETHA UXOR LUDOVICI
ATTERBURY, THOMÆ GIFFARD ARMIGERI FILIA ;
OB. XXVI DIE FEB. A.D. MDCLXVIII.'¹²

By his marriage Atterbury had four children—two sons and two daughters. The eldest son, Lewis, was born on 2nd May, 1656, presumably at Caldecote, as he was baptized at Newport Pagnell.¹³ He was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated B.A. 1679, M.A. 1680. In 1683 he was chaplain to the Lord Mayor of London,¹⁴ and in the following year was Rector of Sywell, Northants. In 1695 he was Preacher at Highgate Chapel, and was afterwards Rector of Shepperton, and finally of Hornsey, Middlesex.¹⁵ He died in 1731, and by his will, dated 16th March, 1730, he bequeathed £10 yearly for ever to the Charity School of Newport Pagnell, but the disposition of the charity was afterwards altered by a Decree in Chancery.¹⁶ He had previously given £200 to augment the living of Newport.¹⁷ His portrait, painted by Thomas Gibson, was engraved by George Vertue.¹⁸

The second son, Francis, was one of the most notable characters of his age, alike as an ecclesiastic, as a man of letters, and as a politician. He was Dean

with some verbal differences. The monument is not recorded by Joseph Staines, *History of Newport Pagnell* (1842), and is not now extant, unless it is concealed beneath the floor of the modern pews. (Part VII of Lipscomb's *History*, which contains Newport, was issued in 1843.)

⁹ Lipscomb, IV, 131; *V.C.H., Bucks.*, IV, 336.

¹⁰ Newport Register, II; Bull, *op. cit.*, 126, wrongly says 'of St. George's, London'. The parish is that of St. Gregory-by-St. Paul's, the church of which was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. The church was not rebuilt, and the parish was united to St. Mary Magdalene, Old Fish Street. This united benefice was, in its turn, joined with that of St. Martin, Ludgate.

¹¹ Lipscomb, IV, 131; *V.C.H., Bucks.*, IV, 336.

¹² Lipscomb, IV, 249. The monument is no longer extant. Oliver Ratcliff, *History of Newport Hundreds* (1900), 339, prints the inscription, obviously copied from Lipscomb, but misquotes the year as MDCCCCIII.

¹³ Newport Pagnell Register, II; F. W. Bull, *op. cit.*, 125.

¹⁴ Sir William Pritchard; he had been arrested during his year of office and brought an action the year after against Thomas Papillon for making the arrest and detaining him in prison, and the defendant having failed to prove a just cause of action, Sir William obtained a verdict, with damages of £10,000.

¹⁵ *D.N.B.*, II, 233.

¹⁶ F. W. Bull, *op. cit.*, 247.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

¹⁸ F. O'Donoghue, *Catalogue of British Engraved Portraits*, I, 88.

successively of Carlisle, Christ Church, Oxford, and Westminster; and Bishop of Rochester. Born at Milton Keynes, 6th March, 1662, and baptized there on the 17th, he was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford. For his support to the Jacobite cause he was sent to the Tower, deprived of his offices and banished.¹⁹ He died in Paris, 22nd February, 1732, and his body was brought to England and interred in Westminster Abbey.

Of the daughters of Lewis Atterbury nothing is known but the entry of the baptism of the younger.

'1664. August the thirtieth Elizabeth daughter of Dr. Atterbury and Elizabeth his Wife (a second daughter) was borne and baptized the sixt of September.'²⁰

Presumably the first daughter died in infancy. There is no record of her baptism or burial in the registers of Newport Pagnell or Milton Keynes.

At the Quarter Sessions at Aylesbury, Midsummer 1689, Dr. Atterbury produced a Sacrament Certificate, took the oaths provided in the statute 1 W. & M. Cap. i, and subscribed the declaration against Transubstantiation.²¹ At the same Sessions he subscribed the declaration contained in the Act, 30 Car. II, Stat. 2, Cap. i, Sect. 3, 'An Act to prevent Papists from sitting in either House of Parliament'.²²

During his ministry at Milton Keynes, Atterbury seems to have been constantly resident, as his signature occurs at the foot of each page of the Church Registers throughout the period. His signature also occurs as one of the parties to an indenture of 13th June, 36 Car. II (1684), conveying to him, as Rector, and others, the interest in trust of a parish charity. This deed is in the Parish Chest of Milton Keynes.

Atterbury printed and published the following sermons²³: (1) 'A Good Subject, or the Right Test of Religion and Loyalty' (on Prov. xxiv. 21, 22), 17th July, 1684; (2) 'The Grand Charter of Christian Feasts, with the Right Way of keeping them' (on 1 Cor. v. 8), 30th November, 1685; (3) 'Babylon's Downfall, or England's Happy Deliverance from Popery and Slavery' (on Rev. xviii. 2), preached at Guildhall Chapel, 28th June, 1691, and published at the desire of the Court of Aldermen.

Of Atterbury's private life and opinions we have nothing but some glimpses afforded by letters to his son Francis. The latter, in 1690, had become querulous and restless, and in November of that year the father thus reproves his son: 'You used to say, when you had your degrees, you should be able to swim without bladders. You used to rejoice at your being moderator and of your quantum and sub-lecturer; but neither of these pleased you; nor was you willing to take those pupils the house afforded you when master; nor doth your lecture please, or noblemen satisfy you'. Later in the same letter is some paternal advice, urging his son's 'marrying into some family of interest, either bishop's or archbishop's, or some courtier's, which may be done, with accomplishments and a portion too'.²⁴

¹⁹ *D.N.B.*, II, 233. For fuller accounts of Bishop Atterbury, see the biographies, memoirs, and correspondence by F. Williams, 1869; John Nichols, 1783-96; H. C. Beeching, 1909. His portrait by Kneller has been engraved by at least seven engravers. O'Donoghue, *op. cit.*, I, 88.

²⁰ Milton Keynes Registers, anno 1664.

²¹ *Bucks' Sessions Records*, I, 289.

²² *Ibid.*, 295.

²³ *Brit. Mus. General Catalogue*; *D.N.B.*, II, 238.

²⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine*, May, 1793; *Selection*, ed. John Walker (1814), IV, 113.

Such was the mundane point of view of a Restoration cleric—the son of a cleric, the father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of clerics!

Dr. Lewis Atterbury was for many years engaged in litigation concerning his rights as Rector of Milton Keynes to certain glebe lands and tithes. In 1668 he filed a bill against Henry Stafford, defendant, and the Court ordered a trial at law; but the matter was delayed for about ten years. He had in the meantime filed another bill in Hilary Term, 26 Car. II (1670), against Sir William Turner and others.²⁵

Atterbury claimed that as Rector he was entitled to all the glebe lands of 39 acres, but of these only 5½ acres were in his possession, the rest being held by the defendants. He claimed also that he was entitled to commons in the meadows of Milton for 4 horses, 10 beasts, and 30 sheep, worth 40 shillings annually, and that he was also entitled to 30 loads of hay from those meadows. He further claimed the right to all Tithes-in-kind, and in particular those arising from the parcels or lands called Ten Pound Close, Great Pasture, Lady Mead, and Little Ham. It was stated that in 1593 an exchange had been entered into between Ralph Smith (the elder), the then Rector,²⁶ and John Stafford, the then Lord of the Manor, for other lands in lieu of part of the glebe, which arrangement Atterbury contended was injurious to the Rectory, besides extinguishing the rights of common before-mentioned. In the bill, therefore, he prayed for the restoration of the original glebe lands and for an account of the tithes. The defendants denied the original right of the Rector to Tithes-in-kind from the lands above-mentioned, contending that these had been compounded by modus and that the Rector had immemorially enjoyed a meadow called Beard's Meadow²⁷ in lieu of tithes arising from the Little Ham. The defendants therefore insisted on the benefit of the exchange.

On the 26th January, 26 Car. II (1670), the case was heard and ordered to be tried at law, and that the plaintiff (Atterbury) should declare that the defendants were possessed of Ten Pound Close, Great Pasture, Lady Mead, and Little Ham, and the defendants promised that if Tithes-in-kind were due from them in respect of such lands, then they would pay them.

The suit seems to have hung fire for nine years, but at last, on the 15th March, 1679, it was tried, and a verdict was given for the defendants to the effect that the customary payments in lieu of Tithes-in-kind in respect of certain portions of the specified lands should stand, Tithes-in-kind being payable only on the residue.

In Easter Term, 32 Car. II (1680), a trial at the bar was ordered on the foregoing issues. The case was heard on the 24th November following, and the jury found that the customary payments in lieu of tithes were valid in respect of all the lands mentioned, except the Little Ham, on which Tithes-in-kind were payable.

In Trinity Term, 33 Car. II (1681), Daniel, Earl of Nottingham, who had purchased the manor of Milton Keynes from Stafford, filed a bill to establish the validity of the exchange made by his predecessor with Ralph Smith, Atterbury's predecessor. On the 2nd May, 37 Car. II (1684), the case was heard, and by a decree of 23rd June of the same year the exchange was confirmed as well as the

²⁵ Sir William Turner's *locus standi* in this affair is not clear. He was not the Lord of the Manor, but was presumably an under tenant of some or all of the parcels of land in dispute.

²⁶ Ralph Smith, Senior, was Rector of Milton from 1585 to 1638. He was succeeded by his son, Ralph Smith, Junior, who held the benefice from 1638 to 1656.

²⁷ This piece took its name from land held in the thirteenth century by Hugo cum Barba and his descendants. The name was corrupted to Bird's, Bear's, Bare's, etc., and finally into Bear Leys, or Bare Leys.



Plate 1. DR. LEWIS ATTERBURY. From the portrait in Milton Keynes Rectory

modus in lieu of tithes, but Lord Nottingham was directed to set out for the benefit of the Rector lands to the value of £15 per annum in lieu of the Common Pasture and other rights extinguished by the exchange, and also two acres called Buckingham Way in satisfaction for glebe lands which lay intermixed with the earl's in the common fields. Two years later, 18th May, 1686, the aforesaid order and decree were confirmed.

Thus the case remained until the incumbency of Dr. Heneage Dering (Rector 1761–1802). Dering gave much attention to the question of glebe and tithes, and he was not satisfied with the result of the aforesaid suits. In 1766 he employed an attorney of Lincoln's Inn named Woodcock to investigate the previous lawsuits and to advise him as to the position. On Woodcock's report, supplemented by other evidence, the foregoing account is mainly based. He informed Dering that the decision of the Court was so full and clear that he could not advise him to try the case a second time.²⁸

Two printed statements of Dr. Atterbury's case, drawn up by himself and giving much detail as to the particular parcels of land as well as the documents and evidence upon which each of them rested and their liabilities for tithe, are preserved in the Parish Chest. Both these long documents are undated, and the details in some respects do not tally with those in Woodcock's report. The whole matter is very involved, and embodies many legal points which to a layman are scarcely intelligible. It is clear, however, that Dr. Atterbury suffered much anxiety and was involved in heavy costs, which were scarcely justified by the very small satisfaction he received, for nearly all the issues were decided against him.

Evidently Atterbury, a man of great pertinacity, did not intend to allow the matter to rest as it stood in 1686, for one of his printed statements, although undated, is manifestly posterior to the previous proceedings, since they are cited in it. He apparently commenced further proceedings, upon which he was engaged at the time of his death, and which in consequence of his decease were dropped, for there is no reference in Woodcock's report to any continuation of them by his heirs or successors. If the statement by Lipscomb (IV. 246) is true, that Atterbury met his death 'when returning from London whither he had gone to attend lawsuits', it would seem that he was then still actively engaged in his suit.

Lewis Atterbury died on 7th December, 1693. Lipscomb states that 'he was drowned, by passing the Bridge at Newport, during a great flood' (IV. 249, *n.* 3). He was buried at Milton Keynes on the 10th December. There was formerly an inscription on a stone under the altar, but this is not now extant. According to Lipscomb, the inscription was :

' HIC JACET LUDOVICI ATTERBURY S.T.P. HUIUSCE
ECCLESIAE RECTORIS QUOD RELIQUUM. OBIIT
VII DEC. A.D. MDCXCIII.'

Ratcliff also gives the inscription, but without any indication that the stone had disappeared long before his time ; he evidently copied it from Lipscomb.²⁹ The stone

²⁸ MS. book of Heneage Dering preserved in the Parish Chest at Milton Keynes.

²⁹ *History of Newport Hundreds*, 340. The year-date is there miscopied as MDCCCCIII. At the time of the publication of Sheahan's *History and Topography of Bucks.* (1862), the stone appears to have been still *in situ*, for it is said (p. 567): 'Within the rails and under the Communion-table is a gravestone inscribed to Dr. Lewis Atterbury, Rector.'

was probably moved or buried during the restoration of the church in 1865, when the chancel and sanctuary were newly paved with tiles and the old floor-stones taken up.

A portrait in oils of Lewis Atterbury by an unknown artist is preserved in Milton Keynes Rectory by the successive Rectors as an heirloom (Plate 1).

I wish to express my thanks to the Rev. G. Hawkes Field, the present Rector of Milton Keynes, for the photograph of the portrait of Atterbury and for allowing me access to all the documents in the Parish Chest.