



# The Forbes Collection, 1610 - 1660

by

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In the previous article, in which we considered the quite small number of items in the Forbes Collection published in English prior to 1610 we were able to suggest only faint signs of a pattern that suggested that the man whose tastes formed the Library was an Independent minister. In this article we shall extend the analysis to include the very much larger number of titles that were published both on the Continent and in England between 1610 and 1660.

It may be as well to make an apology at this early stage for the arbitrary nature of the period chosen. It proved to be convenient, in the light of both the tripartite nature of this journal and the extent of my commitments to divide the balance of the Collection into two parts. It happened that the most convenient point at which the division could be made, for historical reasons as well as because it halved the Collection, was 1660. This, however, has had the unfortunate effect of dividing some of the most important series of titles within the collection, in particular the 61 Baxters and the 24 Owens. In the course of this article we shall refer in detail only to those works that were actually published during the prescribed period but, where relevant, will draw attention to those works published later.

In all there are, in the Forbes Collection, 680 titles published either on the Continent or in England, between 1610 and 1660. The following tables provide us with a very general idea of the overall character of this portion of the Collection.

<u>Total No. of Titles</u>	680
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Total No. published on Continent	143
in Latin	140
in English	<u>3</u>
	143

Total No. published in England and Scotland	537
in Latin	85
in English	<u>452</u>
	537

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680

Date of Publication

Place of Publication

Continent

England and Scotland

1610 - 20  
1621 - 30  
1631 - 40  
1641 - 50  
1651 - 60  
No date

38  
35  
18  
21  
29  
2

28  
23  
103  
134  
245  
4

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143

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537

As I feel scarcely equipped to comment on the Continental works included in the Collection, the remainder of these remarks will refer to those which comprise the major portion within this category, those published in England, mostly in English; and mostly written by Englishmen. Of the Continental works suffice to say that the European writers most amply represented are Johann Heinrich Alsted, of whose works there are not less than thirteen volumes, and Johanes Hoornbeeck, ten of whose volumes were in the possession of Forbes, five having been published before 1660 and five after the Restoration.

Of the 537 titles published in England and Scotland between 1610 and 1660 there are 63 that may be described as primarily secular in tone, the balance, 474, being, in general terms, religious. The following tables attempt to provide an indication of the general character of the secular works, together with a reference to their date of publication.

Content Analysis of the Secular Works

Rhetoric, Logic, Grammar	19
Parliamentary papers, petitions etc.	10
Metaphysics	7
History	6
Natural History	5
Political Theory	4
Contemporary political polemic	4
Political speeches	3
Classics, text or commentary	5
	<hr/> 63

Date of Publication

1610 - 20	3
1621 - 30	2
1631 - 40	11
1641 - 50	20
1651 - 60	27
	<hr/> 63

Into the largest category, comprising a substantial part of the reference library of a schoolmaster, falls Thomas Blundeville's The Arte of Logic, Johannes Buchler's Sacrarum profanarumq phrasium poeticarum thesaurus, Franco Burgersdyck's Institutionum logicarum libri duo, and Charles Butler's Rhetoric libri duo. It is worth noting that Forbes possessed two copies of each of these last three titles. There is also a work by the "leading classical scholar of his generation" (See D.N.B.), Thomas Farnaby's Phrases oratoriae elegantiores, Eilhard Lubin's Clavis Graecae linguae and Henry Cockeram's The English Dictionary.

In the second category fall the Representation, Remonstrance and Petition delivered by Sir Thomas Fairfax respectively in 1647, '48 and '49, two Petitions to Parliament from the Lord Mayor of London, of 1646 and 1648, and three Parliamentary Ordinances of 1646-8. Among the published speeches to Parliament in the Collection are one by John Pym in 1641, one by William Hakewil, The Libertie of the Subject against the Pretended Power of Impositions, published in 1641, though delivered to the 1610 Parliament. and Oliver Cromwell's Speech to his first Protectorate Parliament in January, 1655.

Amongst the general metaphysical and philosophical works are the Scottish



divine Robert Baron's Metaphysica generalis, Meric Casaubon's A Treatise concerning Enthusiasm, and Christopher Scheibler's Metaphysica duobus libris.

The histories bought by James Forbes include Nathaniel Bacon's Constitutional history, An Historicall discourse of the uniformity of the government of England, the first part published in 1647 and its Continuation following four years later. Then there is the Royalist Hamon L'Estrange's The Reign of King Charles and William London's The Civil wars of France during the Bloody Reign of Charles the ninth.

The natural history that is most familiar to us, though it is far from being its author's most important work, is Francis Bacon's Sylva Sylvarum, and anthology of scientific experiments. The other works in this category are somewhat more removed from the mainstream of seventeenth century scientific thought. There is Alexander Ross's Arcana microcosmi, a treatise designed to undermine some of the novelties being popularized by Bacon and Harvey. This is the first of a number of works in the Collection written by Scotsmen, many of them teaching at Forbes' alma mater, the University of Aberdeen. Finally there is Pedro Mexia's The Rarities of the world. On the basis of the collection Forbes appears to provide us with at least one example of a puritan who treats the seventeenth century scientific revolution with something less than complete respect.

The proportion of the Collection dedicated to political theory is equally sparse. There is the Paraenesis ad aedificatores imperii in imperio by Louis du Moulin, Reader in History at Oxford, together with its Corollarium, published the following year, in 1657; another reactionary work by Forbes' compatriot, Alexander Ross, Leviathan drawn out with a Hook, and Samuel Rutherford's famous treatise, Lex Rex: the Law and the Prince.

Looking at the secular titles in the collection as a whole, 47 of which were published during the period of the revolution, they are clearly academic and bookish, there being very few titles referring to contemporary political events. Almost the only titles in this category are by the Royalist divine, Michael Hudson, The Royal and Royallist's Plea, the anonymous King's Cabinet Opened, and Francis Osborne's A Persuasive to mutuall compliance under the present government. This is clearly the library of a scholar, a minister, and a schoolmaster, a man who took little interest in contemporary political events - always assuming, as we must, that we have here the library as it was in 1660. The absence of any of the works of political theory that abounded during this period, perhaps the most fertile in the history of English political thought, is surprising and revealing. The parliamentary theorists of the early 1640's, the radicals, like Lilburne, Walwyn and Overton, later in that decade, and the republicans under the Commonwealth, are all unrepresented. It remains to be seen whether Forbes was equally unmoved by the Exclusion crisis of the next generation.

Obviously the significance of the collection as an index to the formation and character of the mind and interests of an Independent puritan and later nonconformist lies in what comprises its major portion, the religious titles published in Britain, upon which we shall now focus our attention. The following two tables provide a rough guide to this segment of the collection as a whole. The first attempts some sort of content analysis of the 474 works, while the second lists all those authors whose books fall in this category and who are represented by at least three volumes.

Content Analysis of 474 works in Forbes Collection, religious in character, published in England and Scotland between 1610 and 1660.

1. Published before 1641, or published later in a first or subsequent edition, and puritan in tone.

a. Doctrinal, anti-Catholic polemic.	96
b. Exegetical	22
c. Bibles, Commentaries	6
	<hr/> 124

2. Written in defence of the Established episcopal church 45

3. Written and published, 1641 - 60, puritan in tone. 153

4. Civil War Sermons 28

5. Mainly concerned with intra-puritan disputes, frequently ecclesiological 64

6. 1641 - 60 Exegesis 40

7. Miscellaneous 20  

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474

Authors represented by  
3 or more titles.

No. of titles  
published 1610-60

Total No. of Titles  
in Collection

Richard Baxter	19	61
Jeremiah Burroughes	17	18
Richard Vines	11 (mostly sermons)	13
John Preston	14	14
Thomas Gataker	9	9
Anthony Burgess	8	8
David Dickson	7	7
Thomas Jackson	7	7
Thomas Taylor	7	9
Robert Bolton	6	6
John Owen	6	24
Obadiah Sedgwick	6	7
Edward Leigh	5	5
William Twisse	5	5
James Ussher	5	5
John Weemes	5	5
Thomas Fuller	4	4
Samuel Rutherford	4	5
John Saltmarsh	4	4
Andrew Willet	4	4
Henry Ainsworth	3	3
John Ball	3	3
Paul Baynes	3	3
William Bridge	3	3
Nicholas Byfield	3	3
John Davenant	3	3
Christopher Eake	3	3
John Goodwin	2	4



Henry Hickman	2	4
William Lyford	3	3
Thomas Manton	2	12
William Perkins	3	3
William Prynne	3	3
Edward Rayner	3	3
Nehemiah Rogers	3	3
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	195	276

Strikingly apparent within the collection is the considerable body of sermons and doctrinal works delivered or written during the two generations before the Civil War though often published or republished later. Such, for example, are the sermons of Henry Smith, delivered in St. Clement Danes to his late Elizabethan congregation, and published by Thomas Fuller in 1657. Haller has referred to these sermons as "something like a household book for Sunday reading". [W. Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York, 1957), p. 30.]

There are no less than fourteen titles of the sermons and works of John Preston, puritan courtier and Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, until his death in 1628, as well as the three volume collection of the Works of William Perkins and seven volumes, mostly sermons, of another great preacher, Thomas Taylor, and three volumes of each of John Ball, Paul Baynes and Henry Ainsworth.

While there are a number of omissions it would be true to say that this section of the Forbes Collection provides strong support for William Haller's thesis concerning the importance of the Puritan brotherhood that thrived in the underground church in England 1590-1640, and whose influence was largely wrought by their sermons. Most of the prominent puritan preachers who flourished in England during the two generations prior to the War were to be found on the shelves of James Forbes, attesting to the influence of their written as well as their spoken word.

The significance of the presence in the collection of this considerable body of puritan brotherhood literature together with the obviously religiously radical character of the Civil War tracts is underlined by the relative absence of works in defence of the established church. It is interesting to note that of the approximately 45 titles in this category half were actually written by bishops of the church. These range from Thomas Cranmer's Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum, a volume of sermons delivered by Lancelot Andrewes, The Pattern of catechistal doctrine at large, three volumes by the Bishop of Salisbury, John Davenant, two by George Downname, Bishop of Derby and one each by Patrick Forbes, Bishop of Aberdeen and by William Forbes, Bishop of Edinburgh, and four works of the Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher. Perhaps it is significant that the Bishop most represented in the collection was Ussher, whose scheme for a reduced episcopacy could conceivably have led to a settlement of the ecclesiastical issue in 1641 since it comprised the basis of the presbyterian's position at the Savoy Conference which followed the Restoration. One must, of course, always be wary of superficial generalisations since the collection also houses the Works of the leading Laudian defender, Joseph Hall, Bishop of Norwich, and also Peter Heylyn's The Undeceiving of the People in the point of the Tithes.



While Haller's thesis concerning the existence and influence of the Puritan brotherhood appears unquestionable and is supported by the Forbes Collection he is on less solid ground when he writes that -

"the disagreements that rendered Puritans into presbyterians, independents, separatists and baptists were in the long run not so significant as the qualities of character of mind and of imagination, which kept them all alike Puritan". [Haller, Op. cit., p. 17.]

I believe that it can be argued that the differences between the "Puritans of the right" and the "Puritans of the left" were no less "fundamental" than those which, prior to 1641, distinguished the Puritans from the Anglicans. That "puritans" of whatever hue mostly became "Dissenters" after 1660 stems less from that alleged intrinsic "homogeneity" of the movement which made disputes over ecclesiastical questions mere trifles than from the peculiar circumstances surrounding the ecclesiastical settlement of 1660-1. [This whole question has been argued in greater detail in my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Toronto Library, "Independency in New and Old England, 1630-1660: An Historiographical and Historical Study".]

To this question the Forbes Collection is marginally relevant. After all, Forbes was an Independent minister for 50 years after 1654, albeit an atypical one. Almost 300 volumes in this Collection were written and published during the period 1640-1660 [out of a total number of approximately 22,000 titles published and collected during this period by the newsagent George Thomason]. These were the formative years of Forbes' life, between the ages of 11 and 31, when he took the remarkable step of emigrating from Royalist, Presbyterian Scotland to become an Independent minister to a gathered congregation at Gloucester under the Protectorate.

The majority of these nearly 300 volumes were actually written by ministers who came to be ejected from the Church of England in the purges of 1660-2, though to label them all "puritan" or, after the Restoration, "nonconformist" is to oversimplify a group which is rather more heterogeneous. The most conspicuous name that falls within this, the largest single category, is that which comes most nearly to dominate the whole collection, namely Richard Baxter, who was responsible for no less than nineteen titles that fall within this period, and 61 overall. There seems little doubt that during this early period and for the remainder of his life Forbes was profoundly impressed by the minister from Kidderminster. Yet we also know from his involvement in the Savoy Conference of 1658 that Forbes identified himself with the cause of Independency. Hence we must infer that he attributed a great deal of importance to what is central to Independency, namely the attempt to combine a belief in a sectarian and voluntarist type of church with acceptance of a national church, united on fundamentals. On this question of church government, thought by Haller to be peripheral to the puritan mainstream, yet regarded by contemporaries as rather more important, Forbes clearly dissociated himself from the views of Baxter.

Forbes' adherence to the Independent polity expresses itself in the Collection though, again, we must be careful of drawing too firm conclusions on the basis of what is rather intangible circumstantial evidence. Bearing in mind their numerical insignificance - ten out of 121 members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines dissented from its generally presbyterian recommendations - the works of Independent ministers are perhaps disproportionately present in the Collection. Jeremiah Burroughes, one of the Dissenting Brethren at the Westminster Assembly has 18 titles in the catalogue, while the name of John Owen, Cromwell's principal theological adviser, occurs 24 times, though only 6 of these books had been published by 1660. In fact, all five of the Dissenting Brethren who were responsible for the Apologetical Narration in 1644, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, William Bridge, Jeremiah Burroughes, and Sydrach Simpson



were represented in the Collection, though it is noteworthy that the seminal tract is missing. These five together with John Owen, comprise the leadership of Independency before the Restoration, were responsible for 58 volumes in the Collection, some of them, of course, falling beyond 1660. In addition to the works of the English Independents in the Collection, there are also some by New Englanders, whose involvement in the ecclesiastical controversies in England in the 1640's has often been underestimated by historians. John Cotton, the principal theorist of the New England Way, is represented by two volumes, though not by his work in church government but by an Exegesis of St. John's First Epistle, and A Modest and Clear Answer to Mr. Ball's Discourse of Set Forms of Prayer. Also included in the collection is Richard Mather's influential Church-government and church-covenant discussed. Massachusetts did provide, after all, the model for the Independent Way: thus it is not surprising that their two principal theorists of ecclesiastical polity should be known to and read by Forbes.

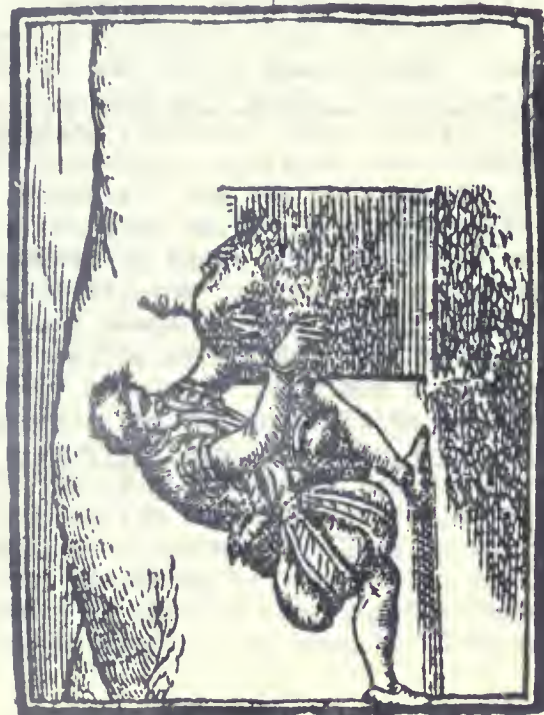
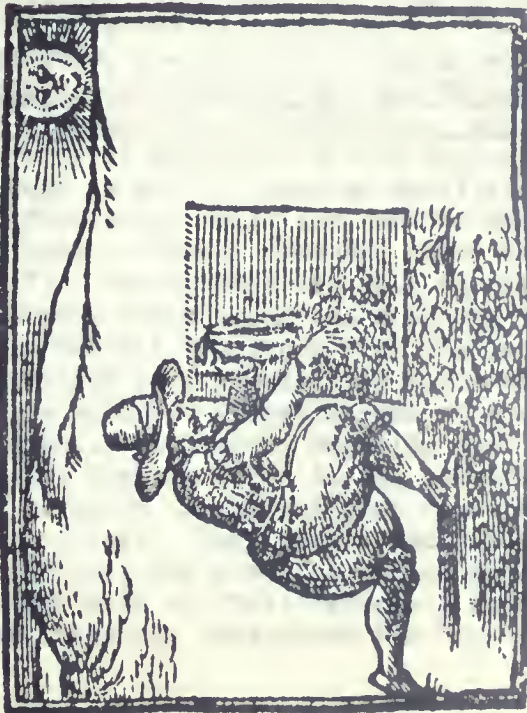
At the same time, of course, and here we catch the limitations of this approach to an historical problem, we must recognize that most works in this category were actually written by divines who between 1640 and 1660 came to identify with the cause of "Presbyterianism". Not that this is surprising since of the approximately 2000 divines ejected at the Restoration, the proportion of "Presbyterians" to "Independents" was about 7:1.

The whole question of tracing intellectual influences is never clear-cut; for every volume, elaborating upon the Independent polity or dealing with more general theological or inspirational themes by Independents, one could name five by divines adopting a position to the left or right. To the left there are, for instance, four volumes by the radical secretary, John Saltmarsh, several more by Walter Craddock, and a defence of Fifth Monarchy by John Archer, The personall raigne of Christ upon earth. On the right there is the large collection of 14 titles, mostly sermons, to the House of Commons, by Richard Vine, nine volumes by Thomas Gataker, and eight volumes, mostly doctrinal, by a third and equally moderate, i.e. presbyterian, member of the Westminster Assembly, Anthony Burgess.

The Forbes Collection does not provide us with so refined a tool that we may plumb the depths of his mind during these crucially formative years of his life. Yet it does provide an index to his major pre-occupations. In addition to the works of exegesis, the sermons and the doctrinal and inspirational writings one expects to find in a clergyman's library, we find a relatively large number of books relating to ecclesiological subjects, anywhere from the conventional presbyterian solution propounded by John Burnsley to the radical questions of Edward Burroughs. He certainly shares the ecclesiological concerns of his generation and the shape of his library not only makes his involvement in the Savoy Conference unsurprising, but also suggests that the question of church-government was more vital than Wm. Haller was prepared to concede. It remains to be seen whether this is peculiar to the Civil War period or continues beyond the Restoration.



*A perfite platforme of a Hoppegarden.*



Two woodcuts from The perfite platform of a hoppe garden showing planting at different times of the year (slightly enlarged).



Richard Baxter (1615-1691) the presbyterian divine whose many works are well represented in the Forbes Collection. Baxter was active in Kidderminster, but according to the DNB spent some time at Gloucester. Ill-treated under Charles II and James II, he was imprisoned in 1685-86. (From his Life of faith in the Rare Books Department collection).