

The Revd Thomas Swadlin, DD (1600 – 1670)

Rector of St Marylebone *after 1660*

Swadlin was born in Worcestershire and matriculated from St John's College, Oxford, on 15 November 1616, aged sixteen, graduating BA on 4 February 1619. For the next decade details of his life are unknown, but in 1628, or soon afterwards, he was appointed curate of St Botolph, Aldgate, where his eloquent preaching attracted a large following among High Church Anglicans.

In or before 1632 he married Alice, whose other name is unknown. Between November 1632 and April 1640 they baptized four children, Susanna, John, Elizabeth, and Thomas. Swadlin's first published work, *Sermons, Meditations, and Prayers upon the Plague, 1636*, appeared in 1637.

In the months preceding the outbreak of the civil war trouble began brewing for Swadlin in the parish. On 29 February 1642 the House of Commons ordered him to admit John Simpson as a lecturer. A petition against Swadlin from his parishioners was formally received by the Commons on 1 August, though it had no immediate effect. But Swadlin was then denounced by one of his parishioners for a sermon that he had preached in defence of the king, and was imprisoned in Crosby House. He was examined by the lord mayor, and then moved to Gresham College. The total duration of his imprisonment on this occasion was from 29 October to 2 December. While at Gresham College, Swadlin defiantly prepared for publication his offending sermon and others under the title *The Sovereignes Desire Peace: the Subjects Dutie Obedience*; this eventually appeared in February 1643. The work was not extremist, endorsing the common royalist theory of mixed monarchy in which 'the Monarchie is bound by an Aristorcracie of Peeres, and Democracie of Commons and this mixture meeting in their command' (p. 10). The Commons ordered on 10 November 1642 that Swadlin be tried by martial law as a spy.

At some point Swadlin's living was sequestrated and his wife and children turned out: he was the first signatory to a petition from sequestrated ministers seeking charity, which dates probably from 1643. Presumably this was produced during what seems to have been an extended period in captivity, as were *A Manual of Devotions* (1643) and *The Scriptures Vindicated from ... Cardinal Bellarmine* (1643). On 26 May 1643 the Lords ordered that Swadlin be moved from Gresham College to Norwich prison, then on 2 August the Commons ordered that he be moved from London House to Newgate.

By his own account after the Restoration, Swadlin was imprisoned a total of five times, but there was a brief interlude to his troubles in the mid-1640s, when, freed from imprisonment, he spent time with Charles I in Oxford. There he was created DD on 17 June 1646. During the 1640s Swadlin produced a number of political works. These included three further collections of political sermons castigating rebels in 1647. Swadlin also experimented with a variety of different forms of political writing in these years. Probably his most significant work was *The Soldiers Catechisme, Composed for the Kings Armie* (July 1645). This work was a response to Robert Ram's work of the same title produced for the parliamentary armies. Swadlin told the rank and file that whatever they did in obedience to the commands of their king they did blamelessly. In January 1646 Swadlin tried his hand at ventriloquy in *A Letter of an Independent to his Honoured Friend Mr Glyn*, written to suggest that the Independents were about to support the king in return for a grant

of liberty of conscience. He demonstrated his continuing anti-Catholicism in *The Jesuites the Chiefe, if not the onely State-Heretique* [1646] and produced a single number of the newsbook *Mercurius Academicus*, addressed from Oxford to the 'passive party' in April 1648. According to Wood he worked at this time as a schoolmaster in London. But after the regicide Swadlin again found himself in difficulty. He was held in custody on suspicion of having treasonable links with Charles I, being released on bail by order of the council on 9 January 1651. By his own later account Swadlin helped many royalists in distress and gave material assistance to enable two royal servants to attend Charles II and further his interests. On 14 June the committee for examinations ordered that he be discharged.

During the interregnum he lived in Listin Green, Marylebone, and then from 1655 in Baldwins Gardens, St Andrew's, Holborn. In 1653 Swadlin preached a sermon to the Society of Astrologers, published that year as *Divinity No Enemy to Astrology*, but most of his published work in the period from 1653 to the Restoration was in defence of the protestant faith of the Church of England. He enquired, in the subtitle of one of them, *To all, paupertatis ergo ne peream fame* (1658), 'whether it be better to turn Presbyterian, Romane, or to continue what I am, Catholique in matter of religion'.

In 1661, after the Restoration, Swadlin petitioned for restoration of his living, signalling his continued loyalty to the crown in *King Charles his Funeral* (1661). He was reinstated to St Botolph, Aldgate, and it was from there that, on 21 April 1662, Swadlin, as a widower, obtained a licence to marry Hester Harper, widow. He does not seem to have got along with his parishioners and resigned the living.

He appears to have spent time in the early 1660s as curate of Marylebone, although in 1662 Archbishop William Juxon appointed Swadlin to the vicarage of St James, Dover, Kent, and a neighbouring rectory of Hougham. But the livings were poor, and Swadlin increasingly infirm.

In 1664 the Earl of Clarendon's influence gained for Swadlin the rectory of St Peter and the vicarage of All Saints in Stanford, Kent. He died on 9 February 1670 and was buried at Stanford. His wife Hester survived him. *Glen Burgess for ODNB © Oxford University Press 2004–14*