THE FORBES COLLECTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

The University of Toronto has recently acquired the large collection of books and manuscripts of James Forbes (1629-1712), first nonconformist minister of Gloucester, England. Though some of Forbes' books may have disappeared over the years, the body of the library is intact. The possibilities for research in this collection are myriad, and Renaissance and Reformation hopes to explore some of them in the course of this year. This issue is devoted especially to 16th century materials in the collection. Michael Finlayson of the Department of History has introduced Reverend Forbes and has commented on the religious significance of the 16th century English items. Natalie Z. Davis has looked at the continental editions and authors as they might bear on European trade connections with England and as they illustrate Forbes' memory of the continental Renaissance and Reformation. David Sinclair of the Victoria College Library has selected interesting 16th century items in the collection for full bibliographical description. Future issues will concentrate on 17th century materials and themes in Forbes' library.

Mailed with this issue is a valuable illustrated pamphlet on the Forbes Collection, written by Professor P.L.Heyworth of the Graduate Department of English and published by the University of Toronto Library. Prof. Heyworth has long been interested in the collection and we are grateful to him for permitting us to circulate his essay. This pamphlet, incidentally, initiates a series of Library publications on its holdings.

FORBES AND INDEPENDENCY*

by

Michael Finlayson

Samuel Palmer, in his edition of Calamy's Nonconformists' Memorials, praised the great generosity of one of the longest surviving clerical veterans of the Interregnum and wrote, as his final accolade, that

> at his death he left many gifts to charitable uses, especially his study of books, which was considerable.

Now, 256 years after his death, this "considerable" library of James Forbes has come to rest in the Rare Book Room of the University of Toronto.

The acquisition of this collection is significant for two main reasons. First it brings to Toronto some 1800 or so sixteenth and seventeenth century English and European books, most of which were not previously here, or at least not other than on the Ann Arbor STC and Wing microfilms. More importantly, perhaps, the collection is, or may be, a concrete expression of the intellectual and theological heritage of a seventeenth century Independent. For James Forbes is inadequately described merely as a "puritan" or as a "nonconformist": more accurately he was one of that relatively small band of clergymen who identified with the cause of "Independence" during the Interregnum. He was one of the less than 200 ministers ejected during the great purge of 1660-62 (from a preachership at Gloucester cathedral) who may unequivocally be labelled an Independent. Born in 1629, Forbes was, of course too young to have participated in the proceedings of the Westminster Assembly but he did

* numbers cited are accession numbers.

demonstrate, to an unusual degree, his identification with the clerical Independents such as Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, and John Owen by participating in the Savoy Conference of 1658. Reminiscing some 40 years later, he clearly romanticised the Conference, designed by the Independent ministers, and probably in opposition to the wishes of the Lord Protector, to make explicit Independent orthodoxy.

> It was a kind of heaven on earth I think to all who were present. Such rare elaborate speeches my ears never heard before, nor since. We had some days of prayer and fasting kept from morning til night.

(quoted in A.G.Matthews, Intro. to The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, London, 1959)

Though described by Palmer as a "strict Calvinist" albeit "of a catholic temper" it is important to recognise that Forbes was reluctant to accept a benefice in 1654 but preferred to preach at large and to minister to his gathered congregation. As he wrote when he accepted the preachership at Gloucester,

> I could not accept the call to be a Parochial Minister, for if I received the Parish Maintenance from all, All would expect me to baptise their Children, and administerr the Lord's Supper to all, according to long Custom.

The preachership he preferred as

> more suiting my Principles; for I was to have no Parochial Charge, and my Maintenance was to come from the State.

(quoted in G.F.Nuttall, Visible Saints, Oxford, 1957, pp. 139-140)

The principles that Forbes was here referring to were no mere momentary whim, but the expression of a fundamental ecclesiology, first outlined by Ames, Parker and Jacob in the Netherlands, that became the orthodoxy in Massachusetts and, later, amongst the Dissenting Brethren. What is involved is a conception of the church that differs radically from that adhered to by Anglicans and Presbyterians alike and that alienates the Independents from their erstwhile brethren, the Presbyterians, just as fundamentally as had the "puritans" previously been alienated from the "Anglicans".

Not that Forbes can even be fitted into a pigeon-hole as narrowly described as this, for he was not, like so many Independents, an Englishman educated at Emmanuel, but a Scotsman, who graduated M.A. from the University of Aberdeen and came to England in the early 1650's. Absence of more detailed information causes us simply to wonder about the circumstances that led to a Scottish and presumably presbyterian-oriented minister committing himself so fully to the Independent cause. For despite several period of imprisonment Forbes remained at Gloucester for 52 years after his ejection, ministering to his congregation during which time he managed to write three books, all of them published after 1688. His works comprise a collection of Sermons on the Psalms, a book of Pastoral Instruction, and finally Nehushtan, a tract directed against the Quaker, John Elliott.

This then is the man whose library has found its way to the University of Toronto Library. Hopefully, we may see in the collection some of the intellectual forces that helped shape a seventeenth century Independent mind although, as we have seen, Forbes is scarcely a very typical figure. This is always, of course, a rather risky undertaking, the more so in this case as we have no way of telling which of the books he possessed during what must have been the crucial years of his life, that is between 1645 and 1654. Nor do we know the extent to which the

collection is complete; as we shall see, there is a number of surprising ommissions which suggest that at some stage during the past 256 years the original library has been dispersed. In the end then, we may have to lower our sights and see the collection as an expression of one seventeenth century Independent's intellectual and theological tastes, rather than of his formation.

Certainly when we come to analyse those books in his library published prior to 1610 and written by Englishmen it becomes difficult to detect much consistency. This part of the total collection, numbering perhaps 20 or so works, is impressively eclectic and could be almost a random sample from the STC. It is, for instance, satisfying to see in the collection an early work of that pre-historic Independent par excellence, Robert Parker, Minister at Wilton, A Scholasticall Discourse Against Symbolizing with Antichrist in Ceremonies; especially in the Signe of the Crosse, 1607 (Acc. 24758). It would conform to our understanding of seventeenth century English religious history to be able to establish a direct connection between a Civil War Independent and one of the progenitors of the Independent ecclesiology. Yet in the same collection we find such a pillar of episcopal and monarchicial orthodoxy as Basilikon Doron, or His Majesty's Instructions to His Dearest Son, Henry the Prince, 3 Books, London, 1603 (Acc. 25944).

How are we to interpret the fact that a man educated for the ministry in Scotland possessed only one work by John Knox - (Acc. 19580) John Knox, An Answer to a Great Number of blasphemous cavillations written by an Anabaptist, and adversary to God's eternal Predestination and Confuted, 1560? Admittedly, there are three of Cartwright's works, (Acc. 22287), T.Cartwright, A Reply to an Answer made of Dr. Whitgift against the Admonition to the Parliament, 1575 (for the others bound with this, see Sinclair, below, items 8-10). But to counterbalance these we have (Acc. 24547), Richard Bancroft, Dangerous Positions and Proceedings, published and practised within this Island of Britain, under pretence of Reformation, and for the Presbyterial Discipline, London, 1593. Johannis Rainolds, Sex theses de sacra Scriptura et ecclesia, London, 1602, a work dedicated to that great sixteenth century Calvinist and, simultaneously, puritan-baiter, Archbishop Whitgift. Along with these were two other general defences of the Elizabethan church settlement, (Acc. 20588), Thomas Bilson, Warden of Winchester, The True Difference between Christian Subjection and Unchristian Rebellion, Oxford, 1585 (see Sinclair below, item 11), (Acc. 20730), -----, The Survey of Christ's Sufferings for Man's Redemption and of His Descent to Hades of Hell for our Deliverance, London, 1604.

If the rationality of what remains in the collection is obscure how much more puzzling is what is omitted. How are we to explain the fact that there is so little of the work of John Calvin, only one work in English and that an abridgement, without supposing that we have only part of the original library? (Acc. 24548) (An Abridgement of the Institution of Christian Religion written by Mr. John Calvin, by William Lawne, Edinburgh, 1585).

There does, however, emerge at least the possibility of there being some significant pattern inherent within the collection, as distinct from its being imposed upon it by the over-zealous historian, when we note several volumes of sermons that may fairly be regarded as puritan in tone. There is, for example, (Acc.19564), The Plaine Man's Spiritual Plough, Containing the Godly and Spiritual Husbandrie, by I.C., Preacher of the Word, London, 1607, a work, incidentally, that is not immediately apparent in the STC. Then there is (Acc. 21250), A Collection of Sermons by Edward Dering, published between 1569 and 1597, and bound in a single volume. A third work in this category is (Acc. 19374), Certain Godly and Learned Sermons preached by that worthy servant of Christ, Mr. Edward Philips, in S.Saviour in Southwark.

From the volumes that remain in the Forbes Collection that were written by Englishmen prior to 1610, then, we can discern little pattern, with the one proviso that there appears to be a slightly disproportionate amount of puritan sermon literature. It remains to be seen whether any more rational and satisfying connection can be established between the man and that part of his library published closer to his actual lifetime.

16th CENTURY CONTINENTAL EDITIONS AND AUTHORS IN THE FORBES COLLECTION

by

Natalie Zemon Davis

After 1534, says H.S.Bennett of the English book trade, "foreign competition [was] wellnigh impossible. The English printer had things all his own way." How can this be true when the great publisher Christophe Plantin was sending European editions to fifteen booksellers in London and to several more in Scotland in the 1560's and 1570's? How can this be true when scholarly English libraries of the late 16th and early 17th centuries include so many continental editions? About 70% of the 750 books in the theological collection of Anthony Higgin (d. 1624), graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge and Dean of Ripon, had been printed accross the Channel - to give only one example.*

This movement of books from Europe to England in the 16th and 17th centuries has never been fully studied and is difficult to analyse, depending as it does on so many independent variables of market, legal prohibition, printing and transport costs, religion, travel and literary taste. A look at the European editions printed before 1610 in the Forbes Collection suggests both the possibilities and problems of a broad study; it also helps us to see what a non-Conformist minister of the late 17th and early 18th centuries "remembered" of the religious and intellectual life of continental Europe in the 16th century.

Of the 1500 books in Forbes' library, only about 125 were printed before 1611, 86 of them on the continent. Once we move into the 17th century, the ratio changes; the great bulk of Forbes' books were printed in England. Here are some tables to introduce us to the subjects and languages of books printed on the continent before 1611 as well as their date and place of publication.

* H.S.Bennett, English Books and Readers, 1475 to 1557 (Cambridge, 1952), p.193. Colin Clair, Christopher Plantin (London, 1960), pp. 208-10. The Library Catalogue of Anthony Higgin, Dean of Ripon (1608-1624), ed. J.E.Mortimer, Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Literary and Historical Section, X (1962)