

MANUSCRIPT 114

Burnet, Gilbert, bishop of Salisbury, 1643-1715
The History of the Reformation of the Church of
England. By Gilbert [sic] Burnet. (Binder's
title on spine: Bishop Burnet's own manu-
script.)
BR 375 .B89 MS 114

England

Late 17th-century

Gilbert Burnet, English bishop and historian, became acquainted with some of the most influential men in England and Scotland during his first years as a clergyman and as professor of divinity at the University of Glasgow. Upon the accession of James II to the throne of England, Burnet fled the country and became a Dutch subject; but after the Glorious Revolution he returned to England with William and Mary, on whom he exerted considerable influence. For his services to them he was consecrated bishop of Salisbury on March 31, 1689, and later (1699) became tutor to Princess Anne's son, the duke of Gloucester.

Burnet published sermons and pamphlets in defence of the Broad Church position, but he is most famous for his historical works, especially the voluminous History of His Own Time (pub. 1715). This MS contains an abridged version of the first two volumes of his History of the Reformation in England, a lengthy and

scholarly work prepared from original sources. Vol. I of the history was first published in 1679, vol. II in 1681 and vol. III in 1714; an abridgement, made by the author, appeared in 1682. Both the original work and the abridged version were immensely successful and re-appeared in numerous new editions during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

According to the binder's title, this copy is "Bishop Burnet's own manuscript." It seems quite unlikely, however, that the MS could be in Burnet's hand: his own name is misspelled in the caption title, the text is neatly written out without any corrections, and another treatise not by Burnet (see below) has been copied by the same hand and included at the end of the MS. However, it is not clear which version of Burnet's History - the abridgement or one of the early editions of the entire work - was used by the man who made this MS; for the text here does not correspond exactly to any of the printed editions which have been available for examination and comparison. The MS text covers, in less detail, the same material as is included in vols. I & II of the History (pub. 1679 and 1681).

Burnet traces the course of the reformation in England from the reign of Henry VIII to Queen Elizabeth's time, quoting often from letters and other original

documents. At the end of the narrative (p. 312 ff.) is a list of the articles of faith agreed upon by the bishops in 1554 and an account of the translation of the Bible in the reign of Elizabeth I and James I. Following this, the MS compiler has copied down "An Abridgment of a treatise of the Spirituall life and in being of Christ in all belieuers by William Bridge." Bridge (1600?-1670) was a Puritan minister who, like Burnet, took refuge for a time in Holland, then later (1642) returned to England and preached at Great Yarmouth and Clapham. He was quite influential as a preacher, and many collections of his sermons and treatises appeared in print during his lifetime and afterwards.

4^o - 19 cm. x 14 cm.

189 fols. - fully paginated.

Bound in boards.

Pur. ca. 1926 from Dobell cat. 54 no. 10. Inside front cover bears book plate of Edward Duke (1779-1852), antiquary and magistrate in Wiltshire.

18 January 1968
JoAnn L. Strateman