

Shakespeare As A Tithe Holder

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William Shakespeare(1564-1616) was endowed with genius; an actor, playwright, poet, and man of business. He was not only an imaginative and literary person, but also a wealthy and investing one. The man of genius slept in the yard of the Stratford Parish Church on 23 April 1616 as a tithe holder, about a month after he rewrote his will. He was born on 26 April 1564 in Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. He was “Gulielmus filius Johannes Shaksper” (*WSh.II*, 1) in the Parish register, and died on 23 April 1616 which fell on the same day when he was born. This great dramatist retired from the stage in London, died a few years later in Stratford-upon-Avon, and was buried on 25 April 1616: “Will Shakspeare, gent” (*WSh.II*, 143) was recorded at the Parish Church. “Parish” was an area where an ordained rector took care of the laity spiritually and where he was supported as incumbent from endowed land and tithes.

Shakespeare was believed to become in 1594 one of the Lord Chamberlain's Men(1582-1603), and the King's Men(1603-42), a group of actors who were given the sponsorship of King James I(1566-1625, king of England and Ireland 1603-25). He might be a major actor in the company by 1598, and the most important person by 1603, acting and writing plays for his company. Shakespeare was also one of the housekeepers(sharers) of this dramatic company, while he was interested in moneymaking. He invested in the real estates both in London and in Stratford, his native village where he did in the tithes.

Long years after King Henry VIII(1491-1547, king of England, 1509-1547) sold the tithe income privileges, Shakespeare, son of a local glove-maker(John Shakespeare, c.1530-1601), bought one of them, about one-fifth of the Stratford tithes, on 24 July 1605 for 440 pounds. This privilege brought him 60 pounds per year, and made him live comfortably in the second largest house, New Place, in Stratford-upon-Avon after he retired about 1611 from the stage in London. He paid 60 pounds in 1597 for the New Place to live with his children and parents as he succeeded in London and invested also his money in Stratford real estates, one of which was the New Place. After he paid lots of money for an interest in the tithes and finally went back to his home village, his name continues to appear in London records. For example, he paid 140 pounds on 10 March 1613 for a gatehouse close to the Blackfriars theatre, which was probably one of his investments. In the same month he and his fellow actor Richar Burbage(c.1568-1619) received 44 shillings each as they supplied an impresa to the Sixth Earl of Francis Manners Rutland(1578-1632) at a court tournament.

Shakespeare purchased the tithes but had to charge himself with employment of a parish priest and care of the chancel. This is why he could sleep eventually in Holy Trinity Church in 1616 as a tithe holder.

Referring to a dictionary, we can know its origin or meaning. It is a tenth part of one's yearly income paid voluntarily or due as a tax, especially for the support of the clergy or church; a tax or assessment of one tenth. It is the old ordinal numeral in English, goes back to a prehistoric West Germanic spelling "tehuntha-" formed from the cardinal numeral "tehun=ten," "teogothian=tenth" in Old English, and the same ordinal suffix that survives in Modern English as "-th."

A tithe was a tenth part of the products of land(praedial), of the earnings of labour(personal), and those out of the ground and from work(mixed), which people provided for the clerical incumbent of a parish benefice since the ancient times. Part of the same amount was set apart as an offering to God for works of mercy, regarded as an obligation or a tax to support the church. In England it was originally voluntary, which was made compulsory in the 10th century.

Its system, however, is a biblical concept that has been known for thousands of years. It is found, for instance, in Genesis 14 where Abraham is contributing a "tithe" to the priest Melchizedek. When he returned from the rescue of his nephew Lot from four enemy kings, saw the priest on the way, and voluntarily provided him one-tenth of all the spoils he had won from his enemies. Like this he tithed about 430 years before the Law was given to Moses. The tithe was indeed not a law in the days of Moses, but the system, however, worked out well. It was, therefore, a custom since the period of Old Testament and accepted by the church that the laity provided one 10th of their income for Christian or ecclesiastical purposes, and legal obligation. Centuries later it became one of taxes as well, which was recognized to be original, genuine, and able to be justified. Of old it was one tenth of the agricultural, natural, expected profit of land and stock, and was collected to be offered to the parish church for keeping clergymen and their assistants.

People had to pay their tithes as a legal obligation, which derived from the older moral duty, dates back to the ancient history. No one discussed the origin, until it became a responsibility to be enforced by legal penalties different from a voluntary donation. The faithful followed it as a moral duty to provide a tenth parts of products to the clergy from the 4th century onwards, throughout the Christian world. The customs gradually grew to be a kind of obligation, which finally forced the laity to pay the religious tithes as a civil duty, not by appeals to conscience or even by spiritual penalties, but by real punishment. This last policy by which their tithes be changed from moral obligations into legal debts happened at different dates in the different countries of Europe.

Before the 6th century in England the clergy advised people to contribute one tenth of fruits to God, which was established by the Christian followers, whereas the preaching was the more forcible since it came from the authorities. The sacred orders and the worldly royals later made such as acre, strips, fields, farms, barns, flocks, herds, ponds, wood disperse among the country.

More than 2000 Medieval tithe barns were gradually built in England between the Norman conquest in 1066 and 1400, some 200 of which still dot the English countryside. Henry II (1133-89, King of England), for instance, regarded a tithe as an ecclesiastical one in "The Saladin Tithe" (1188) in order to provide funds for the Third Crusade. He might have paved the way for a beginning of secular taxation of rent and movable goods in England. In Middle Ages between 500 and 1,000 years taxes were different from those in a modern economy, and paid due to roughly the same organizations in the form of crops, stock and other agricultural and natural products. As the kings granted the tithe of 10 percentage to the churches, it was not an optional charitable donation. In those days every person had to willingly supply one tenth of his rents and movable goods, except for the arms, horses, clothing of knights, books, vestments, church furniture of the clergy, and precious stones of the clergy or laymen. Tithes could also be purchased and sold in England as in the Continent.

Tithes were originally paid in the actual form of crops, farm stock, wool, milk; every tenth egg, sheaf of wheat, lamb, chicken, all other animals, and so on. They were part of the yearly output of cultivated land or farms, and provided by each parishioner to support the clergy, pilgrims, maintain churches, or the poor. Tithing was also a main source of subsidy to build big or magnificent cathedrals in Europe. The tithes were paid in principle on every harvest of the ground such as grain, vegetables and wood, on the livestock nourished by the ground such as young cattle, sheep and horses, on animal produce such as milk, eggs and wool, and on the results of man's labour such as the gains out of mills or fishing. People called their donations prebendal, mixed and personal tithes, which were also divided into both great and small ones. The former were generally corn, grain, wheat, oats, hay or wood; the latter, all other prebendal, mixed and personal tithes such as poultry, fruit, herbs, honey, lambs, chickens, eggs. It was not universal but common for laymen to pay the former to the rector; the latter to the vicar.

The laymen began to possess both much church land and the rectorial tithes, partly because the monasterial system dissolved gradually. Eventually these tithes passed into the hands of the new owners as a personal property. In deed money payments were substituted of old for those in kind, because of a further movement of enclosures, which often aimed to improve land, farms or the products. The clergy and new sharers of the tithes could be glad to receive an increased income, if such cultivation with good care of tithes would be improved without preliminary enclosure, which also caused disturbance, serious troubles and lawsuits in

England.

On the other hand, the tithe system grew to be obligatory as Christianity spread in England and the Continent in spite of serious opposition. The church welcomed it under an ecclesiastical law from the sixth century, while a secular law compelled people to pay their tithes in Europe from the 8th century. Payment also became obligatory in the tenth century in Great Britain under ecclesiastical penalties by Edmund I(921-46. King of England, 940-46). St. Gregory VII(c. 1020-85. Pope, 1073-85) declared the laymen's possession of tithes to be illegal in the fourteenth century in order to control their abuses. During Protestant Reformation in sixteenth century, Martin Luther(1483-1546) accepted that they should pay tithes to secular lords or churches. People, however, showed resistance to the system step by step. The ecclesiastical courts were annoyed with the lawsuits of tithes between the clergy and the laity, or between worldly owners and laymen. In the seventeenth century there also existed internal customs, and consequently they were important tax tithes to the church which continued at ten percent of annual fruits throughout the century in England.

In the days of ambiguity Shakespeare was in relations to tithes and enclosures. The the words “tithe” was penned 5 times (*The First Part of Henry IV*(1597). 3. iii; *Hamlet*(1601). 3.iv; *King John*(1596). 3.i; *Troilus and Cressida*(1602). 2.ii; *Sir Tomas More*(1595). 3)-- “tithed” (*Timon of Athens*(1607). 5.iv) once, “tithe-pig's tail” (*Romeo and Juliet*(1595).1.iv) once, “tithe's to sow” (*Measure for Measure*(1604). 4.i) once, “tithe-woman” (*All's Well That Ends Well*(1602). 1.iii) once, “tithing” (*King Lear*(1605). 3.iv) once--in Shakespeare's works of the First Folio published in 1623. He was an investor as well as great playwright, sharer in the Lord Chamberlain's-King's Men, and partner in the Globe and Blackfriars theatres. He perhaps could earn about 200 pounds yearly at the height of his career, and invested his money effectively in several properties around Stratford and London, as well as in farm revenues or New Place. The extant record, for instance, shows that he likewise holds one cottage and one garden by estimation a quarter of one acre, and pays rent yearly “ ijs vjd.”

Stratford tithes, which consisted of those in the Parish and in Old Stratford, were rented from former monasrery land, and granted to the governing Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon, which leased them to individuals who often subleased them to the others. William Barker(fl. 1544) gained possession of a ninty-one year' to Sir John Huband(? -1583), steward to the Earls of Warwick and Leicester. His brother Ralph Huband (? -1605) was given the half of John's leasehold. After having made and held a lot of money for more than ten years in London, it was in 1605 that Shakespeare paid 440 pounds to Ralph Huband for one of these subleases that included the rentals in the Stratford-upon-Avon area and the adjacent hamlets of Old Stratford,

Welcombe, and Bishopton. His interest from the corn and hay tithes brought him 60 pounds a year, though he had to pay annual rents of 5 pounds to the owner of the original lease, John Barker (fl. 1605) and 17 pounds to the Stratford Corporation. Shakespeare, therefore, earned 38 pounds every year as an investor. His friend Anthony Nash(? -1622) gathered Shakespeare's tithes, and witnessed both his purchase of land in 1602 and an agreements between Shakespeare and William Replingham(fl.1614) in 1614. The other half of the lesehold interests was in the hand of the Combes, and another larger part of the tithes, of Richard Lane(fl. 1611), whose total mean rent was 27 pounds, 13 shillings, and 4 pence. One of the sale documents extant in the Stratford Corporation reads concerning Shakespeare, "Indenture between Raphe Hubande of Ippesley...on thone parte...William Shakespear of Stratforde vpon Avon...on thother parte...This indenture nowe witnesseth that...Raphe Hubande...the somme of foure hundred and fourtye poundes of lawfull Englishe money to him by...William Shakespear...payed... whereof...Hubande...sett over vnto the sayed William Shakespear...the moytie or one half of all and singuler the sayed tythes of corn, grayne, blade and heye, yearlye...in the townes, villages, hamlettes, groundes and fyeldes of Stratforde, Olde Stratforde, Welcombe and Bushopton...and also one half of... tythes of wooll, lambe, and other smalle and pryvie tythes, herbage, oblacions, obvcncious, alterages, mynumentes and offeringes whatsoever...(July 24, 1605)"

(E. K. Chambers. *William Shakespeare*. 1, 120-21.)

There were also other leaseholders of tithes that originated from Barker, but all of them didn't pay their share as lots of the subleases were not defined exactly.

This is the reason why in 1614 proceedings took place in order to enclose land at Welcombe, within the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon, in which Shakespeare had an interest in the tithes. Beforehand, William Combe(fl. 1611) living in Stratford-on-Avon, had secured the consent of Lord Chancellor Ellesmere to his plan, as representative of the Crown, and the possitive co-operation of the Chancellor's steward. In 1614 this land owner, one of the Combes and the Crown tenant, tried to convert his arable land from thse open farms of Welcombe, enclose it, and lay it down into pasture, and also expected to enclose a lot of his ancient greens or pasture as his rights of pasturage. After the Corporation of Stratford severely resisted his plan, William Combe agreed to compensate the sublese holders more than the acual price of their tithes. He expected, on the other hand, to repair the roads passing over his land, and insised to increase the value of their rights of the freeholders and the tenants, wishing to turn out sheep and cattle on the commons. Then he did so by himself, preparing to enclose his land by surrounding it with a ditch and hedge, whearas it resulted in much dispute and trouble because the townspeople angrily filled in his ditch. Moreover, peace in Stratford-upon-Avon

faced to serious smash, and on 27 March 1615, at Warwick Assizes, Lord Chief Justice sentenced to the Combes that “noe inclosure shal be made within the parish of Stratforde.” The small vaylleyes command part of these common fields of Welcombe today.

The Subleases holders eventually were to be compensated for any loss. In 1611 Shakespeare drafted with the two other holders of subleases, Thomas Greene(c. 1595-1640), his cousin, and Richard Lane, a Bill of Complaint that the Combes and others parties didn't pay their share, to protect their rights. The Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation protested the plan to enclose land, to a slow solution of which the conflict between them continued for several years. The three sublease holders brought it in a hurry before the Court of chancery in 1611,

“dayly oratours Richard Lane of Awston...Thomas Greene, of Stratford uppon Avon...and William Shackspeare, of Stratford uppon Avon...your oratours Richard Lane and William Shackspeare, and some fewe others of the said parties, are wholly...usually dryven to pay the same for preservacion of their estates...”

(E. K. Chambers. *William Shakespeare*. 1, 122-24.)

William Combe agreed finally to pay rent--5 pounds, 6 shillings, and 8 pence--if all the other paid their share, in a document to reply to this Complaint. Besides, a number of Greene's notes about it have survived. He said in the Stratford Corporation documents “At my Cosen Shakspeare...he told me that they assured him they ment to inclosenoe further...I alsoe wrytte to my Cosen Shakespeare...a not of the Inconveniences wold grow by the Inclosure...” (E. K. Chambers. *William Shakespeare*. 1, 142-43.)

“Enclosure” or “inclosure” meant land enclosed from the waste or open fields. Throughout 15th and 17th centuries a farming system gradually changed with the social and economical ones. Fifteen century saw that land owners, for example, tried to promote to enclose land, a lot of its strips or common fields by ditches and hedges. It profited especially sheep rearing but impoverished the country people as it caused much damage to their cultivatestrips and other rights. They suffered terribly from enclosure proceeding in Tudor(1485-1603) and early Stuart (1603-1714) era. The titheholders were not active when people tried to cultivate the soil. They supplied neither payment nor labour to the enterprise of the farm lands, but they got the interests derived from increased or better productiveness. Interests of landlords was often collided with those of new lease owners. The former's actual ways was were frequently oppressed by the courts of law, whose evidence is the proposed enclosure of the commonfields at Welcombe, near Stratford-on- Avon. It is also the important facts that tell us a rare public life of William Shakespeare or the social establishment in the Shakespearen times.

The plan, what is called 'Enclosure', is considered as one of the major sources to cause the big troubles in the 16th and 17th centuries. Natural, agricultural, and open customs were maintained since Anglo-Saxon and Middle Ages, whereas the clergy or laity owned lands randomly divided in a few or smaller strips and acres, where Welcobe Enclosure was included. Its purpose was to group these uneconomic strips and acres together by means of enclosure, which gave rise to both benefits, social unstableness, or troubles. As a result the riots occurred in Stratford in 1615 and 1616 concernig Enclosure troubles. Shakespeare's attitudes, however, is doubtless uncertain about it and may have favoured it, all documents of which are missing.

Shakespeare's tithes also extended over Welcobe, a village close to and hamlet in the Stratford parish, about one mile northeast of his town. In 1602 he invested in 127 acres of land in Old Stratford, and in 1605 in the sublease of tithes covering the fields of three hamlets. When Arthur Mainwaring(fl. 1614), landowner in Welcombe and supporter of enclosure, and his cousin William Replingham, proceeded to enclose these fields or farmlands in Welcombe in 1614 to keep sheep. Shakespeare with the other tithe holders opposed the scheme that would lose their interests if arable land were changed into pasture. On 28 October 1614 Replingham promised to compensate him and Thomas Greene for any loss.

Milliard-minded Shakespeare is in nature a creative and imaginative genius, and in business a clever man of the world, that is, a shareholder of the actor Company and theatres, proprietor of the tithes and real estates, and an good investor. We are not able to know well about his financial ability, how to earn, manage, invest, purchase, or how to have a good relationship with the others except the facts in his documents and letters.

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(2002年12月11日受理)