
A table of contents for the *Congregational History Society Magazine* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_congregational-history-circle-01.php

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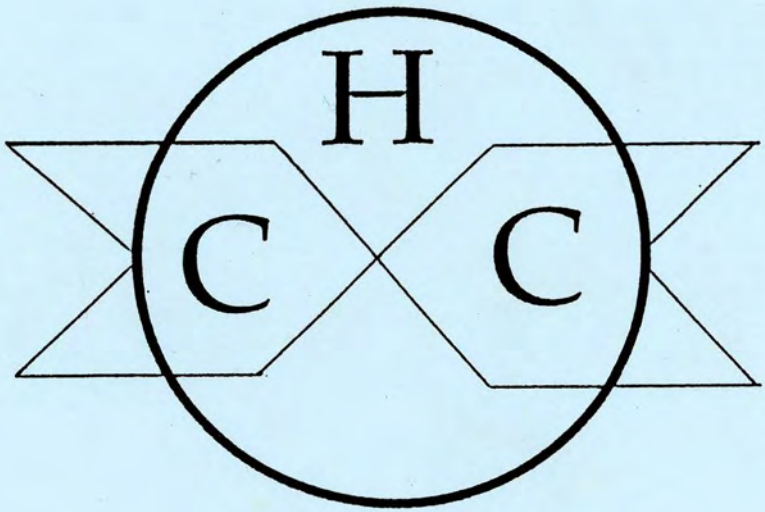

Spring 1996

The Congregational History Circle Magazine

Volume 3 No 4 Spring 1996

Contents

Page		
2	●	Editorial
2	●	News and Views
3	●	Robert Browne: A Fair Story *by P.B.Coleman*
15	●	The Story of a Puritan Tract by Francis Tallents *by Trevor Watts*
18	●	The Tale of an Idle Fellow: Jerome K. Jerome *by Alan Argent*
31	●	Book Reviews
36	●	Our Contemporaries

EDITORIAL

Our magazine this Spring conveys the reader through three different periods of religious nonconformity, offering some consideration of contrasting personalities - Robert Browne, the Elizabethan Separatist, who became an early Stuart conformist. Francis Tallents, ejected in 1662 from his Shrewsbury curacy, and Jerome K. Jerome , the writer , and his father, Jerome Clapp.

Peter B. Coleman, a retired schoolteacher, is a new contributor to the CHC Magazine. Significantly his father was the rector of Thorpe Achurch, Robert Browne's parish, and wrote a short history of Achurch, working from the parish registers and other papers, found among the archives of Lilford Hall, which was owned by the Browne family during Browne's time as rector.

NEWS AND VIEWS

On 21 December, 1995, the date of Robert Moffat's birth, a group of enthusiasts assembled in damp weather at West Norwood cemetery, London. They came from near and far - Dorset, Manchester, Witney, Norwich, and Hamburg, as well as London - to celebrate the bicentenary of the noted LMS missionaries, Robert and Mary Moffat. After scripture readings and a prayer, the company moved to Trinity Congregational Church, Brixton where a service of thanksgiving was held. The congregation included admirers from URC, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Church of England, Methodist and Congregational churches, as well as representatives from local government and libraries.

The 1662 Society will be meeting at Dr Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London WC1 on 4 June, 1996 and will hear a talk given by Dr. Susan Hardman Moore of King's College, London on aspects of mid - 17th century gathered churches. The meeting will start at 7.30pm and all are welcome. On St Bartholomew's day, 24 August, 1996 Graham Adams, the general secretary of the Congregational Federation, will preach at a commemorative service, for the ejected ministers of 1660-1662 and their churches, to be held at Cole Abbey Presbyterian Church, Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4 at 3pm. Further details may be obtained from the editor.

Last year's CHC chapel crawlers were treated to a veritable feast of Welsh chapeldom and our thanks must go to Revd. Chris Gillham for his arranging this tour and, also, to those who welcomed the visitors at all the chapels concerned. They had a welcome for us. Details of the London chapel crawl on May 10, 1996 may be obtained from our CHC secretary Revd. Colin Price.

A book our readers should note is Michael Watts' second volume of his

history of The Dissenters (Oxford, 1995, Pp 911, £75 hardback) which covers the period from 1791 to 1870. The author subtitles his work The Expansion of Evangelical Dissent although he does not exclude non-evangelicals such as the Unitarians from his study. Indeed the 1790s saw the beginnings of the modern missionary societies and the religious census of 1851 revealed the growth and size of dissent in the country at large. In addition the collected papers from the 1995 conference of the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries, including one by our editor, are due in book form from Keele University Press this Spring, entitled Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England, edited by Alan Sell (priced at £40 hardback). Lastly A Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, covering the period 1730-1860, and edited by Donald Lewis, has recently been published by Blackwell's of Oxford (2 vols, Pp 1280, £175 hardback).

ROBERT BROWNE : A FAIR STORY

The early life of Robert Browne (1550?-1633) has been covered many times. The first two writers, Stephen Bredwell and Thomas Fuller, were against him, doing their best to degrade his character, beliefs and work. So successful were they that historians such as Dale, Dexter, John Browne and others continued the harshness of comment. Later historians like Cater and Smith found kinder words with which to relate their opinions.

Bredwell was a puritan physician and a fanatical opponent of all nonconformists and particularly of R.B. who had written a scathing indictment of puritan ways and had converted many people to his own beliefs.(1) Bredwell suggested that Browne was mad which idea was reiterated by others with no evidence, except for a muddled report by Fuller who confused 'Browne' with 'Brayne', a different person.(2)

Browne had the imperious behaviour of some gentry families coupled with a short temper. Nevertheless, he was a sincere Christian who struggled throughout his life to lead his fellows toward the kingdom of God. His demeanour laid him open to criticism and attracted enemies.

Bredwell served as a source for R.B.'s harshest critic, Fuller, who published his History of the Church in 1655, twenty-two years after Browne's death. He was R.B.'s antithesis in many ways. He was born in 1608 when R.B. had been rector of Thorpe Achurch (which post he held 1591-1631) in Northants for seventeen years. Fuller's father had been rector of Aldwincle, a village just across the river from Thorpe. He was still being educated at Cambridge when R.B. died.

He might have seen R.B. when he was a boy and heard gossip and comments against Browne which he remembered. He was not known for noticing people. In fact it was said of him that he would walk by friends and not know them until his attention was called. (3) But the fact that he had lived nearby helped to convince his readers he knew Browne well.

Fuller and his father were 'high' church, appreciating ritual, pomp and colour, whereas R.B. was 'low', preferring plainness as a help to sincerity. The two were incompatible. Fuller was an ardent Royalist and as such had fled for his life soon after R.B.'s death. Browne held different views and was very much a man of the people. (4)

Fuller wrote about R.B. with the bitterness of one who had suffered because of the ideas and ideals of those he despised, epitomised in R.B. His writing and comments about Browne must be seen in this light.

R.B.'s beliefs and aims were plain and unadorned. He came nearest to modern congregationalism although, initially, he favoured the presbyterian approach which was general puritan belief. It was said that R.B. first advocated the theory of congregationalism. Although he later disavowed the separatism of his youth, Browne did not dishonour 'the cause' for he never claimed to be other than what he was, a Christian believer attempting to live as he preached. The apparent inconsistency of beginning as a non-conformist and then conforming, for the most part, was virtually forced upon him.

The puritans, generally, were unable to be perfectly consistent as some hesitated to acknowledge the supremacy of James I, for instance. Browne cannot be singled out and so accused.(5) The desire among historians to categorise Browne has been great but he called himself neither puritan, separatist, congregational nor presbyterian. He tried to devise ways to fit the social and religious needs of his day and also to keep within the law. R.B. favoured the law, which is not surprising, for his family for generations, had been closely connected with parliament. His uncle, Lord Burghley, was lord treasurer and a skilful diplomat who protected and advised his spirited nephew on several occasions.(6)

R.B. sailed very close to the wind with his preaching, which he undertook without a licence, having torn one up when his brother had obtained it for him in the 1570s when he was at Cambridge.(7) Inevitably his activities came to the notice of Bishop Freke who wrote to the lord treasurer aware that he and Browne were related. R.B. had teamed up with Robert Harrison, an old Cambridge university friend, and they founded together a church in Norfolk.(8)

When Burghley heard that R.B. had been imprisoned in 1581 he replied

rapidly and diplomatically, making known what he wanted and reinforcing his wishes by stating that R.B. 'had been dissuaded from the course he had taken'. Just to make certain he added that ' he is my kinsman'.(9) The result was that Browne was released. His congregation, however, continued their activities, causing further trouble for him.

Whether Browne went on preaching in spite of knowing the contents of his uncle's letter, or whether his travels prevented such particular knowledge, is impossible to ascertain, but in August 1581 the bishop again wrote to Burghley complaining bitterly.(10) This put Burghley in a quandary. He could only advise R.B. and Harrison to go while they were still able. So to Middelburg, Holland, went a small group of ardent followers. In fact, R.B. married one of them, Alice Allen, at that time.(11)

It was then that R.B. wrote down his ideas which were published and widely distributed in England in 1582. However A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Anie was pronounced seditious by the Queen and upset the puritans also.(12) Despite this setback R.B. continued to write. He set out his basic beliefs in A Book which Showeth the Life and Manners of All True Christians and how unlike they are unto Turkes and Papists and heathen folke..... - a work about theology and Christian principles. Without doubt R.B. lived as he had written.

If he was forced to retreat with his preaching, now he found he had fared no better with his writing but he would not give up. He had tried to reform the church but was forced to retreat to Holland where he met additional difficulties. He was accused of being too strict and found settled there already an English church under Thomas Cartwright, R.B.'s former tutor at Cambridge.(13) It was time to try another approach.

R.B. and his wife, expecting their first child, set sail for Scotland in 1583 where he encountered the presbyterians and found himself even more restricted.(14) Typically and fearlessly he spoke his mind, condemning the presbyterian structure. Understandably R.B. met opposition and suffered imprisonment. (15)

He was released by the Scots courts when the presbyterian party fell temporarily out of favour.(16) R.B. took his wife to Tolethorpe Hall, near Stamford, Lincolnshire, the ancestral home, and travelled around himself, probably trying to find a suitable place where he might usefully be employed. As a devout Christian from a privileged family he felt he should lead in some way rather than live as an idle gentleman. He wanted to help the next generation by teaching but he was somewhat of a fugitive.

He had not made matters better by writing to Cartwright, stating he

thought the Book of Common Prayer might be altered or shortened on occasions, but it required strict adherence to the order of service and the words. He felt this too restrictive. Somehow this letter was published without his consent and this led to his further imprisonment in 1585. Again Burghley secured his release.(17)

R.B. appears to have learnt from his own arguments. He had thought that bishops were wicked to appoint priests who were corrupt but then began to see that such corruption need not be the bishops' fault. He had allowed them administrative powers only but then argued that they could have spiritual powers also for all things done should be done spiritually.(18)

He was certain that a sinful minister could not lead a godly church but he could admit that if there were some godly persons therein, it could be a legitimate church.(19) After his Scottish experience R.B. felt that the organisation of bishops was probably the best that men could devise.

He still had no job after leaving Scotland and was virtually unemployable. His uncle's diplomacy rescued him as Burghley worked out, perhaps with R.B.'s help, five innocuous questions to which R.B. could agree. These he gave to the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, suggesting that he send for R.B. and put these questions to him. This he did, for both Burghley and Whitgift ''.... were men of the world who were far more concerned with the appearance of conformity than about strictly orthodox belief''.(20)

So it was that R.B. 'submitted' to Whitgift and signed the document. This had two results. It made R.B. a conformist in the eyes of those who mattered, approved by the Archbishop himself; and also, which was what R.B. wanted, it laid the foundation for him to find a legitimate job. It also reminded R.B. that conformity was what was demanded.

This 'submission' was grist to the mill of those against R.B. He has been accused of recanting all his ideals but even Fuller knew that at heart R.B. never recanted anything. Shortly afterwards in 1586 R.B. secured a post as schoolmaster at St. Olave's, Southwark, but he had to sign six articles to do so and almost immediately things went badly for him. First the local parson was inclined to drink too much so R.B. attended another church. This may have contravened one of the articles although R.B. did not say so.(21)

Then Bredwell wrote about him.(22) R.B. saw, as a result, that teaching was impossible. By now he had accepted that there were many good and devout ministers in the Church of England and had seen what was possible to do under its protecting mantle. The law required services to be read according to the prayer book and that was all. How one behaved in between was not legislated for. R.B.

glimpsed his future action when he wrote, ''How much more blessed are they that preach the whole Gospel and that purely.....as do so many in the C. of E. this day''.(23) The problem was how could he possibly become a C. of E. minister with his reputation and writings?

During 1589 R.B. may have met his uncle, for he was given a letter to Bishop Howland of Peterborough recommending that since he had become 'dutiful and conformable' he might be given a chance as a C. of E. minister.(24) This letter is a jewel of diplomacy for it said everything the bishop would want to hear. However historians took the words as if Browne himself had written them, accusing him of recanting all his beliefs. He cannot be held responsible for Burghley's diplomatic words.(25)

But Bishop Howland was in no hurry. Two years later Little Casterton, near Stamford, became vacant. It was in the gift of R.B.'s eldest brother, Francis, who had taken over Tolehorpe Hall on the death of their father shortly before. He offered it to R.B. backed by Burghley, and R.B. was instituted to the rectory there.(26) However, Achurch, Northamptonshire then became vacant, which was in the gift of Burghley himself and was ideal for Browne. To tip the scales, Burghley had the Queen herself join with him in the presentation.(27) With this formidable backing Bishop Howland did not delay in admitting R.B. to the orders of deacon and priest on the last day of September 1591.(28)

Thus Robert Browne became a Church of England minister. This finished him for many historians. It was the final act of a traitor.

Browne recognised no other church than that of England as protestant. The law required a certain organisation for the people and R.B. had to obey. After that he could do as he liked, and he did. There was nothing to prevent his gathering his true church.

Achurch proved ideal for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that Gilbert Pickering, an officer of Burghley's, lived at Titchmarsh, about two miles away.(29) He had married R.B.'s sister and was able to report directly to Burghley any potential trouble. Also Lilford Hall, half a mile from Achurch, was owned by the Browne family.(30)

R.B. housed some poor people in his large rectory and attendant out-buildings and may have bought 'poor houses' as well, ie. those which rented at under £10 a year. Then in 1601 trouble occurred. For ten years the same churchwardens had witnessed the signing of the register, Henrie Greene and William Allaman. Then on the 15th November 1601 a special meeting replaced both men which indicates an unusual incident, for changes were normal at the end

of the year in March.(31)

Burrage considered that there was a religious squabble amongst R.B.'s own church but the evidence hardly supports this. Certainly some disagreement between R.B. and Henrie Greene had occurred. The Poor Law Act of 1601 required churchwardens to serve as overseers of the poor.(32) This may have caused difficulty. Parish overseers generally felt it their duty to keep the homeless out of the parish to cut costs. This would have seemed an unchristian act to R.B. In addition, starting in the late 1580s, there was organised a 'classis' of clergy who wanted to gather a church within a church on presbyterian lines, picking the godly from the multitude,(33) which is exactly what R.B. did in his parish. Trouble came when some MPs requested the prayer book should be replaced by the Genevan liturgy and five were sent to the Tower.

Their Book of Discipline had considerable success in Northamptonshire (34) but the classis collapsed, many fearing for their lives. Nevertheless, ''... it was not difficult to graft a form of eldership on the existing parochial office of churchwarden in order to evade the law without incurring its penalties''.(35) Were Henrie Greene and William Allaman unwilling to co-operate in the integration of the godly based in Thorpe?

R.B. made some entries in his registers which have intrigued historians. He wrote that some were baptised/buried/lived in 'schism', meaning they had a belief different from that accepted by Browne. Even before Wigsthorpe church was swept away by the reformation, a dissenting community existed there which R.B. placed in Lilford parish, probably at Wigsthorpe, for that hamlet was always considered part of Lilford although it is almost two miles away. The vicar of Lilford made no comment, for their register was completely rewritten being in pristine condition compared with those of Achurch.(36) It is possible that this community consisted of Lutherans.

The register shows that in 1627 a child of Edmond Quincey was baptised 'els where' (37) but this and other names do not occur in the registers of any parish nearby. The conclusion is that they were left off the Lilford register as a protection for someone or some sect. Even by the 1620s when England had been Calvinist for some sixty years, ''there had always been a minority of dissidents who led a ..... clandestine existence....they were known as Lutherans, those who rejected Calvinist predestinarian teaching''.(38)

The majority of the population held to a ''folk religion which had almost no assayable protestant content''.(39) According to Giles Widdowes it was necessary to distinguish between ten 'specifical kinds' of puritan non-conform-

ist.(40) Even in 1610 the actual numbers of the godly were only a fraction of the populace.(41) However the puritans were soon under pressure from anti-Calvinistic Arminians who sought to change the church organisation.(42) They may have caused the schism entries rather than the 'Lutherans'.

R.B. did not bother with any register entries from 1601 to 1615, which suggests he did not preside at services in Achurch, leaving them to curates who 'forgot' the register. During this time R.B. was resident in Thorpe, having left the rectory entirely to the homeless.(43) The 'Old Chapel' was not built until 1618 evidently when there were more people in R.B.'s gathered church than could meet easily in someone's home.(44) Gradually however R.B.'s built-in protection disappeared and the malcontents gathered force.

Gilbert Pickering died in 1599 and his widow in 1601. Their daughter, Katherine, was married in the same year and moved away. Nothing more was heard of the once influential Pickering family.(45) In the same year R.B.'s cousin Nicholas, vicar of Lilford, resigned his living.(46) Then Alice Browne died in 1610.(47) She may have been a calming influence in the community and certainly was courageous and long-suffering.

R.B. married again, Elizabeth, who obviously expected to live the life of a lady in the picturesque rectory, but was disgusted to find it dilapidated and full of the poor. She felt no desire live in a cottage in Thorpe and did not expect R.B. to live much longer (so she would inherit his 'fortune').(48) In the event his will was shown to be forged and she had to forego much of his wealth.(49)

The malcontents kept complaining from 1615 onwards and, although the court did nothing for many years, eventually R.B. was suspended.(50) This seemed to suit him for he was able to run his church in Thorpe as he wished and leave his curates to deal with the other parish work.(51) Then on Palm Sunday 1626 R.B. took a service in Achurch for the burial of his son's wife.(52) The churchwardens were presented for not reporting R.B. for breaking his suspension but again nothing was done.(53) His curate had left so R.B. resumed his duties in Achurch although he was now in his eighties and in poor health.(54)

From 1627 onwards records show the malcontents gathering strength as R.B. was repeatedly presented for misdemeanours; not wearing the surplice and not using the sign of the cross in baptism, which he felt was papist pandering.(55) Proceedings were deferred again and again. R.B. appeared occasionally. At other times one of his sons explained that he was unwell.

Why were the malcontents so determined? Possibly they felt certain they

could win, which they did. This suggests perhaps that the court was in sympathy with their beliefs, even having anti-Calvinist connections? It might be that R.B.'s ultra-plainness generated opposition. In future years , when Lilford church disappeared, some of their monuments found a home in Achurch church which had none previously.

Dexter criticised R.B.'s register remarks as 'uncalled for' but they silently witness to the Christian caring character of the man.(56) There is particular interest when in 1615 R.B. wrote in the name of John Smith whose son John went to Cambridge, becoming an intruded fellow of Queen's College.(57) The good offices by which John Smith managed this was said to be due to Dr. Ashton, R.B.'s successor, but since he went up within a year of Ashton's coming into residence, his preparation must have been due to R.B. Almost certainly R.B. helped the son of Boniface Peake on his way to becoming Lord Mayor of London by securing an apprenticeship for him there.(58)

Typical of R.B.'s register entries showing his pastoral concern is : ''Anne Dawkins said to be the daughter of one William Dawkins of unknown dwelling''. The six days later, when he had obviously called and found out about the mother, when he buried the child it was with this comment: ''Anne Dawkins the child of a sorrowing woman called Juda Stanley alias Dawkins''. Again an entry on Thomas Draper. Either R.B. interceded on the boy's behalf or the man relented from the goodness of his heart so that he took the boy back and R.B. put the kind action on record.

''Thomas Draper, base borne as he said before his death, a boy servant of Henrie Willamot, ran away from his maister and was intertained and kept by Henrie Willamot, contrarie to his maister's will; surfytted in harvest in Henrie Willamot's woode and was turned out of him being sick, and afterward received again and kept by him in his sickness tyll he died''.

Since the boy was not buried until the 15th December, Henrie Willamot had him for some time.

In 1630: ''A child of my own gracious godsonne Robert Greene baptised in schism'', an entry which is full of pathos. Cater may have misread the words 'own gracious' reading them as 'ungracious'.(59) There are more comments by R.B. which show that his church at Achurch acted as a magnet to the poor and outcast from places around.

It is evident that R.B.'s brother, Philip, had been deprived of his living at Little Casterton and at some time had come to stay with R.B. According to the records Philip was excommunicated.(60) Then on 15th December 1631 is shown :

"Robert Browne stands excommunicated".(61) Neither R.B. nor his brother would have been over-concerned for they believed the court had no such power.(62) However the malcontents were not finished for they pursued the old man relentlessly. He was cited to appear in Peterborough on 29th May 1632 but he could not travel so far at his age. In March 1633 Allen Greene and Robert Dust were appointed sequestrators of the living and were paid expenses incurred in the prosecution on the 24th January 1634.(63) In effect the court forced R.B. to retire, as he could have done years before, for some portion of the sequestered living went to him.(64) Fuller's portrayal of Browne must be seen as a caricature. He expressed his feelings through the degradation of Browne's character whenever possible.

Cater urges : "a reconstruction of judgment concerning Browne", (65) while Smith concludes that R.B.'s actions "belong to the life of a man who was convinced that the individual is precious in the sight of God and of equal importance with any king or priest".(66)

R.B. surely believed that in order to spread the Word of God he should follow the example of Jesus. The Word spread from the twelve with no need to organise a huge church at once. Indeed the Word did spread, for many years after R.B.'s death the care for people particularly the poor and unfortunate was continued from Thorpe Achurch. Browne's organisation was never intended to be separate from the Church of England, although he ran it on congregational lines. He lived a good, practical, thoughtful Christian life and should be revered for that rather than castigated for what he did not do.

P.B.Coleman

1. D.Willen "Robert Browne and the Dilemma of Dissent" Journal of the URC Historical Society II No.6 (1980), 171 - hereafter "Dilemma".
2. C.Burrage The True Story of Robert Browne 1550?-1633 (1906) 30.
3. J.S.Brewer "The Life of Fuller" in T.Fuller The Church History of Britain (1847) xxxv.
4. R.W.Dale The History of English Congregationalism (1906) 339.
5. J.Browne The History of Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk (1877) 60.
6. F.I.Cater "Robert Browne's Ancestors and Descendants" Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society II (1905-6) 154.

7. Burrage op.cit.7.

8. A.Peel and L.H.Carlson (eds.) The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne (1952) 166- hereafter ''Writings''.

9. Landsdowne Mss. 33, No.13.

10. ibid., J.Strype Annals of the Reformation (1824) III, 20-22.

11. Cater op.cit. 155.

12. Willen ''Dilemma'' quotes Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series XIV, 271,303.

13. ''Writings'' 424-429.

14. ibid. 518-519.

15. D. Calderwood History of the Kirk of Scotland (1843) Woodrow Soc. Ed. 8 vols. IV quoted by D.C.Smith ''Robert Browne Independent'' Church History (1937) VI, 310.

16. R.B.'s letter to Mr.Flower (1588) published as ''A new year's guift'' by C.Burrage op.cit., cited by Smith ibid., 311.

17. ''Writings'' 430-506.

18. F.J.Powicke Robert Browne Pioneer of Modern Congregationalism (1910), 70.

19. ''Writings'' 442.

20. Smith op.cit. 314, based on Hume The Great Lord Burghley (1898) and J.Strype Life and Acts of John Whitgift (1718).

21. F.I.Cater ''New facts relating to Robert Browne'' Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society (1905-6), 238.

22. S.Bredwell The Raising of the Foundations of Brownism (1588), 136-139 - hereafter ''Raising''.

23. Burrage op.cit. 55.

24. Smith op.cit. 329.

25. Brewer op.cit. V 65.

26. Cater ''New Facts'' op.cit. 240.

27. ibid.241.

28. ibid.

29. Cater ''Ancestors'' 154.

30. ibid, 153.

31. Achurch parish registers and notes left by F.O.Coleman, rector of Thorpe Achurch with Lilford cum Wigsthorpe 1937-41.

32. A.F.Pollard Political History of England (1910) VI, 451-455, 469.

33. J.E.Neale Elizabeth I and her Parliaments 1559-601 (1953-57) II, 145-165.

34. W.J.Sheils The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610 (Northampton, 1979) Northants Record Soc. XXX, 56.

35. ibid.

36. Notes left by F.O.Coleman from Achurch parish register.

37. F.I.Cater ''Achurch Parish Register'' TCHS (1907-8) III, 135.

38. N.R.H. Tyacke ''Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution'' in C.Russell (ed.) The Origins of the English Civil War (1973) 130.

39. P.Collinson English Puritanism (1983)19.

40. ibid. where Collinson quotes Widdowes The Schismatical Puritan(1630).

41. Sheils op.cit.145.

42. Tyacke op.cit.137-139.

43. H.M.Dexter Congregationalism of the Last 300 Years (New York 1880) 117.

44. Cater ''New Facts'' 243.

45. Smith op.cit. 291.

46. Notes left by Coleman.

47. Cater ''Ancestors'' 158.

48. Powicke op.cit. 51.

49. Smith op.cit. 51.

50. F.I.Cater ''The Later Years of Robert Browne'' TCHS (1907-8) III, 313.

51. ibid. 308.

52. ibid.

53. Cater "Later Years" 309.

54. ibid.

55. Collinson op.cit. 31.

56. Cater "Achurch Registers" 128.

57. Powicke op.cit. 51.

58. Letter and notes left by Coleman.

59. As read and translated by F.O.Coleman.

60. Smith op.cit. 343.

61. ibid. 341.

62. J.S.Brewer T.Fuller History of the Church (1845) III, 127-136.

63. Smith op.cit.127.

64. ibid. 338.

65. Cater "New Facts" 246.

66. Smith op.cit.349.

THE STORY OF A PURITAN TRACT BY FRANCIS TALLENTS

My interest in Francis Tallents (1619-1708) began in 1972 when I was confronted by his portrait in oils at the Swan Hill Congregational Church, Shrewsbury, which I was to serve as minister 1973-81. Details of his life are given in the Dictionary of National Biography by Charlotte Fell-Smith. A contemporary but concise account of his life is supplied by Matthew Henry, along with the funeral sermon preached on that occasion in 1708, and a brief modern biography of Tallents is included in his Calamy Revised (Oxford 1934) by A.G.Matthews. J.W.Ashley Smith in The Birth of Modern Education (1954) marks his contribution to education, as provided in the dissenting academies. A number of shorter items with the postscript of his Journal etc. appeared in earlier issues of the Congregational History Circle Magazine.(1)

Francis Tallents left a number of interesting items, one in particular which has puzzled many. This is a thin folio of fourteen pages quarto, entitled A Large and Sure Foundation by the author of the View of Universal Historie, subtitled with text Matthew 16:18 - "Upon this rock I will build my Church" (printed 1693, London).

Seeking a view of the folio, I found copies had once been held at the Shrewsbury School and also at the town's public libraries, but that these had disappeared from the shelves. Only the British Library still retained this work and I secured a copy of this some twelve years ago, and proceeded to have further copies made. which I presented to both the libraries mentioned at Shrewsbury and also to Dr.Williams's Library, London.

When Mr. J.Lawson, the librarian at Shrewsbury School, examined the copy he wrote, "I am pretty certain that the photocopy you sent me was one of our copy ", the one known to be once in that library, having been presented by Tallents himself to the school in 1696. Under the large lettering "Large and Sure" etc. the words "or Latitudinarian" are interpolated, and under the word "Foundation", the words "on which to erect Anarchy and Confusion", also after the words "Upon this rock I will build my Church", have been interpolated "And by this Schism will I overthrow it". Dr.Geoffrey Nuttall then drew my attention to Sir John Bickerton Williams' Life of Philip Henry (1825), reprinted by The Banner of Truth, unaltered, in 1975. Dr.Nuttall confirms that this is the only copy known (see Wing L437-anon, unattributed), adding that the interpolated words must be those of a probably Anglican critic. Also he notes that in the DNB it is called A Sure and Large Foundation and wonders if this folio is another untraced piece by Tallents.

There is ground for this view in Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ejected Ministers(1713) which refers to other works by Tallents. None however fits the description of a treatise setting out the excellence of reformed Christianity, as against the Roman Church, and which may have been written by Tallents when in Paris.

Mr. Lawson believes that the high church Tory, and the writer of the critical interpolations I have described, must have been the Revd Leonard Hotchkiss, an early 18th century headmaster of the school, who would have no time for Tallents and his nonconformity. Local tradition claims Hotchkiss as the scholar who held the bridle of Henry Sacheverell's horse when he started his almost triumphal procession to Selattyn, his new living in north Shropshire in 1710, after his trial for preaching against religious toleration and occasional conformity. (2)

Further to our story, Mr. Lawson writes, "although the photocopy came from the British Library, it appears to be taken from a microfilm originating at Ann Arbor, Michigan USA, where there is a notable library. I have been able to trace it through our catalogues to Dr.Samuel Butler (a former headmaster) and his catalogue of c.1800.

John Bickerton Williams borrowed it on January 28th 1824 and subsequently returned it.(3)

It does not appear amongst Dr. Butler's books, sold by Payne and Fogg in 1841, but was, however, not recorded in an 1890s shelf catalogue." About that time the school had only a dozen or more scholars and the ancient library also suffered, so that with others A Large and Sure Foundation was lost and probably sold, eventually finding its way to the Ann Arbor library, already mentioned. As the only copy known, it was copied for the British Museum and hence I obtained my copy. The only other writing on the title page already described and also in print after "Large and Sure" etc. are the words "by the Author of the View of Universal Historie". The other matter of interest which confirms it was Tallents' own copy, presented as stated, is the ode written by Tallents on the death of Rowland Nevet of Oswestry, Shropshire December 1675, apart from a final line on the title-page, after "printed in the year 1693" - "for Aunsham Churchill, Paternoster Row" in Tallents' handwriting.(4)

Dr. Nuttall adds "the fact that it is printed 'for Aunsham Churchill' as was the View of Universal Historie is further confirmation of the authorship". And the two handwritings, mentioned as being added to the printed title-page, settles the matter. Mr. Lawson confirms the critical hand is that of Hotchkiss while the writing in the firm, square, if cribbed hand is that of Tallents.(5)

Trevor Watts

1. For Francis Tallents see above and A.G.Matthews Calamy Revised (Oxford 1934), 474-5, A Short Account of the Life of Mr. Francis Tallents, added to a funeral sermon preached by Matthew Henry (1709),postscript to Tallents' Journal, DNB, CHC Mag vol.1,No. 8, 14-23, vol. 2, No.4, 36-41.

2. For Henry Sachevereli (1674?-1724) see DNB.

3. For John Bickerton Williams, c.f. CHC Mag vol.2 No.2, 16-28, no.3, 16-17, DNB.

4. The Title Large and Sure Foundation appears in the ode referred to. See copy of the ode in CHC Mag vol.2, No.7, 26, for Nevet see Calamy Revised 362.

5. Private correspondence.

THE TALE OF AN IDLE FELLOW, JEROME K. JEROME

Jerome K. Jerome (1859-1927) is known now chiefly as a humorist, the author of Three Men in a Boat, although he was a journalist, novelist, and playwright with over forty other publications to his credit. He may be remembered the more easily because he had a slightly absurd name which perfectly matches the easy-going humour associated with his work. Indeed journalists early in his career called him JKJ. Certainly Three Men in a Boat achieved for Jerome a permanent literary renown with its story of three young men and their dog, Montmorency, who spend a fortnight's holiday rowing on the river Thames. Yet this was not his first nor his last success. His earlier experiences as an actor led him to write a collection of humorous stories about the theatre called On the Stage and Off (1885) and he followed this with Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow (1886), also popular. However the publication of Three Men in a Boat in 1889 made his name. He had hit a rich vein of humour and sentiment which suited the taste of late Victorian England. The book was translated into many languages becoming very popular abroad, especially in Russia. By 1930 Jerome and his writings had become the subject of an academic monograph in German.(1)

JKJ may be remembered also as the writer of a curious play, The Passing of the Third Floor Back (1907), about the residents of an Edwardian lodging house in Bloomsbury who are exposed and transformed by a strange Christ-like figure who comes to live among them. Just as Three Men in a Boat was later filmed, in 1933, and then again in 1956, adding to Jerome's fame so too The Passing of the Third Floor Back was filmed in the 1930s, with Conrad Veidt playing the calm but unsettling stranger.(2) Thus Jerome's fame has grown even if literary critics have been inclined to dismiss his humour and sentiment somewhat lightly. The Times' obituarist wrote that the "simple humours" of Three Men in a Boat and the "religious sentiment" of The Passing of the Third Floor Back "belong essentially to their period". JKJ was admittedly "an industrious writer, but he never equalled these two successes, and in his later work the sentiment which had always marked his writing tended to degenerate into sentimentality. He had not, in fact, kept pace with the changes of public taste, and remained to the end in the naivete both of his laughter and his tears a typical humorist" of the 1880s.(3)

JKJ nevertheless has bequeathed certain sayings to the English language such as the following:

"The only malady I could conclude I had not got was housemaid's knee"
(Three Men in a Boat ch.1)

"George goes to sleep at a bank from ten to four each day except Saturdays, when they wake him up and put him outside at two"
(ibid. ch 2)

"I like work: it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours. I love to keep it by me: the idea of getting rid of it nearly breaks my heart"
(ibid. ch15)

"Love is like the measles; we all have to go through it."
(Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow, "On being in love")

"It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty of work to do"
(ibid."On being idle")

Indeed the very use of three men in a title seems to echo Jerome's comic invention . Significantly in recent years the title Three Men and a Baby has been used for a French film comedy and its American remake (as well as sequels).(4)

This paper is an examination of JKJ's family background, especially offering an insight into the life of his father, an unsuccessful businessman and former Congregational minister, whose inability to settle greatly contributed to his family's sufferings. This examination is not always helped by JKJ's own autobiography where filial loyalty and a tendency to gloss over difficulty (probably acquired from his long-suffering mother) led him to depict his father as a victim of cruel misfortune. However the sincere faith of JKJ's parents despite their sufferings, communicated itself to their son whose works reflect the triumph of humour over bleakness and of goodness over the wisdom of this world.

Although Jerome wrote of idleness he himself had a background not of money and indulgence but of poverty in east London, occasioned by his father's recurrent business failures. Here then is the source of his laughter and tears. Indeed the sub-title of Alfred Moss's uncritical biography of JKJ suggests not only an early struggle but a defiance of the critics - From Poverty to the Knighthood of the People (1928). JKJ was born at Walsall on the 2nd May 1859, the younger son of Jerome Clapp Jerome who was then a colliery proprietor, having formerly been a Congregational minister. His middle name Klapka was not derived from his father's Clapp but rather from an Hungarian general, George Klapka, then exiled in this country and a friend of the Jeromes. Klapka wrote his memoirs in their Walsall home. JKJ's father had been known as Jerome Clapp prior to the move to Walsall. JKJ's mother was Welsh, formerly Marguerite Jones, the elder daughter of a Swansea solicitor. In "those days of modest fortunes" she may have been regarded as something of "an heiress". JKJ described his father as "of Puritan stock" and

stated that his mother and her sister, also nonconformists, when children, would often be pelted with stones and mud on their way to chapel on a Sunday morning.(5)

Jerome Clapp's Early Life and Ministry

Jerome Clapp was born in London in 1807 and, according to his son, was educated at Merchant Taylors' School (although the school records do not confirm this). JKJ suggests his father studied to be an architect and then felt a call to the ministry. Certainly Jerome Clapp was a student at Rothwell academy in Northamptonshire by March 1823. There he was tutored by Walter Scott, the minister of Rothwell Congregational Church before going on to college. By December 1823 Clapp was a student at Wymondley academy and with five others that month was reported and disciplined. The offence was deemed serious enough for Clapp to be sent home so that by the end of the month he wrote from London asking to be re-admitted to Wymondley, with a supporting letter from Rev.Samuel Nichols of Hackney Road.(6)

Wymondley academy had undergone some recent changes by 1823. Its long-time principal, William Parry, had died in 1819. He was succeeded by John Atkinson who expelled two students in 1820 and a little later several, including many able Unitarian inclined students transferred to Manchester College, York. Atkinson died in 1821 and "matters improved" under Thomas Morell and William Hull. Morell disciplined the young Clapp.(7)

JKJ believed his father in early manhood had "occupied his time chiefly in building chapels" and preaching in them. His first position was probably at Marlborough for a silver salver in the family's possession is inscribed, "presented to the Reverend Clapp Jerome by the congregation of the Independent Chapel, Marlborough, June 1828". At this time Clapp was only 21 years old. (8)

By 1830 Clapp had moved to Cirencester in Gloucestershire where he gathered a cause, resulting in June 1833 in the opening of a new Independent chapel. His reported success was such that, "under the divine blessing, he has not only collected a respectable congregation, and founded a Christian church, but excited towards their interest the kind liberality of even several members of the Church of England", especially that of Earl Bathurst who granted a piece of ground "for the erection of a commodious chapel, 44 feet by 50". Henry Bathurst (1762-1834) had been MP for Cirencester 1793-4 and had held high office in Pitt's government and that of Lord Liverpool. He was "a Tory of the old school" but supported in principle the repeal of Roman Catholic disabilities. Clapp must have been persuasive.(9)

The chapel at Cirencester attracted some fine preachers to its opening services. William Jay (1769-1853), from 1791 until his death, minister of Argyle Chapel, Bath, who was called by Sheridan "the most natural orator he had ever heard", preached for Clapp at Cirencester's opening. as did John Leifchild (1780-1862), then the successful and popular minister of Craven Chapel, Bayswater, in London.(10) The Cirencester chapel was built in the classical style, nine steps leading up from the road to its columned frontage. The interior was lit principally by a sky-light, in the centre of a "dome-shaped iron roof", 40 feet in diameter. Cirencester had then a population of 7,000 with one parish church where only one sermon was preached on a Sunday. Lord Bathurst for his generosity was to suffer anonymous aspersions on his name.(11)

At the time of its opening the outstanding debt on the chapel was about £300. In 1834 its minister, Jerome Clapp, made known his intention to visit London "to solicit the aid of all who wish well to the spread of the gospel" and thus to accept contributions for the Cirencester cause. Clapp was presented with a large Bible by the "Ladies of the Congregation". By the 1920s his old chapel had become the Cirencester Memorial Hospital on the road to the station.(12)

In 1835 Clapp moved to Dursley to become minister of the Boulton Lane chapel. He clearly had initiative and vision as his Cirencester experiences showed. At Dursley he proved himself to be "a man of clever and lively temperament" and a thorough nonconformist, prepared to enter the political arena for his congregation and his principles. He campaigned on the issue of church rates (whereby all parishioners, regardless of their church affiliations and beliefs, were required to pay a rate for the upkeep of the parish church). In March 1840 the churchwardens proposed a 3d in the pound rate to repair the churchyard. The vestry meeting discussed the issue but extraordinarily the proposal was overturned. A town poll was held, resulting in a victory for the churchwardens by 105 to 30 votes.(13)

Clapp rallied his supporters to the vestry so that the meeting was moved into the church itself. He spoke out against the levy asking that the previous year's accounts should be presented. When this was done, the references to wine and the washing of surplices were treated by some with contempt. The injustice was felt keenly and was thus publicly exposed.(14)

Boulton Lane chapel had been built by a group of former members of Dursley Tabernacle. They had never been numerous and Clapp recommended to his church that their best course lay in a reunion of the two causes. This eventually happened in the spring of 1840 and, after a short while in which Clapp often preached to the joint congregation, he left for Appledore, near Bideford in Devon. Just prior to this, probably when arrangements were in process for the reunion,

Jerome Clapp supplied the pulpit "for a few sabbaths" at the recently opened chapel at Southam in Warwickshire. In 1841 the Anti-Corn Law League (led by the Quakers Richard Cobden and John Bright) called a conference of ministers of all Christian denominations in Manchester. Jerome Clapp attended, as did some of his former colleagues from Dursley, again emphasising his political interests and social concern.(15)

Clapp must have married at Dursley perhaps in 1838, or soon after leaving there as his bride's first settled home with her husband was at Appledore where from 1840 he was minister of the Congregational church, a 1662 foundation. The acquisition of a considerable sum of money (left to his wife in her father's will) made it possible for Clapp to buy a farm and build a house, named Milton, on the land. Whilst at Appledore Clapp preached often at the neighbouring Congregational church in Bideford, gaining a reputation as a fine preacher. He may also have edited and published a hymnbook.

"Parson Clapp", as JKJ claims he was known there, had an inventive and amusing streak (perhaps conveyed to his son).An old local man who had worked on Clapp's farm recalled in the 1920s that his employer had agreed to give a talk and, on being asked the title, had noticed a board in front of a house, on which were the words in large letters, "Power to Let, enquire within". Clapp took that as his title and gave a very amusing speech which, although pressed, he would never repeat.(16) JKJ later claimed that his father had been "a great friend" of the journalist, editor, and philanthropist, Passmore Edwards, a Cornishman, when they were both young. Clapp boasted that he and Edwards had introduced golf to the south of England, playing it on the sands above Westward Ho, when Clapp was farming on land above Instow.(17)

While at Appledore Clapp became the secretary and editor of the Congregational Tract Society, a local organisation which aimed "to diffuse extremely cheap treatises and tracts on Protestant Dissent". Its proponents, Baptists and Independents, resented the "political control" of the Church and saw "the Establishment of religion" as "an unmixed and unmitigated evil ". It published, among other works, Edward Miall's liberationist tract The Practical Evils Resulting from the Union of Church and State.(18) Clapp also found himself embroiled in north Devon in a local dispute between the Wesleyan Reform Association and "some official advocates of Conference Methodism". In 1852 he had chaired a public meeting and was later accused of bias against the Wesleyan Methodists (not the Wesleyan Reform Association). His accuser suggested that his own ministerial labours at Appledore had not resulted in many converts, much "harmony", and "spiritual prosperity". However the correspondence makes it clear that by 1852

Clapp had left his ministry at Appledore "through ill health" and had enjoyed "the very highest approval" for his work there.(19)

JKJ reported that his father had started a stone quarry in Devon although his later biographer believed that a Scots miner had suggested to Clapp that silver ore might be found on his land. This first attempt at mining proved costly but yielded no silver.

Walsall

In 1855 the family moved to Walsall in Staffordshire where Clapp hoped to make his fortune out of coal which was then a prosperous concern though again JKJ suggests the move was motivated in part by the offer of a pastorate (although this seems unlikely). At Walsall Clapp became a partner in the Birchills Iron Works and also a church member of Bridge Street Congregational Church.(20) Soon after moving from Devon Clapp (now described as Jerome Clapp Jerome in all documents) was elected to serve as a deacon. In January 1856 he acted as an auditor of Bridge Street Chapel's annual accounts. In April 1856 he gave an address to the Sunday School teachers on "The best method of dealing with the minds of the young". In May the teachers' friends took tea with JCJ in the chair and in August he chaired the church's finance committee.(21)

However relations between JCJ and the minister, Alexander Gordon, a northern Irishman, deteriorated rapidly when Gordon was made aware of charges against Clapp Jerome's character (probably stemming from the slurs alleged against him in Bideford by the Wesleyan Methodists). The minister wished to know more and "some rather heated church meetings" were held, with no definite increase in enlightenment. In December 1856 Gordon addressed the church meeting in reference to "certain rumours" about Clapp Jerome. Clearly JCJ was prepared and several of his friends in the church felt he was "perfectly free from any just imputation - and that from unworthy motives he was made the victim of a cruel oppression which was being exercised in defiance of Scripture, the Spirit of Christianity, and the Order and Institutions of Congregational Churches". Consequently a "number of the most earnest and zealous workers in the Church sided with Mr. Jerome" and in January 1857 twenty members withdrew from the fellowship.(22)

The seceding members resolved to found a new church and met for a time at the New Inn club - room, Park Street, and then, as numbers grew, they moved to the Guildhall Assembly room. At this time they received a new influx of worshippers as a neighbouring church became uneasy at their minister's heterodoxy. In March 1857 the Walsall Free Press contained a letter from JCJ in which he

stated his desire to hold a public discussion with Dr. Gordon but he had been refused. He asked to use the newspaper to publish his views. He claimed Gordon had rigged the church meeting with a ''packed majority'' to secure a ''prejudiced verdict'' and that ''false and foul insinuations had been put about by ''certain disappointed drunkards.... in base revenge, on being frustrated in a scheme of fraud''. (23)

In March 1858 the foundation stone of a new chapel, Ephratah, was laid in Wednesbury Road, Walsall with a crowd of 3000 present. Again JCJ defended himself at the tea afterwards, alleging the motive of ''revenge'' on his accusers' parts. In January 1859 Ephratah chapel was opened for worship. It was designed by JCJ along the lines of Bideford Congregational church and resembled the style of 15th century decorated Gothic. The stained glass windows over the entrance depicted Luther, Melancthon, and Wycliffe. The Wednesbury Road chapel was damaged in a Zeppelin raid in January 1916 but was rebuilt. Bridge Street and Wednesbury Road chapels were to remain separate until they united in 1945.(24)

Although JCJ was unanimously chosen to be the ''President'' of the fellowship in 1857 it was stated that this was ''untill a Pastor should be required''. Contrary to expectation JCJ proved not to be the first minister of this church but his supporters who left Bridge Street with him remained staunch members until their deaths. Among them was E.T.Holden, later MP for Walsall, three times town mayor and a town council member for over 60 years. He was knighted in 1907 and died at the age of 95 in 1926. Sir Edward Holden recalled JCJ as ''a wonderful preacher'' who ''drew large congregations to Walsall from all round the district''.(25)

JCJ's business interests did not flourish however. His partnership in the ironworks had not proved profitable and the pits which he had sunk on Cannock Chase involved more and more problems, as shifting sand and underground water required ever-increasing expenditure to by-pass them. Money was lost at every turn. JKJ later, with the wisdom of hindsight, commented that his father should have followed ''sound Biblical advice'' and ''stuck to his preaching, for which God had given him the gift, and had left worldly enterprise to those apter in the ways of Mammon''. Yet JCJ saw that ''fortunes were being made all around him, even by quite good men'' although once his own pits became flooded he was ruined. Clapp Jerome confessed to his wife their financial ruin on JKJ's first birthday in May 1860.(26)

London

This should have been the occasion of a return to the ministry but by then JCJ's mind was set. His character was stubborn and he determined to shake off the shame of financial disgrace. The family moved to Stourbridge while JCJ, with unbowed optimism, took himself to London to retrieve their fortunes, working as a wholesale ironmonger. JCJ lived there for two years on his own, limiting his weekly expenses to a minimum. Sadly the ironmongery did not prosper and at Stourbridge there were seven to keep. When Mrs. Jerome discovered the truth she ''took matters into her own hands'' and came to London. However JKJ's older brother, Milton, had died in Stourbridge after a short illness, aged six, and he was buried in the churchyard of Stourbridge Congregational church. JKJ had two elder sisters also - Blandina, eleven years older than himself, and Pauline who was a grown-up young woman, with ''a Sunday School class and a sweetheart'' when he was still an infant.(27)

JKJ found London a frightening place and Poplar, where they lived, was close to the menace of the East End with the ''awful silence of its weary streets''. In these bleak surroundings where JKJ passed his childhood he developed a ''melancholy, brooding disposition''. He later remarked, ''I can see the humorous side of things and enjoy the fun when it comes; but look where I will there seems to me always more sadness than joy in life''. His father argued with Mrs. Jerome that the young boy should be allowed to wander the streets but there he was persecuted by the street boys until he learnt to double round corners and run faster.(28)

JCJ invested in one more scheme, this time concerned with railway speculation. Blandina and her young brother were frequently sent to Stoke Newington where ''grand folks'' lived. A new railway was proposed, enabling JCJ to dream again. An old gentleman met the children and they ate a sumptuous tea while notes were read and written. Blandina would take home grapes and peaches for Mamma whose hopes rose also for ''Papa's railway''. However one afternoon Blandina emerged with no fruit but a fearful look and tears in her eyes. The two children never returned to this house and Mrs. Jerome recorded in her diary - ''Papa's railway is not to be proceeded with. We are overwhelmed with sorrow. Every effort my dear husband makes proves unsuccessful. We seem shut out from the blessing of God.'' In February 1870 only one property at Notting Hill was left to represent ''the hard earned savings and privations of years''. In March JCJ had, through ill health, been forced to give up work and in 1871 he died.(29)

Clapp Jerome had retained his interests in politics and wider affairs in Poplar. Just as in Dursley he had campaigned for the removal of church rates on dissenters and the repeal of the Corn Laws, so in Poplar he was active for peace, becoming president of the Poplar branch of the International Peace Association.(30)

JCJ certainly had proved able to inspire loyalty and deep affection. Yet his inability to settle and his failed business ventures had grave consequences on his immediate dependants and on himself. He had a commendable concern for civil justice and for the poor yet his participation in local controversies led to bitterness and division as at Appledore and Walsall. Clapp felt outrage and righteous anger at these incidents. But he does not seem to have engaged in self-examination nor experienced remorse. Perhaps he lacked the will to seek reconciliation and healing. He had obstinacy to a disastrous degree. His move from the ministry into a business career, not in itself unworthy, had dire results. Possibly Clapp was the unfortunate victim of economic forces beyond his control, for financial ruin was a common theme of Victorian England. Yet one feels his reckless character was unwilling and unable to learn the lessons meted out to him. Consequently he and his family endured humiliation and penury. JKJ later recorded that he himself thought life was always "a gamble, with prizes sometimes for the imprudent, and blanks so often to the wise". Marguerite Jerome, the mother, was loyal and patient, a resourceful woman and faithful Christian married to a dreamer.(31)

Nevertheless JKJ emerged from this abject poverty with a warm appreciation for the humour which sustains life in its darkest moments - a humour, admittedly with a broad popular appeal, but neither tasteless nor smutty. In addition JKJ absorbed from his parents a deep, if unattached Christian faith. In him, again as in the popular mind, such faith revealed itself in mawkish indulgence but his unintellectual moralising and his homiletical approach mirrored the mood of the day (a mood reflected by H.G.Wells in Kipps a little later, in 1905). JKJ's father's hopeless speculations taught his son to be alert to public taste and to pay heed to it rather than to the critics. Yet his feel for religion was genuine and he was able to embody the voice of conscience in the Stranger in The Passing of the Third Floor Back. JKJ's love for his parents and admiration for their faith is evident in the themes of this play - "attitudes towards kindness, respect and honour" which represented the "closest he ever came to a formal religion". Yet JKJ made no great claims for this play which bore the sub-title An Idle Fancy.(32)

Jerome K. Jerome

Three Men in a Boat itself is a simple comedy, blending pleasant descriptions with homely philosophizing, and "farcical humour with ..... naive sentiment". Its mood and charm brought JKJ not only immediate popularity but

also lasting fame. This book is still in print and has become a much-loved classic. However in 1941 (just fourteen years after his death) JKJ was curtly dismissed as ''a successful exponent of the saloon-bar and music-hall type of humour at the level of the cockney clerk'' of the 1880s and 90s. Grudgingly Three Men in a Boat was allowed to retain ''its interest as a period piece'' while JKJ's later books revealed that ''his limited vein of humour was worked out''. Certainly JKJ never quite escaped the ''slur of vulgarity'', after being dubbed in Punch 'Arry K. 'Arry. This and his enormous popularity weighed against him with serious literary critics.(33). JKJ not only wrote humorous pieces. The religious short story The Passing of the Third Floor Back (1907) as a play was a theatrical triumph. Nevertheless in this JKJ was judged to have indulged in ''mystical sentimentality'' to a distressing extreme. The play proved a profitable vehicle for the talents of the celebrated actor Forbes-Robertson for many years although one critic felt the actor was ''wasted'' in the part. Its style aped that of JKJ's friend, James Barrie.(34)

In the Edwardian age Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson (1853-1937) chose his plays carefully but in 1908 he felt the leading role in The Passing of the Third Floor Back exactly suited his personality. The play may have ''little artistic merit'' but the role of the Christ-like Stranger drew on the actor's essential ''sweetness and goodness''. The appeal of play and actor to religious feeling was irresistible. People for whom the theatre was unknown territory flocked to see it both in England and America.(35)

JKJ's latest biographer, Joseph Connolly, wrote that in the world of literature ''Jerome was never sure of his standing, and even now it is hard to clarify''. He sought to draw attention to the evils of the world in his later works although he recognised that he had no real influence to remove them. ''Jerome had a voice.... but it was not the voice of a lion. His philosophies were wise, but they remained parochial''. Clearly Jerome's fame rests upon one book; even The Passing of the Third Floor Back is now dated. However his critics cannot deny that he is remembered as ''one of a rare breed: the author of a deathless humorous book''.

In addition ''his influence upon modern lighter writing may now be seen to be greater than previously supposed'', for although we should not presume to suggest that Jerome had been P.G.Wodehouse's inspiration and ''guiding spirit'', many of ''Wodehouse's beloved devices may be traced back directly to the mannerisms of the 'new humour' '' of JKJ.(36)

JKJ had many friends in Germany and could not subscribe to the spirit of jingoism in 1914. Yet he felt impotent and frustrated at his non-involvement in the war and, although in his middle 50s, he signed on as an ambulance driver for the French Red Cross, serving on the Western Front for about a year. He had some

feeling for God yet regarded the institutional church as profoundly unsatisfactory but retained great respect for the Quakers, derived from his experiences in wartime France, even stating that the survival of Christianity after the war was owed directly to the Quakers. JKJ experienced nights of unceasing rain with mud everywhere, causing the cars to overturn with dying men writhing in "ghastly heaps". The sorrow of it never totally left him and medically his heart was badly affected.(37)

JKJ, unlike his father, achieved the riches of fame and wealth. His father had died when he was 12 years old and devastatingly his mother when he was only 15 - "the greatest grief of his life". Sadness and loneliness overwhelmed him then and he lived in a succession of rented rooms, mostly in Camden Town. Yet his work at Euston for the London and North Western Railway Company brought him an income. In 1888 JKJ married Georgina Stanley at St.Luke's church, Chelsea. She was the daughter of Lieutenant Nesza of the Spanish army and of an Irish mother but, at the time of their marriage, both parents were dead. They had one daughter, Rowena.

JKJ in time came to love motoring and drove often just for pleasure. In 1927 he and his family planned to visit Devon on holiday. He was adamant on driving but suffered a sudden, mild heart-attack from which, after rest, he appeared to have recovered. By May the Devon air seemed to have rejuvenated him and he decided to drive from Devon to Cheltenham, and then to visit Northampton. There he suffered a severe stoke and in Northampton General Hospital, two weeks later, he died. He could neither move nor speak but recognized all his visitors. He died on the 14th June 1927, aged 68. He had written earlier in a private letter:

"It seems to me that now even more than when he lived Christ stands for the last great adventure. All other things have been fought for, died for, Democracy, Socialism, Parliamentarianism. Now for the last great Adventure."(38)

Alan Argent

1. M.Drabble (ed.) The Oxford Companion to English Literature (Oxford, 1985) 508, DNB, J.Connolly Jerome K. Jerome: A Critical Biography (1982) 7, W.Gutkess Jerome K. Jerome (Jena, 1930).

2. L.Maltin TV Movies and Video Guide (1987) 992.

3. The Times 15 June 1927, M.Drabble op.cit.

4. DNB, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Quotations(1964) 113, J.M. and M.J (eds.) The Penguin Dictionary of Quotations (1960) 204, Trois Hommes et un Couffin was released in 1985 and the American version in 1987, followed by Three Men and a Little Lady in 1990. D.Ellley (ed.) Variety Movie Guide (1993) 782-3.

5. DNB, Connolly op.cit., JKJ My Life and Times (1926) 8.

6. A. Moss Jerome K. Jerome: His Life and Work (1928) 41, New College Mss (at Dr Williams's Library) 325/21, L53/2/69, 53/2/74, 53/2/77.

7. H.MacLachlan English Education under the Test Acts (Manchester, 1931) 172.

8. JKJ op.cit., 8. One suspects JKJ must have inverted the names.

9. Evangelical Magazine (1833) 317. For Henry Bathurst, third Earl Bathurst see DNB.

10. For Leifchild and Jay see DNB.

11. Evangelical Magazine op.cit.

12. ibid. (1834)156, JKJ op.cit. 8-9.

13. D.E.Evans As Mad as a Hatter! (1982) 128-9.

14. ibid.

15. ibid. 128-9, 141, J.Sibree and M.Caston Independency in Warwickshire (1855) 351, Report of the Conference of Ministers of All Denominations on the Corn Laws, held in Manchester August 1841 (1841) 7.

16. Connolly op.cit.8, Moss op.cit. 42-3.

17. JKJ op.cit. 7-8, for John Passmore Edwards see DNB.

18. For Miall see DNB. For the Congregational Tract Society see records at North Devon Records Office, Barnstaple.

19. A Correspondence Between Thomas Evans and Rev. Jerome Clapp (Bideford, 1852).

20. JKJ op.cit. 9, Moss ibid.

21. Records retained at Walsall Local History Centre - Acc 361/48 Bridge St. Chapel accounts 1846-62, 30 January 1856; Acc 361/75 Sunday School journal 1849-91, 60,62; Acc 361/9 Finance Committee journal 1835-56, 4 August 1856.

22. A. Willis The History of Bridge Street Chapel, Walsall (Walsall 1893) 17-18, Wednesbury Road Congregational Church, Walsall Acc 790/1, minute book, 1 January 1857. A printed letter, dated December 26th 1856, from Walsall, is inserted in the flyleaf of the minute book of Appledore Congregational church (held at Barnstaple) which states that the 16 signatories have investigated the reports against Clapp and have found them "malicious" and untrue.

23. Willis ibid., Moss op.cit., Walsall Free Press 21 March 1857.

24. Walsall Free Press 20 March 1858, 8 January 1859, Walsall Local History Centre - Acc 790/41, Historical Scrapbook of Walsall Congregational churches, Moss ibid. 45.

25. Wednesbury Road Congregational Church, Acc 790/1 minute book - 1 January 1857, Moss 45-6, Who Was Who 1916-28 (1929) 506.

26. JKJ op.cit. 9-10.

27. ibid. 10-11.

28. ibid. 12.

29. ibid. 13,14,32.

30. D.E.Evans op.cit. 128-9, 141, ibid. 258.

31. JKJ ibid. 10-11.

32. Connolly op.cit. 149.

33. DNB, M. Green The Other Jerome K. Jerome(1984) 8, G.Sampson The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature (1941) 976-7.

34. Sampson ibid. Drabble op.cit. 508.

35. For Forbes-Robertson see DNB.

36. Connolly op.cit. 198.

37. DNB, ibid.171,173, Moss op.cit. 210-2, JKJ op.cit. 272-287.

38. Connolly op.cit. 22,193-4, Moss ibid. 68, DNB.

BOOK REVIEWS

John Gibbs A Newport Pagnell Puritan, 1627-1699 by Marilyn Lewis. Pp173 1995. Mrs.M.Lewis, The New Rectory, 81 High Street, Newport Pagnell, Bucks, MK16 8AB. £8.65 (inc. postage and packing).

Marilyn Lewis intends to produce a series of works on the "history of Christian faith and experience in Newport Pagnell". She is a keen and industrious local historian and has produced an interesting work (ring-bound, loose-leaf, with four original illustrations) on a relatively little known but fascinating 17th century Puritan. John Gibbs served as vicar of Newport Pagnell from 1652 to 1660 when he was removed from his living. Gibbs is an important figure in the development of religious dissent in north Buckinghamshire, founding Newport Pagnell Independent church (now United Reformed Church) and serving as pastor of the Olney congregation which now survives as Sutcliff Baptist church. Mrs Lewis has aimed to set Gibbs in his "theological and historical context" rather than write a biography, so this book "is a little study of Puritanism in which John Gibbs is the central character and the binding force".

She shows that Gibbs and his two congregations were closely associated with the gathered church of John Gifford and the young John Bunyan at Bedford. Gibbs himself attended Bedford School before moving to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge and Gibbs' family had many links with the Bedford gathered church. Gibbs was involved in a public disputation about infant baptism (which he opposed) in the late 1640s in which he was described as a 'Catabaptist', meaning he had a low view of baptism - as opposed to the Anabaptists with their high view. In 1659 Gibbs played a key role in the arrest of the Presbyterian royalist, Sir George Booth, who had rebelled against the Rump Parliament and Gibbs remained an effective influence in local nonconformity until his death.

Marilyn Lewis has found it easy "to enter into John Gibbs' story imaginatively". Her five page bibliography testifies to the hard work of the author and to the breadth and depth of her reading. She has looked at manuscript material in the British Library, the Congregational Library, the Public Record Office, Dr.Williams's Library, public libraries at Bedford and Milton Keynes, and also at Sutcliff Baptist Church, Olney and at Newport Pagnell URC. If you are well-read in 17th century Puritan history then you may feel it necessary to skip a little of her text. Yet I have no hesitation in recommending this serious little book although it would have benefitted from chapter end notes and an index.

Alan Argent

Philosophical Idealism and Christian Belief by Alan P.F.Sell. ISBN 0-7083-1310-8, Pp 338 1995, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, £35.00

This book is a useful addition to the study of post-Hegelian idealism. Alan Sell discusses, through the writings of seven British idealists - T.H.Green, Edward Caird, J.R.Illingworth, Henry Jones, A.S.Pringle-Pattison, C.C.J.Webb and A.E.Taylor - the religious and social-ethical aspects of the absolute idealism movement. All seven are discussed as to whether their thoughts helped or hindered Christian faith. He points out the fidelity of all these writers to their philosophical beliefs, except Taylor whose idealism, he suggests, was affected by Thomism and Scottish realism. He then passes to the formative intellectual influences on the group. Other chapters are given to discussions of God, the Absolute and the Idealists, Ethics, Society and the Idealists, and the Idealists and Christian Doctrine, before offering a detailed consideration of each philosopher in turn. He ends with reflections on Post-Hegelian idealism. The book has a useful bibliography for the student of this important 19th century philosophical movement.

Yvonne A. Evans

Why did the English Stop Going to Church? by Michael Watts. ISSN 0305-3962, Pp 16 1995, Friends of Dr. Williams's Library 49th Lecture, Dr. Williams's Trust, 14 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG, £2.00

Watts begins by asking: Why did they *start* going to church? References from medieval times onwards show authorities time and again deploring empty churches. Watts produces evidence to suggest that the period of churches full of regular worshippers extended from the late 18th century to around 1880. He ascribes this to the education provided by S.P.C.K.'s Anglican schools plus evangelism by nonconformists, citing statistics to show that substantial proportions of Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist converts between 1780 and 1850 had been brought up as Anglicans. Watts finds that Baptists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists lack these statistics.

Watts tells us that the Church of England instilled the necessity of obeying a strict moral code. Failure led to Hell. But success was found to be impossible; so fears of death, judgment and Hell predisposed people to accept, through faith, Christ's redeeming sacrifice.

Why then did our recruitment efforts fail from 1880 onwards? Watts discounts the effects of Darwin and of the "German" higher criticism. He ascribes the churches' failure rather to a growing distaste for the doctrines of eternal punishment, Hell, the Atonement, and damnation of unbelievers, and cites the

widespread acceptance of teachings of our Edward White and the Anglican F.D.Maurice. The aim of salvation of the individual sinner was displaced by the establishment of God's kingdom on earth - the brotherhood of man, with Christ, and the fatherhood of God. These objectives do not require a church.

Watts turns to a puzzling contrast: the perpetuation of church-going in the Unites States. He quotes several authors as ascribing this to greater persistence of orthodox ideas of salvation, avoidance of Hell, the promise of supernatural life after death. Watts does not suggest reasons for this transatlantic difference. Is it perhaps an example of the way in which emigrant societies cling on to features of the old country - for instance, the preservation of Old Norse in the Icelandic language; or the 18th century atmosphere of the university of Quebec?

We must thank Watts for his analysis. He expresses disappointment at his conclusion, which is, approximately, that if we want our churches to flourish, we must preach Hell and frighten our hearers as they consider their destiny after death. He seems to have a point, but not the point which will be of most interest to us! Is it, in fact, fear of Hell, and thoughts of life after death, which nourish successful Congregational (and other) churches today? Indeed, was it this barren landscape which shaped the evangelism of Whitefield and Wesley? Look for instance at the first Primitive Methodist hymnbooks, dating from 1821 and 1825. Hell hardly gets a mention! No, when their converts sang with such fervour on the moors of north Lincolnshire that the police were sent for, they were full, not of fear, but of joy - they had found a new life on this earth. Life after death, if you'd asked them, was at the back of their minds, but as a continuation of the eternal life which they were enjoying now, on earth.

So what is the lesson for us? Have you ever heard a sermon, or (woe) ever even preached one, which sent the hearers away happy that they were engaged, with good people of other faiths and none, in striving (with help through prayer) to improve the world? That, as we see from Watts, won't do. I, the hearer, have to be led again to believe that God has, for no understandable reason, given me grace to trust Jesus; to see my own inability to achieve anything by my own powers; to confess my sinfulness; and to accept, rejoicing, the forgiveness which Jesus bought for me on the Cross, and the ever-present power of his Holy Spirit.

This is the Gospel which maintained Congregationalism as a separate body in the 18th century, but which many churches lost in the 19th and early 20th. A Gospel with emphases of hope and cheer, not of fear and gloom.

J.W.Ashley Smith

'Fire in the Belly': Motivation for Mission in the LMS/CWM over Two Centuries by Barrie D.Scopes ISSN 0963-181X, Pp27 1995 The Congregational Lecture, Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd., Caroone House, 14 Farringdon St., London EC4A 4EB £2.00

In the 200th anniversary of the London Missionary Society's foundation Barrie Scopes, a former teacher-missionary, born of missionary parents in south India, was appropriately chosen to deliver the Congregational lecture at Dr.Williams's Library. His theme was the motivation of individuals who in the course of those 200 years committed themselves to declaring "the saving truth of salvation through Christ" in foreign lands, is not an easy one to deal with. Scopes opts for breadth rather than depth in his treatment of it. He begins by examining what inspired the early LMS missionaries and ends by quoting from letters he received from fellow missionaries in answer to his request for reasons why they offered for missionary service.

When speaking of the early missionaries he refers to three "sources of inspiration". The first of these was the Evangelical Revival which "stirred the hearts and feelings of Christian people, giving many of them the urge to share the gospel with people sunk in misery and sin" and combined with the second, accounts of the lives of "heathen (pagan) people" by travellers such as Captain Cook, created the enthusiasm which enabled Christians to face a dangerous unknown for the sake of the gospel and the souls' well-being of those living in societies where savage acts such as revenge killing, widow strangling and cannibalism were accepted. Scopes later discusses a third source of motivation, the confidence that Europeans discovered through the Enlightenment which convinced them that the growth of God's kingdom would naturally follow the spread of their civilisation.

Early missionaries often sought not only to bring the gospel to the heathen but also to convey the benefits of European progress. Over the years many have served in the mission field as craftsmen, teachers and doctors while simultaneously seeking to share their faith with the indigenous population. In the course of the lecture we are made aware of the debate about the rights and wrongs of seeking to change foreign cultures and also of the growing realisation of the contribution of local peoples to the growth of the church.

Scopes entitles his lecture "Fire in the Belly" and states that this fire "refers not just to the intellectual understanding of the mind but to the emotional commitment and enthusiasm, to the strength and feeling of a person". In order to experience a little of what this means it must, therefore, be necessary to know these men and women who often endured great hardship because of their burning desire

to see fellow human beings freed from the evils and fears that bound them. Sadly the number of missionaries referred to in this lecture prevents any deep examination of their motives. Neither do we learn much about what kept them going through difficult and sometimes desperate times. Did they ever have doubts? What did they understand by this "saving truth" of the gospel which moved them to risk everything? It is interesting that the one note of criticism is reserved for David Livingstone, surely the most famous LMS missionary, who is said to have "proved a difficult colleague to fellow missionaries". Here we begin to see a human being with faults who yet had the capacity to inspire "great devotion" from his African servants.

In preparing his lecture Scopes has read widely of past missionaries and given time also to reaching his contemporaries to discover "what made people who went as missionaries tick?" His lecture certainly gives some insight into who these missionaries were and what they achieved, but we are left feeling we need to know more about them if we are to have a penetrating assessment of their motivations.

M.L.Dean

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The Baptist Quarterly

(XXXVI Oct. 1995, No 4)

G.M.Ella "John Gill and the Charge of Hyper-Calvinism", M.Woods "Words that stay in place", A.H.J.Baines "The Pre-history of Regent's Park College", S.Read "Further Information on the Ryland Family".

(XXXVI Jan 1996, No 5)

M.Haykin " 'Resisting Evil': Civil Retaliation, Non-resistance and the Interpretation of Matthew 5:39a among 18th century Calvinistic Methodists", T.S.H.Elwyn "Industrial Mission: a Reflection", M.Goodman "Numerical Decline Amongst English Baptists 1930-1939"

(XXXVI April 1996, No.6)

N.G. Wright "The 'Sword': an example of Anabaptist diversity", R.Archer "Like Flowers in the Garden; John Bunyan and his Concept of the Church", B.M. Doyle "'Through the Windows of a Baptist Meeting House': Religion, Politics and the Nonconformist Conscience in the Life of Sir George White MP"

The Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin (No.22 1995)

P.Arthur "Thomas Tillam's Legacy. The Story of a Northumbrian Church"

Moravian History Magazine (No.9, Autumn 1995)

M.Doerfel "Memoirs of Charles Beresford Painter", R.Morris "Moravian Chapel in Chowbent 1773-1799", J.Mason "Cranz's Greenland History", "Br. Lewis West's report of his journey to, and visit at, Keld in Swaledale. N. Yorkshire".

The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society

(Vol 5, No 6 May 1995)

J.H.Taylor "A Tale of Taylors - A family and their church: Above Bar Southampton",

B.M.Doyle "Gender, Class and Congregational Culture in early 20th Century Norwich", A.Hoppen "Presbyterians in Victorian Hull: The Profile of a Congregation", A.J.Doodson "The Presbyterians in Liverpool. Part I: A Survey 1800-1876", S.C.Orchard "William Edwin Orchard (1877-1955): A Biographical note".

(Vol.5, No.7 Oct.1995)

K.B.E.Roxburgh "George Whitefield and the Secession Church in Scotland: An Unpublished Letter from Ralph Erskine", J.H.Thompson "Army Chaplains and the English Presbyterians", A.J.Doodson "The Presbyterians in Liverpool, Part 2: A Survey 1876-1900", F.R.Tomes "'We are hardly prepared for this style of teaching yet': Samuel Davidson and Lancashire Independent College", A .Argent "Thomas Hardy's Schooling: some Congregational links to his life and work", C.Binfield "An Obituary footnote: Sir Edgar Williams CB, CBE, DSO (1912-95) and the Revd. J.Edgar Williams (1877-1938)".

Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society

(Vol 50, Part 2, May 1995)

C.C Short "The Bible Christians in Birmingham", C.H. Goodwin "The Greatest Itinerant: Francis Asbury 1745-1816", J.M.Turner "Methodist Classics Reconsidered: 2: The Maldwyn Edwards Trilogy".

(Vol 50, Part 3, Oct.1995)

T.Macquiban "Practical Piety or Lettered Learning", G.E.Milburn "Methodist Classics Reconsidered: 3: H.B. Kendall's Origin and History of the P.M. Church".

(Vol 50, Part 4, Feb.1996)

K.G.C.Newport "Early Methodism and the French Prophets", P.Ellingworth "Methodist Classics Reconsidered: 4: The History of the W.M.M.S.", P.Nockles "Methodist Archives: Manuscript Accessions".