

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Calvert, Giles (*bap.* 1612, *d.* 1663),
bookseller

by Ariel Hessayon

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Calvert, Giles (*bap.* 1612, *d.* 1663), bookseller, was baptized on 20 December 1612 in the parish of Meare, Somerset, the eldest son of George Calvert (*d.* 1628), vicar there since 1601. Soon after his preferment George Calvert was charged in an ecclesiastical court with not observing the order of service prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer and with preaching over-long sermons. On 30 June 1628 Giles Calvert was bound apprentice to William Luggier (*d.* 1658), citizen and stationer of London, for the term of nine years. For some unknown reason Calvert's indentures were cancelled and on 11 January 1632 he was apprenticed for the term of seven years to Joseph Hunscomb (*d.* 1660), who was also the master of his younger brother, George Calvert (1620–1691). On 25 January 1639 Giles was made free of the Stationers' Company.

Shortly after gaining his freedom Calvert married Elizabeth Calvert (*d.* 1675?), whose maiden name is unknown. The couple settled in the parish of St Nicholas Cole Abbey, London, where their first child, Elizabeth (*d.* 1646), was baptized on 15 March 1640; their other children were Nathaniel (1643–1664), John (*d.* 1648), a stillborn (1651), and Giles (*b.* 1653, *d.* in or after 1674). On 4 March 1641 'Calvert a book binder' was questioned by a committee of the House of Lords concerning the publication of Richard Overton's unlicensed pamphlet *A Dreame, or, Nevves from Hell*, issued that year. Although he refused to identify the man who supplied him with the copy, no further action seems to have been taken against Calvert. Thereafter Calvert entered several publications into the Stationers' register. In 1642 he published *Napiers narration, or, An Epitome of his booke on the Revelation* and William Carter's *Israels Peace with God, Beniamines Overthrow*. The following year he published two works by Joseph Caryl (one in partnership with John Rothwell), *The Souldiers Pocket Bible* and *The Pathway to Peace*.

In 1644 Calvert signed the Stationers' Company petition to the House of Commons protesting at the 'monopolies' held by royal patent to print English bibles and 'sundry Bookes of generall use' (*Stationers' Company, Stationers' Hall, London, liber A: letter-book of the Stationers' Company, fol. 149r*). That year he published one tract by Joseph Caryl and sold two titles by John Saltmarsh. He also took on Gregory Moule, an apprentice who had been turned over to him by Joseph Hunscomb. By late May 1644 Calvert was occupying a tenement at the sign of the Black-Spread-Eagle at the west end of St Paul's Cathedral in the parish of St Gregory by Paul's. Situated on the busy street leading from Ludgate Hill to the cathedral, Calvert's premises consisted of a cellar, a shop with a street frontage, four rooms above the shop, and a little yard behind the property where the privy and the stairs leading up into the house were located. This well-known address was to become a lodging, meeting-place, postal address, and distribution point for radicals and their printed literature. Indeed 'Lame' Giles Calvert was to gain a reputation as a purveyor

of 'soul-poysons', for example in Thomas Hall's *Vindicae literarum* (quoted in R. Baxter, *The Worcester-Shire Petition to the Parliament for the Ministry of England Defended*, 1653, 39), his shop branded 'That forge of the Devill, from whence so many blasphemous, lying, scandalous Pamphlets ... have spread over the Land, to the great dishonour of the Nation' (T. Hall, *Vindicae literarum*, 1654, 215).

On 27 March 1646 'One Calvert a Sectary' (T. Edwards, *Gangraena*, 1646, 2.9) was examined before the lord mayor of London concerning the publication of Richard Overton's anti-monarchical *The last warning to all the inhabitants of London*. Calvert was subsequently brought before the bar of the House of Lords, but, unlike the printer and bookseller William Larner and his two servants, escaped imprisonment. Thereafter Calvert's publishing activities continued unabated. In 1646 he issued or sold thirty-seven known new titles, including two numbers (20–27 October and 27 October–12 November) of the newsbook *The Military Actions of Europe*, as well as works by Robert Bacon, Henry Burton, Thomas Collier, Benjamin Coxe, William Dell, Henry Lawrence, Hugh Peters, and William Walwyn. A similar picture emerges for 1647. That year Calvert issued or sold thirty-one known new titles, including works by Mary Cary, Nicholas Cowling, William Erbury, Francis Freeman, Paul Hobson, and Joseph Salmon.

On 12 April 1647 Calvert, having paid £20, was admitted into the livery of the Stationers' Company. On 17 December he was nominated for the lowest and most undesirable ward office, that of scavenger. In March 1648 Calvert and Adam Haughton, a London merchant, purchased a parcel of former bishops' lands in the manor of Thorfield, Gloucestershire, for £410 15s. 10d. At the same time Calvert continued to publish, issuing or selling thirty-two known new titles in 1648, including works by John Lewin, Isaac Penington, Henry Pinnell, William Sedgwick, Joshua Sprigge, John Warr, Valentin Weigel, Robert Wilkinson, and Gerrard Winstanley.

By January 1649 Calvert's widespread network of contacts included a group called 'My one flesh'. Abiezer Coppe appeared 'in a most dreadful manner' before members of 'My one flesh' and it was to this conventicle that Calvert directed the itinerant preacher Lawrence Clarkson. Calvert was also prolific in 1649, issuing or selling sixty-one known new titles including one number of the newsbook the *Irish Monthly Mercury* (ending 21 December), as well as works by Thomas Banaster, Jacob Böhme, Ellis Bradshaw, Thomas Butler, Peter Chamberlen, John Cooke, Abiezer Coppe, Richard Coppin, Henry Danvers, J[ohn] F[ile?], Joseph Heming, John Lilburne, Richard Mercer, Henrick Niclaes, M[ary] P[ordage?], Robert Purnell, William Rabisha, and William Sheppard. Significantly Calvert also published in partnership with John Partridge, Rapha Harford, and George Whittington *A petition from his excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax and the general council of officers of the army ... concerning the draught of An agreement of the people* (20 January 1649). Calvert, moreover, issued a parliamentary act (23 February 1649), suggesting that he may have had friends both in the army and parliament.

In 1650 Calvert issued or sold twenty-five known new titles, including works by Samuel Eaton, John Fry, Henry Halhead, John Horn, Samuel Loveday, William Potter, Nicholas Rust, and Theaurau John Tany. Calvert was also believed to have printed Lawrence Clarkson's 'impious and blasphemous' book *A single eye all light*,

no darkness (JHC, 6.474). While Clarkson was questioned by a parliamentary committee and subsequently sentenced by the House of Commons 'to be kept to Labour for one Month; and from that Time to be banished out of this Commonwealth' (ibid., 6.475), no action seems to have been taken against Calvert. In 1651 he issued or sold twenty-seven known new titles; these included works by Noah Biggs, Abraham Boune, William Bray, Christopher Cob, Charles Hotham, Edward Hyde, John Jackson, Joseph Mede, and Thomas Tillam. Again, in 1652 Calvert issued or sold twenty-five known new titles, including works by James Cranford, John Graunt, Henry Haggar, Simon Henden, Thomas Larkham, and Roger Williams.

On 2 June 1652 Giles Calvert and George Poole, clockmaker, came upon bail before the sessions held for the Newgate gaol delivery, and were committed. Although the reasons for Calvert's confinement are unknown he does not appear to have remained long in Newgate, for on 11 October 1652 he freed his apprentice Richard Moone (*d.* 1663). In May 1653 Calvert, his former apprentice Thomas Brewster (*d.* 1664), and Henry Hills (*d.* 1689) were appointed printers to the new council of state that had been established on 29 April 1653. Calvert appears to have held this position until early August 1653. Afterwards Hills continued in the post alone.

In 1653 Calvert began publishing Quaker writings including works by Christopher Atkinson, Samuel Buttivant, Richard Farnworth, George Fox, and James Nayler. Of the fifty-two known new titles issued or sold by Calvert that year, fourteen were by Quaker authors. In 1654 Calvert issued or sold thirty-eight known new titles. Of these, thirty were by Quaker authors, representing 47 per cent of all known Quaker publications that year. By the end of 1654 several Quakers had also entrusted Calvert with forwarding their letters. This trust was reciprocated with the loans that Calvert gave to Quakers newly arrived in London. In January 1655 a group of over two hundred Quakers, including James Nayler and George Fox, gathered for a 'General Meeting' at Swannington, Leicestershire. Also present were 'many Ranters' including Jacob Bothumley, as well as 'other professors' and Baptists (*Journal of George Fox*, ed. J. Nickalls, 1986, 182). It was said that the Quakers had 'a printer with them', later identified as 'Giles Calvert of London, who stay'd with them eight or nine dayes, and is now gone up to London with two or three queere of paper written to be putt into print' (Thurloe, *State papers*, 3.116).

Calvert issued or sold seventy-five known new titles in 1655. Of the fifty-seven new texts by Quaker authors, perhaps fifteen or more derived from manuscripts he had collected at Swannington. Some of this new stock was seized on Oliver Cromwell's orders in February 1655 and taken to Westminster for examination.

On 4 July that year Calvert came to a London Quaker meeting with George Fox. Afterwards Alexander Parker and James Nayler 'passed downe' to Calvert's, where they found him 'exceeding tender and loving towards us' (I. Ross, *Margaret Fell, Mother of Quakerism*, 1949, 116). Calvert remained a 'Loving friend' (RS Friends, Lond., Swarthmore MS 3.30) of the Quakers throughout 1655 and for some time afterwards, as he continued to publish their writings, forward their letters, and supply them with credit and printed books. On 19 April 1656 Stephen Bowtell, a deputy of the commission for regulating of printing, presented information against Calvert for selling Edward Burrough's *A Trumpet of the Lord Sounded out of Sion* (1656), a work thought to be 'scandalous and prejudiciall to the Comonwealth'

(Thurloe, *State papers*, 4.717). For issuing this and some other books 'reflexive upon the present Government' Calvert was ordered to appear before the council of state on 6 May 1656 (*CSP dom.*, 1655–6, 308). In December 1656 Calvert was one of eighty-seven signatories to a petition for remitting the remaining part of James Nayler's punishment. One of Nayler's followers was Calvert's sister, Martha Simmonds (bap. 1624, d. 1665), and by the end of 1658 her husband, Thomas Simmonds, had replaced Calvert as the leading Quaker publisher.

In 1660 Calvert served as second renter warden of the Stationers' Company. The following year he chose to pay a £24 fine on demand rather than serve again. About November 1660 Calvert published in partnership with Thomas Brewster and Livewell Chapman a seditious book, *The Speeches and Prayers of some of the Late King's Judges*. On 29 June 1661 Calvert was examined before the secretary of state, Sir Edward Nicholas, concerning the publication of *A Phoenix, or, The Solemn League and Covenant*. Calvert was committed prisoner to the Gatehouse, Westminster, by order of Secretary Nicholas. During Calvert's confinement his wife, Elizabeth, carried on his business, completing the publication of *ENIAYTOS TEPASTIOS mirabilis annus, or, The year of prodigies and wonders*.

Giles Calvert was released with the adjournment of parliament on 30 July 1661 and by October had gone into hiding outside London, apparently fearing arrest for debt. On 21 December a warrant was issued to release Elizabeth Calvert on her bond of £500. By March 1662 Giles appears to have returned to London. On 8 May 1662 he entered into two bonds with John Harris of Carmarthen and Walter Lloyd. Thereafter he was imprisoned for distributing seditious books. On 27 November 1662 he was released on his bond of £500. His freedom was to be short-lived. On 16 December 1662, four days after a warrant for imprisoning him in the Tower had not been executed, Calvert was committed to Newgate for dangerous and seditious practices by order of the secretary of state, Sir Henry Bennet. The same day Elizabeth Calvert entered into an obligation to surrender herself to one of the king's messengers. Giles was probably released at some time in January 1663, whereupon he appears to have continued selling 'many seditious books' (N. Penney, ed., *Extracts from State Papers Relating to Friends, 1654 to 1672*, 1913, 168). On 29 June 1663 Elizabeth Calvert was again committed to the Gatehouse for delivering unlawful books. Following the intercession of the earl of Carlisle and a bond of £600 for her good behaviour she was released on 24 July 1663. On 11 August that year Giles Calvert drew up his will. No doubt debilitated by his periods of imprisonment he died before 28 August. He had issued or sold either individually or in partnership 475 known different publications, of which about 200 were by Quaker authors.

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Calvert, Elizabeth (d. 1675?), bookseller
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Calvert, Elizabeth (d. 1675?), bookseller, was the wife of Giles Calvert (bap. 1612, d. 1663) and sister-in-law of the Quaker Martha Simmonds. The Calverts' shop at the Black Spread Eagle at the west end of St Paul's Churchyard, London, was a major source of radical and Quaker publications during the periods of the civil war and Commonwealth. After the Restoration Elizabeth Calvert carried on the trade in republican, nonconformist, and oppositional literature. Of the Calverts' three surviving children, Elizabeth (b. 1639), Nathaniel (b. 1643), and Giles (b. 1653), the two sons were also booksellers.

After the Restoration, when Giles and other male stationers were under constant pressure from the government for oppositional publications, Elizabeth Calvert took a central role in arranging the printing and distribution of radical pamphlets. In 1661 while her husband was imprisoned she 'went on with the Prodigies' (that is, the 'signs and wonders' pamphlet, *Eniautos terastios mirabilis annus*), the very text which had led to Giles's incarceration (L'Estrange, *Truth and Loyalty*, 57). After the 'Confederate knot' of male stationers had been broken up by deaths and imprisonments, she and other book-trade wives and widows (Hannah Allen, Joan Dover (later Darby), and Ann(a) Brewster) carried on the surreptitious trade in anti-monarchy texts (L'Estrange, *Considerations*, 6). Elizabeth was arrested twice (in 1661 and 1663) before Giles's death in August 1663. In October of that year their son Nathaniel was freed as a stationer by his uncle, the bookseller George Calvert, and presumably joined his mother in the business. Several warrants for the arrest of Elizabeth, her maid Elizabeth Evans, her apprentice Mathias Stephenson, and her son Nathaniel were issued during 1662–3 in connection with the printer John Twyn's trial for treason, and Elizabeth was questioned about the printing of *Mene tekel, or, A Treatise of the Execution of Justice* and the *Speeches and Prayers* of the regicides. Committed to prison on 2 February 1664, she petitioned for her discharge to nurse Nathaniel, who after his own release from prison had become 'dangerously sick' (TNA: PRO, SP 29/95/98). Her request was refused, and a second petition shows that her release on 8 April came too late: Nathaniel was 'ever since fryday morning dead and is yett unburied' (TNA: PRO, SP 29/96/64).

Despite repeated imprisonments, deaths, consequent debts, and the destruction of her shop in the great fire of 1666, Calvert persisted in her trade, continuing to publish both openly and surreptitiously. She was apparently unmolested for her publication of works by nonconformists, Independents, and Quakers such as Richard Steele, John Owen, Benjamin Agas, Francis Howgill, and Thomas Wilson. Other publications, however, attracted harassment from the Stationers' Company and, more frequently, from Roger L'Estrange, the surveyor of the press, who was well aware that her distribution network stretched far beyond London. Both Richard Moone, a former apprentice of Giles's who had moved to Bristol, and Moone's wife,

Susannah, were caught in possession of books sent by Elizabeth Calvert, and her pamphlets reached at least as far north as Flintshire and Carlisle. Although her name appears in only twenty-seven imprints she is known to have been responsible for many more 'seditious' works, including tracts about the great fire such as *A True and Faithfull Account* (1667), Benjamin Keach's *A Trumpet Blown in Sion* (edition now lost), John Wilson's *Nehushtan* (1668), and Andrew Marvell's *Directions to a Painter* (1668). After the destruction by fire of her shop she moved to Duck Lane, returning to St Paul's Churchyard in 1669. Her secret press in Southwark had been discovered and broken up the previous year, but she continued her illegal trade. Early in 1670 she supplied the printer Samuel Simmons with the copy of Dyer's *Christ's Famous Titles*, which was interrupted and seized while at the press, and in December she was indicted for her publication in 1668 of *Directions to a Painter*. After her trial in March 1671 she absconded and pursuit of her fine seems to have been dropped. Circumstantial evidence suggests that she may have been protected by the earl of Carlisle, whose secretary was Andrew Marvell.

After the trial Calvert's trade seems to have been largely in old stock which had survived the great fire, in reprints, and a few new works of inoffensive character. One of her few secular works, William Rabisha's *The Whole Body of Cookery*, appeared in 1673. But assumptions that she turned to more innocuous publishing in her last years are belied by the survival of a warrant for her arrest in January 1674. Her offence is not stated, but it may have been in connection with the publication of the pamphlet *Verbum sapienti*. In February 1674 she bound the last of her four apprentices, on 19 October she made her will, and she died probably in early 1675, her will being proved on 5 February 1675. The 1675 edition of Rabisha's cookery book has, uniquely, the imprint 'for E. C. And are to be sold by Francis SMITH, at the Elephant and Castle near the Royal Exchange in Cornhill', presumably a posthumous title-page. The residue of her estate, after debts, was left to her only surviving son, Giles. Although he is described as 'bookseller' of the City of London, there is no evidence that he was active in the trade or that he carried on the business at the Black Spread Eagle.

Although Giles and Elizabeth had earlier been sympathetic to Quakers, there seems to have been a rift after the James Nayler incident of 1656, in which Giles's sister Martha had played a central part. After 1656 the Calverts published few Quaker works, and Elizabeth seems to have been regarded by Quakers as an enemy. In a letter of 1671 Ellis Hookes, clerk to London Friends, associates 'Jesebell; Giles Calverts wife' with a group of apostates and 'Ranters' including Robert Rich, John Pennyman, and Mary Boreman (Ellis Hookes to Margaret Fell Fox, 21 Oct 1671, Swarthmore MS, I.57). The best indication of her religious beliefs, however, is that in her will Elizabeth asked to be 'decently buryed amongst the Baptists' (TNA: PRO, PROB 11/347, sig. 12).

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