

## Giles Calvert's Publishing Career

**G**ILES CALVERT was one of the principal publishers of Friends' books in the Commonwealth period.

An account of his publishing career has been written by Miss Altha E. Terry, of Columbia University Library in New York, who has kindly placed a typewritten copy of her work in The Library at Friends House. She has also compiled a list of over six hundred publications bearing his imprint, of which over one-third are Quaker works. The following article summarizes parts of her paper most closely concerning the early history of Quakerism. We are deeply grateful to the author for the opportunity to print this. If in the course of summarizing any mis-statements have occurred, we ask her pardon. The original paper is fully documented with sources of information and makes an interesting and valuable contribution to our knowledge of one who was closely associated with the first Friends under the Commonwealth, but who appears never to have thrown in his lot wholly with them.

Giles Calvert was a bookseller in London, at the Black Spread Eagle, St. Paul's Churchyard. He was the son of George Calvert of Mere in Somerset, "clerk", and had a brother George Calvert. The year of his birth is unknown. He was first, in 1628, apprenticed to William Lugger, a bookseller, for nine years, but his indentures were cancelled for a reason undiscovered. Fresh indentures were taken out in 1632 for the remainder of his term with Joseph Hunscoff. He took up his freedom on 25th January, 1639. He was appointed, with Henry Hills and Thomas Brewster, to be an official "printer" to the Council of State in 1653. The appointment does not seem to have lasted very long, but his favour with the authorities probably enabled him to publish Quaker books without restraint. He was questioned once in 1656 but no action seems to have been taken against him. After the Restoration, in 1661, he was imprisoned for publishing a pamphlet, *The Phœnix of the Solemn League and Covenant*, but was released after a few weeks. Both Calvert and his

wife Elizabeth were imprisoned for a time and became much reduced in circumstances. There are conflicting accounts as to the date of his death, but his will proves he died in August, 1663, being made on the 11th and offered for probate on the 28th of that month. His widow carried on business as a bookseller till 1675, frequently in trouble with the authorities. Her will, dated 1674, shows that she died a Baptist<sup>1</sup>.

He was among the earliest of the publishers who were not themselves printers. Six hundred and three pieces printed by Calvert have been traced. Many of his earlier issues were sermons and religious treatises. Notable among them was *The Souldier's Pocket Bible*, sixteen pages of extracts from the Scriptures specially selected to strengthen "the inner man" of him "that is a fit souldier to fight the Lord's Battels," (1643). This is probably the *Pocket Bible* which tradition says was supplied to Cromwell's soldiers.

Interests closer to Quakerism are shown by his publication of works of John Saltmarsh, sometimes classed as one of the Seekers, and of William Dell, whose works circulated widely among Friends, in the eighteenth as well as the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Both these men were leading preachers in the Commonwealth armies. Richard Baxter describes them as "the two great preachers at The Head-Quarters". Calvert also published works by Hugh Peters, Independent, Chaplain to the Council of State, who was executed as a regicide in 1660.

Another regicide, John Cook, figures in the list of Calvert's authors, once with a bitter and somewhat scurrilous pamphlet justifying the trial and execution of the king.

He produced three of Jacob Boehme's works, the *Epistles* in 1649 followed by *The Signature of all things; Concerning the Election of Grace [or] Predestination*; and by *Aurora*, the last in 1656. During the same period he published seven pieces by Henry Nicholas, the founder of the Family of Love, viz. *The Prophecy of the Spirit of Love*;

<sup>1</sup> Facts for the above mainly from H. R. Plomer's *Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers*, . . . 1641-1667. (1907.)

<sup>2</sup> Both Dell and Saltmarsh are described by Rufus Jones in *Studies in Mystical Religion* and are by him placed with Fox and Winstanley among those who found the Light which the Seekers were groping for.

*The Revelation of God ; An Introduction to the Looking Glass of Righteousness ; The Joyful Message of the Kingdom ; Spiritual Tabernacle ; The First Exhortation of H. N. to his Children and An Apology for the Service of Love.*

The appearance of these ten from Calvert's bookshop at a time when he was publishing so many Quaker books, is evidence that the earliest Friends probably read both Boehme and Nicholas.

A certain sympathy with the more dangerous views of the Ranters, so often repudiated by Friends, is perhaps shown by the issue in 1650 of *A Single Eye, All Light and No Darkness, or Light and Darkness One*. The author of this was sought for at the order of the Parliament and one Laurence Claxton, a Ranter, confessed to it. The copy in Thomason's collection in the British Museum has a note that Calvert printed it.

The strong equalitarian political views of the Levellers found support in Calvert, who published John Lilburne's *Agreement of the Free people of England*, a work closely likened by G. K. Fortescue to the *Social Contract* of Rousseau. Even in 1649 this brought down authority's heavy hand and the licenser lost his appointment, though the publisher did not suffer. Two other Leveller works attributed to William Walwyn had appeared in 1646 from the sign of the Black Spread Eagle.

Close to the Levellers, but more directly concerned with economic than political equality, were the Diggers, led by Gerard Winstanley.<sup>1</sup> About half of his twenty-three works bear the imprint of Giles Calvert, while the rest bear no publisher's name. The first of many Quaker writers to be published by Calvert is Isaac Penington, many of whose works, beginning in 1648, bore the imprint of "The Black Spread Eagle".

The direction of Calvert's interests and sympathies, already shown, becomes more marked after 1650, when he begins to print many works by Friends. Though he only published a small proportion of the total output of Quaker

<sup>1</sup> His teaching was in so much in the same spirit as that of Fox and other early Quaker writers that it seems certain that it was his death that prevented his finding his place beside them. Nothing is known of him after 1652, nor when he died.

literature at the time, no less than thirty-three works by George Fox and thirty by James Nayler bore his imprint.

His close connection with Friends is shown in a letter by Alexander Parker to Margaret Fell, dated 21.v.1655,<sup>1</sup> where we read that "on ye 4th day there was a generall meetinge of friends in this City [London] and both Geo[rge Fox] and Jam[es Nayler] was there and many precioussse friends was there and towards y<sup>e</sup> latter end thy husband [i.e. Judge Thomas Fell] came with Giles Calvert into the meetinge . . . afterwards Jas. N. and I passed downe to Giles Calverts". This places Calvert in a Friends meeting in the close company of George Fox, James Nayler and Alexander Parker and shows Friends visiting his house. Martha Simmonds, the wife of Thomas Simmonds, another printer, was an ardent and unwise follower of James Nayler. One Giles Calvert was fined as a Friend in 1676. Whether this was the bookseller's son is not known, though his will shows he had a son named after him.

The following is a list of some of the better known of the Quaker authors for whom Calvert published works: Thomas Aldam, Christopher Atkinson, Anne and John Audland, Gervase Benson, Edward Billing, Edward Burrough, William Dewsbury, Richard Farnsworth, Margaret Fell, George Fox, George Fox the Younger, Francis Howgill, Richard Hubberthorn, James Nayler, Alexander Parker, James Parnell, Anthony Pearson, Isaac Penington, George Rofe, Martha Simmonds, Humphrey Smith, John Stubbs, Thomas Stubbs, George Whitehead.

So well known was he as a publisher for Friends that the *Bible* which he published in 1653 became known as the "Quakers' Bible". Another publication of special interest is *A Spiritual Journey of a Young Man towards the Land of Peace, to live therein essentially in God* . . . translated from the Dutch, which he put forth in 1659, and which is listed among possible sources of influence on John Bunyan for his *Pilgrim's Progress*.

A somewhat elaborate scheme for a communistic society, very much in keeping with the radical experimental character of the times, written by Pieter Plockboy, was published in the same year. It is entitled: *A Way Proposed to Make the poor in these and other Nations happy. By*

<sup>1</sup> Swarthmore MSS. I, 162.

*bringing together a fit suitable and well qualified people unto one Household—government, or little Common-wealth, Wherein every one may keep his propriety and be employed in some work or other, as he shall be fit, without being oppressed. Being the way not only to rid those and other Nations from idle, evil and disorderly persons, but also from all such that have sought and found out many inventions to live upon the labour of others.* It was intended to put it into practice at once and Calvert was to supply the address of the author to enquirers.<sup>1</sup>

From 1656 Giles Calvert's publishing for Friends declined rapidly. His sister Martha was the chief of Nayler's unbalanced followers. It may be that he sympathized with Nayler in such a way as to estrange him from the leading Friends. He did, however, publish a tract for George Fox as late as 1658. In 1659 Robert Wilson, a Quaker publisher, began to use an imprint with the same address, "The Black Spread Eagle," near the west door of St. Paul's Cathedral, though Calvert was still using the same. Their connection is not clear, but apparently Wilson ultimately succeeded him. Calvert was thus a publisher whose publications spread, not only Quakerism, but other advanced opinions of his day, propagating thoughts on social and constitutional affairs which have influenced English life in succeeding years.

Some other references to Giles Calvert and his wife: Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, Part II, 1646, p. 9; do., Part III, p. 62. George Fox: *The Great Mystery*, 1659, p. 235-236. Swarthmore MSS. I, 303. Letter from G. Taylor to Margaret Fell, 1658. MS. Portfolio 15, 26. Letter from W. Dewsbury to Thomas Aldam, 16[57]. Swarthmore MSS. I, 162, Letter from Alexander Parker to Margaret Fell, 1655. A. R. Barclay MSS. 157, Letter from Bristol for Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill, c/o Giles Calvert in London, no year date. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, under 1653, 1656, 1661, 1662, 1663, 1664, 1665, 1667, 1668, 1670, 1674. Wills at Somerset House, London, of himself and his wife. A fuller bibliography is contained in Miss Terry's MS.

<sup>1</sup> Had John Bellers read Plockboy's work before he planned his *Proposals for a College of Industry*, published in 1695?