

Tudor Reformation

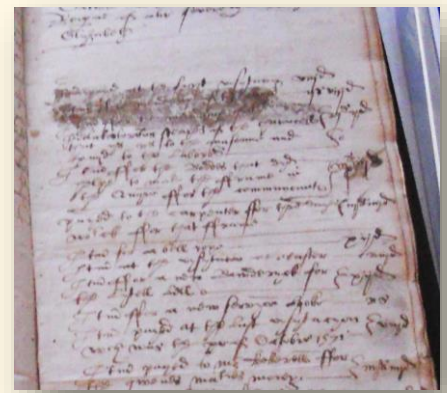


Unlike some Canterbury parishes where there were outspoken religious reformers, St Dunstan's is not mentioned in Archbishop Cranmer's enquiry into the state of the Canterbury diocese in the early 1540s.



This suggests the parish was prepared to follow the directives of Henry VIII and his archbishop, as they did in 1539 when they bought a copy of *The Great Bible*, an English translation which Cranmer wanted to see in every parish church.

During the remainder of Henry VIII's reign, the churchwardens' accounts show that several new service and theological books were purchased, including *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for a Christian Man* at a cost of 4s, as well as a book in which to record christenings, marriages and burials. They also seem to have followed the order of 1548 to remove images; a single payment of 9d is recorded to deface images that year. In 1549, 2d was received for selling a case for an image.



After chantries were suppressed in 1548, altars were replaced by communion tables on the king's orders in 1551. At St Dunstan's, a fine Tudor walnut dining table was given, possibly by William Roper.

The churchwardens' accounts only survive for part of the final year of Mary's reign, but they show the church was following Catholic services. Thomas Wynston, who died in 1558, wanted a dirige and three named masses to be celebrated for his soul at his funeral.

Elizabeth's reign brought more changes, the parish sold vestments and bought new service books in the early 1560s. The rood loft was taken down and sold in 1563 and later that decade work was done on the pews. Sermons were far more important than church music, the pulpit had three rich cloths, while the organ lacked three pipes and part of the bellows. In 1571, communion rails were introduced and the 'idolaterous steps' of the chancel were removed at a cost of 6s 2d. Such developments suggest that by the later sixteenth century, the parish had adopted the new Protestant religion.



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Credits: Research and text by Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh. St Dunstan's Communion Table and 1571 Churchwardens' Accounts, (photographs courtesy of Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh); Frontispiece detail of Henry VIII's Great Bible 1539, RCT, © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2021; Detail of Communion, R. Day, *A Book of Christian Prayers* (1590), fol. 62, STC 6431, EEBO; Silver Communion Cup, c.1570-1580, © Victoria & Albert Museum, London, ref. no. 1876-1898.