

**THE TRUE STORY OF ROBERT BROWNE (1550?-  
1633). FATHER OF CONGREGATIONALISM:  
INCLUDING VARIOUS POINTS HITHERTO  
UNKNOWN OF MISUNDERSTOOD, WITH SOME  
ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS  
RELIGIOUS VIEWS, AND AN EXTENDED AND  
IMPROVED LIST OF HIS WRITINGS**

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The True Story of Robert Browne (1550?-1633). Father of Congregationalism: Including Various Points Hitherto Unknown of Misunderstood, with Some Account of the Development of His Religious Views, and an Extended and Improved List of His Writings by Champlin Burrage

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# CHAMPLIN BURRAGE

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BY

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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
HON. JOHN HAY  
SECRETARY OF STATE, WHOSE KINDLY SUPPORT HAS  
GREATLY BRIGHTENED AND FACILITATED  
THE WRITER'S RESEARCHES, DURING  
SIX YEARS OF STUDY ABROAD.

## PREFACE

THE material here presented has been chiefly gathered at intervals during the last three and a half years. For about seven years, however, the writer has been interested in Robert Browne's life and writings, and for somewhat over four years has been making a critical study of Browne's work. The results have been surprising to himself, but he does not expect he is now saying the final word on this subject; other 'finds' possibly may be made and other facts learned that may necessitate further material changes of view; but he asks only for an impartial reading of what he has to say, and hopes that as a whole his work may prove to be well done, and to be a substantial addition to the already numerous accounts of Robert Browne's life.

Especially within the last year many a new point concerning Browne has come to the writer's attention. During this time he has discovered the two most extended manuscripts of Browne's apparently still extant. Together they cover seventy-one folio pages and furnish us with between fifty and sixty thousand words all in his own handwriting. These manuscripts have been practically lost sight of for about three hundred years, and their discovery will make Robert Browne's handwriting better known than that of many notable men of the sixteenth century. The discovery of these writings, together with 'A New Years Gift' (edited in 1904), also makes the writer's total contribution in the last four years to Browne manuscripts hitherto unknown to scholars to consist of eighty folio pages, or probably between sixty and seventy thousand words.

Within this last year and particularly during the past eight months the present writer has also become aware, as never before, of the fact that the early writers, Robert Baillic, Thomas Fuller, Peter Heylyn, Jeremy Collier, and others, while giving many interesting facts concerning Browne,

cannot be relied on for chronological accuracy, and should be used only after the most unsparing criticism. This remark also applies to the work of all those who have followed the statements of these earlier authors, and thus the writer himself is compelled to correct some of his own views elsewhere expressed.

In the preparation of these pages he is greatly indebted to the Rev. F. Ives Cater, of Oundle, for the loan of his admirable paper entitled 'New Facts Relating to Robert Browne', recently printed in the 'Transactions' of the Congregational Historical Society for January, 1906. This is the most suggestive contribution concerning Browne that has appeared for a long time, and has enabled the writer to complete his study of Browne's life. He is also especially grateful to Dr. J. Vernon Bartlet, Professor of Church History in Mansfield College, Oxford, for a thorough and critical examination of the contents of the following pages, whereby very considerable improvement has been secured.

This pamphlet, it may be said, is not published for religious controversial purposes, but rather as a supplement to, and corrective of, Dr. Henry Martyn Dexter's account of Robert Browne's life. It is also intended as a companion work to Dr. Dexter's little volume, entitled 'The True Story of John Smyth, the Se-Baptist'; and it is no small pleasure for one who has benefited much by Congregational learning, to be able herewith to present to the Congregationalists of America and England the following 'True Story' of their historical father or pioneer. The writer unfortunately has not been able to adorn this pamphlet with a likeness of Robert Browne, though he wishes he might have done so. Browne certainly deserves a portrait, for the history of New England may be said really to begin with him, in the religious ideas which he promulgated. Those who have said that Browne was not made of the stuff of which martyrs are made, have at least not spoken the whole truth. A martyr does not need necessarily to be hanged or to be burned at the stake. In some respects Browne was certainly more of a martyr than Barrowe, Greenwood, or Penry. The authorities ruined his life just as much



as they did theirs. Their penalty was quickly executed; but Browne was practically allowed to die for forty years, before he was trundled off to Northampton Gaol. Robert Browne has sometimes been looked upon as a coward and an apostate. This is certainly too harsh judgement, for in reality he was a singularly honest and an unusually brave man, as becomes more and more apparent the better he is understood.

To the librarians and other officials of the many English libraries which have been visited in the preparation of this work, and which are almost too numerous here to record by name, the writer hereby extends his very hearty thanks for the many favours he has received at their hands. Among those who have been exceptionally kind to him while engaged in these researches, he would especially mention: the Rev. Sadler Phillips, Hon. Secretary of the Church Historical Society; Mr. S. Wayland Kershaw, M.A., Librarian of Lambeth Palace Library, London; Mr. Falconer Madan, M.A., Sub-Librarian of the Bodleian Library, and Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford; Mr. Rushbrooke, Head Master of St. Olave's Grammar School, Southwark; Mr. Francis J. H. Jenkinson, M.A., Librarian of the University Library, Cambridge; Mr. Charles W. Moule, M.A., Senior Fellow and Librarian of Corpus Christi College; Professor J. S. Reid, D.Litt., Librarian of Gonville and Caius College; Mr. Arthur Gray, M.A., Tutor of Jesus College; Mr. E. W. Lockhart, Sub-Librarian of St. John's College; Mr. James D. H. Dickson, M.A., F.R.S.E., Fellow of Peterhouse; Rev. Robert Sinker, D.D., Librarian, and Mr. William White, Sub-Librarian, of Trinity College, Cambridge; Mr. John A. Herbert, B.A., Superintendent of the Manuscript Reading Room in the British Museum; Mr. George K. Fortescue, Keeper of the Printed Books in the British Museum; Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, K.C.B., &c. &c., Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum; the Bishops of Norwich and London: the Archbishop of Canterbury; and his Excellency, the Hon. Whitelaw Reid, Ambassador of the United States of America.

C. B.

OXFORD, April 25, 1906.

'But as I judge it to be the noblest occupation to gaze on the truth,  
so it is the greatest dishonour to accept falsities for truths.'  
(*The Academies of Cicero* as translated by Prof. J. S. Reid, Litt.D., p. 57, sect. 66.)

## CHAPTER I

### THE PERIOD OF EDUCATION AND NONCONFORMITY (1568?—Oct. 7, 1585).

#### I. THE YEARS SPENT IN ENGLAND SUCCESSIVELY AS STUDENT, TEACHER, PREACHER, AND ORGANIZER OF A SEPARATIST CHURCH (1568?—Jan. 1581/2?<sup>1</sup>).

FROM the time of Thomas Fuller it has been the custom of those who have made a study of Robert Browne's life to give considerable emphasis to the important standing of the Browne family. The point of view, however, taken by later Congregational scholars in speaking of Browne in relation to his notable ancestry, is naturally somewhat different from that adopted by the earlier writers. Fuller seems rather to suggest a contrast between the 'ancient and worshipfull family' and Robert (styled by Bredwell 'Troublechurch') Browne, and to seek to make it appear strange that so great a family could produce such a disturber of the Church's peace. Congregational scholars, however, refer with pride to the same 'ancient and worshipfull family', to show that the father of Congregationalism came from stock of more than ordinary reputation. To the present writer further attention to the Browne family appears unnecessary. Those who delight in genealogical lore may go to Dr. Dexter's account of Browne's life, or to Mr. Cater's admirable article on 'Robert Browne's Ancestors and Descendants'.<sup>2</sup> It is sufficient for us to know that Browne came of a highly respectable family of even honourable position, and that Robert also, if he had early

<sup>1</sup> The dates of the years throughout these pages, unless within quotation marks, are given both in Old and New Style. The dates of the month always given in Old Style.

<sup>2</sup> In the 'Transactions' of the Congregational Historical Society for September, 1905 (vol. ii, no. 3), pp. 151-9.