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William Dell

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solaciis ipsarum et releuacionibus solícite et misericorditer intendamus. Vnde cum domus de Tauistok' multis hactenus pressuris fuerit depressa, et quoque per incuriam priorum pastorum ita adnichilata,¹ ut uix de ipsius releuacione spes haberetur, nos, ad ipsius domus releuacionem, et hospitum pariter et pauperum ibidem adueniencium recreacionem, diuini amoris intuitu, ecclesiam de Abbedeshame uacantem, in qua ius habuerunt patronatus abbas [de] Tauistok' et eiusdem loci conuentus, cum omnibus suis pertinentiis, ipsis in proprios usus concedimus et autoritate episcopali confirmamus, salua tamen vicaria honesta in eadem ecclesia assignanda iuxta facultates ecclesie vicario perpetuo qui in eadem diuina perpetuo ministrabit, salua etiam in omnibus nostra et successorum nostrorum et ecclesie Exonie dignitate. Vt igitur hec nostra concessio robur in posterum firmitatis obtineat, ipsam scripti presentis testimonio² et sigilli nostri appositione coroborauimus. Hiis testibus, B. archidiacono Totton', et magistro Rogero de Winkaleg', magistro Martino tunc officiali, domino Nicholao monacho et capellano, Radulfo de Ilstinton', Martino Prodome et Benjamin clericis, et multis aliis.³

LIX. [fo. 3b, added in tail margin.]

[c. 1235 ?]

Omnibus Christi fidelibus ad quos presens scriptum peruenerit Walterus Giffard filius Walteri Giffard salutem. Nouerit uniuersitas uestra me omnes donationes seu concessionem quas Walterus Giffard pater meus seu quicumque antecessores mei, tam in ecclesiis de Lamerton' et de Rupe sancti Michaelis cum omnibus pertinentiis suis quam in terris cum earum pertinentiis, seu quibuscunque rebus aliis, ecclesie beate Marie et sancti Rumoni de Tauistok' et monachis ibidem Deo seruientibus, secundum quod instrumenta antecessorum meorum cum eorundem confirmationibus testificantur, ratas habuisse et hac presenti scriptura mea confirmasse. In cuius rei testimonium hiis testibus presentibus sigillum meum apposui. Hiis testibus, magistro Rogero de Torix, Roberto Giffard, Ada de Bradeleg', Roberto vicario de Middelton', Alano ianitore de Tauistok', et multis aliis.

William Dell

THE case of William Dell has been confusing to students of the seventeenth century for some time; it is perhaps worth a few lines to clear it up.

A certain William Dell, whom I shall call William Dell (1), was secretary to Archbishop Laud. He was devoted to Laud during Laud's lifetime, acted as Laud's solicitor during his trial, and after Laud's execution in January 1645/6, erected a memorial tablet to him in the chapel of St. John's College, Oxford, describing

¹ The abbots of this period were: Andrew, c. 1200–c. 1202; Jordan, c. 1203–c. 1220; William de Kernet, 1220–4; and John of Rochester, 1224–33.

² in testimonio ms.

³ The original charter is extant (Woburn muniments, Devon, G 1, no. 1).

himself as 'servus maestissimus'. After this time there is no evidence referring demonstrably to this William Dell.

But a few months after Laud's death we become acquainted with a new William Dell, whom I shall designate as William Dell (2). This William Dell had evidently been educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, the great puritan seminary, taking the degree of B.A. in 1627-8, and of M.A. in 1631. In 1640-1 he had been presented to the rectory of Yelden, Beds, by Oliver St. John, earl of Bolingbroke; and in 1645 he preached before Lady Bolingbroke a sermon, subsequently printed as *Power from on High or the Power of the Holy Ghost* (1645), and again as *Christ's Spirit a Christian's Strength* (1651), in the course of which he describes a recent spiritual crisis. From this time onwards, William Dell (2) is a familiar figure in the world of Independency. He was a preacher in Fairfax's army, preached a controversial sermon before parliament on 25 November 1646, officiated at the marriage of Henry Ireton to Bridget Cromwell, sought to obtrude himself upon Charles I before his execution, was engaged in several controversies with Presbyterian and other less advanced puritan clergymen, and in May 1649 was appointed Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. In 1662 he was deprived of his mastership and ejected from his living of Yelden. He died in 1664.

It has often been supposed that these two characters were identical, and that Laud's secretary was converted after his master's death into the fanatical preacher. This view was first given currency (I think) by J. B. Mullinger, the historian of Cambridge University, in his article on Dell in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, in which he says that Laud's secretary 'subsequently, but under what influences it does not appear . . . abandoned the tenets of the Church of England and became, by reputation at least, an antinomian', &c. The same view was accepted by Professor Theodor Sippel of Marburg in his book, *William Dells Programm einer 'lutherischen' Gemeinschaftsbewegung* (1911); and it has been repeated by me in my book, *Archbishop Laud* (1940). On the other hand, Professor Sippel, in his later work, *Werdendes Quakertum* (1937), has expressed doubt about the identification, and J. Venn, in his *Biographical History of Gonville and Caius College* (1897) states roundly (but without giving any evidence) that Mullinger had confused William Dell (2) with 'his Oxford namesake, the secretary of archbishop Laud'. This Oxford namesake is presumably the William Dell recorded by Foster in *Alumni Oxonienses*, as having matriculated at St. John's College in 1619 and taken the degree of B.A. in 1622-3 and M.A. in 1626. Unfortunately there is no

trace of such a name in the records of St. John's College ; and as Foster goes on to describe this Dell as rector of Yelden, it is clear that he too is confusing him with William Dell (2).

No conclusive evidence has hitherto been published either for or against the identification of the two William Dells, although the arguments from probability are strongly against it. Although it is conceivable that Laud's secretary was presented to a living by a puritan patron while in Laud's service, and experienced a spiritual revulsion after Laud's death, it is at least surprising that neither in the works of William Dell (2) nor in those of the puritan controversialists who assailed him is there any mention of so signal a conversion. However, it is not necessary to rely on negative arguments only. William Dell (1) wrote numerous letters for Laud, which are extant ; and there are two holograph letters by William Dell (2) in Gonville and Caius College. A comparison of a photostatic copy of the latter with the original letters of William Dell (1) in the Bodleian Library (MSS. Rawlinson, letters 83 and 84) shows such differences that it can now be stated confidently that the identification made in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and by subsequent writers is incorrect. Laud's secretary did not become the puritan preacher.

There remains the question of Foster's enigmatical entry. The second part of this entry,—the identification of the rector of Yelden (i.e. William Dell 2) with a plebeian of St. John's College, Oxford, is plainly Mullinger's error once again ; but who was this William Dell of St. John's College ? Though his name is not recorded in the college, there is no doubt that Foster's entry is, in this respect, accurate ; for the University matriculation records and the records of Congregation maintain it. The only possible explanation is that this William Dell, who matriculated in 1619, was one of the two nameless servants of the president. Now the president of St. John's College in 1619 was William Laud ; and it is a reasonable assumption that this unrecorded plebeian from Wiltshire, William Dell, was our William Dell (1), Laud's secretary, and that he obtained his education in Laud's college as Laud's servant. As he is first known to us as Laud's servant, so we last hear of him after Laud's death as *servus maestissimus*, the inconsolable servant who performed the last acts of piety and disappeared from the recorded world. Perhaps he died soon afterwards,—a note in MS. Tanner, lxi. fo. 243, which refers to his death is unfortunately undated, but would appear to have been written soon after Laud's death. At all events he should not be confused with the puritan rector of Yelden and Master of Gonville and Caius College.

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