

ANDREW GIFFORD ON HIS YOUTH

In an obscure corner of the Library at Baptist Church House is a small volume, imperfect and uncatalogued, a collection of 18th century funeral sermons, none of them for, or preached by, Baptists. You wonder why it is in a Library predominantly of Baptist material, till your eye is caught by the bookplate on the inside of the front cover and repeated before the title page of the first sermon; for it is that of 'A. Gifford, D.D., The Museum', with his coat of arms. The volume also carries the stamp of the Bristol Education Society.

On the reverse of the titlepage of the funeral sermon for Thomas Cole, minister of the Congregational church in Gloucester, preached and published in 1742 by Thomas Hall, a prominent London Congregational minister, Gifford has written:

The Rev^d M^r Cole was my dear & intimate friend - whom I went to invite to succeed Dr Calamy, but in vain; & who was always found faithful & compassionate. Alas! my father - the Horsmen of Israel & y^e Chariots thereof: A.G. This Sermon I could never get before Sept^r 25. 1779.

See also another MSS. mem^d page 50-52 concerning y^e rev^d M^r Isaac Noble who preached M^r Forbes's Funeral Sermon & was an intimate friend & correspondent of M^r Cole's who w^d do nothing without consulting him; & to whom I owe most if not all my little usefulness & acceptance, as a father that took me up when all forsook & rejected me (1724).

And on p.50, where a footnote refers to Noble's funeral sermon for James Forbes, Gifford has written of Noble:

who adopted me as a son wⁿ my own dear & hon. father was by sudden death ushered into Sudden Glory & who was y^e last guide of my youth for y^e work of y^e Ministry & my introducer into it - his Pulpit in Castle green Bristol being y^e first y^t was ever preached in there by A.G. & whom he usually addressed by Mi fili.

These autobiographical memoranda are the more interesting in that so little is known of Andrew Gifford's youth. The funeral sermon for him preached and published in 1784 by John Rippon mentions 'letters of his worthy friend the Rev. Mr. Noble of Bristol' but gives no hint that Gifford owed so much to Noble as is revealed here; nor does it record Gifford's friendship with Thomas Cole, who had been trained by Noble and boarded with him.¹ The two relationships fill out Gifford's story as told by Dr Champion in *Farthing Rushlight*, and provide background for the friendships with others than Baptists characteristic of Gifford in his adult life.

NOTE

1 For Thomas Cole, see my article on him, 'George Whitefield's "Curate": Gloucestershire Dissent and the Revival', in *Journal of Ecclesiastical*

History, 27 (1976), 369-86; that Cole had a number of 'very advantageous proposals' to remove to London was known, also that Sir Richard Ellys, Bart., to whom Gifford was chaplain, 'had a very high esteem' for Cole and was 'a particular friend of Calamy, but not that Cole was invited to succeed Calamy. For Isaac Noble, a Congregational minister prominent in the Association movement in 1690 and in correspondence with ministers in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Wales, see my 'Assembly and Association in Dissent, 1689-1831', in *Councils and Assemblies* (Studies in Church History, 7), Cambridge 1971, pp. 289-309.

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1689 CONFSSION COMMEMORATION

We have been informed that a committee has been formed, representative of those 'loyal to the historic Particular Baptist Confession known as the London Confession of 1689', to consider how the 300th anniversary of its original declaration 'might best be marked for the glory of God in an international call to gospel enterprise'.

Interested Baptists who wish to be placed on the mailing list and kept informed should send a stamped addressed envelope to '1689 Commemoration', P.O.Box 140, London NWB 7SW.