

Books of the Pilgrims as Recorded in their Inventories and Preserved in Pilgrim Hall

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DECEMBER 21, 1970, will mark the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Landing of the Pilgrims. At each recurrent anniversary, historians of New England re-evaluate their significance, and reexamine what is known of their acts, their material circumstances, and the temper of their minds.

One of the questions which comes up for review is the intellectual life of Plymouth Colony. For this there is interesting data. In 1633, the Plymouth General Court ordered that a complete inventory of each man's goods should be made at his death, as a basis for settling his estate. Thus we know in considerable detail what was read, who read it, and the distribution of books through the households of the colony. We even know what some of the volumes looked like. Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth, the museum of the Pilgrim Society, has books that belonged to Brewster, Bradford, and Alden, and examples of a number of other titles mentioned in the inventories.

Between 1633 and 1640, twenty-one inventories were filed with the General Court of Plymouth Colony. Eleven of these mention books: 17 Bibles, 6 psalm-books, and 85 other titles, besides several entries such as "all his books," or "1 Bible and 10 other books."

The largest library listed in this period is that of Samuel Fuller, the Pilgrims' physician, who was also Deacon of the Plymouth church. His contemporaries thought that his explanation of the organization of the Plymouth church in-

fluenced the Bay Colony to organize theirs on similar lines, though they had left England protesting that their aim was to "purify" the English Church, not to separate from it as the Pilgrims had done.

Dr. Fuller had three Bibles; Plymouth Colony inventories show that many households had more than one. William Bradford had two; Pilgrim Hall has one of them. John Alden had two; one Geneva and one Authorized version. Pilgrim Hall has one, Dartmouth College the other. The London firm of Barker printed both versions. Some of the same ornaments appear in both.

Samuel Fuller also had a psalm-book, presumably the Ainsworth version, "Englished both in prose and meter." Pilgrim Hall has the Amsterdam edition, with the tunes as they were sung by the Pilgrims. This is the psalm-book referred to in the *Courtship of Miles Standish*, when John Alden comes to court Priscilla on the Captain's behalf, and stays to speak for himself.

"Open wide on her lap lay the well-worn psalm-book of Ainsworth,
Printed in Amsterdam, the words and the music together,
Rough-hewn, angular notes, like stones in the wall of a churchyard,
Darkened and overhung by the running vine of the verses."¹

Dr. Fullers' list of books is characteristic, and not, perhaps, too long to quote in

¹ *Courtship of Miles Standish*. Longfellow: Complete Poetical Works, p. 169. H. O. Houghton & Co., 1893.

full. It stands at the head of his inventory.

Imprimis:

Brightman on the Revelation. Elder Brewster, and John Atwood and his widow Ann, all had "Brightman."

Peter Martyr on Rom. (Romans?) Gov. Bradford had his *Commonplaces*. Peter Martyr (Pietro Marire Vermigli), a refugee Italian theologian, was Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford at the time of Edward VI.

Musculus. (Wolfgang Moesell) Brewster had several of his Latin commentaries.

Gulton's Homilies.

1 *Bible*: another *Bible*: another *Bible*.

Dod on the Commandments. Brewster, Godbert Godbertson whose wife was Isaac Allerton's sister, and Gov. Bradford all had this. Brewster printed a Dutch edition.

Thomas Dictionary.

Babington. Brewster and Bradford had Babington's *Works*.

Basaes Catechisme. Beza was Calvin's successor at Geneva. Brewster had his *Confessio Fidei*, and "a Bible with Besa's notes." There is a copy of *Confessio Fidei* (Geneva 1577) in Pilgrim Hall.

A Concordance.

Comunion of Sts. Brewster also had this.

The Godbertson's had it in French. The full title was *The Communion of Saints. A Treatise of the Fellowship that the Faithful have with God and His Angels, and one with another; in this present life etc.* It was by Henry Ainsworth.

Aynesworth on Genesis. Henry Ainsworth, Teacher of the English Separatist congregation in Amsterdam, was a noted Hebrew scholar. Pilgrim Hall

has his *Annotations upon . . . Genesis, . . . Exodus, . . . Leviticus, . . . Numbers, . . . Psalms, . . . Song of Songs. . .* His works are mentioned in the inventories of Fuller, Brewster, John Jenny, and Richard Langford.

Notable Things. Brewster had this also. The full title is *1000 Notable Things of Sundrie Sorts, Whereoft Some Are Wonderful, Some Strange . . . Diverse Necessary . . . A Great Sort Profitable. . .* It would seem that "Books of Knowledge" are no new invention!

Greenham. *The Works of . . . Master Richard Greenham* were published in London in 1611. Fuller, Brewster, and Will Wright all had copies. Pilgrim Hall has the copy which is thought to have belonged to William White, father of Peregrine, the first child born in the colony.

Robinsons Observations. Pilgrim Hall has both the 1625 and 1638 editions. These short essays by John Robinson, the Pilgrims' pastor, are both shrewd and entertaining. In *Counsel* he remarks that most people ask advice just to be sustained in what they intend to do anyway. In *Youth and Old Age* he is concerned for their children, growing up "in this audacious age." We know these children now as the Pilgrim Fathers!

Goades husbandry.

Dick on the heart. This, no doubt, is *The Mystery of Self Deceiving or the Deceitfulness of mans Heart . . .* by Daniel Dyke (London 1615). Clearly the appraisers looked only at the outside of the books, not the actual title pages. Between their desire to abbreviate, and their untrammelled spelling, it is sometimes hard to guess what book is meant. Thus *Dodines Earball* provides a pretty

puzzle in Myles Standish's inventory until one finds *Dodoner Herball* on Brewster's list. A Dutchman named *Dodens* wrote an *Herbal*, that is, a book on herbs and their uses; an English translation was published in London in 1606.

A psalm book. This was probably Ainsworth's, which was used by the Plymouth church until 1693, when the Bay Psalm Book was substituted.

Dennison on Pet. Presumably a commentary on the Epistles of Peter.

Household Government. Brewster had this also. It is probably Cleaver's *A Godly Form of Household Government: for the ordering of private families according to the direction of Gods Word.*

Dods Remedy of Cont. Presumably by John Dod, who with Robert Cleaver wrote *A Plaine and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, which appears in several Plymouth Colony inventories.

Ecclesticall Discipline. No doubt the pamphlet by Calderwood printed by Brewster in 1617. Pilgrim Hall has a copy.

Catholicks Peticon.

Wilson's Dictionary. The full title is *A Christian Dictionary, opening the signification of the chief Words dispersed through Holy Scripture.* Brewster had this also, and so did Myles Standish. Fuller's list ends with his *Phisicke Books*, which are valued at £1.

Fuller was not the only member of the Pilgrim Company who provided himself with "Phisicke Books." Bradford had *The Method of Phisicke*; Standish, *The Phisitions Practice*; Brewster, a *Treatise of English Medecines*, probably Bedford's *A Treatise wherein is declared the suffi-*

ciencie of English Medicines for the cure of all diseases cured with medicine: Where unto is added a collection of Medicines growing within our English climat. . . . It was printed in London, 1615. And of course there was the *Herbal* already mentioned, which both Brewster and Standish had.

Elder Brewster's library is the largest and most interesting in the twenty-six inventories filed between 1640 and 1650. In this period the books, something over five hundred, were concentrated in six or seven inventories. Brewster's books were listed by Gov. Bradford and Thomas Prence, who served as Governor in two of the five years when Bradford declined the office, and succeeded him after his death. They called in the minister, John Raynor, to list the twenty-six foreign-language books. These include a Hebrew grammar, and Greek, Latin, and Hebrew lexicons. There are 382 entries in the inventory. Dr. Henry Dexter studied them in detail. His list, giving what he believes to be the full titles, was published in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* for October-November 1889. It is to Dexter's list that we turn in trying to identify the fantastically abbreviated titles of the Pilgrim inventories.

The foundations of Brewster's library were laid in the works of the "forward" scholars associated with Cambridge University in the late 16th and early 17th centuries:² Thomas Cartwright: William Perkins: William Gouge: William Ames: Richard Sibbes: John Preston: Henry Ainsworth, in the Pilgrims' day Teacher of the English Separatist con-

² Everett H. Emerson, in his *English Puritanism from John Hooper to John Milton* (Duke University Press, 1968), gives short biographies of some of these men, and extracts from their writings.

gregation at Amsterdam: John Robinson, the Pilgrims' Pastor; and the great originators, Luther and Calvin. Brewster added to his library all his life. He lived twenty-four years in the wilderness. Only two years are unrepresented by some new publication. How he acquired one of his books we can trace.³ His signature, one of the very few extant, is on the flyleaf of his copy of *The Works both Morall and Natural of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, now in Pilgrim Hall.⁴ The names of three previous owners precede Brewster's, two gentlemen by the name of Kyrbie, of whom nothing else is known, and William Pierce, a shipmaster who made several voyages to New England. Brewster bought the book from Pierce for 10s 6d. When he died it went to his son Love, who sold it to Alexander, son of Myles Standish; in 1722 it passed to John Robinson, grandson of the Pilgrim pastor, and so, by various hands, to Pilgrim Hall.

Not all Brewster's books deal with theology. He had some histories; he had a few verses and a couple of plays which he may have had to take thrown in with something else, as he also had a tract on the iniquity of "stage-plays."

He had Francis Bacon's *Two Bookes*

³ Thomas Goddard Wright, *Literary Culture in Early New England*. Yale 1920, pp. 26-27. Wright discusses several Plymouth Colony inventories, and lists Brewster's in full. He is also interesting on the various means by which books came to New England, and notes that there was a book shop in Boston by 1647.

⁴ It is curious that Brewster, the only Pilgrim with any university education, has left no writings at all, and only four or five signatures. Bradford and Winslow, largely self-educated, were compulsive writers, to whom we owe vivid accounts of the early days of the Colony. Brewster is silent. Perhaps his preaching, which was probably extempore, satisfied his need for expression.

of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning; he had Aristotle's *Problems*, and Machiavelli's *Prince*; he had, oddly enough, a *Catalogue of Nobillyte of England*. He had two or three of the sort of books which a public speaker keeps to help him out of a tight place: the *1000 Notable Things*, *Treasury of Similies*, *A Help to Memory*. He had a few books intended to be useful in the wilderness, such as Captain John Smith's *News from Virginia*, and *Description of New England*; Hakluyt's *Navigation, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*; and *A Brief Description of the Whole World*, by Abbot, which was published in London in 1620, and presumably bought with the voyage in view; *The Surveyor* by Rathborn, and *Surveyor's Dialogue*, "very profitable for all men to peruse that have to do with revenues of land, or occupation thereof"; he had a book called *New Directions for the Increasing of Timber and Firewood* which he must have found unnecessary, and a book on silkworms. Jamestown, too, hoped to profit by producing silk!

Brewster's library also included books and controversial pamphlets which he had published in Leyden. Pilgrim Hall has examples of nine of the 18 titles known to have come from his press. They are:

Een Klare ende Duydelyoke Uytlegginghe over de Thein Gheboden . . . voor Guiliaem Brewster, Boek-Drucker. 1617. This was Brewster's Dutch edition of Ainsworth's *A Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments*.

An Abridgement of that Booke which the Ministers of Lincolne Diocesse delivered to his Majestie upon the first of December 1605 . . .

Guil. Amesii . . . Apud Guiljelum Brewsterum 1617.

Commentarii . . . in Proverbia Salomonis . . . Authore Thomas Cartwrighte . . .

Apud Guiljelum Brewsterum . . . in vinco Corali 1617.

Guil. Amesii ad Responsum Nic. Grevinchovi Rescriptis Contracta . . . Prostant Lugduni Bavatorum Apud Guiljelem Brewsterum in Vico Corali. 1617.

An Admonition to the Parliament . . . 1617. This is a reprint of a tract by Thomas Wilcox and John Field, stating the English Puritan's position in 1572. Archbishop Whitgift replied, in *An Answer to a Certain Libel . . .*, of which Pilgrim Hall has a copy. He was answered by Thomas Cartwright. The argument continued till 1577, when Queen Elizabeth ordered the whole Puritan side of the controversy suppressed.

A Full and Plaine Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline . . . 1617. This was Cartwright's English translation of Walter Travers' *De Regimine Ecclesie Scotiane*.

De Regimine Ecclesie Scotiane . . . 1618. A reprint of Travers' Latin tract, first published 1575.

A Confutation of the Rhemists . . . Translation, Glosses and Annotations on the New Testament . . . by Thomas Cartwright. 1618. Gov. Bradford, John Jenny, and John Hazel all had copies of this.

Perth Assembly. MDCXIX. This tract by the Scotchman, David Calderwood, was considered highly subversive by the English authorities.

Many of Brewster's publications do

not bear his imprint. It would have been unsafe with such controversial material. As it was, the English authorities brought pressure upon the Dutch, who finally shut down his press. This shock to their security was one of the reasons the Pilgrims left Holland.

Like most of the controversial pamphlets of the day, printed under stress by little presses like Brewster's, his imprints are driven into a wild confusion of type-faces, because he did not have enough type of any one kind. It is clear, however, that variety was considered decorative. The seventeenth century had a strong taste for decoration, as their capital letters, chapter headings and tailpieces attest. One example is a "bear-in-bush" which is considered a good clue to a Brewster imprint, though Brewster is not the only printer who used it. It consists of a bear at bay, sometimes supported by two huntsmen with spears. Brewster often used the bear alone, sometimes the whole ornament. It was used before him by Henry Denham in his edition of Hollinshed's *Chronicles*, 1579.

Brewster's edition of *The Confutation of the Rhemists* is the handsomest volume that came from his press. Rendel Harris⁵ who has made a study of Brewster's publications, thinks he kept such work spread out all over his shop, to cover the hasty printing of more dangerous publications.

The inventories of the decade 1649-1659 are the last that have been analyzed at Pilgrim Hall. There are forty-one inventories; twenty-three list books, but not all the titles are given. It is plain, however, that the Old Colony still treasured Ainsworth, Cartwright, Perkins, and John Robinson.

The most interesting libraries of this

⁵ The Pilgrim Press. Rendel Harris, Stephen Jones, Cambridge, 1922.

decade are those of William Bradford and Myles Standish.

Bradford had two Bibles; Pilgrim Hall has one of them. There were forty other books whose titles we know, fifty-three small books whose titles are not listed, and two parcels of books in Dutch, something over a hundred books in all. Most appear to be theology. One is pure New England: *Mr. Cotton's Answer to Mr. Williams*. It is part of the long controversy between John Cotton and Roger Williams which produced *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience*; *The Bloody Tenent Washed and Made White in the Blood of the Lamb*; *The Bloody Tenent Yet More Bloody*; and so forth.

In his old age Bradford began to study Hebrew. Pilgrim Hall has the holograph copy of his *Dialogue between Some Younge Men Borne in New England and Sundery Ancient Men that Came out of Holland and Old England*.⁶ Here Bradford tries to explain to the younger generation why their fathers had left England, and what their relations had been with the nonconformist leaders of their time. The blank spaces of the manuscript are filled with beautifully written Hebrew texts. William Carpenter of Rehoboth

also studied Hebrew. He left a Hebrew grammar, as well as Latin books and a Greek Bible and lexicon. Two Plymouth households had books in French.

Myles Standish was a reader as well as a soldier. He had three Bibles, a Testament, a psalmbook, forty-one books whose titles are recorded, and two parcels of other books which his appraisers did not examine in detail. He had Homer's *Illiad* and Caesar's *Commentaries*; English, European, and Turkish histories; and the *Swedish Intelligencer* which was also in Brewster's library. He had a book on artillery, a medical book, and the *Herbal* which Brewster also had. His theological books might have come from Brewster, too. Perhaps they did. Certainly he had Calvin's *Institutions*, Wilcox, Meyers, Preston, Dod, and others whose names the Plymouth Colony inventories have made us familiar.

The Bay Colony read other books. Henry Dexter, who studied Brewster's Library so minutely, compared it with the list of books which John Winthrop gave to Harvard College on its first Commencement, and found that they differed completely. It would be interesting to hear from some competent theologian what Plymouth's choice in theological reading matter may have had to do with the difference in temper we feel between Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay.

⁶ Reprinted in Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*. Boston, 1844.