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John Workman, Puritan Lecturer

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JOHN WORKMAN, PURITAN LECTURER
IN GLOUCESTER

by J. N. LANGSTON

THE 17th century witnessed the final phase of the long conflict between the Church of England and Puritanism; it lasted from about 1620 until 1662. It must be borne in mind that the Puritans, with their rigid Calvinistic doctrines, were not fighting to gain a footing in the church but for complete ascendancy over it. They were striving to overthrow the episcopal constitution of the church, as it had been overthrown under John Knox in Scotland, and to set up in its place the presbyterian system of government. Paradoxically, these men were unable conscientiously to accept either the constitution or the doctrines and formularies of the church, yet were troubled with no qualms of conscience in seeking and accepting ordination in that church so that they could the better work to undermine its principles and authority. However, by 1620 opinion had already begun to turn against the extreme Calvinistic teaching, and benefices were being given more and more to conforming clergy, so that the unyielding Puritan faction was forced to adopt other methods of propagating its tenets. A system of lectureships was developed which quickly spread until all the puritan centres were provided by this means with ministrations according to the views of the party, while the lecturers themselves became the leaders of resistance against episcopal authority.

A few years previously the city of Gloucester, one of the strongholds of Puritanism, had been left an annual sum of money to help support one of these lecturers in the town, as the following inscription on a tombstone in Down

Hatherley churchyard testifies :—' William Drinkwater was buried the 29th of January 1615, who (in zeal to the Worde) gave Forty Shillings yearly for ever toward the Maintenance of a Preacher in Gloucester, and Ten Shillings in charity, Ten Shillings yearly to the Poor of Hatherly for ever '. On 20 January 1619, the Common Council, composed wholly of intractable Puritans, evidently considered the time ripe for appointing a city lecturer, for they passed the following resolution :—' Whereas many pious and charitable works have heretofore from time to time been done in this city by divers and sundry well disposed persons, all which tend to the temporal wealth and increase of the state of the city and maintenance of the public good thereof, and yet hitherto no such sufficient care hath been had nor cause taken for the setting and establishing of the public preaching of God's word here amongst us as were to be wished, the same being the only ordinary means of our salvation, and therefore more to be sought after than any earthly thing whatsoever. Now to the end that the want thereof may hereafter more carefully be supplied, It is ordered and enacted by this house that the chamber of this city shall from henceforth yearly and every year quarterly pay and allow towards the maintenance of a public lecture within this city, to be preached twice in the week at such days and places as shall be appointed by this house, the sum of twenty marks to such sufficient preacher as this house shall nominate and elect, and the said stipend and lecture to have continuance for ever '.

A suitable man was at hand and his unanimous appointment, 6 March 1619, is recorded in another minute :—' Whereas at a Council House holden the 20th day of January last past, it was enacted by this city that a stipend of twenty marks by the year should be yearly paid by the stewards out of the chamber of this city unto such a lecturer as should be chosen by the same house to preach two sermons within this city every week, the one

upon Sunday in the afternoon and the other upon the Friday morning, as by the same act appeareth, and whereas Mr John Workman, master of arts, hath lately preached in this city and is well approved by all the members of the house who have with one consent given their full voices for his election unto the said place, It is now therefore ordered that the said Mr Workman shall be from henceforth the public lecturer of the city, to preach twice in the week throughout the year (that is to say) once every Thursday morning at the church of St. Michael's beginning about nine of the clock, and every Sabbath day in the afternoon, viz. one day at St. Nicholas and the next at St. Michael's, and so every Sabbath day by turn throughout the year until this house shall think fit to alter the days and places. And for his pains therein he, the said Mr Workman, shall have yearly out of the chamber of this city towards his maintenance the sum of twenty marks to be paid him quarterly by the stewards and chamberlains of this city, and forty shillings more by way of increase of stipend which was given by one Mr Drinkwater towards the maintenance of a preacher here'.

Ten days later, the Council, pleased with their preacher, agreed that 'Mr Workman, appointed lecturer for this city, shall have the stipend of twenty marks already increased to eighteen pounds out of the chamber of this city, and Mr Drinkwater's gift of 40s to make it up twenty pounds yearly'; and in the following week they appointed 20 persons in the four wards of the city 'to go about to those that are not of this house for their contribution towards the new lecturer, Mr John Workman, for three years next ensuing'.

The University records show that John Workman of the county of Gloucester matriculated 3 June 1608, aged 18, as a commoner at St. Alban's Hall, Oxford. He was admitted B.A. 27 May 1611, and proceeded M.A. 8 July 1614. Joseph Stratford in his *Gloucestershire Tract No. 6* (1865) incorporated two years later in his *Good and Great*

Men of Gloucestershire, states that he was ' a native of Lasborough '. Anthony Wood refers to him as brother of Giles who was born (1605) at Newton (Newington) Bagpath, Glos., son of William Workman, but the two places are only half a mile apart. Giles, according to Wood, was ' a quiet and peaceable Puritan ' in comparison with his brother John ' who by meddling with things indifferent, created not only trouble to his diocesan, but to the archbishop of Canterbury, as you may fully see in *Canterbury's Doome* '. According to evidence given before the High Commission Court in 1634, John must have been ordained priest in 1617, and it has already been noted that he was preaching in Gloucester during the early months of 1619, probably as a candidate for his subsequent post of city lecturer.

In 1622 Workman was presented to the incumbency of St. Nicholas ' Church in the city, evidently by the Council who were patrons of the living though no minute has been found making the appointment. No difficulty would have been encountered about his institution as the bishop was Miles Smith who is called by Atkyns ' a stiff Calvinist and a great favourer of the Puritans '. This bishop cared so little for his cathedral that he allowed the fabric to fall into grave disrepair, and it is said that he never entered it between 1616 and his death in 1624 because of the removal of the altar from the body of the church to the east end by order of Dean Laud who had express orders from the king to reform the cathedral. Workman's promotion to a parish church apparently raised the question whether he should also continue his lectures, but the Council, 9 September 1622, settled the point by agreeing that ' John Workman, lecturer for this city, shall have his stipend of £20 granted to him heretofore by this house yearly paid unto him this year '. Three years later the Council, seeking to make the cathedral the venue of their Sunday lecture, decided in September that, if leave could be obtained, the lecture of the city shall be

preached henceforth after our Lady Day upon the sabbath days in the afternoon at the College. It is unlikely that the desired permission was granted because the new bishop, Godfrey Goodman, consecrated towards the end of 1624, was not so sympathetic towards the extreme Puritans as his predecessor. In fact it was not long before he found cause for complaint in Workman's sermons and took action against him, which finally resulted in his removal in 1627 from St. Nicholas' Church. A later incumbent, John Allibond, writing 24 March 1640 from the bishop's palace in Gloucester to Dr Peter Heylin, a prebendary of Westminster, states that Workman was 'suspended and deprived of a cure that he had'. His successor at St. Nicholas is given under the year 1628.

No doubt as a gesture of defiance, the Council decided, 20 July 1627, that 'whereas Mr John Workman hath for these many years together been a lecturer in this city of worthy respect both in regard of his painful teaching and exemplary living, whereby he hath gained the general love and approbation of this house, and in token whereof it is mutually agreed and ordered that he, the said John Workman, shall have the full sum or stipend of £20 per annum confirmed unto him and duly paid unto him out of the chamber of this city for so long time as he shall here continue lecturer, as hitherto he hath done'. This was followed by an order, 21 January 1628, that the city should make an allowance 'for ringing the sermon bell at St. Michael's Church which was heretofore disbursed by Mr John Workman', and that the stewards should provide and appoint someone for the purpose.

A minute, 9 November 1630, records the Council's agreement that 'Mr Workman, lecturer to this city, shall have his stipend of £20 yearly confirmed unto him for three years more to be paid out of the chamber of the city as formerly it hath been'. Before the three years had expired, Workman was summoned to appear before the bishop for the scandalous matter of some of his sermons,

and it appears from the depositions before the High Commission Court in the later proceedings that the bishop particularly complained that Workman had delivered in open pulpit that how many paces a man made in dancing so many paces he made to hell ; also that pictures or images were no ornaments to a church than stews to a commonwealth ; also that now-a-days be a man never so deboshed, never so drunken, yet if he be a conformable man, or a conformable protestant, he was adjudged capable of any ecclesiastical promotion, whilst others of better desert were put by and not thought capable ; also that the election of a minister properly belonged to the people ; also that for a man to have the image of any saint, especially of our Saviour, in his house is unlawful, and that if any man kept such pictures in his house, if it were not flat idolatry, it was little better ; also that in his sermon he had usually prayed for the States of Holland, and the King of Sweden, before the King's Majesty (Archbishop Laud said that this practice was ' the garb of that time among that party of men ' ; and that one of Workman's common themes of preaching to the people was against the government of the church).

Workman admitted to the bishop that he had uttered such doctrines, and offered to maintain sundry of them, and when the bishop asked for the notes of his sermons he promised to bring them but failed to perform his promise. Thereupon the bishop inhibited him from preaching, and the City Council retaliated, 9 August 1633, by agreeing that he ' shall have his stipend confirmed unto him, together with the voluntary allowance of those that are of the four wards of this city, until our Lady Day next, whether he preach or not ', and it was further resolved that ' letters be written to the Lord Bishop and Chancellor that he may have like liberty to preach till then as formerly he hath had '. However, in the same month, Laud became archbishop of Canterbury and his conviction that episcopal succession was of the essence of a church

determined him to suppress the lectures founded in towns throughout the country and which had become the favourite posts of Puritan preachers condemning episcopal authority. Workman's case was quickly referred to the High Commission Court where he was subsequently tried and censured as a schismatical lecturer and deposed from his lecture.

The City Council, in a spirit of bravado, retaliated by ordering, 26 September 1633, that ' Mr John Workman shall have his allowance of £20 yearly out of the chamber of this city confirmed unto him so long as he shall be pleased to inhabit and live in this city, whether he preach or not, and have it confirmed unto him under the seal of the city '. This deliberate contempt of court resulted in John Brewster, the mayor, and William Guyse, the town clerk, being called before the House of Lords to answer about the annuity. What happened there is not known but the archbishop decided to have the matter more carefully examined before the High Commission Court. Accordingly the mayor and town clerk with five aldermen, Anthony Edwards, Thomas Purie, John Nelmes, Henry Browne, and William Price, were cited to appear before the court to answer for the act of the council. (John Allibond, in the letter already mentioned, notes that Edwards and Nelmes, ' both strong and rank Puritans ', were observed to be especially active in the town in the party's cause, and that Ald. Pury, sometime a weaver, now an attorney, had particularly endeared himself to the party by ' his irreverence in God's house, sitting covered when all the rest sit bare ').

The council, thus faced with court proceedings, met on the last day of 1633 and solemnly reversed their previous decision, deciding that ' it is now upon further consideration thought fit and so ordered and directed that the said act (of 26 September last) shall from henceforth stand repealed and be utterly void and of none effect '.

A petition (the contents of which are unknown) was

drawn up ' touching the grant made to Mr Workman, our lecturer ', and after it had been read to the Council at a meeting, 16 January 1634, the house agreed that it ' should be engrossed, and all the members of the house so subscribe their names unto it, and that it shall be delivered to my Lord Archbishop by Mr Robinson '. On the same day, it was likewise agreed that ' Mr Robinson, who at the request of this house is consented to go to London for the mitigating of the business about the act for Mr Workman, shall there proceed therein being assisted with the advice of Mr Brewster and Mr Guyse, who are to answer the said matter this next term, and also to deal in the business concerning the fines, Escheators account and other our occasions in the Exchequer, being assisted and directed by Mr Pury who hath already dealt therein '. The stewards were to furnish moneys for the expenses and other necessary charges of Mr Robinson, who, upon his return, was to account for such moneys to such members of the house as he made choice of to receive and allow his account, and he was to have such charters and writings as concern the business delivered to Mr Pury.

Another resolution was passed by the Council, 4 March 1634, agreeing that ' Mr Robinson shall be employed to attend my Lord Grace of Canterbury in the cause depending in the High Commission concerning the act of common council to mediate therein according to his discretion, to bring the same suit to a conclusion, and also to assist Mr Pury in the cause for the fines same and other business with Mr Attorney General, and to be furnished with money by the stewards for his expenses and other necessary charges expended therein from time to time, the moneys by him received to be accounted for by him in such manner as was appointed by the act of common council made the sixteenth day of January last '. This is the last reference to these proceedings in the Council Minute Book.

Unfortunately most of the Commission Court records have been destroyed and there remains only one Act

Book, being an original minute book of the proceedings entered by a registrar every sitting day from February 1634, over a period of some three years. Its contents have been summarized in the Calendar of State Papers. There are only two references to the proceedings against Brewster and his colleagues. On 29 January 1635, an order was made for ' Workman *and the rest*, of Gloucester, to appear the last court day of this term to hear final order ' ; and, 16 April 1635, it is recorded that the ' defendants Brewster, Guyse, Purie, Browne and Price, having acknowledged their error in making such a deed of annuity to Mr Workman as is " deduced ", were dismissed, paying their fees '. It will be seen later that these men were fined £10 each but that the fines were afterwards remitted. What happened to the other two defendants, Anthony Edwards and John Nelmes, is not related, and perhaps they were dealt with more severely.

A few other particulars are afforded by Laud's account of his own trial in 1644 when Mr Pury was one of the witnesses against him. Pury alleged that after Mr Brewster and Mr Guies, the town clerk, had been called to the Council-Table about the annuity, Laud had the matter further examined at the High Commission. Laud contended that it was no offence to desire that such an affront to government might be more thoroughly examined than the Lords had leisure to do ; in any case, Pury did not give this in evidence as he only said that he heard so from Mr Brewster, and his hearsay was no conviction. For the thing itself, it was a gross abuse and scorn put upon that court that when they had censured a schismatical lecturer (for such Workman was there proved), the townsmen should make him an allowance, the mayor and magistrates of Gloucester doing that which was no way warrantable by their charter. Pury also said that the High Commissioners called upon this business of the annuity because they were informed that the £20 given to Workman was taken out of the moneys for the poor ; to

which Laud replied that he still thought that was a good and sufficient ground justly to call them in question. Pury also complained that the mayor and others were fined because that which they did was against authority ; and Laud pointed out that the witness himself thus showed that they were not fined simply for allowing means to Mr Workman but for doing it in opposition to authority. Finally, Pury said they were fined £10 apiece and that the fine was presently taken off again, which Laud contended was no such great persecution as was made out in the Cause, while as for the cancelling of the deed of annuity, it was done by themselves as Mr Langley gave witness.

The Act Book contains a number of entries with regard to the proceedings against Workman. The earliest item, 5 May 1634, records that the witnesses were produced and sworn, and three days later another entry states that the witnesses' depositions, except those of John Adams, were published. On 12 June the court decreed that Workman be admonished to bring with him on the first court day of the Michaelmas term notes or copies of the sermons complained of by the bishop and which Workman had refused to produce to him ; and at the same sitting the court accordingly ordered Workman to be warned to that effect. His failure to produce the notes led to the court, 9 October, again warning him to bring in copies or notes of his sermons for which he stood questioned. He again absented himself from the court a week later but a petition he had sent in was read, and he was once more ordered to produce copies or notes of his sermons before the next court day, and when that was done he was to be referred to the bishop of Ely. The following week, 23 October, he was yet again admonished to bring in the notes, but at the next sitting a week later the court was informed that he had lost the notes of his sermons, whereupon Dr Rives, who appeared for the complainant, signified that he intended not to stay proceedings for want

of them, and so the cause was ordered to be informed in out of the proofs, and Workman was to be warned to appear the following court day, 6 November. Whether or not he appeared is not stated, but he was again ordered to bring in notes of his sermons and to appear next court day. He evidently kept away, for on 20 November the cause was assigned to report the first session of the next term, and on 29 January 1633, he, with the rest from Gloucester, were ordered to appear the last court day of that term to hear the final order. Eventually the cause was appointed to be finally sentenced on 16 April, and on that day the mayor and aldermen were dealt with but nothing appears to have been done with Workman until 25 April when his cause was heard.

It was then put on record that the defendant had been a minister in holy orders of priesthood for 17 years and a lecturer in St. Michael's Church, Gloucester, 13 years. He was charged with having made the statements in his sermons already quoted ; that he failed to supply copies or notes of such sermons to the bishop ; and further that he stood out in contempt and refused to produce the notes to the court. The court suspended him, and for infringing the authority of bishops and the government of the Church of England by archbishops and bishops pronounced him excommunicate according to the canon, and ordered him to make his submission and recantation of his erroneous and scandalous points of doctrine before the court at its next sitting. The submission, having been publicly made in court, was to be published in the cathedral of Gloucester and in the parish church of St. Michael. He was also condemned in costs of suit to be taxed next court day.

When the court sat on 11 June 1635, he failed to attend and an order was made for him to appear the next court day to perform his submission. A week later he put in an appearance but refused to make his submission and he was thereupon committed a prisoner to the Gatehouse.

After being detained there for five days, he sent in a petition, presumably suggesting that his answer might be different if he were freed to think about it, and having given sureties to appear in the second session of the next term, the court ordered his release so that he might consider and advise with himself touching the performance of his submission. More than four months later, 29 October 1635, his case was brought up and assigned to the next court day, when apparently he did not appear, and a similar procedure was adopted on 12 November. In the following week he attended the court and was required to make his submission according to his sentence but he answered that while he submitted himself in all humility to the court, he could not read the form of submission enjoined him, for the reason, as he alleged, that he was therein to acknowledge something which he had formerly denied on his oath. He therefore desired a reference to commissioners to peruse the form of submission and so to reform the same that it might not be prejudicial to his oath. The court patiently referred the question to Sir John Lambe and Drs Worrall and Duck, and ordered Workman to attend them, and to appear the next court day to perform his submission. Apparently he took no action in the matter, for on 26 November his further appearance in the court was respited until the first session of Easter term next, but in the meantime he was to wait upon the commissioners to whom the correcting of his submission had been referred for the perfecting thereof. The conclusion of the matter is not known for there is no further entry relating to Workman although the Act Book extends over several more months. He may have served a term of imprisonment because Prynne (according to a note in *Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis*) states that it was only after some months' imprisonment that he obtained his liberty. If this was so, it must have been later in 1636; otherwise, as shown above, he was a prisoner for only five days in the middle of 1635.

When Workman returned to Gloucester he opened a small school for private pupils until the archbishop intervened and inhibited him. He then turned to the practice of medicine but this was likewise forbidden him. Laud's account of his own trial, at which the 'cruel persecution' of Workman was one of the charges, puts a rather different complexion on the matter. He points out that, while the High Commission thought it no way fit to trust such a man, who had been factious among men, with the education of children and particularly not in the town where he had so showed himself, there was nothing to prevent him teaching a school or practising physic anywhere else. The fact was he had done so much harm, and made such a faction in Gloucester, that the Commission thought it not fit to continue him there, but he refused to leave the town where he had made his party. This was doubtless quite true for it is evident from the particulars given above that the court treated Workman with considerable patience, leniency and forbearance, in spite of his studied contempt of its proceedings and his protractive tactics.

Neal (*History of the Puritans*) says that, 'being deprived of all methods of subsistence, he fell into a melancholy disorder and died'; and Guizot (*History of the English Revolution of 1640*) states that 'hereupon Workman went mad and soon after died'. That he suffered a long illness is borne out by a minute of the City Council, 13 December 1640, agreeing that 'Mr John Workman, in regard of his long weakness and sickness, shall have given him out of the chamber of this city the sum of £20 to comfort him in his sickness'. He died a month later and was buried in St. Nicholas' churchyard where his tombstone bore the following inscription:—'In memory of that pious, worthy divine, Mr John Workman, once minister of this parish, who was buried 12 January 1640, aged 50 years'. The Burial Register of the parish contains an entry under 12 January 1640-41:—'Mr John Workman, minister, for sometye preacher to ye Citye'. Towards the end of the

same year, on 21 December, the City Council 'ordered and agreed that Esther Workman, widow, the late wife of Mr John Workman, deceased, in consideration of one hundred and forty pounds to be given and paid to the stewards to the use of the chamber of this city, shall have an annuity or yearly rent of £20 per annum, to be paid unto her quarterly by even portions, of the chamber of this city, by their stewards for the time being, for and during her natural life, and to have a grant under the common seal of this city for the same'. Neal says that Workman had a numerous family.

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