

## Review.

### **Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence: printed, classified and indexed by Professor E. Lyon Turner.**

For many years past, students of nonconformity have been aware that there was much valuable material available at Lambeth Palace and in the Record Office, which would enable the laborious work of Calamy to be augmented and corrected. Biographers and county historians have frequently had recourse to these sources, and extracts have often been printed. But seven years ago the Congregational Historical Society inspired Mr. Turner to undertake a complete presentation of all the documents, and after most painstaking toil, the whole may now be purchased from Mr. Fisher Unwin, in two massive volumes totalling over 1,380 pages, for two guineas. They must be consulted by every one who is dealing with the period 1665-1676; and with Dr. W. A. Shaw's History of the Church 1640-1660, they give such first-hand information as will enable many shaky foundations to be underpinned or replaced.

Other students have of course been at these papers; the official Calendars of State Papers have summarised and indexed half of them; and Mr. Bate, of Liverpool University, recently published a study of these summaries with geographical indexes. We have for years had a complete copy of all the Lambeth entries relating to Baptists, and have long proved its value in linking scattered notices. But the accurate reproduction in type will supersede all previous work. Mr. Turner has taken the utmost pains to ensure accuracy, checking his proofs at every stage by comparison with the originals, and having special type cast to represent curious contractions.

Three sets of returns are now printed, with a fragment of a fourth. The first set is a series of reports sent to Archbishop Sheldon in 1665 from the Bishops of St. Asaph, St. David's, Bristol and Exeter, as to physicians, schoolmasters and ministers ejected in 1662. An Act of 1664 had made it illegal to hold conventicles for three years, and Sheldon was determined to enforce this Act, so he sent out enquiries to all his suffragans, and some of their replies have been preserved. The second Act had a similar origin, [for when the Act expired, conventicles opened widely: Sheldon sent out renewed orders,

requiring this time detailed accounts from every parish, what meetings were held, of what sect, how many frequented them, of what quality they were and who were the chief abettors, who were the teachers? The tone of the returns is fairly represented by two extracts, put in modern spelling:—

Diocese of Exeter, Archdeaconry of Exon, Westbeare Deanery. John Symonds, Practitioner in Physic in Farringdon, is a person of no note or learning an Anabaptist, and one that keeps conventicles; he is neither licensed nor conformable.

Diocese of Ely, Cambridge Deanery, Fulborne All Saints. At the house of Thomas Mascall, labouring man, Anabaptists, not above twenty when most, poor people, women and girls most; teacher, Edward Hancock, a mean farmer. The conventicle near Whitehall in a house fitted for it is their especial encouragement; see the return.

This last note is one of many signs that the Lambeth records are only copies made from the original returns of the clergy; the present writer has sought for these originals, but they are not known at Lambeth; possibly they might, in some intermediate form, be at the diocesan registries. And since not half the returns for the Province of Canterbury are here, and few for the Province of York, there are still opportunities at centres like Rochester, Bristol, Gloucester, Oxford, Peterborough, Hereford, St. David's, Lincoln, and other archidiaconal registries.

The third set of returns is from three Entry Books of the Privy Council. King Charles II. found the Nonconformists were so exasperated by the persecutions of Sheldon, that when the Dutch war broke out he could not count on their support. Colonel Blood persuaded him to issue a Declaration of Indulgence, and for several months in 1672 and 1673 licenses were issued to Protestant Dissenters to hold worship in their houses, or to teach on licensed premises. The books contain the original applications, correspondence between the government offices and such agents as Blood, records of the licenses issued, receipts for them, and several licenses not actually taken over. The whole of this valuable information has been printed at length, and it gives light on the situation from the side of the dissenters themselves.

We have already given a study of the Baptist facts, in volume I., pages 156-177. Mr. Turner repeats and generalises our caution on page 165, that many Baptists were content to be registered as Congregationalists; he has not noticed our instance on page 176, that blunders were made and Baptists were entered as Presbyterian.

Such facts rather detract from the value of the patient work he has done in classifying the whole mass of facts. His method has been to group first by counties; this however is slightly spoiled by arranging the counties in geographical sets, where it is inevitable to separate some which are closely associated—York and Nottingham, Shropshire and Hereford, Buckingham and Herts., Lincoln and Norfolk, etc. Fortunately an admirable table of contents will quickly guide the student. But the same idea is more trouble-

some when within the county returns the classification is by topography and not by alphabet. And then the cross-classification into Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist and Quaker is of doubtful value, because of inaccurate descriptions; and it even obscures the study of the county. It is much to be regretted that a series of county maps, which are ready, could not be added because the cost was too great and the response of subscribers was too meagre. We would willingly have sacrificed pages 631-1227 to obtain instead the maps, and indexes of places and people referring direct to the original text.

The indexes as they stand are complete for every person and place mentioned, and it is easy to track out all the history recorded here. More than that, special type is used to indicate the ministers ejected 1659-1662, so that the limits are slightly extended. This of course is not of much value to a Baptist student, but for Congregationalists has much interest.

Indeed the comparison with Calamy, however useful in most cases, has led to a number of singular conjectures in dealing with Baptist entries. It seems to have been sufficient to find an unappropriated name in Calamy for Mr. Turner to query whether the man is not the same. A typical instance is that of Edward Hancock. There was a clergyman of that name ejected from Bristol, whom Mr. Turner identifies as licensed at Haresfield in Gloucester, and at Bathford in Somerset; he also identifies him in 1669 as reported from Bathford; Bath Easton, Bath Weston, Monckton Combe, Beckington, Dunkerton. Yet as if that were not enough, he identifies him also, without any query, to be the mean farmer reported in 1669 as teaching Baptists at Fulborne in Cambridge, as we have quoted. There are dozens of such assumptions or queries as to Baptists, and we cannot agree with more than two or three, though we welcome the invitation to study.

Mr. Turner's method of classifying breaks down badly in Somerset and Wales, where he has very few denominational data, but masses of facts. His articles for the Congregational Historical Society in 1905 and 1906 show the great pains he took to study on the spot; but he has neglected the valuable paper of Henry Maurice in 1675, which he quoted once; and our own study, whose results were given in our volume I at page 174, has therefore naturally left his opinions unchanged.

If in these points we regret wasted energy and must warn against classes of error, yet these are the exceptions. The rule is that this work is deserving of all praise, and that we now have most invaluable records, reproduced with the utmost accuracy.

W. T. W.