

II.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL REVENUES OF SHETLAND AFTER THE REFORMATION SETTLEMENT IN 1560. BY GILBERT GOUDIE, F.S.A. SCOT.

As is well known, the great accumulation of wealth in the hands of the Church in Scotland was one of the principal grounds of the clamour which assailed her at and prior to the Reformation. Much of that wealth was in the possession of monastic communities, and much of it was required to maintain the dignity of the prelates—the two archbishops with their suffragan bishops, ten or a dozen in number. Consequently the provision for the support of the ordinary (or “secular”) clergy throughout the country, especially in remote districts like Shetland, was at all times meagre enough. When at the Reformation the monastic possessions were seized by greedy nobles or erected into temporal lordships, and the parochial revenues, so far as not already made away with, had to be allocated between the ejected Catholic clergy and the Reformed ministers in the proportion of two-thirds to one-third (with deductions even from that), the position of the ministers became a somewhat precarious one. Every original document throwing light upon this, one of the most absorbing practical problems of the period, must therefore be welcomed.

In April 1884 I was enabled to produce to the Society an instructive report of this kind which I found in the charter-house of the city of Edinburgh, the city having held from the Crown a lease of the lands of the Bishopric of Orkney and Shetland for a period of eighteen years. The report showed the revenues of the benefices in all the Shetland parishes at its date. It was not possible to fix that date with precision; but, from the names of one or more of the then clergy, whose years of incumbency are elsewhere recorded, I felt justified in attributing it to the period between 1607 and 1615, say sixty years after the legalising of the Reformation in 1560.

By the kindness of William Arthur Bruce, Esq. of Symbister, Shetland, whose forebears have owned that estate since 1572, I have now been put in possession of another document from his family charter-chest, also containing careful details of the Church revenues of every parish in the islands. In this case also the date has to be gathered from internal evidence. One minister named, Patrick Hog of Fetlar, is stated in the *Fasti Ecclesie Scotice* to have been appointed to that parish in 1607, and to have died before 1st September 1624. This would seem to warrant our ascribing the document to a time within those two dates, notwithstanding that there are one or two slightly conflicting indications which would suggest a little later date.

The document is written in the ordinary character of that time; and while it is not clear whether it is an original paper or a copy, there can be no reasonable doubt of its genuineness or of the authenticity of its figures. I have not been able to ascertain under what particular injunction of the Crown or of the General Assembly these "Overtures" were compiled, but the information supplied is an important amplification of the material as yet accessible in print in regard to the financial arrangements of the Reformed Church in the islands in this early stage of its history. One of the most striking features exhibited in it is the amalgamation of neighbouring parishes under a single minister, due, no doubt, partly to the scarcity of qualified ministers, but more directly to the inadequacy of the means for the support of a full charge in each parish. As a matter of fact, this inadequacy of funds was the main determining cause of the drastic process of 1581, whereby the 924 Churches at that time in Scotland were reduced to 600. The effect of this is shown in the present document by the unwieldy combination, in several instances, of parishes of large extent in one ministry. This is not indeed to be wondered at when it is considered that at the Reformation settlement (1560-1570) one hundred merks (£66, 13s. 4d. Scots, or £5, 11s. 1½d. sterling) was considered a sufficient yearly stipend for an ordinary minister; readers receiving £20 Scots, or £1, 13s. 4d. sterling, for their services yearly. In the paper before us one example may be

quoted, that of one minister, Mr Thomas Henrie, who is responsible for the cure of souls in the widely extended parishes of Walls, Sandness, Papa, and Foula (here termed "Thule"), with the modest income of little more than £33 stg. per annum. This result of the suppression of the many district churches of the Roman Catholic period subsists to the present day in many of the widely extended "ministries" in Shetland, though in a few instances mission churches and chapels of ease have been supplied, and a few *quoad sacra* parishes have been formed. The enumeration of the communicants in the different parishes, afterwards specially referred to, is also of much interest. The patronage of all the parishes was vested in the bishop. One minister, William Moffat, incumbent of the united parishes of Dunrossness, Sandwick, Cunningsburgh, and Fair Isle, whose name was unknown to the author of the *Fasti*, appears in this list.

The terms of the document are as follows:—

OVERTOURIS FOR PLANTING OF THE KIRKS OFF ZETLAND.

The Archdeanrie Ting-wall Quhytnes Weisdail.

The patronage is alledgit to pertain to the Laird off Esselmont Be ane new erectioun.

The Laird of Esselmont fewar of the hail landis of the archdeanrie qlk wilbe worthe ane thousand merkis or better. And takisman off the hail teyndis both personage and vicarage. Qlk wilbe worthe yeirlie ane thousand merkis.

The minister hes no stipend. The present archdean hes onlie ane pensioun off twelff scoir libs.

The Kirkis becaus off Esselmontis few and takis ar to be provydit be him with vii^c merkis and for the elementis xx libs. Becaus this is the cheiff p[air]t & Seate off justice in the countrey. Communicants 700.

Nort maving Hildis-
weik Oliberrie Nort
Ry. M(inister) Gilbert
Mowat.

The Bishope patrone to the vicarage. Qlk hes or hed and yit hes the halff of the corneteynd as vicarage.

The minister vicar and his vicarage worthe v^c/merkis.

The elementis to be furnished and payed be the vicar. Communicantis 600.

The King for the half of the corneteynd worthe iii^c merkis.

Wallis Sandnes Papa
ane Ile. Thule ane Ile
distant xvi myles fra the
neirest land. M[inister]
Thom. Henrie.

M^d [Memorandum]
that I lay this burden
on the [minister?] and
fries the K[ing] heir
that he may be burdinit
in a uthir place.

Dunrosnes Sandwick
Cunnesbur^e Pair Ile ane
Ile distant xxiiij myles
fra all landis great
charge and transport
M[inister] Will. Muffet.

Nesting Lunasting
Quhailsay The Skerries
litle Islands.

The Mr. dead.

South Yell Mid Yell
North Yell all in ane
Ile xx mylis of extent.

Andrew Edmiston.

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The Bischope patrone to the vicarage. Qlk hes the half of the corneteynd as vicarage.

The minister hes the vicarage in his owne possession qlk wilbe worth the yeirlye v^c merkis. To be augmentit Becaus of the number of Kirkis with j^c libs. To be payit be his majestie his chalmerlaines and takismen off ther p[air]t of the teyndis of the saidis Kirkis. And for the elementis xx merkis To be payit the ane half thairoff be his majesties takismen and chalmerlaines, and the uthir half be the Vicar. Communicants 560.

Kingis half corneteynd worth the iiij^c/ merkis.

The Bischope patrone to the vicarages qlk hes the thride off the corneteynd as vicarages.

The ministeris stipend wes of old sex scoir libs. But now be paction is augmentit be the takisman James Sinclair off Quendaill to iiij^c merkis.

To be augmentit becaus of ye number of the Kirkis and far distance iiij^c merkis. To be payit be his majestie his chalmerlaines and takismen. Becaus his majestie hes the twa pairt of the corneteynd, qlk is worth the v or vi^c libs. And for the elementis xx libs to be payit equallie betwixt his majesties chalmerlaines and the takismen. Communicants 800.

The Bischope patrone to the vicarage qlk hes the half off the Corneteynd as vicarage.

The minster hes onlie xxx libs. Laurence Sinclair off Burgh is takisman of yie vicarage as he alledgis yit his take [i.e. tack] tho^t to be expyrit. The Vicarage is worth vj^c merkis. The ministeris stipend to be augmentit to vj^c merkis. To be payit v^c yroff Be the pretendit takisman and j^c merkis by his majestie his chalmerlaines and takismen quha possessis the half of the corneteynd of the saidis Kirk together with the half of the new teynd Lambis off the vicarages worth iiij^c merkis. And for the elementis xx merkis to be payit equallie betwixte his majesties Chalmerlaines and the pretendit takismen of the vicarage. Communicants 600.

The Bischope patrone to the vicarage qlk hes the half of the corneteynd as vicarage.

The ministeris stipend concertane Becaus he receavit the benefice in tak for payment off v^c merkis To be payit be him to Rob^t Menteith of Egilshay takisman of the vicarage, wha allowit to him his stipend out of

the said vicarage attour and besyde the v^e merkis payit to him yeirlic be the minister.

Thir Kirkis to be plantid Be payment off v^e merkis, with xx merkis for the elementis. The tua pairt thair-off to be takin of the takisman, and the thirde pairt to be payit be his majestie his Chalmerlaines and takismen of ther pairt of the teyndis of the saidis Kirkis. Communicants 600.

Kingis pairt worth
iiij^e lib.

Fetlar.

The Bishope patrone of the vicarage. Qlk hes the fourth pairt off the corneteynd as vicarage.

Patrik Hog minister hes the vicarage in possessioun qlk is worth iiij^e merkis. To be augmentit ij^e merkis to be payit by his majestie his Chalmerlaines and takismen, Becaus they possess and upliftis thrie pairtis of the Corneteynd qlk wilbe worth yeirlic iiij^e merkis and for elementis xx merkis to be payit equallie betwixte his majesteis takismen and the Vicar. Communicants 320 (?).

Unst Sandwick Bail-
zestay Nort. Kirk.

All in an Iyll of 8
myle lenth.

The Bishope patrone to the vicarage, qlk hes the half off the Corneteynd as vicarage.

The ministeris stipend is sex scoir libs. James Sinclar brother germane to Laurence Sinclair of Aythe is takisman off the vicarage worth a thusand merkis.

The stipend is to be augmentit iiij^e merkis To be payit equallie be the takismen and his majesteis chalmerlaines and takismen quha possessis and upliftis the half of the Corneteynd of the saidis Kirkis. And for the elementis xx merkis to be payit equallie betwixt the takismen and his majesteis Chalmerlaines. Communicants 600.

Kingis pairt worth vj
or vij^e merkis.

Bressay Burray.

5 peice of corn teind.

The Bishope patrone to the vicarage, q^{lk} hes as vicarage the half of the Corneteynd as vicarage. The Vicarage worthe iiij^e merkis.

Thir Kirkis to be augmentit iiij^e merkis becaus they ly distant fra utheris aucht myles of Land and tua ferreis qlk makis great Chargeis, Becaus of the weiklie transport taking over the said ferreis And for the elementis xx merkis (?) augmentatioun is to be payit by his majestie his takismen and chalmerlaines quha upliftis yeirlic the half of the Corneteynd of the saidis Kirkis. Communicants 400.

[Kingis pairt] worth
— merkis.

Aythesting Sandsting.

The Bishope patrone to the vicarage qlk hes the half of the Corneteynd as vicarage and the vicarage teyndis worthe yeirlic iiij^e merkis neirby.

The Kingis pairt worth
ij^c mark.

Thir Kirkis to be augmentit j^c merkis to be payit by his majestie his Chalmerlaines and takismen quha upliftis yeirlie the half of the Corneteynd of the saidis Kirkis. And for the elementis xx merkis. Communicants 350.

Delting Laxo Olna-
firth.

The Bishope patrone to the vicarage qlk hes the half of the Corneteynd as vicarage and the vicarage teyndis worthe iij^c merkis. To be augmentit j^c merkis To be payit by his majestie his Chalmerlaines and takismen wha upliftis yeirlie the half of the Corneteynd of the saidis Kirkis. And for the elementis xx merkis. Communicants 360.

Kingis pairt worth
vj^c libb.

A comparison of the foregoing with the statement submitted in 1884, printed in vol. xviii. p. 291 of the *Proceedings* of the Society, shows that the revenues are differently described in the two documents, the later one being usually more specific in detail, and generally estimating in money value what in the former is merely descriptive of the nature and extent of the revenues from land and in kind. As an example, the case of the first parish quoted may be cited. In the document printed in 1884 the facts are given as follows :—

Tingwall, Weisdail.—The Archdeanrie is twentie sevin peise Corne teind the bow [*i.e.* cattle] teind fyve barrell butter the bot [boat] teind thre scoir guidlingis with hail lamb and woll. *Item* thair pertenis to the Archdeanerie twentye last of land [*i.e.* say 360 merks] with twell mark for the glebe and the samyn [same] is set in long takis [tacks] and few to the laird of Esslemont be Sir James Hay. This benefice hes twa Kirkis.

In the statement now submitted the value of the lands of the Archdeanerie, held by Esslemont, is stated to be “worthe ane thousand merkis or better”; and the whole teinds, both parsonage and vicarage, of which he is also the tacksman, “will be worthe yearlie ane thousand merkis” [£55, 11s. 1d. stg.]. The minister is said to have no stipend, the present archdean having “onlie ane pensioun off twelff scoir libb”; but, because of Esslemont’s feu and tacks, the churches of the united parishes of Tingwall, Whiteness, and Weisdale are to be provided by him with 700 merks yearly, and 20 pounds for communion elements. This instance is a clear illustration of the diversion of the Church property into lay hands, and the consequences to the Church.

The particulars in regard to the other parishes are specifically amplified in the same way. Though the provision for the support of the ministry is in appearance so ludicrously small, the figures may probably not be very remote in purchasing power from the same amounts of sterling money at the present day.

In my former paper printed in the *Proceedings* I endeavoured to throw some light upon the fiscal arrangements generally for the support of the ministry, as these were gradually brought into shape after the convulsions of the Reformation. This need not be repeated, but the attenuated portion of the ancient revenues of the Church which remained for the Reformed clergy was, as has already been shown, so inadequate for the purpose as to be a cause of perpetual and bitter complaint by Knox and his successors in their Supplications and representations to the Estates and Council during the minority of James VI. and later. Matters might have been gradually adjusted as the two-thirds left to the Catholic clergy fell in by their deaths but for the Tacks and Assignations of lands and revenues which had been granted, before the Reformation as well as after it, to lay "impropriators," in permanent detriment of the patrimony of the Kirk. The effect of all this is shown in the document now submitted, in which the Tacksmen and the King's Chamberlains repeatedly appear as uplifting the half of the [thirds of the] corn teind, while in several instances the whole teinds are seen to be in the hands of laymen who, it may be safely assumed, allowed as little as possible to the claims of the minister.

Persistent efforts were from time to time made to check the process of dilapidation of the Church revenues, as at the Conference at Leith, in January 1572, between the Commissioners of the Crown and the Kirk, when it was enacted—

That all fewes, rentals or tacks of anie spirituall livings or promotiouns to be made after the date of this present rental sall be in law null and of none avall.

At this time the Commissioners of the Kirk took in hand to have, in authentic form, a Book of the Rentals of the Church prepared, to remain

with the Regent (the Earl of Morton) for the King's use, in order that more formal resolution should be taken in the nomination and disposition of benefices. If that book is preserved, it must be of inestimable value as a record of the temporalities of the Church in the beginning of the Reformation period. It may possibly be the folio volume of the Register of Ministers and Readers and Assignations of Stipends of the year 1574, preserved in the Advocates' Library, a brief abstract of which was printed in the *Miscellany*, vol. i., of the Wodrow Society. In that volume some of the Shetland parishes are strangely mixed up, as might be expected in such a time of transition. Thus, Tingwall, Whiteness, Weisdale, Nesting, Whalsay, and the Skerries are all under one minister, Hierom Chein, with two "Readers," for the whole united parishes. The stipend is "the haille third of his Archdeanerie of Zetland," £80. The other ministers throughout the islands, with their stipends, are briefly noted in the same way.

The two recently discovered documents, the later of which is the subject of the present paper, are only thirty or forty years later in date than the volume of 1574, and the three combined enable us to obtain a fairly accurate view of the provision for the Reformed ministry in the islands at that early period. Several other volumes of the Books of Assignations are preserved in the General Register House, and if these are ever printed, the path of the ecclesiastical historian in regard to the personnel and the finances of the ministry of the early-Reformation period will be greatly cleared.

It is not necessary here to inquire into the process by which the Teinds in Shetland, in their valuation and in the method of uplifting them in kind, have been recast from time to time to meet changing circumstances, and the conflicting claims of the King, the tacksman, the minister, the poor, and education, until the present day, when, as I understand, almost the whole, if not the whole, have been converted into money payments by the heritors. The collection of the tithes drawn from corn and other produce must have been attended with much inconvenience and irritation both to the people and to the bene-

ficiaries. I was once informed by an aged native that the tenth sheaf had been set aside and carried off the ground in certain districts at a date by no means distant from my informant's own time, and by another that on one occasion, in the early part of last century, the tithe of fish ("boat teind") had been demanded from him as "vicarage," though the demand was scouted as obsolete. I do not, however, propose to enlarge upon the question of Teinds, a complex and difficult one, though pertinent, so far, to the subject of this paper; and I content myself with putting on record the particulars which the document now submitted contains, for the benefit of future inquirers on the subject.

Attention deserves to be called to one point of statistical importance brought out in the MS., namely, the enumeration of the Communicants in each of the parishes, which is given as follows:—

Tingwall, Whiteness, and Weisdale	700
Northmaven, Hillswick, Ollaberry, and North Roe	600
Walls, Sandness, Papa, and Foula	560
Dunrossness, Sandwick, Cunningsburgh, and Fair Isle	800
Nesting, Lunnasting, Whalsay, and Skerries	600
South Yell, Mid Yell, North Yell	600
Fetlar	320
Unst, Sandwick, Baliasta, North Kirk	600
Bressay, Burray	400
Aythsting and Sandsting	350
Delfting, Laxo, Olnafirth	360
Total communicants	<u>5890</u>

It may not be altogether satisfactory to compare these figures with the statement of the communicants of the Church of Scotland at the present time, partly owing to a probably more restricted system of communion now, to the presence of dissenting elements in almost every district, and to variations in the parochial boundaries. The enumeration is nevertheless of great interest, looking to its early date, about three centuries ago, and only about half a century after the Reformation settlement in 1560, up to which time the whole population were attending Mass, in full communion with the Roman Church. At the date of enumeration, no doubt, almost all adult persons had qualified as

Protestant communicants, as to be absent from church or the sacrament would have made the absentee suspect as a "Papist," with all the attendant pains and penalties, including liability to death itself for the offence of hearing Mass for the third time.

THE BISHOPRIC ESTATE IN SHETLAND.

In the foregoing remarks I have not referred to the lands or the revenues otherwise in Shetland which belonged to the Bishop of Orkney, represented in that portion of the diocese by the Archdeacon, who was always the incumbent of Tingwall: I have confined myself to the ordinary provisions for maintaining ordinances in the different parishes.

The Bishopric lands in Shetland, as in Orkney, appear to have been interspersed with those of the Earldom and of other owners until the year 1614, when these Bishopric lands were made over to the Earldom in exchange for other lands lying together in certain parishes in Orkney, which lands thereafter formed a compact Bishopric estate. We have already seen that the lands of the Archdeanerie, probably the principal portion claimed as the Bishopric property in Shetland, had at the time of our present document been feued to the laird of Esselmont. This was, in all likelihood, an equivocal transaction of the kind customary at the time, Sir Hierom Cheyne of the Esselmont family in Aberdeenshire having been the last Archdeacon in office at the Reformation. I have not been able to ascertain on what terms this feu professed to be granted, but if it was couched in any plausibly legal form the lands could not be included in this excambion with the Earldom, and may be assumed, as private property under the contract of feu, to have disappeared for ever from the bishopric or archdeanery estates. The bishop and the archdeacon were themselves at the time far on the way to extinction as ecclesiastics. No wonder, then, that the minister "hes na stipend," the Archdeacon having "only a pension of 240 pounds" (Scots); and there was every reason why Esselmont, because of his feu, should have to provide the three kirks of Tingwall, Whiteness, and Weisdale (no less than 700

communicants) with 700 merks, and 20 pounds for the "elements," all as described in the paper.

Since the above was written, there has been placed in my hands by Mr Horatius Bonar, F.S.A. Scot., "The Teind Book of Fetlar, as the Tithes were uplifted for John Bonar, the Minister. Anno 1734." Though the date is more than a century later than the document I have now had the honour of submitting, the facts and figures which the book contains (from which I am permitted to make extracts) in regard to the nature and incidence of the Teind Collection in one of the Shetland islands at that time have an important bearing upon the subject of the present paper. The following preliminary explanations, apparently for guidance of the collector in exacting the tithes, are given:—

Note.—That every 6 oaring [6 oared boat, worked by 6 men] pays 18 Ling, and every 4 oaring [4 oared boat with 4 men] pays 12 Ling.

The first year a Boat is put to sea they pay no Teind, therefore they pay the year after she is laid up or lost. So

If they row in a 6 oar'd Boat, or in a 4 oar'd, the first year they so row, payment is made according to the Boat used the preceding year.

In gathering up of the Bow Teind [*i.e.* Cattle; *old Norse*, Bú] every Tid cow payes 5 merks Buttar, every Forrow cow and every tid quey payes 3 merks, and every forrow quey $1\frac{1}{2}$ merks of Buttar.

All these are reckoned tid which calve betwixt 25 March and 15 of August.

For every Calf the Teind is 8 pennies Scots.

Every Teind Lamb payes 4 merks Wool and when the Stock arises not to a Lamb the Teind is for each Ew and Lamb 2 pence.

The Teind Gryce [Pig] and the Teind of Eggs is also payable to the Minister.

Every merk Land pays for Corn Teind 4 merks Buttar and $\frac{1}{2}$ a Can of Oil in Fetlar. A Can contains a Scots quart.

The following is an example of an account for the year rendered to a Teind payer:—

WILLIAM ROSIE IN LITTLAND DR.

	£	Sh.	Ds.
1733 To Boats Teind 18 Ling	2	14	"
To last years Ballance 4 Ling of Boat's Teind	"	12	"
To Bow Teind 20 merks	2	8	"
To Sheep Teind $1\frac{1}{2}$ Lamb and 6 merks Wool	1	16	"
To Calf Teind 2 sh. and Boats freight 1733	"	4	"
	<hr/>		
L Scots	7	14	"

Contra Creditor.

	£	Sh.	Ds.
1733 Pr 18 Ling of Boats Teind rec ^d	2	14	„
Pr 4 Ling resting [unpaid] rec ^d	„	12	„
Pr 20 merks Buttär rec ^d	2	8	4
Pr 1 Lamb rec ^d marked to the Hill	„	12	„
Pr 8 Ling rec ^d	1	4	„
Pr Ballance resting Novr. 21, 1733	„	4	„
		<hr/>	
	L Scots	7	14 4

Further illustrations might be given, but the above may suffice in the meantime.