
John Forbes of Corse (1593–1648), a Scottish Episcopalian Pietist, on Dutch soil

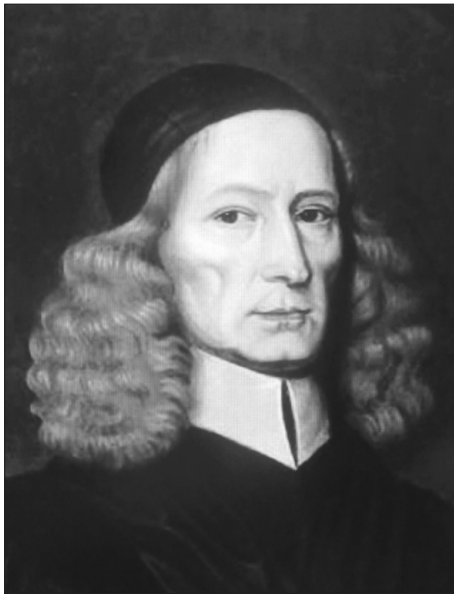
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I. John Forbes of Corse and his uncle in the Netherlands

A certificate dated 4th April 1619 contains the signatures of Willem Teellinck (1579–1629), pastor of the Reformed Church in Middelburg, John Forbes ‘Senior’, pastor of the English Church in that city, Alexander MacDuff, pastor of the Scottish church in Veere (Campvere), and two more ministers belonging to the Walcheren Classis (Presbytery) of the Reformed Church of the Dutch province of Zeeland. It is a statement that candidate John Forbes of Corse (1593–1648) was granted a preaching licence.² It is not known whether this licence applied to the Reformed Church or only to the Scottish and English churches in the United Provinces. In any case,

¹ This article was originally published in Dutch; see L. J. van Valen, ‘Was de Schotse episcopaaalse theoloog John Forbes of Corse (1593–1648) een gereformeerd piëtist?’, in J. van de Kamp *et al.* (eds.), *Pietas Reformata: Religieuze vernieuwing onder gereformeerden in de vroegmoderne tijd* (Zoetermeer, 2015), pp. 167–182. This English version has been revised and extended.

² This data is derived from G. D. Henderson, ‘The ordination of John Forbes of Corse’, *Scottish Notes and Queries*, Vol. 10:3 (March 1932), pp. 33–35. Henderson indicates that this was not an official confirmation or ‘ordination’. The preaching consent was probably given at an informal meeting with the aim of allowing Forbes to preach in Scottish and English churches in the Republic. I have not been able to find the explanation in question. Henderson mentions that Forbes later submitted this ‘certificate’ for his appointment as professor at King’s College, Aberdeen. As evidence, Henderson mentions a note by Forbes in his *Disputationes theologicae* in which he refers to the certificate, and also the ‘Records’ of the ‘Aberdeen Synod’ confirming that he had been legally authorized to preach and could therefore be ordained professor of divinity (p. 35). There is no evidence that he was ordained as pastor in Middelburg. There was also no call. The records of the Middelburg Classis in 1619 are silent about this. It is also questionable whether Forbes could have conformed with the Presbyterian church-form that was no longer applicable in Aberdeenshire.



John Forbes of Corse.

the marriage register of Middelburg indicates that he was a 'preacher of the English Church'. This must be the English church in the capital of the province Zeeland, Middelburg (Middleburgh).

The young Scot was almost twenty-three years old when he lived with his uncle John Forbes (c. 1565–1634). This elder Forbes is referred to as John Forbes of Alford, to distinguish him from John Forbes of Corse. Young Forbes' father, Patrick, and his uncle were brothers. His stay with his uncle came at the end of his studies, first in Aberdeen and then at various universities on the

Continent. In the Zeeland capital he met Soetjen (or Soetgen) Rooseboom ('Sweet Rose-tree' in English), whom he married on 23rd July 1619. His uncle acted as witness. The ceremony took place in the English church. Soetgen was the daughter of Hendrick Rooseboom, who was an alderman and later councillor of the city. The couple left for Aberdeen shortly after the wedding.³

It is no coincidence that Willem Teellinck and John Forbes of Alford appear on the preaching certificate of John Forbes of Corse. The connections between Teellinck and Forbes of Alford were not only based on a classical involvement with the foreign churches in Zeeland. The common denominator was a pietistic bond on account of their Reformed confessional basis. Personal contacts with English and Scottish migrants in the Republic strengthened the affinity with Puritan piety and contributed to Dutch editions of English and Scottish pietistic writings.⁴ The 'umbrella name' of 'Reformed Pietism', as used by

³ See G. D. Henderson, 'The wife of John Forbes of Corse', *Scottish Notes and Queries*, Vol. 6:3 (September 1928), pp. 178-181. The marriage registers of Middelburg were lost due to the war in 1940, but Henderson was able to consult them before 1940. The name of Soetgen's father appears in several places in *De magistraat der stad Middelburg* (Middelburg: Willem de Klerk, 1744). Rooseboom was a notary and became a citizen of the city on 26th February 1583. 'Zoetken', his daughter, is spelled this way in the baptismal register, which shows that she was born on 23rd April 1599 and baptized on 11th May of that year. In this year, her father was an alderman of the city. See Henderson, p. 179.

⁴ A standard source on the history of the English and Scottish churches in the Republic of the United Provinces is K. L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries* (Leiden, 1982).

W. J. Op 't Hof, refers to an international movement that is described in England and Scotland as 'Puritanism'. It has been established in various academic publications that it was precisely this Anglo-Saxon piety movement that exerted so much influence on the 'father' of the 'Dutch Further Reformation' (in Dutch, *Nadere Reformatie*), Willem Teellinck and kindred spirits in the Netherlands. The range of Dutch translations of English pietistic (read also Puritan) writings in the first quarter of the seventeenth century is partly proof of this.⁵

Several Scottish names appear among the authors of the translated 'Puritanistica' from the period mentioned, namely John Abernethy, William Cowper, and John Napier. The latter was not a minister and Abernethy and Cowper were bishops in the Scottish Church. It is noteworthy that the Dutch translators' choice fell on two Episcopalian authors.⁶ Well-known Scottish Presbyterian devotional authors such as James Melville, Robert Bruce, and Robert Rollock apparently did not inspire Dutch translators. It is difficult to trace what the reason for this could be. Are the writings of Cowper and the others more pietistic than those of, for example, Rollock?⁷ It is remarkable that the books by the Presbyterian Forbes of Alford, which were partly

⁵ The 'umbrella term' of Reformed Pietism is defined in W. J. op 't Hof, *Reformed Pietism* (Houten, 2005), pp. 16 and 85. For the influence of English and Scottish Puritanism, see pp. 36-46. For the name of 'Scottish Puritanism', see L. J. van Valen, "Life with God": Scottish Puritanism and its reception in the "United Provinces" in the seventeenth century', in *Documentatieblad Nadere Refomatie (DNR)*, Vol. 36:2 (2012), pp. 97-114. Despite crosscurrents from the English movement, Scottish Puritanism developed independently from around 1580, according to Van Valen. There is, however, a parallelism in the beginning (pp. 97-100). For Dutch translations of Puritan writings, see W. J. op 't Hof, *English Pietistic Writings in Dutch, 1598–1622* (Rotterdam, 1987).

⁶ From the Reformation onwards, the Scottish Church developed towards a Presbyterian form of church government that was also ratified by the reigning monarch James VI in 1592. Under pressure from the same king, this church form was replaced in 1610 by a mild episcopal church structure, in which the General Assembly was silenced, and the existing bishops were given more authority. For the historiography of Presbyterianism in Scotland, see J. Kirk, 'Presbyterianism', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, pp. 673-676 (cited hereafter as *DSCHT*). The historiography of Episcopalian historians claims that the Scottish Church had Episcopalian elements from the beginning of the Reformation. See, among others, E. G. Selwyn (ed.), *The First Book of the 'Irenicum' of John Forbes of Corse. A contribution to the theology of re-union* (Cambridge, 1923), 'Introduction', pp. 1-24. David Mullan takes a middle position. See D. G. Mullan, *Episcopacy in Scotland: The History of an Idea, 1560–1638* (Edinburgh, 1986).

⁷ According to Van Valen, Abernethy, and Cowper hardly appear in Scottish secondary literature: 'I think this... has to do with the fact that they have exchanged their strict Presbyterian principles for moderate Episcopatism', L. J. van Valen, "Life with God": Scottish Puritanism and its reception in the "United Provinces" in the seventeenth century', p. 108.

printed in the Republic, did not lead to Dutch translations. Three of his seven books, which are characterized by a pietistic content, reached the publisher Richard Schilders in Middelburg in English from the printing press that also issued writings in Dutch by Willem Teellinck and others.⁸

How did the contacts with John Forbes of Alford, and with Teellinck and others, come about? The elder Forbes was a minister at Alford in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, from 1593 to 1605. Because of his strict Presbyterian principles, which were at odds with the Episcopalian (Conformist) and Erastian views of King James VI, he was exiled after a period of captivity. After a stay in France, he came to the Netherlands in 1611. In this year he became pastor of the English church in Middelburg, which consisted mainly of merchants. In 1621 he became pastor of the English church in Delft. Both communities were formed by the 'Merchant Adventurers', the society of British merchants in the Netherlands.⁹ Especially during his period in Middelburg, he kept in touch with Willem Teellinck, who had become a preacher in Middelburg in 1613.¹⁰

⁸ See C. G. F. de Jong, *John Forbes (ca. 1468–1634)* (n.p., 1987), pp. 171, 172. De Jong pays relatively little attention to the pietistic character of Forbes' writings. His attention to his theology is also limited. A strong point in this study, however, is the suggested affinity with English Puritanism such as that of William Perkins (see pp. 119–140). For Richard Schilders, see, among others, D. van Wijnen, *Richard Schilders: Printer to the Protestants* (Leiden, 1980). Schilders published important Puritan works. W. J. op 't Hof, *English Pietistic Writings*, p. 585. See also K. L. Sprunger, *Trumpet from the Tower: English Puritan Printing in the Netherlands, 1600–1640* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 35, 36. The last book shows that Forbes had some books printed on the advice of the English 'Merchant Adventurers' in the United Provinces. This testifies to the Puritan character of these British merchant communities, such as in Middelburg and in Delft, where Forbes was a minister.

⁹ G. W. Sprott, A. R. Macdonald, 'Forbes John (c.1565–1634)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (accessed 11 Nov 2010) (cited hereafter as ODNB); Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (2nd edn., 8 vols., Edinburgh, 1915–1950), Vol. 6, Alford, pp. 117, 118; Vol. 7, Delft, pp. 542, 543; Middelburg, p. 547 (cited hereafter as *Fasti*).

¹⁰ Teellinck's son Maximilian (1605–1653) was pastor of the English church in Vlissingen from 1627 to 1628, succeeding John Wing who served the congregation from 1620 to 1627. Wing had several pietistic writings published; *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 545. Willem Teellinck preached at the ordination of Wing; see W. J. op 't Hof, *English Pietistic Writings*, pp. 496, 497. According to Op 't Hof, Forbes visited Teellinck in his manse; W. J. op 't Hof, *Willem Teellinck, his Life, Writings, and Influence (Willem Teellinck, leven, geschriften en invloed)* (Kampen, 2008), p. 564. Op 't Hof mentions some interesting additions to Teellinck's connections with English and Scottish Puritans. For example, he states that Maximilian was inducted in the English church of Vlissingen by Forbes in 1627. Forbes was then affiliated with Delft; see W. J. op 't Hof, *The Theological Views of Willem Teellinck* (Kampen, 2011), p. 10.

Teellinck was closely involved in the re-establishment of the English church in Middelburg in 1623 and often participated in the service of the Word. C. G. F. de Jong points out that much of Forbes' theology and spirituality can be found in Teellinck. Mutual influence that has a direct connection with English Puritanism can be deduced from Forbes' writings. The influence of Puritan theology in this region was also strengthened through the British churches in Zeeland and it helped to shape the emerging movement of the Further Reformation.¹¹

Naturally, John Forbes of Alford introduced his nephew to Teellinck. John Forbes of Corse was not exiled from his homeland, but his stay in Middelburg marked the final phase of his educational travels on the European continent. It is not clear to what extent the young student was influenced by his uncle and Teellinck. In any case, this does not apply to the *jus divinum* of the Presbyterian church order, because Forbes of Corse opted for the Episcopalian system after his return to Aberdeen. His father Patrick's changed point of view was probably the deciding factor. He had changed from a convinced Presbyterian to a supporter of a moderate Episcopalianism.

II. His father Patrick Forbes

As we have mentioned, John Forbes of Corse was the son of Patrick Forbes of Corse (1564–1635), who had been Bishop of Aberdeen since 1618.¹² Patrick was the brother of John Forbes of Alford. He belonged to the landed gentry, the Forbes family, and inherited the estates of his father William Forbes, which included Corse Castle in Aberdeenshire. After studying in St. Andrews and Glasgow, he moved to the castle. At first, he showed solidarity with the party of Andrew Melville, which opposed the king's policy of introducing bishops. He gradually conformed to the Episcopalian insistence of James and, albeit after much struggle, accepted the see of Aberdeen in 1618. Before that he had been a preacher for some time. This move alienated him from his Presbyterian brethren, of whom David Calderwood regarded him as a traitor. His acceptance of the Articles

¹¹ C. G. F. de Jong, *John Forbes*, p. 120. See also W. J. op 't Hof, *The Theological Views*, p. 226. Zeeland is the province where the Further Reformation had the deepest effect. See W. van 't Spijker *et al.*, *Never Reformed: Eight lectures on the Further Reformation in Zeeland as a lasting source of inspiration (Nooit uitgereformeerd. Acht lezingen over de Nadere Reformatie in Zeeland als blijvende bron van inspiratie)* (Nieuwdorp/Nunspeet, 2012), pp. 7, 8.

¹² For the lineage of Forbes, see A. and H. Tayler, *The House of Forbes* (Third Spalding Club, Aberdeen, repr. 2001).



Patrick Forbes.

of Perth of 1618, which was the first step towards an Anglican liturgy in the Scottish Church, made him even more of a conformist and a follower of the king's autocratic policy of bringing the Church to submit to his wants.¹³

Patrick Forbes can be considered a Reformed Pietist. His pious way of life and the way in which he sought to promote the 'pietas' in his diocese are striking.¹⁴ He was a Calvinist who defended the doctrines of predestination and effectual calling in preaching and writing. A proof of this is his cooperation

in a revision of the Confession decided upon by the Scottish (Episcopal) Assembly of 1616. His first publication was a *Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, which was published in London in 1613 and reprinted a year later by Richard Schilders in Middelburg.¹⁵ This reveals his antithetical attitude to the Roman Catholic tradition. He contrasts this tradition with the 'primitive apostolic church, which shone gloriously in the bright light of the Sun of righteousness'.¹⁶ For him, the 'pietas' of the Early Church meant the example of personal piety and its impact in the church. He wanted to convey this ideal image in the university

¹³ For biographical information about Patrick Forbes, see D. G. Mullan, 'Forbes, Patrick, of Corse (1564–1635)', in *ODNB* (consulted 22-6-2011). The following biography describes his life and work from an Episcopalian point of view: W. G. Sinclair Snow, *The Times, Life, and Thought of Patrick Forbes, Bishop of Aberdeen, 1618–1635* (London, 1952). Robert Wodrow gives a biography from a Presbyterian point of view: R. Lippe (ed.), *Selections from Wodrow's Biographical Collections* (Aberdeen, 1890), 'Collections upon the life of Patrick Forbes, Baron of Oniel and laird of Corse, minister of Keith and bishop of Aberdeen', pp. 80–105.

¹⁴ According to Drummond, Andrew Melville speaks of the 'guid, godly, child Patrick Forbes of Corse', A. L. Drummond, *The Kirk and the Continent* (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 86. However, this was not Andrew Melville but his cousin James. See G. D. Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Cambridge, 1937), p. 32 with reference to J. Melville, *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr James Melville* (Edinburgh, 1842), p. 18 (not p. 15 as Henderson states on p. 246, note 9).

¹⁵ Patrick Forbes, *An exquisite commentary upon the Revelation of Saint John* (London: W. Hall, 1613); *An learned commentary upon the Revelation of Saint John* (Middelburg: Richard Schilders, 1614).

¹⁶ P. Forbes, *An learned commentary* (ed. Middelburg), p. 105, 'the Primitive Apostolike Church, glorious in the cleare light of the Sunne of righteousness'.

in Aberdeen, the King's College, founded by his predecessor Bishop William Elphinstone (1431–1514).¹⁷ Regarding the need for education and the exercise of Christian discipline in his diocese, he followed in the footsteps of Knox and Calvin. A continuing reformation remained necessary to promote piety. The latter was more important to Forbes than an ecclesiastical restructuring according to the Presbyterian model. He found the combination of a moderate episcopate that provided guidance in the multiple assemblies and the local parishes to be the most effective organizational form for implementing the reformation process.¹⁸

III. John Forbes of Corse in Scotland

John Forbes of Corse was Patrick's second son. He was born in Corse on 2nd May 1593 and died in the same place on 29th April 1648.¹⁹ Patrick Forbes' influence on his son John is undeniable.²⁰ First of all, he had the same character traits of being peaceable and gentle. Subsequently, both had a spiritual bond that is especially evident in the account of the bishop's deathbed. Wodrow derives this from the memorial volume that appeared in 1635. He writes: 'The bishop had many pleasant conversations with his son on spiritual subjects.' The subjects mentioned include: the fall of man, redemption through Christ, the vanity of the world, the shortness of life, 'and the sweet invitation and promise' (Matt. 11:28). 'He spoke much upon righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, the death of the body, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection, and heavenly inheritance, and beatific vision, with the greatest pleasure and delight.'²¹ These themes were also central to John in his *Diary*, which will be discussed later in this article.

¹⁷ Both King's College and Marischal College, the two universities in Aberdeen, fell under the supervision of the bishop. D. G. Mullan notes: 'The two colleges of Aberdeen were raised by him [Patrick Forbes] into a condition of great prosperity, and by his encouragement of piety and learning he gathered around him a body of clergy who were ornaments of their church and country.' D. G. Mullan, *ODNB*.

¹⁸ An explanation of the ecclesiological thought of Patrick Forbes is given by Sinclair Snow, *The Times, Life, and Thought of Patrick Forbes, Bishop of Aberdeen, 1618–1635*, 'Chapter IX. The thought of bishop Patrick Forbes', pp. 142–160.

¹⁹ *Fasti*, Vol. 7, pp. 369, 370.

²⁰ For Patrick Forbes' influence on the Scottish Church, see Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, 'Chapter II. The influence of bishop Patrick Forbes', pp. 31–59.

²¹ *Selections from Wodrow's Biographical Collections*, p. 101. For the sermons delivered after his death, and biographical information, see C. F. Shand (ed.), *The Funeral Sermons, Orations, Epitaphs, and other Pieces on the Death of the Right Rev. Patrick Forbes* (Reprint of 1635 edn., Edinburgh, 1835).

After studying at King's College, the older of the two universities in Aberdeen, from 1607 to 1612, John Forbes of Corse left for the continent. He first visited his uncle John in Middelburg and then attended lectures in theology in Heidelberg under David Pareus, moving in 1615 to Sedan where Andrew Melville taught during his exile. After visiting several other universities, he arrived in Middelburg again in 1618. This was his second visit to Zeeland. After his marriage and return to Aberdeen, he was appointed professor at King's College, partly on the recommendation of his father. He was the first professor of theology at this university. His inauguration took place on 27th April 1620, and in the same year he was given the title DD (Doctor of Divinity).²²

IV. The Aberdeen Doctors

John Forbes was one of the so-called 'Aberdeen Doctors'. These were six 'Doctors', of whom Forbes, Robert Baron, and James Sibbald were the best known. They were students of Bishop Patrick Forbes, under whose supervision they developed into followers of a moderate Calvinist theology with an emphasis on the practice of the 'pietas'. Patrick adopted this moderate Episcopalian church government, which should also give Presbyterians the opportunity to remain within the church. Patrick Forbes wanted to bring the parties together in an irenic way, to find solutions for the Church that was becoming strongly divided. His mild attitude also extended to religious doctrine. Although he supported the Synod of Dordt, as did King James VI, he nevertheless argued for space for those who, for example, had a broader view of the extent of the atonement. Deviation from essential doctrines, amongst which he included the doctrine of election, was not to be permitted; but on minor points, such as with ecclesiology and eschatology, one could have a difference of view. This ecumenical attitude, which he transferred to the Aberdeen Doctors, met with resistance from the strict Presbyterians.²³

²² D. G. Mullan, *ODNB*.

²³ For the Aberdeen Doctors, see *DSCHT*, H. R. Sefton: 'Aberdeen Doctors, a group of six ministers who received the degree of Doctor of Divinity at King's College, Aberdeen, 1620–30.' The doctoral title had fallen into disuse since the Reformation and was reintroduced by Patrick Forbes. This group included Robert Baron, John Forbes, William Leslie, Alexander Rose, Alexander Scrogie, and James Sibbald. For a Scoto-Catholic account of their theology, see D. Macmillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors: A notable group of Scottish theologians of the first episcopal period, 1610–1638 and the bearing of their teaching on some questions of the present time* (London, 1909). For their contribution to philosophy, see S. J. Reid, 'Reformed Scholasticism, Proto-Empiricism and the Intellectual "Long Reformation" in Scotland: The Philosophy of the "Aberdeen Doctors", c. 1619–c. 1641', in J. McCallum (ed.), *Scotland's Long Reformation* (Brill, 2016), pp. 149–178.

The Aberdeen Doctors had reservations about scholastic theology and ‘doctrinal systems’. They were more inspired by the varied undogmatic Church Fathers than by the strict Calvinists who, in their view, advocated a systematic confession from which no deviation was allowed. They also adopted this tolerant position with regard to church customs. For example, Sibbald was in favour of wearing clerical dress and had no objection to the dedication of church buildings.²⁴ History shows that tolerance often crosses boundaries. No wonder that strict Presbyterians like Samuel Rutherford were sceptical of the ‘Doctors’. In 1636, the later-famous theologian Rutherford (1600–1661) had to leave his congregation in Anwoth in the south of Scotland, and was banished to Aberdeen.

During his exile, Rutherford came into confrontation with the ‘Doctors’, whom he accused of Arminianism.²⁵ Rutherford was banished because he did not want to bow to the Episcopalian rule in the church. In Rutherford’s *Letters*, the names of Baron and Sibbald appear but not that of John Forbes.²⁶ It is not clear whether he also argued with him.²⁷ Despite the tolerance that the ‘Doctors’ advocated, they felt that the Presbyterians went too far when they proclaimed the National Covenant against the will of the monarch. They did so in 1638 and considered it as a binding rule for the entire nation. It was a *national* bond that sought to reform both the doctrine and the church government on a strict confessional basis. There was no place for the episcopate within this Covenant. When the ‘Doctors’ were confronted this Covenant, they refused to sign it. Aberdeen

²⁴ Macmillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors*, pp. 59, 281-2; Shand, *Funeral Sermons*, pp. 122-3.

²⁵ Macmillan rejects the specific charge of Arminianism but admits: ‘There was not one of them but who was affected by the liberalising spirit which emanated from the teaching of Arminius’; Macmillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors*, p. 58. See fn 66 below.

²⁶ During a public ‘disputatio’ between Baron and Rutherford, the former maintained ‘that God predestined the wicked to hell because he foresaw their wicked works,’ and that Christ died for all people. Rutherford maintained that God ‘predestined the wicked to hell, not because he foresaw their wicked works, but by his own absolute decree, and that Christ died not for all men, but for the elect only’; Macmillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors*, p. 113. The ‘free will’ doctrine propagated by Arminius was apparently not discussed at the time, because there was no difference of opinion about it.

²⁷ A. A. Bonar (ed.), *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (Edinburgh and London, n.d.), pp. 89, 117, 144 (Dr. Baron) and p. xviii (Dr. Sibbald). Rutherford was struck that the ‘Doctors’ advocated a union with the Lutherans, op. cit., p. 191. They supported the efforts of the ecumenical Scot John Durie to work for a united Protestant church, in which Anglicans should also have a place. Rutherford was strongly opposed to this on the basis of the *jus divinum* of the Presbyterian system. See D. Macmillan, op. cit., pp. 150-180; A. C. Denlinger, “Men of Gallio’s naughty faith”?: The Aberdeen Doctors on Reformed and Lutheran Concord’, *Church History and Religious Culture*, Vol. 92/1 (2012), pp. 35-61.

was subsequently occupied by a Covenanting force, after which the Doctors were forced to resign from their office.²⁸

V. Theological position

It is not my intention in this article to discuss John Forbes' theological position in detail. His extensive written legacy in Latin requires a great deal of knowledge and discipline to make a comprehensive study of his theology. Based on some secondary sources to be mentioned, I present a few characteristics. The first item to mention is his *Peaceable Warning to the Subjects in Scotland*, in which he explains his view on the Covenant. His intention was not to increase the conflict but to bring the parties together. Unsurprisingly, his efforts failed. The Presbyterians could rely on most of the people and also had Parliament behind them. In their eyes, Aberdeen was a nest of troublemakers holding back the ongoing work of Reformation.²⁹

John Forbes' first theological publication (in his name alone) appeared in 1629, when he had been a professor for ten years. The title is *Irenicum Amatoribus Veritatis et Pacis in Ecclesia Scoticana*.³⁰ In this book he defends the legality of the Episcopalian church form and of the Articles of Perth of 1618 in which Christian holidays were re-introduced, along with the practice of taking the Lord's Supper kneeling rather than sitting.

His intention was to discuss the decisions of this Episcopal Assembly in an irenic tone, asking for understanding for the changes introduced. He establishes that the decisions of Perth were taken lawfully and that they do not constitute any material deviation from the confession of the church. What is striking is the attention he gives to kneeling when partaking of the Lord's Supper. Sitting at the table or kneeling is acceptable to him. He does emphasize that kneeling is more in line with a humble posture of the body. For Forbes, the sacrament is not only a memorial supper but also a form of worship (adoration) and thanksgiving. In this respect he mainly refers to the Church Fathers, such as Cyprian and Augustine.³¹ The importance he

²⁸ The Doctors defended their position in *General Demands concerning the late Covenant* (Aberdeen: Edward Raban, 1638). Five Doctors put their names to this; the first signatory is John Forbes, from which it can be deduced that he had the main share in the composition of this pamphlet.

²⁹ Macmillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors*, p. 71; J. Forbes, *A peaceable warning to the subjects in Scotland. Given in the year of God 1638* (Aberdeen: Edward Raban, 1638).

³⁰ J. Forbes, *Irenicum Amatoribus Veritatis et Pacis in Ecclesia Scoticana* (Aberdeen: Edward Raban, 1629). For an English translation of the first part of this Latin work, see Selwyn, *The First Book of the 'Irenicum' of John Forbes of Corse*.

³¹ Selwyn, *The First Book of the 'Irenicum' of John Forbes of Corse*, pp. 112-115.

attaches to the Lord's Supper (which he refers to as the Eucharist) is also evident in his most famous work *Instructiones historico-theologicae*. In it he defends the 'Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist as opposed to the Roman Catholic dogma of transubstantiation'.³² This section is also peppered with quotations from the Fathers. He adheres to Calvin's vision of the Lord's Supper and follows the breadth of the tradition of the Early Church.

His appeal to the Church Fathers occupies an important place in Forbes' theological thinking. He was one of the leading experts on patristics of his time. His magnum opus *Instructiones historico-theologicae* contains recommendations from well-known Continental theologians such as Johannes Polyander, Jacobus Trigland, Frederick Spanheim, Andreas Rivet, Gisbertus Voetius, Carolus de Maets, Johannes Hoornbeeck, Joahannes Cloppenburg, Johannes Coccejus, Samuel Maresius, and Hendricus Alting. He met several of these prominent scholars during his third stay in the Republic.³³

John Forbes says that his father had urged him to pay attention to the 'history of doctrine'. He followed this advice when writing his *Instructiones*. The extensive attention to the Church Fathers in this book was not appreciated by everyone. The Covenanter Andrew Cant supposedly commented: 'I despise reading about these men they call the "Fathers", because I was told about Charles Ferme who said that they smell too much of Papacy.'³⁴ The Scottish theologian T. F. Torrance (1913–2007), on the other hand, had a higher regard for Forbes' theology than for that of Rutherford and the Westminster Confession. He greatly appreciated the attention paid to the Orthodox Fathers of the ancient Catholic Church with their 'deep sacramental and practical concern for the life and mission of the Church'. He calls Forbes 'one of the most able and learned theologians that Scotland

³² See W. L. Low, *The True Catholic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist: as contrasted with the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation in the Instructiones historico-theologicae of John Forbes of Corse* (Edinburgh, [c. 1922]). Here we find a translation of this theme that appears in 'Book IX' of Forbes' work. See J. Forbes, *Instructiones historico-theologicae* (Amsterdam: Elzevier, Lowijs, 1645). This book is a Summa of Protestant doctrine. The first edition of 1645 has 735 folio pages; the second edition was published in Geneva in 1680 (Joannem Pictetum, 1680); with an abridged edition in 1663, edited by Arnoldus Montanus, *Forbesius contractus. Sive compendium Instruct. histor.-theol.* (Aegidium Janssonium Valckenier, 1663). For an overview of Forbes' writings, see Selwyn, *The First Book of the 'Irenicum'*, pp. 34, 35. Some other works mentioned there are J. Forbes, *Theologiae moralis libri decem* (Aberdeen: Edward Raban, 1632), an explanation of the Decalogue; and J. Forbes, *De Cura et resideria pastoralis* (Aberdeen: Edward Raban 1646).

³³ See *Instructiones* (edn. Geneva, 1680).

³⁴ G. D. Henderson, *Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, p. 48.

has produced between the Reformation and the Disruption.³⁵ Particularly, Forbes' treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity and his attention to 'doxology' (praise and worship) commended themselves to Torrance. The same was true of his discussion of the 'incarnation' of the Son of God and of the 'Eucharist'. According to Torrance, Forbes' dogmatism was not as legalistic in tone as he found among the seventeenth-century 'federal theologians' (covenant theologians), such as Rutherford. But Torrance does not establish this point, for Forbes, too, was a 'scholastic' and concurred in this regard with the Dutch orthodox theologians.³⁶

The Presbyterian church historian John Macleod (1872–1948) also speaks appreciatively about Forbes, despite his Episcopalian church opinions: 'in the field of Patristics and Church History, John Forbes was the finest scholar that Scotland has yet produced.'³⁷ Notwithstanding his appreciation for the Church Fathers, he did not deviate from Augustinian soteriology. Like his father, Forbes can be considered a moderate Calvinist. He was broad in his view of the extent of the atonement and distanced himself from the explicit view that God has predestined some people to damnation (reprobation). Like Rutherford, he was well versed in Reformed scholasticism and made use of it in his dogmatic explanations.³⁸

VI. His *Diary*

In the literature, little attention is paid, not only to Forbes' theology, but also to his spirituality. An insight into his spiritual life can be found in the 'Diary of Spirituall Exercises' that he left behind. The English manuscript, which was twice transcribed, was translated into Latin for his posthumously published complete works. It is a pietistic writing, describing his life from 1624 to 1647 in diary form.³⁹

³⁵ T. F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John MacLeod Campbell* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 79.

³⁶ T. F. Torrance, op. cit., 'John Forbes of Corse (1593–1648)', pp. 79–90.

³⁷ J. Macleod, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh, 1946), p. 43.

³⁸ 'He was undoubtedly influenced particularly by the teaching of Augustine, but declined to press the issue at stake to its logical extreme in the idea that God had eternally predestinated some people to damnation', T. F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John MacLeod Campbell*, pp. 87–8.

³⁹ I have not been able to locate the original document. It is probably kept in a private archive. See *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 370: 'His *Diary* written in English is preserved in MS. at Fintray House, Aberdeenshire.' This house belonging to Forbes of Craigievar was demolished in 1956. According to G. D. Henderson, the manuscript was lost by his day: G. D. Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East* (Aberdeen, 1934), p. 11n. The first transcription was made from 1687 to 1690, entitled 'Spirituall Exercises in Old Aberdeen' (Library, King's College, MS 635). At the beginning is a short note from a certain Semple, dated 30-7-1913, which suggests

His *Diary* or ‘Spirituell Exercises’ (we use the copy from the University Library of King’s College, Aberdeen) begins on 5th January 1624, when he was thirty years old and four years a professor, and ends on 22nd July 1647, nine months before his death. The largest part is taken up with descriptions of spiritual experiences. He also mentions sermons that he listened to, mainly in Old Aberdeen. His own interpretation of Scripture passages occurs regularly. He also writes about his experiences during sermons that he preached himself. He describes special events in the country, such as the renewal of the Covenant in 1638. He regularly mentions highlights, such as communion celebrations. Making a personal covenant occurs several times, although it was not automatic for him that he could keep the promises he made.⁴⁰ The often-short diary entries provide a fascinating picture of the person and inner life of this Episcopalian Pietist. According to Low, there is no surviving writing by Dr Forbes that is so capable of touching the heart as his *Diary*.⁴¹

The experimental character of John Forbes’ religious life is marked by a constant longing for comfort.⁴² The use of the word ‘Oh’ and the sometimes ecstatic expressions mark him as a believer who is not satisfied until he may glorify God with all his heart. Joy is a characteristic of his experiences, but we also encounter brokenness of heart. And then his prayer-life and meditative practices. The sorrow for his indwelling sins determines his confession of sin in his ‘secret times’. The trust in God’s forgiving grace in Christ that comes with this marks him as a believer who is assured of his interest in Christ. Also dealing with trials, such as the passing of his wife, shows that he is not only assured of his sonship but also submissive to God’s will in all circumstances of life.

that the original was in his library, but he did not know its location. The transcriber says that one copy of the manuscript was kept by ‘D.G.G.’. This was almost certainly Dr George Garden who later translated it into Latin. Then follows: ‘The original is in the custody of the Lord K.’ This was probably Lord Kinnoull, the 6th Earl; see G. D. Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East*, index. The second transcription is held in National Record of Scotland, General Register House, Edinburgh (CH12/18/6). It dates from 1687 and was written by John Milne, ‘schoolmaster of Drumoak’. See also W. L. Low, *The True Catholic Doctrine*, p. 33.

⁴⁰ ‘On October 28, 1625 he wrote that he began his devotions with prayer: “But immedatellie I was disquyeted in considerations, that even since I had renewed Covenant with my God, I had grievouslie offended, and do daylie fall into manie sins ...”’; D. G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638* (Oxford 2000), p. 201.

⁴¹ ‘Of the many writings left behind him by the great doctor, none is so well suited to attract the Christian heart as his *Diary*’; W. L. Low, *The True Catholic Doctrine*, p. 32.

⁴² Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, p. 104, ‘Forbes of Corse’s *Diary* represents a constant quest for comfort.’



Corse Castle.

A characteristic quotation from his 'Spirituell Exercises' is the following: 'Upon the 12 day of aug. 1624 I was greatly comforted that the Lord had heard my prayer, for I found to my great comfort, the Lord's presence at my heart and at my mouth, in my preaching, according as I had prayed. Glory to God.'⁴³

Early in 1636, the castle in Corse and the homes of some of the tenants of his estate were attacked by robbers and thieves from the Highlands. They also targeted his reputation as a professor and wanted to take his life. His *Diary* provides an illustration of how he dealt with this ordeal:

O Lord God of our Salvation, who hast commanded us to call upon thee in all

our troubles, and hast promised to deliver us that we may glorifie thee, and who has said that for the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, thou wilt arise and set him in safetie from him that puffeth at him: ... Convert them unto thee, the Lord our God, if it be thy good will and pleasure ... Give us grace to make the right use of these and all thy fatherlie visitations for a true conversion unto thee, the Lord our God.⁴⁴

An example of prayer and subsequent thanksgiving:

(...) night and day I cried unto the Lord my God, beseeching him to hear me and have mercie upon us for Jesus Christ our Saviour's sake, the son of his love in whom he is well pleased O Lord God of our Salvation, who hast executed judgment and justice for all that are oppressed, who hast prevented us so plentifully with thy tender mercies, hast heard our prayers, and hast wrought this great and glorious and wonderful deliverance in the sight of men and angels, blessed be thy Holie Name for ever and ever. Our souls rejoiceth in thee O Lord our God and is exceeding glad in thy salvation.⁴⁵

⁴³ 'Spirituell Exercises' (Aberdeen copy), p. 20.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 137-8; W. L. Low, *The True Catholic Doctrine*, p. 35. He refers here to the deliverance of the Highland enemies who targeted him.

The Christocentric character of this private document is characteristic for him: Christ is the express image of God's mercy and grace extended to the lost children of men. Especially during communion celebrations, the Person of the Son of God and His atoning work come to the fore in his reflections. It appears that the frequency of celebrations in Episcopalian Aberdeen was greater than in other parts of Scotland.

VII. Exiled to the Republic

Unfortunately, Forbes' second visit to the Netherlands in 1618/19 is not covered in his *Diary*, but we do find a detailed account of his adventures during his third visit, the period of his exile from 1644 to 1646.



Corse Castle doorway.

The account of his third visit to the Netherlands gives an impression not only of his own spiritual life but also of his meetings and church visits. In contrast to previous visits to the Republic, one can speak of a certain tragedy. His wife Zoetgen had died not so long ago, on 19th January 1640. Of the nine children to whom she had given birth, only his son George remained.⁴⁶ In July of the same year Forbes appeared before the General Assembly in New Aberdeen. He gives a detailed account of this in his *Diary*.⁴⁷ On 1st August

⁴⁶ His *Diary* gives a moving account of his wife's illness and death in December 1639 and January 1640. For example, in mid-December we read: 'Who [his wife] in this her sickness doth call upon his name night and day for mercy and comfort and strength and grace, submitting herself humbly to the goodwill and pleasure of her heavenly Father.' 'I prayed for mercy and grace, strength and patience, comfort and peace and joy in the Holie Ghost to her and to me.' And under January we read: 'And upon the 19 day of January, it being the Lord's Day, my beloved wife having most earnestly and frequently and comfortably recommended and committed her spirit into the merciful and saving hands of God, her Heavenlie Father in Christ, did verie piously, patiently, willinglie, faithfullie and calmelie end her course of this mortal life with joy.' See Low, *The True Catholic Doctrine*, pp. 40-41; 'Spirituell Exercises' (Aberdeen copy), p. 102, at 'Uxor mea Soete Roosboom'.

⁴⁷ Macmillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors*, pp. 272-276, taken from 'Diary of Dr Forbes', fol. 143-4. See also J. Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs from MDCXXXVII to MDCXLI* (3 vols., Aberdeen, 1841), vol. 3, pp. 232-234.

and a few days afterwards he was investigated by a committee for orthodoxy. On 6th August, the Assembly's Moderator declared that they were satisfied with his orthodoxy.⁴⁸ Discussions about his attitude towards the Covenant would continue in Edinburgh. He maintained his opinion that the Covenant was a matter of civil disobedience against the authority of the king. This position led to his dismissal as professor at King's College, which took effect on 20th April 1641, to the great sorrow of the young students of theology.⁴⁹ He was even kept from the Lord's Supper but ignored this ban.⁵⁰ When the 'Solemn League and Covenant' in 1643 also included England and Wales in the 'national alliance' and Forbes refused to agree to this, he was forced to leave Scotland in August of that year.⁵¹ These sad and disappointing events that ended his career were interspersed with spiritual enlargements that he describes in his *Diary*. These also confirm his pietistic religious experience.⁵²

The deposed doctor left for the Republic on 5th April 1644, 'to his wife's friends on the island of Walcheren, and there he stayed for several

⁴⁸ '(...) to all which he answered so readily, so learndly and orthodoxly, and with such candor and modestye, that the moderator of that comittye was forced to tell him that they had nothing to saye to his lyfe, but that they founde him pious, learnd, and fully orthodoxe, and to disagree with them in nothing but in poynt of church government'; Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs*, Vol. 3, p. 233. See also A. Peterkin (ed.), *Records of the Kirk of Scotland, containing the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies from the year 1638 downwards* (Edinburgh, 1838), p. 285.

⁴⁹ 'to the great greif of the youth and young students of theology'; J. Spalding, *Memorialls of the troubles in Scotland and in England, A.D. 1624–A.D. 1645* (2 vols., Aberdeen, 1851), Vol. 2, p. 57. His orthodoxy was no longer criticized, as was the case, for example, with his colleague James Sibbald, who was accused of Arminianism. Rutherford in particular attacked Sibbald at the Assembly in Aberdeen. See Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs*, Vol. 3, pp. 228–230.

⁵⁰ D. G. Mullan, ODNB. Reference is made to his *Diary* of 20th June 1641.

⁵¹ Forbes believed that his position on Episcopacy was not at odds with 'the Reformed Churches'; the differences in church government were of secondary importance. See Spalding, *Memorialls of the troubles*, Vol. 2, pp. 499–500.

⁵² A great encouragement to Forbes was that he was allowed to participate in the sacrament with his son George at Old Aberdeen on 14th May 1643. He writes, among other things: '... where I and also my son George did communicate with plentiful comfort in Christ our Lord and Savior.' On 3rd September of that year, they celebrated the Lord's Supper again, 'and I was much comforted, and my son also declared to me that he found great comfort in Christ Jesus coming into his heart and assuring him of the remission of all his sins, and that he resolved to abide in Christ by God's grace, and to keep Christ dwelling in his heart by faith. Whereupon I told [him] that Christ who worketh these sweet motions in us doth thereby strengthen our faith, and assure us by his holy Spirit that he dwelleth in us and we in Him, and that he will abide in us and keep us, and will raise us up at the last day unto the resurrection of life eternal, and hereby we were both of us again much comforted in God our Savior, to whom be all honor, glory, and praise for ever and ever, Amen'; W. L. Low, *The True Catholic Doctrine*, pp. 37–8.

years, to the great joy of the learned professors there', wrote James Gordon.⁵³ A few days after his departure, he, his son George, and his mentor William Keith arrived in Veere (Campvere). He joined William Spang, minister of the Scottish Church there. Spang (1607–1664), who was associated with this town from 1652 to 1664, was a cousin of the Covenanter Robert Baillie with whom he corresponded. The latter thought it wise that Spang had not allowed him to sit in the pulpit of the Scottish church in Veere.⁵⁴ Spang suggested to the exiled doctor that he preach in the English church in Middelburg, which was not under the supervision of the Scottish church. At the request of the predecessor Petrus Gribius, who was married to a daughter of Willem Teellinck, he went there.⁵⁵

The time Forbes spent in the Republic (from April 1644 to July 1646) was an intensive period for him. He not only stayed in Veere but travelled through various provinces. He preached on 28th April in the English church of Amsterdam. There were two preachers there at that time, Julius Herring and Thomas Paget, both English Puritans.⁵⁶ This was followed by the English churches in Utrecht and in Delft. His uncle had been associated with the latter of these and had been removed from office just prior to his death in 1634 due to the opposition of Anglican members. In Leiden he visited the French church where he met Professor Frederick Spanheim.⁵⁷ He also attended Dutch church services, because he could understand the language of the Low Countries.⁵⁸ On 23rd June 1644, he was in the

⁵³ '... to his layes freendes, of the Isle of Walker [Walcheren], and ther sojourned some years, with great applause of the learned professors ther'; Gordon, *Scots Affairs*, Vol. 3, p. 234. For Forbes' stay in the Netherlands, see G. D. Henderson, 'John Forbes of Corse in exile', *Aberdeen University Review*, Vol. 17 (1929–30), pp. 25–35; Macmillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors*, pp. 298–314; Spalding, *Memorialls of the troubles*, Vol. 2, pp. 500–506.

⁵⁴ R. Baillie, *Letters and Journals* (2 vols., Edinburgh: W. Gray, 1775), Vol. 2, p. 1, 'As for Dr Forbes, you have done well, in my mind, who have not given him your pulpit.' He even advises his cousin to send Forbes away and not to get involved in any of his affairs. See also R. Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, ed. D. Laing (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1841–42), Vol. 1, p. 113; Vol. 2, pp. 166, 169.

⁵⁵ For Spang, see *Fasti*, Vol. 7, pp. 547–8. For Gribius, see K. L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, p. 193. During his trip to Brazil for the West India Company, Gribius had his brother-in-law Johannes Teellinck supply for him in the congregation, p. 193. Willem Teellinck himself had died in 1629.

⁵⁶ G. D. Henderson, 'John Forbes of Corse in exile', p. 28.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵⁸ 'I heard at Amsterdame before none [noon], in the Zuydere kirk, one of the pastors of Amsterdame preaching unto the congregation of Dutchmen their assembled. His sermon was learned and pious, and very comfortable. His text was, For the Son of Man has come to redeem that which was lost'; Spalding, *Memorialls of the troubles*, Vol. 2, p. 501.

Zuiderkerk in Amsterdam where he took the Lord's Supper.⁵⁹ More than once he went to the French church in this city on the river IJ. In June 1646, he heard the Huguenot Andreas Rivet preaching in the French church in The Hague. He also visited Dordrecht (Dort), the city of the National Synod of 1618/19. Here he took communion in the French church. Because he listened to sermons in French several times, we assume that he also understood this language. He also visited Groningen, Arnhem (where he stayed for some time), and other places in the Seven Provinces, preaching in the English congregation in Leiden, among others.⁶⁰

Forbes accompanied his son George to Groningen where he enrolled at university. His supervisor William Keith also enrolled there. He took the opportunity to visit Leeuwarden and the university of Franeker. Maresius from the university of Groningen is mentioned. He also visited Voetius in Utrecht. Another famous scholar, G. J. Vossius, he met in Leiden. He presented him with the manuscript of his *Instructiones historico-theologicae*, some of the chapters of which the professor read with much approval. With several recommendations in his pocket, Forbes contacted the well-known publisher Elsevier in Amsterdam. He finished his book in August 1645. Elsevier wanted to publish it and put it on the market the same year. This was a milestone in Forbes's eventful life. Now that he was no longer a professor, he could still exert his influence through his written legacy.⁶¹

After two years in exile, he was allowed to return to his homeland. He arrived in Aberdeen on 8th July 1646 after embarking in Veere with his son and his mentor Keith.⁶² At the beginning of September he went to his paternal home, the castle of Corse, in the parish of Leochell. Several times he held a day of humiliation and fasting here with the parishioners.

⁵⁹ 'After sermon, the holy communion was celebrated, where I did also communicate at the Lord's table with that congregation, and I was comforted not a little. I found the Lord's gracious presence with me, preparing and inviting me, and leading me to his holy table, and there reviving and strengthening my soul with that heavenly food which endureth unto everlasting life. I renewed my vows, and cried for grace, and was greatly comforted, and my soul praised the Lord, and I do praise him with all my heart, and will, by his grace, love and praise his holy name, while I have any being. Hallelujah.' Ibid., p. 501.

⁶⁰ G. D. Henderson, 'John Forbes of Corse in exile', pp. 30-33.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 31. Keith had obtained his degree in Aberdeen in 1643 and later became professor of theology in Edinburgh. In the register of Groningen University, we read: 'free, in gratiam dn. Forbesij Prof. Theol. Abderdonensis'. Forbes had an accident in a lodging house in Groningen: he fell from the high bed to the floor. Other foreigners at that time complained about the high Dutch beds.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 32-35; Macmillan, *The Aberdeen Doctors*, p. 302.

He accompanied his son to King's College, Old Aberdeen to continue his studies there. Here ends his diary. Not long afterwards, on 9th April 1648, he died at the age of 55 at Corse Castle. He wanted to be buried next to his wife and father in the cathedral of Old Aberdeen, St. Machar's,



The grave of the wife of John Forbes of Corse at St Machar's Cathedral.

but the Presbytery of Aberdeen did not allow this. Nothing remains of his grave but a secluded place in the cemetery of Leochel.⁶³

VIII. Reformed Pietist?

Forbes's surviving published writings are dogmatic in nature. They are not specifically 'piety writings'. The pietistic element does not explicitly emerge in his theological works. He did not write for the common public but for the world of theologians. Latin was the language he used according to the custom of his time. His great learning did not prevent him from writing down his spiritual experiences in a simple manner. His *Diary* is proof of this. The combination of 'giant of learning', as Dowden calls him, and 'saint', as he is called by George Grub, is in harmony with him. In this respect he can be compared with his contemporary Samuel Rutherford, with whom he differed ecclesiologically.⁶⁴

As we have seen, his theology is Reformed.⁶⁵ Rutherford's accusations that Aberdeen was a spawning-ground of Arminianism do not apply

⁶³ Spalding, *Memorialls of the troubles*, Vol. 2, p. 504; *Fasti*, Vol. 7, p. 370. According to David Mullan, Forbes remarried Janet Turing, but I have been unable to verify this. His *Diary* does not indicate this either. See D. G. Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self in Early Modern Scotland* (Farnham, 2010), p. 145, citing A. and H. Tayler, *House of Forbes*, p. 317. According to Mullan, his second wife survived him.

⁶⁴ 'During the course of many years the writer of this biographical sketch had various conversations regarding the subject of it with the late Bishop Dowden, a distinguished scholar and theologian, and with the late Dr Grub, a no less distinguished ecclesiastical historian. On one occasion Bishop Dowden summed up by declaring with great emphasis: "John Forbes was a GIANT OF LEARNING": Dr Grub's no less emphatic pronouncement was: "John Forbes was a SAINT"', W. L. Low, *The True Catholic Doctrine*, p. 42. For an Episcopalian appreciation of John Forbes, see G. Grub, *Ecclesiastical History of Scotland* (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1861), Vol. 2, pp. 372-374.

⁶⁵ Forbes maintained, in his rejection of the National Covenant, that he conformed to the Reformed confessions, including the Scottish Confession of 1560. See Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, p. 225.

to him.⁶⁶ This is also proven by his contacts with Calvinist theologians on the continent. The Aberdeen Confession of 1616, which was drawn up by Episcopalians, and to which his father had contributed, is Calvinistic in design. Predestination (election) is expressly taught, as is sovereign grace, by which the elect are saved. Reprobation is not explicitly mentioned, but neither is it denied. According to Calderwood, in addition to Patrick Forbes, the Episcopalians William Cowper and William Struthers also contributed.⁶⁷ Moreover, Scottish Episcopalian thinking cannot be placed on the same footing as that of the Anglican Church. The Scottish Church hierarchy was moderately Episcopalian in the years from 1605 to 1638. The bishops were appointed by the crown, but they did not replace the multiple Church assemblies. Until the 1638 Service Book, the liturgy remained practically the same as in the time of the Reformation. It is striking how Forbes and others thought about King James VI. He considered him to be a God-fearing prince, whereas the Covenanters saw him as an enemy of true religion.⁶⁸ There was no room for royal absolutism among the Presbyterians. This makes the difference with the Aberdeen Doctors.⁶⁹ Theologically speaking, this has to do with the fact that the royal office of Christ received more attention among the Presbyterians than among the Episcopalians. For Forbes, the priestly ministry of the Mediator was paramount, which is also clearly reflected in his *Diary*.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Robert Baron was accused of Arminianism by Rutherford, but he indicated that he agreed with the Canons of Dordt. See *ibid.*, pp. 224-5; A. C. Denlinger, 'Scottish hypothetical universalism. Robert Baron (c. 1596–1639) on God's love and Christ's death for all', in A. C. Denlinger (ed.), *Reformed Orthodoxy in Scotland. Essays on Scottish Theology, 1560–1775* (London, 2015), pp. 83-102. According to Denlinger, Baron was a moderate Calvinist who shared the 'Saumur theology' of the Scottish professor John Cameron (1579–1625) and his disciple Moise Amyraut (1596–1664), but did not adhere to Arminianism. Probably Rutherford regarded 'hypothetical universalism' as a form of Arminianism. The Dutch theologian Gisbertus Voetius considered the position of Amyraut to be within the bounds of Reformed orthodoxy. See W. van Asselt, *Gisbertus Voetius* (Kampen, 2007), p. 69: 'In Voetius' view there was room for different views regarding the atonement wrought by Christ.'

⁶⁷ For the Aberdeen Confession, see C. G. M'Crie, *The Confessions of the Church of Scotland. Their evolution in history* (Edinburgh, 1907), pp. 27-35; D. Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland* (8 vols., Edinburgh, 1845), Vol. 7, pp. 233-243.

⁶⁸ 'Forbes of Corse described James as the monarch "who surpassed all the Christian princes of the world's history in knowledge of, and devotion to, true and pure Christianity"', D. G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, p. 248.

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 251.

⁷⁰ By contrast, a booklet that emphasises Christ's kingship over the nations is *Christ's kingship over the nations maintained and defended in the Establishment Principle* (Free Presbyterian Publications, Gisborne, n.d.).

The question arises whether there are differences between the Reformed Pietism advocated by Scottish Presbyterians and the Episcopalians. Judging by Forbes' *Diary*, the differences are minimal. What is striking is the attention he gives to the 'Eucharist'. The element of worship and praise is particularly striking. This probably has to do with his knowledge of the spirituality of the Early Church, in which the celebration of the Lord's Supper was a highlight in the spiritual life of believers. Communion with Christ and with believers is central. These notions were certainly accentuated in the diocese of Aberdeen.⁷¹ The Lord's Supper was served there more often and was an important means of building up the life of faith. Although Forbes regularly talks about self-examination in his *Diary*, this does not appear in the preparation for the sacrament.⁷² He then regularly speaks from the assurance that he participates in salvation in Christ. He makes room for characteristics of grace, fruits of faith, and conversion. He also notes this in times of trials and temptations, quoting Bishop Adam Bellenden of Aberdeen to the effect that there is 'no cross without a comfort, nor any comfort without a cross'.⁷³

T. F. Torrance points to the sacramental spirituality of Forbes. He calls this a 'compendium' of Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper: 'Forbes held that the flesh of Christ in the mystery of the Lord's Supper is no less a spiritual matter than eternal salvation. Whence, he concludes that all who are devoid of the Spirit of Christ can no more eat the flesh of Christ than they drink wine without taste.'⁷⁴

In my opinion, it goes too far to place the blessing of the sacrament on the same level as eternal salvation. In any case, Forbes did not go as far as Anglican High Church sacramentalists who attribute a salvific value to the use of the sacraments.⁷⁵ He did, however, attribute a higher value to the Lord's Supper than is found among Presbyterian Pietists in general.

⁷¹ Gordon Selwyn speaks about 'a continuous sacramental and doctrinal fellowship' in the church in the diocese of Aberdeen; see Selwyn, *The First Book of the 'Irenicum' of John Forbes of Corse*, p. 23.

⁷² 'Forbes of Corse wrote about "a holie watchful & carefullnes to be continuous searching & trying our own hearts lest there lurk in them anie deceitfulness to beguyle us"', D. G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, p. 112.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁷⁴ T. F. Torrance, *Scottish Theology from John Knox to John MacLeod Campbell*, p. 90.

⁷⁵ J. Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, pp. 64-5. Macleod notes the contact that Forbes had with the Presbyterian Dutch during his student days, and that he never received Episcopalian ordination.

IX. Influence

Forbes' influence on Presbyterian Pietists was not great. This primarily had to do with his rejection of the Covenants. It is notable, however, that he had a strong influence among 'mystical Erastians', as John Macleod calls them. In this context, Macleod mentions the



Henry Scougal.

Episcopalians Robert Leighton (1611–1684), Henry Scougal (1650–1678), and especially George Garden (1649–1733). Leighton had abandoned his Presbyterian principles after the Restoration in 1660 and accepted a see as a bishop in the Scottish Church, which at that time was under Episcopal organization. He was a Calvinist in doctrine and a Pietist who was also interested in Roman Catholic mystics, such as Thomas à Kempis.⁷⁶ Scougal and Garden were also Scottish Episcopalians.

Scougal, who was a professor at King's College in Aberdeen, made his name mainly through his book *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (1677), which has a mystical character.⁷⁷ Garden studied in Aberdeen and became a minister there. After the 'Glorious Revolution' in 1688 he was deposed, not only for his strict Episcopalian views but also for his defence of the writings of the French Roman Catholic mystic Antoinette Bourignon (1616–1680), which, according to the judgment of the Scottish General Assembly, contained heresies.⁷⁸ He published all the works of John Forbes, including his *Diary* in a Latin version.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Leighton wanted to persuade the Presbyterian David Dickson to recommend À Kempis' *Imitatio* to the students. Dickson refused to do this because the Dutch mystic did not focus on the merits of Christ in his book. See A. Philip, *The Devotional Literature of Scotland* (London, [1922]), p. 27.

⁷⁷ For Scougal, see *DSCHT*, pp. 762-3, 'This [*The Life of God in the Soul of Man*] became a classic of Christian devotional literature, valued by Presbyterians as well as Episcopalians.'

⁷⁸ For Garden, see *DSCHT*, p. 351; G. D. Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East*; and for more recent discussions of Scougal and Garden, see A. C. Denliger, 'The Aberdeen Doctors and Henry Scougal', and M.-L. Ehrenschtndtner, 'Episcopalian spirituality: the Garden brothers and Henry Scougal', in D. Fergusson and M. W. Elliott (eds.), *History of Scottish Theology* (3 vols., 2019), Vol. 1, pp. 279-295, 296-311.

⁷⁹ *Instructiones historico-theologicae...*, part 1, (Amsterdam: Hendricus Wetstein, 1702) and *Reverendi viri Johannis Forbesii à Corse... Opera omnia inter quae plurima posthuma reliqua ab ipso interpolata emendata atque aucta... Johannes Forbesius à Corse*, part 2 (Amsterdam: Henricus Wetstein, 1703). Forbes' *Diary* is included in the second part.

X. Conclusion

John Forbes of Corse was not only a leading Reformed theologian but also a Pietist. He received his theological education in Aberdeen and at various universities. He was one of the greatest experts on the Early Church. He received his spiritual formation from his father Patrick Forbes and in Aberdeen, which was the spiritual centre of the diocese. He also encountered the Puritan spirituality in which he grew up in the Netherlands, such as with the father of the Further Reformation, Willem Teellinck. In Zeeland he encountered the movement of the Further Reformation. The English and Scottish migrant churches in this region were also involved in this movement. Although his first and second stays in Zeeland were short, we may assume that this movement made an impression on him. During his third stay because of exile, he visited the same places in Zeeland. We do not notice that he built up a network of pietistic contacts.

Forbes was a moderate Episcopalian who also wanted to be on good terms with Presbyterians. He had some difficulty with what he saw as extreme Covenanters, because in his view they were not tolerant. It is interesting to consider the extent to which his Episcopalian principles influenced his theology and spirituality. The ritual and the way in which the Lord's Supper was celebrated (kneeling) among the bishops had an influence on his spiritual life. The Lord's Supper was a highlight for him in his religious experience. In that respect, he was also inspired by the 'eucharist practice' in the Early Church. He found the worship service among the Presbyterians too austere and too focused on preaching. The sacraments were just as important to him as the preaching of the Word.

It is remarkable that the Episcopalian piety that we find in him, and in his father, shifted among their followers to attention to mysticism. It is not clear to me what the reason for this could be. It is likely that the spirituality practised in Aberdeen by the Aberdeen Doctors gave rise to mystical contemplation over time. Leighton, Scougal, and Garden particularly appreciated Roman Catholic mystics, such as their contemporaries, the French Madame Guyon and Antoinette Bourignon. The influence of Forbes on mystical clergy needs to be further investigated, where 'Pietism' and 'Mysticism' need to be defined in their mutual connections and differences. Perhaps it will then become clear whether men like Scougal and Garden should be considered Pietists.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ For definitions of 'types of Christian spirituality', see A. E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An introduction* (Malden, 1999), from p. 8.

As to primary principles of piety, there is no difference between Presbyterians and Episcopalians. Forbes was a Pietist, but he was not so attracted to the objectives of the Dutch Further Reformation that he wanted to promote it in his own country. He found the theocratic ideals of the Covenanters to be in conflict with the relationship between government and subjects. He valued the Church hierarchy from above as higher than the popular influence that the Covenanters advocated.⁸¹

⁸¹ Louise Yeoman cites concrete examples of agreement between Presbyterian and Episcopalian pieties. See L. A. Yeoman, 'Heart-Work: Emotion, empowerment, and authority in covenanting times' (PhD thesis, University of St. Andrews, 1991), p. 91 (comparison of Forbes and Rutherford).