

Review.

The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641). By Champlin Burrage, M.A., B.Litt. In two volumes. *Illustrated.*

Mr. Burrage has produced a book which will make all future students of the early history of Dissent his debtors; it will be for them indispensable. Of the two volumes the one is devoted to History and Criticism; the other contains a collection of the more inaccessible or historically valuable writings, many of which have as yet been only imperfectly or partially reproduced. It is characteristic of Mr. Burrage that he issues this collection together with his story of the originals of Dissent: he has a passion for "primary sources." He has searched for them as other men search for hid treasure; and his efforts, as these volumes testify, have so far been crowned with a notable measure of success. It may occur to some readers that the passion for primary sources is the only passion our author permits himself to manifest; to him, apparently, it matters not whether his discoveries are to the advantage of Anglican or of Separatist: to correct misapprehension and to clear away traditional error is the aim which is pursued inflexibly and without even a momentary deviation towards partisanship. To write in such an impersonal fashion of the period under discussion is an achievement hardly possible for a British scholar. Mr. Burrage has had the advantage, as an American, of approaching his subject with fewer preconceptions and with the disinterestedness of one who in regard to the controversy, still vital in this land, between State Churchism and Dissent, is an onlooker, not an active participant. If, as a result, his treatment of his theme appears to many to lack colour and glow, he may rest assured that those who make use of his facts will supply what they miss. For himself, Mr. Burrage would wish his work to be judged by the dictum of Thomas Fuller, which he adopts as his motto: "As that Oyle is adjudged the best that hath no tast at all; so that Historian is preferred who hath the least Tanguie of partial Reflections." Of such "tanguie" we have discovered no trace in this book.

To refer to but a few of the many matters which call for remark, it is of importance to note that Mr. Burrage abandons the view that Separatism in England stood in vital connection with Continental Anabaptism. He now holds it to be much more likely that the true source of Brownism, as well as of Barrowism, is to be found in

the so-called old Nonconformity, in the London Protestant congregation of Queen Mary's time, and in the maturer opinions of later Puritans.

As to Robert Browne it is here insisted that when he opposed the Church of England most strenuously he did not think of permanent separation, "but of using temporary separation as a means of ultimately benefiting the condition of the State Church, to which, no doubt, he hoped to return." Is it not a little misleading to speak of Browne as contemplating a *return* to the Church of England, say when he wrote "A Booke which Sheweth"? Not a return to Anglicanism seems to have been in his mind, but an advance through Independency toward "an ecclesiastical Utopia," in which Episcopacy would have no place, or any church government other than government "by the people for the benefit of the people." We venture to think that at the time in question Browne's hope was to replace the Church of England rather than to reform it.

Very interesting to Baptists is the demonstration that John Smyth's congregation at Amsterdam was not the earliest community of English Anabaptists, and that Smyth himself was not the earliest Se-Baptist. Earlier, by probably not less than ten years is the case mentioned by Henoeh Clapham when writing his '*Antidoton*' in 1600. Mr. Burrage says that Smyth baptized himself rather than accept baptism from the Mennonites "on account of their peculiar beliefs." Is it not more likely that Smyth was without exact knowledge of Mennonite beliefs and practice at the time when he faced the question of re-baptism? We know that later on the linguistic difficulty greatly hindered intercourse between the English and the Dutch Anabaptists: at the outset of Smyth's sojourn in Holland that difficulty may well have been prohibitive of any intimate and extended converse. Mr. Burrage has fortunately brought to light a letter of Thomas Helwys, dated September 26, 1608, showing that when that letter was written Smyth's church was well settled in Holland. Another discovery destroys the basis on which Crosby rested his surmise as to Helwys himself, that he was still living in May, 1622. The letter on which that conjecture was based is certainly not by Helwys: its writer, Mr. Burrage affirms, was "without doubt" Henry Niclaes, the leader of the Familists. The chapter on "The Rise of the Independents" throws light on a subject about which there has been much misapprehension. Mr. Burrage contends, and the chapter vindicates the contention, "that the *early* Independents, or *early* Congregationalists, were merely a certain type of Puritans, and not Separatists from the Church of England; also that the Independents did not directly obtain their opinions from either Brownists or Barrowists." Incidentally it is shown that John Robinson was won from Separatism to this non-Separatist form of Congregationalism by his intercourse at Leyden in 1616 with Henry Jacob and others.

In reference to the re-introduction in this country of believers' baptism by *immersion*, Mr. Burrage is of opinion that Richard Blunt was not baptized in Holland, when he went thither to confer with the Collegiants; that he simply obtained information; and that on his return to London he immersed Blacklock—the leader of the immersionist community—and then was himself immersed by Blacklock. Probably this re-statement of the Blunt incident is correct. At best the available evidence is scanty: more may yet be forthcoming.

It should be added that Mr. Burrage encourages us to regard the present volumes as but a first instalment of the work on which he is engaged. May he be enabled, without let or hindrance, to carry on to its completion the enterprize, of which he has made so admirable a commencement. Needless to say, the Cambridge University Press has done its part in the production of these books in a manner worthy of its great reputation; the printing and the illustrations leave nothing to be desired.

G. P. G.

Arrival of Smyth's followers at Amsterdam, by July, 1608.

1. Extract from the Amsterdam marriage registers, published by de Hoop Scheffer in 1881, translated by T. G. Crippen in 1905: "1608 July 5. Henry Cullandt † of Nottinghamshire, bombazine worker, 20 years old,—shewing act under the hand of Richard Clyfton, preacher at Sutton [in Ashfield], that his banns had been published there—and Margarete Grymsdiche of Sutton, 30 years old." [It has been pointed out that this suggests a hasty flight.]

2. Extract from Zachary Clifton's family Bible, in the Taylolean Institution at Oxford, published by Joseph Hunter, 1854: "Memorandum. Richard Clifton, with his wife and children, came into Amsterdam, in Holland, August 1608."

3. Two more extracts from the marriage registers: "1608 August 23. John Murten † of Queynsborch [Gainsborough], furrier, 25 years old, and Jane Hodgkin of Worchep [Worksop] 23 years. August 30. Francis Pigett of Axen [Axholm], bricklayer's labourer, 32 years, and Margriet Struts of Bafford [Basford], 30 years." Henry Cullens or Collet went to Leijden, Clifton joined the Ancient Church, but Murton and Piggott were prominent members of the same church with Smyth and Helwys. It has been possible for thirty years easily to date the arrival of these people.

Independents and Brownists. The line between these was indicated in our volume I., page 222, note 24. It was very clearly and repeatedly drawn in 1839 by Benjamin Hanbury in his Historical Memorials.