

Editorial Notes

ANDREW Fuller was born at Wicken, Cambridgeshire, on 6th February, 1754. This is a bicentenary which deserves to be commemorated, for in eighteenth-century Baptist life Fuller played a significant part. As A. C. Underwood remarked in his *History of the English Baptists*, Fuller "was the soundest and most creatively useful theologian the Particular Baptists have ever had." It was he, following up the lead given by the elder Robert Hall (whose part is apt to be overlooked), who opened the way theologically for William Carey and the missionary movement. For the infant Missionary Society, of which he was secretary until his death in 1815, Andrew Fuller tirelessly laboured and to his zeal and judgment the Society was immeasurably indebted. As a tribute to this great and good man we include in this issue an article from the pen of Rev. A. H. Kirkby, of Leicester.

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The critical references to the Roman Catholic Church made at Convocation in October by the Archbishop of Canterbury arrested considerable attention and caused the Anglican pamphlet *Infallible Fallacies* to be rapidly sold out. It is to be hoped that Free Churchmen will not overlook a small publication issued from among their own ranks within a week or so of the S.P.C.K. pamphlet. We refer to *The Pope's Men*, written by Dr. Nathaniel Micklem at the request of the Life and Work Committee of the Congregational Union and published (at 1s.) by the Independent Press. No anti-Papist ranter, Dr. Micklem points out that while Rome has its saints, scholars and martyrs, and is capable of producing a noble piety, yet as a politico-ecclesiastical engine it "is a terrible menace to freedom and even in many places to religion itself." The maintenance of the Protestant Succession in Britain, he declares, is neither obsolete nor unnecessary, while his statement that "we are right to view with real anxiety the intrusion and influence of Roman Catholics in the Foreign Office" deserves to be underlined. Many in our churches are critical and even scornful of those who speak of "the menace of Rome." This booklet should be placed in their hands. There is a good deal to be said for the suggestion put forward recently in the columns of the *British Weekly* that the churches in Britain should observe a Reformation Sunday so that at least once a year every congregation would hear why it is Protestant.

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Essential to all serious students of Church History, particularly of the Puritan and Separatist movements, is the valuable series of Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts planned by the late Albert Peel and issued under the editorship of Dr. Leland H. Carlson of Evanston, Illinois. *Cartwrightiana* appeared two years ago and now the second volume has been published, which consists of the known writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne.¹ But for his untimely death (about 1585, in Middelburg) Harrison might have played a highly important part in the early history of Nonconformity. A Cambridge graduate and schoolmaster, he was associated with Browne in Norwich. Of his five works the most important is *A Treatise of the Church and Kingdom of Christ*. His chief concern was for the right government and reformation of the Church and, for him, a true Church is one where Christ reigns supreme; authority resides in the local congregation, which is a separate, independent body, calling its own minister and free from the power of the magistrate.

Better known, of course, is the enigmatic Robert Browne. Born about 1550 he, too, was a Cambridge man and a schoolmaster, and he followed Harrison to Norwich and Middelburg. Imprisoned no less than thirty-two times, he died in 1633, having repudiated many of his own teachings. Browne has been both applauded and abused and today, as often in the past, there are those who, while holding his views, show an almost indecent haste to disown the man. What is indisputable is that, as Dr. Carlson says, he "challenged the mighty power of the Elizabethan state and hierarchy" and that from him "came ideas and principles that have enriched the world." Browne's best-known work is *A Treatise of reformation without tarrying for anie*. The longest and most systematic exposition of his principles is *A Book which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians*. But the most interesting and valuable is *A True and Short Declaration*. Browne held that a true church is a gathering of believers, the chief marks of which are preaching the Word, ministration of the sacraments and reformation of life. He also stresses the importance of discipline and the communion of congregations. For all who wish to understand the history and development of the Free Churches in Britain and throughout the world the publication of these volumes is an important event, perhaps all the more so because so many of the questions dealt with by men like Harrison and Browne are living issues today.

¹ *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*. Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts, Vol. ii. Ed. Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson (Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 35s.).