

Visitation of Bishop Thomas Secker -1738

In 1737 Thomas Secker was appointed as Bishop of Oxford, and in the following year he carried out a Visitation of his parishes, as our Bishop Steven is currently undertaking.

He recorded that in only 78 of the 180 parishes was the vicar resident in the parish. Another 14 of the parishes saw their incumbents for only half of the year. The remaining 88 parishes were served by curates, most of whom received disgracefully low salaries. Many of them were Fellows of Oxford colleges, and most did no more than ride out to the villages on Sunday morning.

In advance of Bishop Thomas' visit, each Rector was required to submit answers to a series of questions. The following is but one example of the responses:

The Rector of Oddington was Rev. Thomas Dickinson, and his report to the Bishop was as follows:

The extent or Circumference of the Parish I guess to be about three Miles only one little Village five and twenty Houses the Parsonage House ten Farm Houses fourteen Cottages Houses for labourers and other poor People. We have no Family of Note in it.

1. There is no Papist in it.
2. There is no Presbyterian Independent or Anabaptist in it.
3. There is no Quaker in it.
4. There are not in my Parish any who profess to disregard Religion tho' there are some few who commonly absent themselves from Church on the Lord's Day.
5. I do not constantly reside upon my Cure. I have a tenant in part of the Parsonage House who rents the Tithe and Glebe the other part of ye Parsonage House I keep to my own use where I frequently come as there is occasion. I live at Islip a mile distance.
6. Public Service is duly perform'd twice every Lords Day in the Church and one Sermon preach'd Prayers are read on most Holy Days in the year. There's no Chapel in the Parish. The children are constantly catechis'd in Lent. The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is administer'd four times every year and a pretty many receive it each time.
7. There is no Free School Hospital or Alms-House in the Parish.

8. There is no voluntary Charity School in the Parish.
11. There is no money given at the Offertory.
12. There is no other matter that I know of proper to give Your Lordship in formation of Witness my hand this 22nd day of July 1738

Thomas Secker became Dean of St. Paul's cathedral in 1750, and was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury on 21 April 1758.