The Conversion to Roman Catholicism of Bernard Smith of Leadenham, 1842

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On 15 December, 1842, Bernard Smith, Rector of Leadenham, Lincolnshire, was received into the Roman Catholic Church at Oscott College. He was ordained priest at Oscott at Easter 1847 and joined the Roman Catholic Mission at Great Marlow in Buckinghamshire, where he died on 24 October 1903 aged eighty-three.1 Smith had begun his church career in a conventional manner. Born at Great Ponton near Grantham, he had been educated at Grantham School, matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, in July 1831 and graduated in 1835 with a third class in Literae Humaniores. In 1836 he had been elected to a Fellowship of Magdalen which he held until 1839 when he was presented by his mother to the living of Leadenham, vacant by the resignation of the Revd. C. B. Otley.2 However, it is his career as Rector of Leadenham and the manner of his departure from the living which is of particular interest. This provides an early example of the application of Catholic ideas in a country parish, leading to friction between the local landed family and the rector, and forming the background to his reception into the Roman Catholic Church. This move had wider repercussions than in Smith’s parish since both Newman and Pusey were caught up in the controversy which surrounded his succession. R. D. Middleton’s account of Smith’s career in Magdalen Studies, published in 1936, provides an account of the affair, but this can be supplemented by a series of letters in the Lincolnshire Archives Office, found among the papers of the late Canon John Kaye in June 1940 and handed over to the Archivist by his executors. These provide interesting insights into attitudes to liturgical innovation in the late 1830’s and 1840’s, and some indication of the attitude of Newman and others to Smith’s conversion. They also indicate something of the relationship between landed gentry and country clergymen in villages such as Leadenham at this period.

At Magdalen Smith had been friendly with John Rouse Bloxam3 and through him had made the acquaintance of Augustus Welby Pugin.4 In 1841 Pugin stayed with Smith at Leadenham Rectory where he worked on a scheme for painting the roof of the chancel of the parish church. Some of Smith’s work at Leadenham may have been a continuation of plans of Thomas Brown, rector from 1821 to 1835 and Smith’s uncle. However, his sympathy with Pugin’s work went further than their collaboration at Leadenham, for when Pugin’s Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume was published in 1844 it included extracts from the work of Durandus, Georgius, etc., translated by the Rev. Bern. Smith.5 The second edition, published in 1846 was revised and enlarged by Smith, with a third edition published in 1868. Smith’s work at Leadenham was not confined to the architectural embellishment of the church. He also introduced an elaborate ceremonial, which, while alarming the local landed gentry, pleased Ambrose Philippes de Lisle.6 On 15 September 1841 he wrote to J. R. Blixam that he saw Leadenham fast becoming ‘a beacon of the ceremonial revival’ and described services in the church: ‘I hear that Bernard Smith’s church looks quite glorious, a chasuble of velvet with gold orphreys . . . lighted candles and a sumptuous altar cross, frontal, etc.’ It was about this time that Lord Bayning7 wrote to Bishop Kaye of Lincoln drawing his attention to the objections made and scruples felt by Colonel Reeve and his family and many of the parishioners of Leadenham in regard to certain forms and usages now adopted in the church at Leadenham. 1st the gaudy decoration of the chancel, unfitted to the solemnity of divine worship and the profuse use of inscriptions in a language unknown to the congregation — the placing of two colossal and gaudy candlesticks and candles in the front of the communion table (without any use or purpose) in addition to those on the table, which are placed by the side of a moveable cross with four gilt brackets and candles in them on the walls — the side table and other modern additions which give the chancel the precise semblance of a popish place of worship and which thus give offence to the feelings of those who abhor the errors and practices of the Romish church and who fear a revival of it in this country.

Other of Smith’s practices which gave rise to objections included bowing to the altar or the cross on it; preaching in a surplice; frequently crossing himself and teaching the children of the parish to bow to the altar and cross themselves when they came into church; turning his back to the congregation during a great part of the services and especially the Communion service, when he used wafers and lighted candles; and preaching on the assumption of the blessed virgin. Girls from the Sunday school had been placed under the instruction of a young woman who had been living with Roman Catholics and had been suspected of being one herself. Smith’s doings were ‘causing offence and alarm to a great majority of the parishioners, and causing divisions of a most serious and lamentable nature in a hitherto undivided parish’.8 Smith was aware of the opposition to his work, but continued with it. In a letter to Ambrose Philippes de Lisle dated “Thursday of the Eve of St. Laurence, 1841”, he wrote

Colonel Reeve is come home, and if I left the village would soon be busy against me, I fear . . . With your letter came one from Hardman, to say that an altar-cushion (bookstand), altar cross, serges and antependium, were on the road to me. These and more I want to introduce into the church, and see quietly settled there, and also install them all in the minds of the people if I can. I am quite tired of the timid policy of Bloxam and company, who are, after all in advance of the rest of the Oxford party. My plan, which it is hardly safe to commit to paper, is to build an abbey dedicated in honour of St. Bernard, in Lefnam; and to retire to it. My brother would succeed me as Rector of Lefnam; and it might be a point of COMMUNICATION between the Catholic and Anglican communions . . . You see the plan implies a change of position on my part. I am preparing my people, my few sheep in the wilderness here, for anything that may occur. A small band are disposed to follow me; the majority are, of course, on the side of their worldly interest, or else Wesleyans.

As we Anglicans now stand, our position contradicts all that we can say in favour of the truth. I am more and more convinced of this. Perhaps it is
impertinence in me to ask if you would come with Bloxam and see me at Lednam. It strikes me that you might bring some of my family to a different mind. When I come I hope to bring with me not a few. But this is in the hands of God. Next April my brother is old enough to be admitted to deacon's orders, which will set me more at liberty, as you may see.\(^{11}\)

Smith's mother had sought to defend her son's conduct to the bishop of Lincoln. Smith had, she wrote to him on 5 November, acted with 'the sincerest good will' to the Church of England, despite 'the incessant interruptions he has met with from Colonel Reeve — who has with the aid of Lady Susan Reeve — undermined his influence in every possible manner from his first entrance into the village'. Within the last few months he and all his family and servants had sat down during service 'to mark their disapprobation, an influence which still continues among the lower classes'. Mrs. Smith had given an altar cloth edged with gold coloured silk lace with IHS on the front in black velvet which the Reeve family had said represented Mrs. Smith's initials. There were also disagreements over the 7 o'clock morning communion service which Smith had introduced.\(^{12}\)

The dispute over liturgical matters was not the only area of disagreement between the Smith and Reeve families. Although the Reeves were lords of the manor and owned a great part of the village by the 1840s they did not own enough to give them absolute control over it. They continued to consolidate their holdings in Leadenham throughout the nineteenth century. As patrons of the valuable living worth £700 per annum, the Smiths were firmly entrenched in the village to provide an alternative centre of authority until the Reeves purchased the Leadenham advowson from Mrs. Smith in 1851.\(^{13}\) According to Mrs. Smith, her son's work in the parish had meant that 'the conduct of the villagers both in the church and out of it since my son's arrival is so manifestly improved that it is remarked by everyone'. This was despite what she saw as the efforts of the Reeves to check her family's usefulness. Where she had bestowed charity 'their favour is immediately withdrawn — and within the last month their agent went about the village trying to influence the "honorary members" to a clothing club instituted to withhold their subscriptions this year'. Other points of disagreement were the village girls' school and the church repair fund. These areas of friction between the two families reached back to the time of Mrs. Smith's late brother so that the Reeves' coolness to her 'was marked before my son entered the village'.\(^{14}\)

Whatever the background to the disputes at Leadenham, the bishop took a firm line against Bernard Smith's innovations in matters of ceremony and liturgy. He had apparently visited Leadenham in the late autumn of 1841. This was reported in the *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury* which commented:

> The zeal of the Bishop of Lincoln against the coming revival of Popish mummeries in the Church of England, has lately been put to the test by the young Rector of Leadenham, who, it seems, is a disciple of the crew who are seeking to acquire a despotism over the human mind that wielded by the parent-church through the means of her pomp and ceremony, and the engendering of superstition. In the fervency of his desire to revive the decaying influence of the priesthood, his enthusiastic reverence, it seems, introduced to the church a moveable cross, and an altar with a pair of candlesticks and burning tapers, the administering of the holy eucharist at an early hour in the morning by taper-light, and the adorning of the back of his surplice with a cross. The prayer-books also bore the emblem of the cross; and on the roof of the building the litany is painted in Latin. These things and various devices and ceremonies calculated to impress the ignorant mind with awe for the mysteries of religion and its priesthood, the Bishop, we are informed, has ordered to be removed, and the plain decorum of the church-service to be observed, in lieu of the pomp and show approximating to that of the Roman Catholic chapel...\(^{15}\)

A draft of the bishop's letter survives, dated 19 November 1841, in which he asked Smith to remove the cross and candlesticks from the altar except where the candles were needed to provide light. There was, he decided, no necessity for an early celebration of Communion, the use of the sign of the cross and bowing to the altar were in opposition to the principles of the Church of England and when Smith turned his back to the congregation he should ensure that all the service could be heard by them.\(^{16}\) Smith accepted the bishop's ruling on the altar cross and candlesticks and agreed to cease turning towards the altar during services. In a letter to Bloxam Pugin described the effect of these changes as meaning that the chancel at Leadenham 'has been as completely denuded of Catholic ornaments as if a troop of puritans had visited it in Cromwellian days'.\(^{17}\)

As well as making his ruling on the furnishing and ornaments of Leadenham parish church, the bishop had accused Smith of being in correspondence with Dr. Wiseman.\(^{18}\) He had denied this in his reply to Bishop Kaye in November 1841, but by December 1842 he was in contact with the Roman Catholic bishop. On a Monday in December he had left Leadenham for Nottingham. The following Thursday he had written to say that he had unexpectedly met with some friends at Nottingham which would prevent him from returning home as soon as he had hoped. This was followed on the Saturday by a letter resigning the living of Leadenham and stating his intention of becoming a Roman Catholic. Smith's mother was quick to point to the circumstances which she thought had led to her son's conversion. As well as Dr. Wiseman and Mr. Sibthorpe she blamed the influence of a Mr. Gubbins who had reconverted a Leadenham woman to Roman Catholicism 'and has ever since been indefatigable to gain Bernard also, ever intruding here, if possible, although my son wished to tell him he wished to avoid any intimacy'.\(^{19}\) Differences over the conduct of services and in the village had also played their part in undermining her son's position in the Church of England. Although it had not grieved him to remove the ornaments from the church his 'other concessions' to the Reeve family had done so. The modifications to the services and the alterations in their timing which had left all the afternoon to be divided between the meeting house and alehouses, and having no control over the boys' school, which is almost entirely neglected on the Sunday. All these circumstances tended to give him, latterly, gloomy views of his own usefulness here, and prepared him to listen with too favourable impressions to the invitation to join the Roman Catholic Church.\(^{20}\)

If the reasons for Bernard Smith's conversion can at least in part be found in the conditions in his Lincolnshire parish, the controversy which surrounded it involved a wider circle. Newman's involvement is set out in the *Apologia*:

> I happen still to have a correspondence which took place in 1843, in which the chief place is filled by one
of the most eminent Bishops of the day, a theologian and reader of the Fathers, a moderate man, who at one time was talked of as likely on a vacancy to succeed to the Primacy. A young clergyman in his diocese became a Catholic; the papers at once reported on authority from "a very high quarter", that, after his reception, the Oxford men had been recommending him to retain his living. I had reasons for thinking that the allusion was made to me, and I authorized the Editor of a Paper, who had inquired of me on the point, to "give it, as far as I was concerned, an unqualified contradiction"; — when from a motive of delicacy he hesitated, I added "my direct and indignant contradiction". Whoever is the author of it, I continued to the Editor, "no correspondence or intercourse of any kind, direct or indirect, has passed between Mr. S. and myself, since his conforming to the Church of Rome, except my formally and merely acknowledging the receipt of his letter, in which he informed me of the fact, without, as far as I recollect, my expressing any opinion upon it. You may state this as broadly as I have set it down."

A letter had appeared in the Morning Herald of 5 January 1843 purporting to be signed by Bernard Smith and denying that he had been converted to Roman Catholicism. This letter was sent to Bishop Kaye by the Revd. Robert Simpson of Newark, who said that he thought that Smith was acting the part of a Jesuit, "believing that he can serve the Papists' cause best by continuing Rector". In his correspondence with Ambrose Phillips de Lisle Smith had written at one stage:

You rather hurt me by saying I am going Jesuitical in some unknown bad sense. I cannot remember what I said, but I must tell you that I much suspect my letters are opened at the Post-Office at times, which makes me very enigmatic in saying things which I do not mean for everybody's ears...

He had also written about the possibility of his remaining an Anglican until he might lead some of his parishioners into the Roman Catholic Church and it is probable that Smith had revealed this in conversation. A letter signed "An Oxford Master of Arts" had appeared in the Morning Herald of 7 January 1843 citing reports of Smith's conversion from the Record, the Oxford Herald and the True Tablet. This letter stated:

I do not say that every individual embracing Roman Catholic opinions ought necessarily to leave the Church of England; but at all events let them in common honesty give up their preferment, their fellowships, and livings, which they have obtained upon the faith of subscription to Articles which they no longer believe, and cease to officiate in the pulpits of a Protestant Church.

The correspondent was Charles P. Golightly, who wrote to Bishop Kaye on 7 January 1843 with a copy of this letter and the one alleged to have been written by Bernard Smith to the Morning Herald in which he denied that he had been converted to Roman Catholicism. Golightly said that he had submitted Smith's denial of his conversion to three of the ablest members of the University of Oxford. Dr. Cardwell was inclined to believe Smith's letter to be a forgery, while the Provost of Oriel and Warden of Wadham "do not know what to think". He personally did not agree with Cardwell and thought that the letter did not look like a forgery. He had also had a slight correspondence with a clergyman called Simpson from Newark who said that he knew of a Tractarian clergyman in Leicestershire to whom it was proposed that he should join the Roman Catholic Church and "go on as usual and that it should never be known". Other converts had private means and had not needed support. Another was useful as a teacher at Oscott. "But of Mr. Smith no use could have been made, and I cannot but think that, after conforming to the Church of Rome, he has been recommended to return to Leadenham and "go on as usual"." Golightly went on to allege:

There is no doubt that the Church of England is betrayed by Mr. Newman. Mr. Stanley Faber has recently detected him in correspondence with Ambrose Phillips. Dr. Wiseman called upon him in Oxford last year subsequently to publication of Tract 90, and visited the monastic establishment which he has set up at Littlemore three miles off. And Mr. Ward, fellow of Balliol College, an intimate friend of his, has twice remarked to a friend of mine in conversation: "Of course we are a great deal connected with the Roman Catholics, and have perhaps more correspondence with them than you and your friends may imagine."

Bishop Kaye had, however, received Smith's resignation by 9 January 1843 when he had drafted a letter expressing pain and sorrow at the resignation and saying that he would not cease to pray for your recovery from the delusion under which you are now labouring. In a letter dated 9 January, which appeared in the Morning Herald on 13 January 1843 Smith repudiated as a hoax the letter denying his resignation. An Oxford Master of Arts informed the paper in a letter published on 17 January 1843 that "the real Mr. Bernard Smith has communicated the fact of his conversion to the Bishop of Lincoln and promised to take an early opportunity of forwarding to his Lordship the final resignation of his living.

However, suspicion of the motives of Newman and others lingered on. G. P. Golightly wrote again to Bishop Kaye on 14 January 1843 discussing Smith's resignation:

The conversion to Romanism of another fellow of Magdalen College has made a great sensation here. The world at large is very little aware of the very serious mischief going forward in this University, and it is only I think quite recently that the Heads of the Houses have become fully alive to it. Every Sunday Mr. Newman addresses a sermon at St. Mary's not to his own parishioners, whose instruction he never appears to contemplate, but to about 200 members of the University, one seventh proportion of the resident academic body; and the principles advocated by him would be intelligible only to assiduous readers of the British Critic. The effect is frightful. I am assured by undergraduate friends upon whose testimony I can rely that a decided majority of the more serious and thoughtful among the young men are fast verging to Romanism.

He continued: "...the University is betrayed." It was against this background that Newman wrote to the Editor of the English Churchman on 23 February 1843 denying reports that he had recommended Bernard Smith to retain his living and in a reply on 25 February the Editor told Newman that the source of the rumour was Smith's brother-in-law. This was the Revd. Henry Schneider of Carlton Scroop, Lincolnshire, who said later that he told the bishop of Lincoln that he had learnt of Smith and Newman's correspondence from Smith's mother, but he had mistakenly thought that it had taken place later than the Spring of 1842. On 27 February E. B. Pusey had also written to Kaye to contradict a report, 'that Mr. Bernard Smith had been recommended by some persons with whom I am connected, to retain his living, after he had forsaken our Church'. Pusey went on to say that neither Newman,
Lordship in speaking unfavourably, on the authority of my statement, or of the advice given by you to my brother-in-law. I will further express my personal regret, that I should have entertained an impression of your conduct, which, after your direct denial of the assumption on which it was founded, I admit to have been altogether erroneous.

Permit me to add that Bernard Smith never mentioned your name to me in other terms than those of affectionate respect, and that though I am fully persuaded his opinions were Romish in the Spring of 1842, when I first had the opportunity of ascertaining them, I am still willing to believe he did not then so account them himself, and that as soon as he felt his duty imperatively required him to desert his position, he took the step his family here have so much reason to lament. 37

Meanwhile, Newman had written to Kaye from Littlemore on 7 March expressing his gratitude for the bishop’s letter. This had given him an opportunity to deny the statements which ‘are from time to time reported to me as credited and repeated by the highest authorities in our Church, though it is very seldom that I have the opportunity of denying them.’ He then added, according to his account in the Apologia ‘with a purpose’ that he could see nothing wrong in a person holding Roman Catholic opinions remaining in communion with the Anglican church provided he held no preference or office, abstained from the management of ecclesiastical matters and was bound by no subscription or oath to Anglican doctrines. 38 He also added to his account of the affair in the Apologia that his letter to Bishop Kaye was in anticipation of my own retirement into lay communion. This again leads me to remark:— for two years I was in lay communion, not indeed being a Catholic in my convictions, but in a state of serious doubt, and with the probable prospect of becoming some day, what as yet I was not. Under these circumstances I thought the best thing I could do was to give up duty and to throw myself into lay communion, remaining an Anglican. 39

In view of his friendships and the influences which stemmed from them, Bernard Smith’s conversion to Rome was not in itself remarkable. The friction between his family and the Reeves was probably not enough to push him to a speedy conversion, although the opposition he encountered undoubtedly accentuated his advanced ritualistic views. His direct contact with Newman was slight and the comment, omitted from the Apologia that it was Smith’s duty not ‘to perplex himself with arguments in a question, to which in my private opinion he was unequal,’ puts their relationship into perspective. 40 Yet rumours about Newman’s own motives and attitudes were strong 41 and in the highly-charged atmosphere of 1843 the conversion of Bernard Smith, Rector of Leadenham, to Roman Catholicism, assumed momentarily a wider significance that it might otherwise have had.

FOOTNOTES
2 R. D. Middleton, op. cit., pp. 231-232; Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury, 7 June 1839.
3 John Rosse Bloxam, 1807-1891, Fellow of Magdalen 1833-63, curate to Newman at Littlemore, 1837-40; correspondent with Ambrose Phillips de Lisle (see below) and 1841-42 especially concerned with the possible reunion of the Anglican and Roman

Keble nor himself nor any who sympathised with them could ever give such advice. 32 Kaye’s reply was printed by Newman in the Apologia:

the bishop instantly beat a retreat. “I have the honour”, he says in the autograph which I transcribe, “to acknowledge the receipt of your note, and to say in reply that it has not been stated by me, (though such a statement has, I believe, appeared in some of the Public Prints), that Mr. Newman had advised Mr. B. S. to retain his living, after he had forsaken our Church. But it has been stated to me, that Mr. Newman was in close correspondence with Mr. B. S., and, being fully aware of his state of opinions and feelings, yet advised him to continue in our communion.” ” “Allow me to add”, he says to Dr. Pusey, “that neither your name, nor that of Mr. Keble, was mentioned to me in connexion with that of Mr. B. S.33

Newman himself then wrote to the bishop outlining his connection with Bernard Smith. Although he had seen him two or three times at gatherings in Oxford he had never as far as he could recollect had any conversation with him since he went into the diocese of Lincoln and had only written three letters to him. One of these was an acknowledgement of Smith’s informing Newman of his conversation; another in the preceding summer asked Smith to stay at Littlemore, which in fact he did not; while the earliest of the three was written about a year before at the request of a friend of Smith’s on the question of Smith joining the Roman Catholic Church. Smith had replied to this and Newman in turn had probably sent a note to explain points which had been misunderstood.

Of Smith’s feelings at the time, Newman only knew of his perplexity about Papal supremacy.

He professed to be searching in Antiquity, whether the see of Rome had formerly that relation to the whole Church, which Roman Catholics now assign to it. My letter was directed to the point, that it was his duty not to perplex himself with arguments in a question, to which in my private opinion he was unequal, and to put it altogether aside. I was not aware, nor am I now of his holding Purgatory, Image worship, or any other characteristic doctrine of the Roman Church. I had heard of his using the Breviary; I did not hear of his using it entirely. I know that he was very fond of the externals of religion, but I believe I had not heard of his holding any Roman or so-called Roman doctrine.

Newman added

there are very definite limits, beyond which persons who agree in my own religious views never would urge another to retain preference in the English Church, nor would retain it themselves; and that the censure which has been directed against them by so many of its Rulers has a very grave bearing upon those limits. 34

(passage in italics omitted or altered in the version of the letter printed in the Apologia).

Kaye told Newman in a letter drafted on 6 March 1843 that the charges against him had been made by a clergyman closely connected with Bernard Smith and asked for Newman’s permission to use Newman’s letter of explanation, which he would send to the informer. 35 On 17 March 1843, Schneider wrote to Newman what he described in the Apologia as ‘the letter of a gentleman’. 36

I now unhesitatingly apologise to you, for having conveyed the impression of my mind on this subject to the Bishop of Lincoln, in such terms as to justify his

4 Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, 1812-52; architect, ecclesiologist and writer; received into Roman Catholic Church soon after second marriage in 1833; believed Roman Catholicism and Gothic art to be associated, and took an almost religious obligation of Roman Catholics to encourage Gothic architecture and no other style; restored Grace Dieu Manor for Ambrose Phillips de Lisle (see below). (D.N.B. Vol. XLVII, London, 1896, pp. 6-10.)

R. D. Middleton, op. cit., pp. 222-33; William John Monson, afterwards Bishop Monson of Burton, visited the church in August 1833 and noted that the reredos presented a solid stone altar ‘in the old fashion, with shields round it, and at the corners, at the bottom, lions’, together with the east window of ‘modern painted glass’ (Lincolnshire Church Notes, Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 31, 1936, p. 244); Archdeacon Bonney noted in 1846 that the communion table, formerly a tomb, had been removed from some other place before the present Incumbent was in office’ (N.S. Harding [ed.], Bonney’s Church Notes, Lincoln, 1937, p. 272);

a report of restoration work at the church published in the Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury on 19 June 1861 noted that the east window of the church had been purchased in Belgium in 1827 by Thomas Brown; the same report commented, ‘The Chancel roof is mean, tawdry, low-pitched of deal, with yellow stars upon a blue background (we question whether this was the true polychrome of Grimaldi’s roof, and legends painted in illuminated letters upon the cross beams, of which there are 4. There are other illuminated legends in Latin upon the principals and side plates.’


Ambrose Lisle March Phillips de Lisle, 1809-1878; Catholic writer; born at Garendon Park, Leics.; received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1824; went to live at Grace Dieu and gave 230 acres of his land at Charnwood Forest to the re-establishment of the Cistercian order in England; became acquainted with J. R. Blythman (see above) in 1837 and began a correspondence with the leaders of the Oxford high church party which he maintained for many years; formed the Society for Prayers for the Conversion of England (L.B., Vol. IV, London, 1888, pp. 321-322.)


Lincolnshire Archives Office (subsequently L.A.O.C.; Cor. B5/1/1. The Colonel Reeve referred to in this letter seems to be Colonel [later General] John Reeve of Leadenham House, 1783-1864; he was prominent in the Magistrates General on 23 November 1841; married in 1821 his cousin Lady Susan Sherard, who also died 1864 (Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury, 7 October 1864; The Army List 1843, London, 1843, p.14.)


L.A.O. Cor. B5/1/2.


L.A.O. Cor. B5/1/2.

Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury, 17 December 1841.


L.A.O. Cor. B5/1/3; Nicholas Patrick Wasson, 1802-1865; educated at St. Catherine’s College, Oxford, and at Durham and the English College, Rome; ordained priest 1825; to England 1835 with duties at the Sardinian embassy chapel and after further spell in Rome appointed co-adjoctor to Dr. Walsh, Vicar Apostolic of the Midland district; 1840 consecrated Bishop of Melpontes and president of Osson College; to Rome 1847 and 1848 sent as Pope Pius IX’s diplomatic envoy to Viscous Palmerston; Pro-Vicar Apostolic of the London district 1848; Vicar Apostolic 1849; 1850 made cardinal and Archbishop of Westminster when the Catholic hierarchy was restored. (D.N.B. Vol. LXII, London, 1900, pp. 243-260.)


Printed in Appendix I, Middleton, op. cit., p.251.


E. S. Purcell, op. cit., pp. 253 and 281.


Charles Pourtaites Golightly, 1807-1855; educated at Eton and Oxford; held curacies in Kent and in 1836 was thought that he would take Newman’s ‘Chapel at Littlemore, which had no endowment, but had disagreement with Newman; lived at Oxford for the rest of his life struggling against what he regarded as the spread of Romanism in the Church of England and was a fierce opponent of Ritualism; was for some time curate of Headington and Vicar of Baldon Too; occasionally officiated at St. Peter in the East, Oxford (D.N.B. Vol. XXII, London, 1890, pp. 100-101.)


L.A.O. Cor. B5/1/11.


Apologia p.166; also printed in Middleton, op. cit., p.263.

L.A.O. Cor. B5/1/15; Apologia, p.167; a version of this letter is also printed in Middleton op. cit., pp. 263-265.


Apologia, p.167.


L.A.O. Cor. B5/1/16; also Middleton, op. cit., p.165 and Apologia, p.168 where the date is given as 8 March 1843.

Apologia, p.168.


Book Reviews

**PAUPER PALACES** by Anne Digby, x + 266pp., illus., Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, £6.95.

In November 1836 Mr. Edward Gulson, the Assistant Commissioner working in Lincolnshire to establish the provisions of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, was asked whether illegitimate children admitted to Lincoln workhouse should be separated from their mothers. He replied, ‘Yes; if it be an illegitimate child even at three years of age — for our great purpose is to work out a moral improvement of the population, and we therefore take such a child from its mother and place it in the Union School, feeling it our first duty to provide education for it’. The circumstances which lay behind this remark and the enquiry which prompted it are typical of a great number of similar situations which existed up and down the country in the 1830’s. Local administrators began to come to terms with the aims of the 1834 Act as enunciated by Assistant Commissioners such as Edward Gulson and began to interpret them in the light of local circumstances.

Although the Act might on the surface have seemed to set up a uniform administrative machinery for poor relief this was not quite the picture at local level. Compromises were made and there were adaptations to local circumstances from the outset. These continued throughout the nineteenth century. Anne Digby’s interesting book studies the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and its workings against the background of Norfolk life. In doing this she shows how the local historian can add considerably to our knowledge of poor relief in the nineteenth century. Some years ago J. A. H. Brocklebank in an article on ‘The New Poor Law in Lincolnshire’ (The Lincolnshire Historian Vol. 2 No. 9, 1962) began this work for Lincolnshire. There are considerable amounts of material from the county’s poor law unions in the Lincolnshire Archives Office. Guardians’ minute books, the records of the internal administration of workhouses and poor law unions, their correspondence with the Poor Law Board and the reports of the local press all await the