Creating New Communities: Women Testing the Boundaries of the Early Modern English Parish

Description:

In the early modern period, the English parish was becoming a more important administrative unit. This process, as Steve Hindle has suggested, required establishing clear geographical boundaries in order to exclude those considered undesirable on socio-economic grounds. At the same time increasing fragmentation within Protestantism began to undermine the religious unity of the parish. The question to be addressed in this workshop is how women, through the new emphasis upon preaching in Protestantism, were able to participate in renegotiating the space of the parish as its roles evolved.

Scholars have suggested that the English Reformation diminished female agency within the parish. While women across the social spectrum had actively participated in the late-medieval parish, by the late sixteenth century centralization of administrative functions and declining attention to the church fabric reduced opportunities for women to perform charitable parish duties. In a study relying primarily upon wills made by women in four London parishes, Claire S. Schen has argued that by the 1590s well-to-do women had less influence upon selection of preachers, while poorer ones had been effectively excluded from meaningful parish roles. Other scholars, however, have begun tracing networks of sermon patronage that suggest women, particularly economically self-sufficient widows, may actually have played a growing role in supporting preachers whose views corresponded to their own. In doing so, they sometimes brought into question the geographical boundaries of the parishes themselves.

This was the situation in the village of Hoddesdon, which we will take as a case study for this workshop. In the early 1990s, Robert C. Evans discovered an autobiographical poem by a local resident named Martha Moulsworth. Subsequent research located her funeral sermon, preached in 1645 by Thomas Hassall, and uncovered her participation in an ongoing controversy between two parishes throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. The poorer part of the village was part of Great Amwell, a predominantly poor and rural parish, while the wealthier part belonged to the surrounding parish of Broxbourne, which was considerably more prosperous. Dissatisfied with his meagre living and relying upon his noted talents as a preacher, Hassall began a preaching ministry in a long-disused chapel of ease located in the Amwell section of Hoddesdon. Hassall’s successes depended upon the patronage of several wealthy widows from the Broxbourne parish, including Moulsworth and Lady Ursula Cocke, who provided him with lucrative commissions for preaching at the Amwell Chapel, in Moulsworth’s case initiating lengthy legal disputes. This workshop will consider the details of this individual case, but will also explore the methodological challenges of understanding female sermon patronage and its impact on communities more generally. The evidence of this particular situation suggests that such patronage could dramatically affect the life of the parish over several generations.
These two parishes offer rich possibilities for study partly because Hassall maintained detailed records in his “Tithing Book” and partly because additional evidence for the participation of these women in the parish survives in other documents. From the perspective of the conference themes, one of the most interesting tensions may be between Hassall’s efforts to ground his claims to his preaching commissions upon tradition as inscribed in the physical boundaries of the parish, while the women seem more concerned with establishing a spiritual community that transcends these boundaries.

The workshop will begin with a twenty-minute introduction, with approximately ten minutes being devoted to general contextualization and the remainder allocated to more specific details relating to the case study. The main part of the workshop will involve participants breaking into small groups to focus on specific aspects of the case that simultaneously allow for more general exploration of women’s roles in creating religious community. These groups will be provided with additional documents to enhance their discussions and to spark conversation about the distinctions frequently drawn between texts regarded as literary and those perceived as historical. At the close of the workshop, participants will reconvene briefly in a single group to share their insights.

Issues and Questions

Female Sermon Patronage in Early Modern England

How significant was this activity in promoting various religious agendas?
What factors influenced the patronage of specific clergy (preaching, personal characteristics, theology)?
How widespread was this practice and how far down the social order did it exist?
What forces opposed this practice?
How do we find and interpret information about this activity (particularly among “ordinary” women)?

Parish Boundaries

How significant were the physical boundaries of the parish in determining social, economic, and religious relationships?
When, why, and how were parish boundaries renegotiated?
How was movement (social, economic) restricted by the boundaries of the parish?

Limits of Female Involvement in the Early Modern Parish

How significant was female patronage as an economic and social factor in the overall functioning of the parish?
What sources should we be looking at to determine what kind of roles women were playing in parish life in this period?
Tentative Chronology of Events in Broxbourne and Amwell Parishes, 1599-1656

1599  Hassall becomes vicar of Amwell parish (succeeding John Payton, 1590-99).

1601  William Thoroughgood (father of Martha Moulsworth’s second husband) makes his will, leaving money for annual sermons to be preached in his memory. He specifically prohibits John Spencer (Broxbourne vicar) from preaching the sermons. Hassall preaches the sermons in the Broxbourne church until 1609.

1605  Martha marries her second husband, Thomas Thoroughgood.

1609  Richard Watkinson becomes vicar of Broxbourne after Spencer is removed (apparently at the instigation of Sir Henry Cocke).

1612  Hassall transfers sermons for William Thoroughgood to the Amwell chapel.

1613  Hassall begins Sunday afternoon lectures at the chapel, at the behest of Henry Cocke’s widow, Ursula, Richard Lucy, and “others.”

1615  Thomas Thoroughgood dies and Martha takes over administering her late father-in-law’s will, including a sum to be paid to Hassall as long as he continues preaching at the chapel and for the annual sermon.

1617  Hassall renovates the chapel; Elizabeth Oxenbury, twice-widowed daughter of Sir Henry Cocke, marries Sir Richard Lucy. Elizabeth dies before 1645 (ODNB).

1619  Martha marries Bevill Moulsworth.

1630  Edmunt Parlet (Watkinson’s successor) sues Martha Moulsworth for moving the sermons to Amwell chapel. Martha’s step-daughter, Elizabeth Moulsworth, marries Francis Lucy c. 1630.

1631  Bevill Moulsworth makes his will stipulating burial in Broxbourne church. Edmunt Parlet and Thomas Hassall are made joint administrators. Moulsworth leaves money for sermons to be preached in the Broxbourne church.

1634  Martha reconciled with Edmund Parlet.

1642  Broxbourne parishioners petition parliament when Parlet refuses to give up the church to Daniel Evans. (see transcription of petition below).

1646  Martha dies. Funeral sermon preached by Hassall in the Amwell Chapel.

1654  Local commission headed by Sir Richard Lucy finds Martha guilty of misemploying funds by having sermons for Moulsworth and William Thoroughgood preached in the chapel instead of the Broxbourne church.
Hassall dies. Isaac Craven preaches funeral sermon, conducting service according to Prayer Book.

Transcription of 1641 Petition, Commons Journals 2.538

April 22. Petition of inhabitants of Broxbourne, Herts. To H. C.: in Sept. 1641, the House made an order that the parishioners of an parish might set up a lecturer: petitioners in pursuance thereof chose Mr. Daniel Evans, but the vicar, Mr. Parlet, will not agree: locks the church and keeps the keys, and says he will not let Evans preach without a direct order from the House.

To the Hon. ble the Kn. a* Citizens & Burgesses of the House of Com[mark over]Jons now assembled in Parliam'

The humble petic[mark over]on of diu[er]s of the Inhabitants of the parish of Broxborne in the County of Hertford in the behalf of themselves and others. /

Sheweth

That in September 1641 An Order was made by this hon ble House — allowing the people of any parish to sett vp a Lecture on any of the weeke dayes, to be p[er]formed by an Orthodox preacher of ther owne choosing, for wch worthy Order soe much conducting to the Glory of God and the edificae[mark over]on of the people, The petic[mark over]oners doe returne vnto yo* most humble and hearty thanks. ./ .

That the Church Wardens and diu[er]s inhabitants of the sayd parish desiring to injoy the benefit of the sayd Order, and in ~ pursuance of the same made choice of Mr. Daniell Evans an able orthodox preacher & of honest Conversae[mark]on to lecture on the weeke day in the sayd parish where there hath not bin constantly soe much as two sermons on the Lords day nor any on the weeke day although it bee a market Towne & the parish very great.

But soe it is That M Parlet vicar of the sayd parish hath hitherto opposed the Church Wardens and others of the parish (desiring the ~ same) by locking ypp the Church Doore and keeping the Keyes till such Tyme as they bringe a p[ar]ticular Order from this hon: ble House for the placing of the fore sayd Mr. Evans & then the sayd vicar p[ro]miseth willingly to submit herevnto. ./ .

The petic[mark over]oners therefore most humbly pray That this ~ hon: ble Assembly wilbee pleased to Order That the sayd Mr. Evans may bee lectuerer in the sayd parish on one of the sayd weeke dayes at the Charge of those of the parish who ~ are willing thereto. ./ .

And the peticon[er]s shally dayly pray &c. / .
TITHING BOOK

Amwell (though Mr John Spencer, a turbulent man and full of lawe, vicar of Broxborn in my tyme, who laboured too winne somme other houses from me, omitted this; he was afterwards deprived by the meanes of his parishioners), only a supposition of the 2nd addition by the parish of Broxborne. Indeed the use of it hath been held premiscious to both for divine service for the towne of Hoddesdon of both parishes and the reparation of it by a mutuall chardge, as especially at the commencement of my lecture there anno 1612.

[Inter-parochial disputes over Hoddesdon chapel]

Our parish of Amwell contributed towards the repayre, for it was much in decay, and commonly before kept by Broxborn men by reason that they made use of it for a schoole-house and kept the lord's courts and such other common business therein, all which after my comming thither to preach was removed. My custome was before only to goe once a yeare namely upon Good Fryday to administer the holy communion to those poore of the almeshouses and other such aged and impotent people of my parish as dwelt there, which custome I held all my tyme to mayntayne the right of the chappell and my right in the same. And well it was that I did so, otherwise my lecture had been crossed by the vicar of Broxborne in this sort.

Mr Watkinson succeeding Mr Spencer (whome his parishioners had wrought out as a contentious person, artiching against hym many things with a tedious suit). Sir Henry Cock, who outed the other, put in this, but little pleasing to the parishioners, who found themselves little mended in their change, for howsoever Mr Watkinson was not so obnoxious to scandal as Mr Spencer, nor so active for contention, yet he proved far more unable for his ministry, and yet peevish enough and apt to enterteine quarrels with the best amongst them, who soone grew weary and were willing to give themselves other comforts.

Mr Thomas Thorogood, my very good frend, takinge some dislike against the vicar of Broxborne (of whose parish he was) in that he [the vicar] would seem to make challenge to his father's gift of 40 shillings per annum

105. See Appendix II.
106. See below p.204.
107. He also conducted baptism and marriage services at the chapel in 1600, 1603, 1609 and 1610, see above pp.4, 8, 13, 15 and 156.
108. 6 March 1609.
109. See Appendix II.
THOMAS HASSALL

for 6 sermons and\textsuperscript{112} proper to hymself (which in the grant are left free) toke occasion (whears he was wont to bestowe the moyety upon hym at least, and the residue either upon me or some other as occasion served) to withdrav his hand wholly from Mr Watkinson and turne it to me. And because Mr Watkinson thought to cross hym in refusinge to give me leave to preach at his church (as I was wont oft to doe\textsuperscript{113}), Mr Thorogood, finding that his father's will was free\textsuperscript{114} either for church or chapell, tooke the advantage of his refusall at the church to transfer the sayd sermons to the chappell; and so I preached both them and certayne others there in October, November, December and January 1612, upon the approbation whereof, I was farther moved by the vertuous Lady Cock, widowe of that worthy knight Sir Henry Cocke, deceased, and her generouse\textsuperscript{115} some-in-lawe Sir Edmund Lucy\textsuperscript{116} and some others of the towne to continue a lecture at the sayd chappell once in a fortnight on the Sabboth Day in the afternoone, and they would contribut toward my paynes to my content.

This motion of theyr was willingly embraced by me, finding both good liking of my weaker giftis and some good encourgement for my labours (my living at Amwell being but smallle\textsuperscript{117}) and so, upon Trynity Sunday being the 30th of May 1613, I began the sayd lecture\textsuperscript{118} ... litle ... aff...ing full every day.

Mr Watkinson, finding hymself much agreed theret, labored to disadue his parishioners what he might, addinge threatenings for absence from theyr parish church and in his sermons (as he was able) invayning against humane eloquence, traducinge me and others. But when he could nothing prevayle but that the lecture continued and grewe more in name, he complaynes to the chancelor\textsuperscript{119}, who spake with me about the busines, and referred the hearing therof to Mr Dr Aubrye\textsuperscript{120}, a civilian then dwelling in Hoddesdon (who being of Broxborn parish also would have perswaded Mr Watkinson to permitt me to preach at the church, which might entertayne the greater company of hearers, but he not yielding, the d[octo]r sawe no reason but that I might

\textsuperscript{112} Reade "as"?
\textsuperscript{113} e.g. August 1609, see p. 14 above.
\textsuperscript{114} "for either parish" deleted.
\textsuperscript{115} high-born
\textsuperscript{116} Husband of Frances, eldest daughter of Sir Henry Cocke, who died in 1610.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{f.} but see p. xlii
\textsuperscript{118} There are some small holes in the MS.
\textsuperscript{119} Dr Thomas Edwards.
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lawfully doe it within my owne parish at the chappell, and others as lawfully
commene to heare me, he hymselfe promising to be one my auditors, and
provinge one of my best benefactors. So the lecture continued.

Mr Watkinson, finding hymselfe nothing satisfied, and perceivinge all
the better sort of the towne clave unto me, could by no meane rest contented, but
importune the chancellor againe (informinge hym that Dr Aubrye had done
nothing in the busines). So, taking the advantage of the d'octo|r's absence in
Wales in the tym of his visitation there, procure letters from Dr Edwards,
the chancellor to the bishop, to certayne ministers neere neighbours as
commissioners to heare and determine the difference, the tenor of whose
letters insueth.

The Chancellor's letter:

After my very hartie commendations, I have long since heard of some
mislike betwixt the ministers of Broxborne and of Anwell, for that
they of Broxborne doe withdrew themselves in the afternoones divers
tymes on the Sabbath Day and goe to Hoddsden, where the minister of
Anwell (a very good preacher I confess) doth preach. This difference I
did heeretoore entreat my good frend Mr Dr Aubrye to compose, which
I understand he hath not done. Wherfore I desire to make bold with
you as fellow ministers to both the other two, to take some convenient
tyme, in the presence of both these ministers, to examine all
circumstances of this busines and to putt such an end therunto as shall
breed peace in both the parishes and doe neither of the ministers wrong
in theyr several places, and furthermore may be to the best edification of
the people in both parishes, and so with my kinde commendations to
yow all I rest. Doctors Commons, 7th August 1613, yor ever loving
frend, Thomas Edwards.

The direction of these letters was: 'To the worthy my very good frends Dr
Darrell, parson of Wormely, Dr Halle, lecturer at Waltham Abby, Mr
Fayle, vicar of Roydon, and Mr Jude, vicar of Nasinge'.

These letters being thus procured and brought downe by Mr Watkinson,
who thought to work wonders with them, he personally also labored all
the committyes and obtained a day of hearing before I ever dreamt of any such
matter untill such tyme as from Mr Dr Darrell I receive notice thereof by his
letters and the chancellor his letters enclosed:

121. Vicar of Waltham Abbey (Newcourt ii.631), he was a celebrated divine who was to
represent the English Church at the Synod of Dort in 1618.
122. commissioners.
To my very loving frend Mr Hassall vicar of Amwell give these salutem in Christo. 

Sir, I gather the rest of them to whome this lettere is directed have receiveved this enclosed from Mr Chancellor of London; and howsoever wee be not very willing to interpose our selves in other men's businesses, yet my self (and so, I understand, of the rest) am willing to doe any good office heerin to yow both, as wee are directed. And to that purpose they, as I am informed, and my self shalbe ready to meet yow on Thursday next (God willing) about one of the clock at Hodsdon at the Black Lyon, unless wee heare anything from you to the contrary, [as.93] Mr Watkinson promising to be there. And for yow, wee shall not press yow, but if yow thing fitt to meet us accordingly, I shall desire to hear from yow and the inclosed returned back again by this bearer. Thus beecching to God to bless yow with his best blessinges, I rest, Your very loving frend, Georg Darrell, Wormely, this 16 of August 1613.

To this I returned this answer:

Sir, seeing it is Mr Chancellor his pleasure and yor kindnes with the rest of the gentlemen named to undertake the examination and accord of this late growen difference betwixt my neighbour minister of Broxburne and my self, I shalbe very willinge and ready so (God permitting) to attend yow at the tyme and place appointed, desiring no better arbitrators of the cause then yor selves, to whom recommandinge both my love and duty, I take my leave, your wor[thy's] willingly obliged, Thomas Hassall, Amwell, August 16, 1613.

The tyme appointed came, and accordingly all the committyes met, Mr Watkinson made his complaunt of much wronge done to hymself and the church of Broxburne, which seemed to be neglected by his parishioners' frequen[ting] my lecture, growing into some personall challenges of some of the townsmen very frivolously and impertinently, as the arbitrators themselves sayed, which in a matter so premiated and labored, shewed smale witt, I made answer to that little which concerned my self, adding that the greatest part of his speech did not concerne me but others whom it concerned in person to answer, as indeed they were ready to doe, some of the chief townsmen being attending in the house and craving leave to be admitted to answer for themselves, which being granted, the case was disputed little to Mr Watkinson's reputation.

But the conclusion was this which these commissornes sett downe. That forasmuch as it appeared t being within my owne pari to be and that he would that seeing it was generally appeared to be a great eas Anwell church 2 myles), rather to confirm it, as it oppose but rather to give object against it.

So wee were reconciled from henceforth the vic somewhat sooner then ord that he and his might also present, though my neighb satisfied, laboring still to menace, sometimes enjoy to lecture at the church, in chappell. Notwithstanding chappell, my interest in my things are ever mutable determined it.

The customme of tythi late incumbent and co assent of the parishion

First, it is generally to reckoninge at such tyme as holy communion and to c parish (and well it is for us else we might be long stra right).

The next is Lammase: Otherwise ordinary tythin

123. Now the Salisbury Arms.
124. 'such' deleted.
125. This thme is resumed on 126. See above pp. xxxviii-xli. 127. 1 August. 128. tithes of milk or butter.
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forasmuch as it appeared that my lecture in itself could not be questionable, being within my owne parish (as the playntiff then acknowledged the chappell to be and that he would not contest with me about it), and that it was but an afternoone’s exercise at which tyme he hymself did not usually preach, and that seeing it was generally approved by the best of the towne of Hodsden and appeared to be a great ease unto them (the church being a full myle of and Amwell church 2 myles), that they saw no cause to silence my lecture, but rather to confirm it, as in right was fitt. So, advisinge Mr Watkinson not to oppose but rather to give way unto it, and to give unto me the right hand of fellowship, to which theyr motion he faintingly yielded, wanting matter to object against it.

So wene were reconciled for the present, the commissioners orderinge that from henceforth the vicar of Broxbornke should begin evening prayer somewhat sooner then ordinary, and I to deferre my lecture one hower longer that he and his might also come to it. This was the end of that busines for the present, though my neighbor of Broxbornke ever shewed that he was not well satisfied, laboring still to draw away such as he could by persuasions or menaces, sometymes injoyning and sometymes seeking to bring in an other to lecture at the church, indeed omitting nothynge that might cross me at the chappell. Notwithstanding all which (I thank God for it) I held my right in the chappell, my interest in my friends and my benefit of the lecture untill (as such things are ever mutable in nature) death of somme and change of tyme determined it.

The customme of tything in Amwell as it was delivered to me by the late incumbe and confirmed by old Gehesey with the general assent of the parishioners. 126

First, it is generally to be observed that Easter is the principall tyme of reckoninge at such tyme as every one is bound by the lawe to come to the holy communion and to come first and reckon with the minister of the parish (and well it is for us that such an order is established in the church, or else we might be long strangers to many of our people and lose much of our right).

The next is Lammas127, when they use to pay whitage128 for chattell. Otherwise ordinary tythings are due as they fall.

125. This theme is resumed on p.223 below.
126. See above pp. xxxviii-xl.
127. 1 August.
128. tithes of milk or butter.
for / which, all that hath bin / sayde, needed not to haue / bin spoken;
I mean the / Memoriall of our deceased / Sister Mi[86], Martha / Molesworth, whose Obsequeys / calle vs together. //

[48v]
And my vnum necessarium / begins heere, being by her / dying
vote desyned to / this duty: And to whose / liuing desert, I owe so / much, and can paye so / little; that you must / take mee but as a
Com= / pounder; willing ra= / ther to staule the dept, / then to dis-
charge it. // I knowe it will be expected I should speake much of / her, being of so longe / acquaintance w'h her / (for I see not that
face in / all this Assembly, w'h hath knowne her longer / then my
selfe); //

[49r]
And during all that tyme / so much obliged to her, / (that the reality
and Con= / stancy of her fauours to / mee, may neuer bee for-
gotten) / And, which is more, That / In all this tyme of our so /
longe acquaintance (I / speake it to Gods glorys) / As there neuer
was any / break of vnkindnes betwixt / vs: so neuer any occasion
/ for which I might haue / wished, I had not knowne her // She was
no stranger in / this place, having liued / heere the better half of / her
tyme; and that part / which might best speake / her. //

[49v]
Whose manner of lyfe and / conversaion is so well / knowne to all,
that it / were but a wast of / tyme to repeat it to you. / And I chal-
lenge euen / justice it selfe to doe / her right in what shee / des-
erved well; and dare / euene Detraction to speake / it's worst in re-
peating / what she did euell. // Yet these are those same / Licentiate
tymes, in w'h / Ius datum sceleri, / hath brought that woe / vppon
vs, denounced / by the Prophet Isaye / Chap: 5. Vers / 21 / 22 //

[50r]
To Call Euell good, and / Good euell, Darckenesse light, / and Light
darkenesse; Bitter / sweete, and Sweet bitter / wherein men are wise
in / their owne eyes, and prudent / in their owne opinions / Quando
noua virtuque, noua / pietas, est maledicere, / et male-
facere, eminen= / tissimis, et excellentiis= / mis rebus, simul
[illegible] / tam in sacris, quam [illegible] // The new Vertue, and
new / Piety, is to speake euell, / and doe euell, to ye= most / eminent,
and excellent / things, and persons, both / in the Church, and in / the
Commonwealth. //
[50v]
Yet lett not Trueth bee / affrayd to remember her / Integrity, Justice, Pietie, / and well formed Charitye / And, to saye muche in / one worde, shee liued / many yeares without / Scandal, and dyed / without a Curse. / To adde to these gene= / rals, some particulers / Her Byrth was generose / descended from honest / parents, well knowne / and respected in their / tymes, and places. / The worshipfull / House, and Name / of Dorsett //

[51r]
Her Education in such / thewes, and manners, as / were most proper, and / commendable to her sexe / yea even to Arts and Letters / Wherein, though left as an / Orphane, to the care of others / (her parents dijng, whilst / shee was yonge) yet when / my father, and mother for= / sooke mee, God tooke mee vp / sayth Dauid; And as shee / receiued the benefitt of / her Education from others / so shee thankfully comm= / municated the same bles= / sing / to those, who beinge / not her owne, were by / mariage of their fathers / committed to her tuition //

[51v]
Her Marriage beginning / in the Pryme of her yeares / was noteworthy, hauing / had three Husbands, / all lousing to her, and be= / louted of her; so that shee / would many tymes saye / They were all so good, / that she knew not / which was the better. / Her Lyfe, a patterns / of Modesty, Discression, / Hospitality, Frugality / to others / of her Sexe / who neyther in Youth, / nor Age neede to scorn / her Example // But after all comes Death / to make ye Catastrophe //

[52r]
Which though ministring / occasion of sorrowe to her / suruiuing freinds, yealt sett / a Crowne vppon all these / precedent passages / The hand of God pleased / by a tedious, and paynfull / sickness (which in all / her former daies shee / had not bin acquainted w/h) / to make her weary of lyfe, / and better prepared for death / And, / in trueth, it moued / many tymes a mixt pas= / sion of sorrowe, / and joye / in her visiting freinds, to / heare, and see how patient= / ly shee indured, how ear= / nestly she desyred her dissolution //

[52v]
And that w/h is worthy / our remembrance, and not / vnworthy ye observation / This vnnum necessarium / the Arte of dying well / was skillfully practized / by her; when during the / tyme of her re- / straynt / being vnder ye Blackrodd / of this her Visitation / shee

[53r]
sought to deceive / the reading good Boke / faythfull Counsellors; / her studyes, / that they n /
Mixing Ciuell, w/h Ecclesi / incurrences / with the / Holy Bible was ne / other Handmayds / to both to heale her / ow / frute / of her studyes to / and paper / wherewith / consequence, quoting /

[53v]
But she hath now taken / vs, and all / these behy / who are parted from her / w/h doultessse / hath care / w/her. // And this is thes / Mr Martha Molesworth / Martha / her vnnum rees /

[54r]
And what now remayn / necessarium, vt semper / riam, non sine morte / m dolori / finem, Mors Ch / maynes as / necessary for / her death, to mee by de / shall giue / an end to my / beginning of Comfort. //

[54v]
This place espetially / of therefore fitts best her / place, wee may all / consider necessarium / is still to re / our dissolution / That so / others departed in the / / consummation, and blis
sought to deceiue / the tediousnesse of soli=ude, and sickness, I
with reading good Bookes, I her constant Companions, I /and
faythfull Counsellors; II And withall, so discreetly / she ordered
her studies, / that they might not seeme / tedious. II

[53r]
Mixing Ciuell, wih Eccle= siasticall Histories, and in / both find-
ing concurrencies / with the present tymes // That Book of Bookes,
the / Holy Bible was neuer / longe from her; attended / with some
other Handmayds / tractats of piety, healpces / to Devotion // And,
both to heale her / owne memorye; and to / communicate the
frute / of her studies to others / she had lyinge by her / pen, Inke,
and paper / wherewith she noted such / matters as were of spatia-
ll consequence, quoting the / places, to commend them / to others. II

[53v]
But she hath now taken / her leue of vs, and of all / these; leauing
vs, and all / these behynd her; to the / increase of our sorrowes, /w
who are parted from her. / But to the comfort of her / owne soule,
wih doutlesse / hath cayred ye quintesence / of those Collections
wih her. // And this is the / breue History of our / deceased freind
Misth Martha Molesworth, // And thus you haue the / modell of our
Martha / her vnum necessarium // One thing is necessariey //

[54r]
And what now remayneth for mee // Vnum quidem hoc mihi / necessarium, vt semper mori= ens lugeam huius mortis / memori-
am, non sine morte / mihi redimendam; Mors / autem mea dabit
dolori / finem, Mors Christi / vitae initium // This one thing re-
maynes as / necessary for mee, Euer to / bemoane the memory / of
her death, to mee by death / only to be redeemed: / For my death
shall giue / an end to my sorrowe, / And the death of Christ / the
beginning of Comfort. II

[54v]
This place especially / obliged mee to her memorial / This place
therefore fitts best her Monument / And in the ruines of / this
place, wee may all / consider our owne / mortality // Our vnum
necessarium / is still to remember, and / prepare for the daye / of
our dissolution / That so wee also, with / this our Sister, and all / oth-
ers departed in the / fayth of Christ Jesus / may haue our perfect
/ consummation, and bliss //
both in body, and soule / in that eternall, and euer= / lasting Glory. // To which hee bring vs / who hath so clearely brought vs / euen Christ Jesus that / Righteous / To whome w'h the Father / and the Holy ghost / Three persons / and one God / bee ascribed / all / Honor, Glory, and Prayes / now, and for euer more // Amen.

Notes
Prepared by Ann Depas-Orange

31v. The two principall pillours: Referring to the deaths of both Marmaduke Rawdon (of London and Hoddesdon) and Martha Moulsworth in 1646.
31v. Mannel: Probably “manual,” i.e., “A small book for handy use... In the mediaeval Church, a book containing the forms to be observed by priests in the administration of the sacraments, etc.” (OED).
33r. Hodson Chappel: the chapel in the center of Hoddesdon had been a point of rivalry between the competing vicars of Broxbourne and Amwell parishes. Moulsworth and the Rawdon family had supported the claims of Hassall (vicar of Amwell).
33r. Simon and Jude: Moulsworth refers to these saints in her “Memorandum” (II. 81–86). Her second husband, Thomas Thorowgood, died on their feast day.
34v. Luke 10 Verse 42: Moulsworth herself alludes to this Biblical incident in her poem (II. 17–18), although in her marginal note the number of the verse is misremembered or miscopied. The whole relevant passage reads as follows: “[38] Now it came to pass, as they went, that he [Jesus] entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. [39] And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. [40] But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. [41] And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: [42] But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”
35r. Illud vnum est ...: This is rendered in the immediately following English words.
35r. In illo uno: “In that one [thing].”
35v. Vnum necessarium: “One necessary thing.”
world, individual believers could experience either a sense of joy or a sense
of despair, depending on their spiritual progress and their disposition. It
is hardly surprising that they sometimes sought out select clergy who
might serve their intellectual and emotional needs and counsel them
throughout their spiritual journey. Significantly, such relationships were
often reciprocal. Not only did clergy benefit from the patronage and
protection that their lay friends in the ranks of the gentry could offer, but
they too might also find inspiration and comfort in these friendships.

Puritanism then was not only experiential but also pastoral in nature,
a combination which created ambiguities. On the one hand, the
individual believer was to confront God directly; on the other, the
minister retained some of the authority of the Catholic priest, mediating
God’s word and guiding the spiritual development of individual believers.
As Richard Greenham explained, ‘when the Lord determineth to beget
soules, he appointeth spirituall fathers fit and able for that purpose’.
Preaching was indispensable. When a faithful minister sincerely and
purely preached God’s word, ‘it is all one as if the lord himself dwelt
personally among us’. Significantly, Greenham believed that not only
should the minister preach publicly, he should also attend his parishioners
in their home and instruct them privately. Either gently and lovingly, or
if necessary, with rebukes, the minister must ‘spurre forward the godly’.
He was the physician of their souls and they, in turn, owed him respect,
obedience, and even fear.37

Despite this exalted view, as Paul Seaver reminds us, the Puritans were
in fact ‘not a priest-ridden people’. A number of factors conspired to
prevent the clergy, significant as they were, from intimidating the laity in
general, or the female laity specifically. The strong patriarchal emphasis
in their own writings helped keep the clergy in check, for the husband and
father as head of household religion remained central to Puritan teachings.38
The superior social position of the gentry also counted for
much in the hierarchal society of Stuart England, and here class allowed
godly women to exert the authority that their gender alone would deny
them. Finally the very nature of the Protestant creed with its emphasis on
the individual’s interaction with Scripture kept the clergy in their place,
just as it ensured the importance of that place.

Godly women of the elite classes, often widowed, acted as patrons,
benefactors and protectors of the clergy. In the Elizabethan period, Lady
Anne Bacon probably financed some of the writings of John Field, and she
presented a number of Puritans to livings.39 Both Lady Bacon and her

37 Ibid. 357, 341, 352, 344–5, 877, 349, 353. For a discussion of the pastoral side of
Puritanism, see Morgan, Godly Learning, 10, 13, 81–6, 94, 305; Claire Cross, Church and
People 1450–1660: the triumph of the laity in the English Church, London 1976, 161. For the
position of the minister, see Lake, Moderate Puritans, 89–90, 156.

38 Seaver, Wallington’s World, 187–8.

39 Richard L. Greaves, ‘Foundation builders: the role of women in early English
nonconformity’, in Richard L. Greaves (ed.) Triumph over Silence: women in Protestant history,
Westport 1985, 70–81; Cross, Church and People, 160.
sister, Lady Elizabeth Russell, sought to influence their brother-in-law, William Cecil (and Lady Russell also appealed to her nephew Robert Cecil) on behalf of godly candidates.\textsuperscript{40} Anne Dudley, dowager countess of Warwick, and Katherine Hastings, dowager countess of Huntingdon, also promoted the appointment of Puritans.\textsuperscript{41} Later, in the Stuart period, the cleric John Davenport turned to Lady Mary Vere, an elect lady, to exert influence with her brother-in-law, Secretary of State Sir Edward Conway; the matriarch Lady Joan Barrington gave financial support out of her household accounts to a number of Puritan divines and was asked to intervene with the earl of Warwick on behalf of ecclesiastical candidates; Lady Jane Barnardiston provided financial support to the Feoffees for Impropiations and, through an intermediary, donated £150 for the efforts at reconciliation among continental Protestants, a cause which also won the support of Lady Anne Finch Waller.\textsuperscript{42} Lady Lucy Jervoise corresponded with one of Lord Conway's secretaries to obtain church patronage in Hampshire and was not deterred when her initial suit failed to bring results.\textsuperscript{43} Lady Constance Lucy established a lectureship to promote religious instruction of the poor.\textsuperscript{44} Through such means, godly women acted as members of the elite, using their status in society to reinforce their religious convictions.

If class or status seems to provide an adequate explanation for patronage, gender would seem to explain the strong pastoral relationships that developed between godly women and Puritan divines. The evidence is impressionistic but consistent. Women turned to the clergy, just as men did, to facilitate assurance, cope with grief and bereavement, prepare for death, but they were much more likely than men to develop strong, perhaps intense, and long-lasting relationships with their clergy. Eric Richardson suggests that ‘certain women, at least, were more willing than men to tolerate spiritual dependence upon a pastor’, a view which other historians share, but which does not do justice to the variety of ways in which gender operated.\textsuperscript{45} Emotionally or intellectually satisfying relation-

\textsuperscript{42} Greaves, ‘Foundation builders’, 79–81. For Barrington, see Essex Record Office, D/DBa, A 15 and Barrington Family Letters, 220–1. For Barnardiston and Waller, see PRO, SP 16/351/100, fo. 260r, SP 16/463/67 (CSPD, 1660, 566–70). Lady Vere also promoted the appointment of James Ussher as archbishop of Armagh; see his letter of thanks: BL, Add. ms 4274, fo. 32r.
\textsuperscript{43} Hampshire Record Office, Jervoise ms of Herriard Park, 44M69, Box E 76, letter to Mr William Wilde, dated only 24 April.
\textsuperscript{44} Folger Library, V.a., 166, fo. 7.
ships with clergy were one of the few legitimate male–female friendships open to respectable married women. Some women, such as Lady Margaret Hoby, emotionally dependent on her chaplain Richard Rhodes, perhaps sought to compensate for a less than satisfactory marriage, while others, like Mrs Anne Busbridge, appreciated spiritual counsel during the difficult days of pregnancy. Moreover, intellectual exchange and pastoral approval could validate the spiritual experiences of women, either compensating for their lack of book learning and formal training or allowing a meaningful amount of self-education. Frank and mutual exchange also provided an avenue for women to influence clergy and thereby indirectly affect a larger community. One twenty-three-year-old woman instructed her minister on the contents of her own funeral sermon, thus at least in death using her close relationship with her pastor to speak publicly and authoritatively to the godly community.

If we examine the clerical networks created by a few godly women, we begin to appreciate the complexity and variety of these relationships. The Barringtons of Hatfield Broad Oak were an influential Puritan family in Essex. Sir Francis Barrington, an ally of Richard Rich, earl of Warwick, served repeatedly as a member of parliament and, in 1627, he spent ten months imprisoned in the Marshalsea because of his opposition to the forced loan. His wife, Lady Joan Barrington (aunt to Oliver Cromwell), chose imprisonment with her husband and was deeply grieved when he died in 1628. She was a forceful and respected figure, an elect lady, consulted by the earl of Warwick about ecclesiastical appointments and by members of the godly community about spiritual matters. Although her sons and sons-in-law were themselves prominent figures, she became, as a widow in her seventies, undisputed head of the Barrington family.

Within the surprisingly large clerical network created by Lady Barrington, three figures are most notable. Ezekiel Rogers was for twelve years domestic chaplain to the Barringtons and then, in 1621, became rector of the Barrington living of Rowley in Yorkshire. Suspended for Non-conformity in 1636, he subsequently migrated to New England. William Chantrell may have briefly served as chaplain to the Barringtons but from 1616 to 1643 he was rector of Walkington, another Yorkshire living in the gift of the Barringtons. Chantrell had occasional conflicts with authorities in Yorkshire over his religious views. James Harrison was lecturer at Hatfield Broad Oak from 1626 until his death some sixteen years later. During these years he also acted as domestic chaplain and tutor for at least

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46 Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599–1605, ed. Dorothy M. Meads, Boston 1930, 63, 66, 154, 159, 166, 243 n. 180; East Sussex Record Office, Dunn ms 51/58, Simon Moore to Anne Busbridge, 26 Nov. 1632.
47 John Ley, A pattern of piety or the religious life and death of that grave and gracious matron Mrs Jane Ratcliff, London 1640, 65 and Lake, 'Feminine piety', 149–50.
49 Hunt, The Puritan Moment, 220. Hunt provides a perceptive psychological portrait of Joan Barrington. See also Barrington Family Letters, introduction.
one of the Barrington grandchildren. He was attacked by the ecclesiastical authorities in 1636 when he preached a long sermon and shortened set prayers.\(^\text{50}\)

As the family chaplain, the young Ezekiel Rogers was by his own account much affected by Lady Barrington. Writing to her from Yorkshire in 1621, he confessed ‘You were the first with whom I had any so serious and solemnic converse about matters tending to the worke of grace... I haue therefore good cause to haue you in my choise remembrance.’ Perhaps unnerved by his removal from Hatfield Broad-oak, Rogers was now insecure in their relationship ‘for this yeare or two you latt[late] did sensibly withdraw your former affectation’. Rogers was particularly troubled by Lady Barrington’s recent reluctance to continue their ‘holy converse’, and he begged her to tell him if he had inadvertently offended her. He wanted more than a client-patron relationship for, as he explained, ‘the care and thought that you took about this some yeares since, did make me looke after the same with the better regarde. I pray God increase those attentions and cares in you and me’. Significantly, Rogers wrote to Lady Barrington separately, asking that he be excused to Sir Francis for not writing.\(^\text{51}\)

Whatever the difficulty in 1621, Rogers’s relationship with Joan Barrington continued. In 1623, he still saw her as a spiritual authority and sought the comfort of some words from her who carried ‘a perpetuall Sabbath’ in her soul.\(^\text{52}\) Ill in 1626, he reminded her of her role in his spiritual development and asked for her help again:

I must not, I cannot forget those times, when the Lorde working powerfully on your soule, made you (in seeking my poore helpe) an occasion of much quickning and benefit to me... I must not now at this time write to profite you; but to desire your lines and prayers to helpe me to profit by diuers afflictions that I haue had.\(^\text{53}\)

He commended her in 1627 for her decision to follow her husband to prison, a decision he saw as natural given her disposition and her affection for her husband. At least her withdrawal from worldly occasions freed her for ‘serious meditation of that solemnic change [death and salvation] which your age and my infirmities may putt us in’.\(^\text{54}\) His emotional dependency now gone, theirs had become a more equal relationship.

Finally, after the death of Sir Francis, when Lady Barrington suffered doubt over her own election, Rogers became her mentor, a figure of authority adopting a stern tone. He wrote in February 1630 that, for whatever reason, the Lord had ‘not dealt so largely’ with her in the matter of assurance as with his other saints. Lady Barrington’s

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\(^{50}\) Ibid. 13, 255–8. For Harrison, see also Mary Bohannon, ‘A London bookseller’s bill: 1635–1639’, The Library, 4th ser. xviii (1938), 424 and PRO, SP 16/351/100, fo. 262v.

\(^{51}\) BL, Egerton ms 2644, fo. 196.

\(^{52}\) Ibid. fo. 203r.

\(^{53}\) Ibid. fo. 240r.

\(^{54}\) Ibid. fo. 251r.
temperament was partly to blame but the main problem was weakness of faith. The consequences were grave for without assurance, 'you cannot have so large a measure of love to your God'. Rogers reminded her that Christ's promise was irrevocable and urged her to seek assurance from the Lord. 'Let me tell you from some little experience, that the lorde so sought will sooner or later be founde.' In November, he hoped 'that your olde disease of melancholy is banished away by faith, as it is high time'. He repeated the message in January 1632, reminding her that since God's covenant was unchangeable, she had little to fear. Whether Roger's counsel and chiding brought Lady Barrington comfort is not clear, but she did apparently promise him £100 before his departure for New England.

In 1626, shortly after his appointment as lecturer at Hatfield Broadoak, James Harrison wrote to Joan Barrington, and, referring to an issue of religious controversy, thanked her for encouraging his 'forwardnes'. For the most part, however, their relationship was based not on ecclesiological issues but on friendship, family, and patronage. When his wife was ill, he wrote to the Barringtons separately, asking for their prayers and thanking Joan for her advice. He offered her guidance during her spiritual crisis in 1629 but always in a mild, deferential tone. He was grateful when she agreed to stand as godmother to his son, felt able to ask her for money for the poor, and regretted her prolonged absence from Hatfield Broadoak where she could 'dooe God so much service and so much further the publicke good'. Prayer was always a great equaliser in lay-clerical relations, and Harrison asked Lady Barrington for her prayers, for example in June 1630, so that he might learn from the affliction of his illness and so that his infant son might be blessed. As well as prayers and stipends, Lady Barrington gave Harrison and his wife a number of small gifts, from cakes to capons.

It is not possible here to do justice to all Lady Barrington's many clerical contacts. What is most remarkable, however, is the number of clerics included in her circle. For William Chantrell, she remained first and foremost a benefactress. Thus when Lady Barrington's eldest son, Sir Thomas Barrington, was selling lands in Yorkshire, Chantrell requested

55 Barrington Family Letters, 128–30, 167, 225–6. See also Hunt, The Puritan Moment, 221–2. Rogers also urged Lady Barrington to find inspiration from other saints and complained that charity was too meagre during his days at Hatfield Broadoak.
57 BL, Egerton ms 2644, fo. 230r. I am grateful to Alasdair Hawkyard for the transcription of this letter.
58 Ibid. fos 261r, 262r.
60 Essex Record Office, D/DBa, A 15, passim.
Patronage of preaching, whether in the most influential and powerful court circles or at local, domestic levels, exerted considerable religious and political influence. The historical narrative is fragmentary, but suggests an important role for women – whether as monarchs or housewives – in promoting and sustaining particular preaching cultures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Even before the Reformation, preaching was part of the royal court’s religious practice, although the number of preaching occasions was likely far fewer than after the Reformation, when ‘powerful orators on both sides pitt[ed] their rhetorical skills against each other in an on-going pulpit debate over the future of the English church’ (McCullough 1998: 52). Queens and consorts could exert substantial influence over that debate. Two of Henry’s wives and his daughter Elizabeth advanced their reform agendas at least in part through patronage of preaching. Most historians present Anne Boleyn’s patronage of oppositional, reform-minded preachers and the printed vernacular books that supported their missions as one cause of her execution in 1536. According to Peter McCullough, Boleyn’s patronage of evangelicals such as Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Shaxton ‘gave the reformers a foothold in the court itself as early as 1530’ (54). Eric Ives notes further that Anne organized an ‘evangelical’ preaching campaign advocating ‘the diversion of monastic endowments to better uses’ (1994: 400). George Bernard, however, challenges this conventional view of Anne as a ‘great patron of evangelicals’ (1993: 2), uncovering more complex personal and political motivations behind her allegedly reformist actions and patronage (8).

Whatever Anne Boleyn’s influence on preaching, we can be more certain that Katherine Parr was instrumental in ensuring the ascendency of Protestants and in implementing evangelical policies that went beyond those officially permitted by the Crown, including Bible reading (King 1985: 45). Parr and her circle, which included the martyr Anne Askew, sponsored Protestant preachers and professional authors who ‘turned out a stream of Reformist sermons’ (44), and she was reported to have instituted the daily practice in Lent of hearing hour-long sermons (Haugard 1969: 352). Elizabeth’s ‘negative attitude towards preaching, which protestants regarded as the ordinary means of salvation’ made her an ‘odd kind of protestant’ (Collinson /ODNB/: 7). Despite her commitment to achieving a stable, religious settlement (1558-1603) by authorizing sermons at least once a month, and homilies every Sunday where there was no sermon, and despite her awareness that sermons could effect social control, she disliked them, preferring to regulate them where she could (as in her monitoring of Paul’s Cross preachers). In fact, she preferred the official /Homilies/, ‘originally envisioned as a stopgap substitute for sermons’ (Collinson /ODNB/: 7) as safer, although she did not appreciate them being applied to herself. Famously, Elizabeth refused to hear sermons on excesses in dress, and practiced a code of behaviour at odds with that upheld in the homily on marriage by declaring her own unwed state unique – and legitimate (Levin 1983: 181). However, despite a ‘personal distaste for sermon-centred piety’ (McCullough 1998: 3), Elizabeth nurtured some preachers as personal favourites, preserved pre-Reformation court sermon customs, and patronized a sophisticated court preaching style (6). Increasingly, however, the relationship between Elizabeth and her preachers became strained, evident in challenges to Elizabeth’s authority by preachers such as Edward Dering, John Jewel, Thomas Drant, Richard Curteys, attacks on courtly behaviour (William Barlow), and personal comments on the queen’s advancing age (Anthony Rudd) (Christian 1993: 561).

Just as reform-minded queens and consorts promoted preaching that supported their aims, their Catholic counterparts influenced preaching cultures as well. The overtly Catholic Queen Mary (reigned 1553-58) used sermons, both delivered and printed, to spread Catholicism among church officials and laity. By requiring preachers to obtain licenses and by placing the printed books of early reformers on an index of forbidden authors, she was able to inhibit dissenting voices. Furthermore,
Mary assented to the print dissemination of official homilies and sermons, thereby directing the messages delivered. Because preaching was authorized by the Council of Trent in a 1546 decree which made ‘personal episcopal preaching’ compulsory for the first time in the history of Western Christendom (Wizeman 2006: 28), Marian bishops took this command seriously, requiring clergy to read from collections such as Edmund Bonner’s /Homilies/ (1555) and Thomas Watson’s /Holsome and catholyke doctrine/ (1558), if they would not compose homilies themselves. Mary understood the importance of preachers and preaching for the establishment of English Catholicism, and took steps to counter the Protestant evangelism of the previous reign – what she termed ‘those errors and false opinions disseminated and spread abroad by the late preachers’ – with ‘good preaching’ (McCullough 1998: 58).

The religious patronage exercised by Catholic queens and consorts of England in the seventeenth century – Anne of Denmark (d. 1619), Henrietta Maria (d. 1669), Catharine of Braganza (reigned 1660-1685), and Mary of Modena (reigned 1685-88) – has been relatively unexamined. Anne of Denmark expressed her opposition to the public religious policies of her husband, James VI & I, via a separate court, entourage, and patronage, the Roman Catholic rite of confession, and pro-Spanish politics. Rejecting the restrictive role defined for her by Protestant clergy such as Thomas Playere and Andrew Willet, Anne engaged in many gestures of resistance, including refusing communion despite patronage of preachers with solid conformist credentials as her sworn chaplains and, near her death, the patronage of priests at Hampton Court. McCullough characterizes her as ‘one of Jacobean England’s consummate ‘church papists’’ (1998: 170), although she kept her Catholicism a matter of private faith and did not become the political focus of an explicitly Catholic court faction.

Henrietta Maria’s household was ‘a centre for the introduction of Counter-Reformation catholicism in its French version into a rabidly anti-papal England’ (Hibbard 1991: 404). Charles I’s queen consort intervened on behalf of Catholic subjects and created a court atmosphere friendly to Catholics, although this did not result in overt patronage beyond her household of pro-Catholic ecclesiastical officials (405). In fact, as a foreigner and as a Catholic Henrietta Maria was the focus of much anti-royalist opposition that was ‘particularly damaging’ to her husband in events leading up to the civil war (White 2006: 119; Mendelson and Crawford 1998: 368).

Catherine of Braganza, queen consort of Charles II, was a woman of deep faith and exemplary piety, but her public profile was negligible (Wynne /ODNB/ 8). Equally, the religious patronage of James II’s Catholic daughter Mary, who held the throne jointly with her Protestant husband William in 1688 and emphatically subordinated herself to him, also remains obscure. To ensure the permanence of the revolution of 1688, Mary set a pious example, surrounding herself with clergymen who had campaigned against popery under Charles II and James II, and publicizing the ‘multitude of plain, useful and Practical Sermons, which She approvd of’ (Manningham 1695: 10). After her death the average number of sermons commissioned per year dropped from 17 to 4 (Speck /ODNB/ 21).

While queens and consorts were important in promoting official religious cultures, women at lower social, even domestic, levels influenced their circles as patrons of preachers. One such group were the ‘Shunamites’ or nurses of the Reformation, epitomized in the figure of Mary Glover (the sister of reformer Hugh Latimer). Glover (and other ‘nurses’) exercised patronage by increasing numbers of sermons and sponsoring itinerant preachers. Their practical support included supplying food and lodging (most famously for Paul’s Cross preachers), nursing preachers who were ill, and arranging preaching venues for reformers and conservatives alike. Wabuda concludes that by ‘inviting clergymen to preach, or housing them, they sponsored sermons which encouraged or inhibited reform in many places’ (1990: 343).

Clerical wives also contributed to serious and ‘relatively systematic’ religious instruction (Charlton 1999: 216), thanks in part to the sufferings of the first generation of bishops’ wives who endured official and popular hatred in the 1540s and 1550s, yet within a century emerged as respected
members of English society (Prior 1985). Not all clerical wives were the same, however. Apparently, women in the family of Philip and Katherine Henry in the later seventeenth century accepted unquestioningly the ideology of the family as a little church embodied in their patriarchal clerical family, consciously subordinating their unimportant domestic ‘preaching’ to their husbands’ important public roles (Crawford 1993). They can be contrasted with Dorothy Hazzard, who in the 1650s refused on grounds of conscience to attend the service of common prayer, even when read by her puritan husband. Instead, she chose to enter during the final psalm in time to hear his sermon, and ultimately she founded a separate congregation (Briggs 1986: 339).

Like clerical wives, other women over this period, particularly in nonconformist, separatist, and recusant circles, practised extensive patronage crucial to the survival of religious preaching ranging from hospitality, provision of ecclesiastical benefices, and the founding of churches, to direct grants of money (including bequests). Women founded lectureships, offered their homes for religious services, harboured like-minded preachers, provided moral and financial support for persecuted ministers, intervened in parish politics to promote their candidates, created underground religious networks, and influenced the printing and publication of sermons. Wealthier women employed suspended preachers as private chaplains and provided ecclesiastical benefices for their chosen clergy (Greaves 1985: 78-81; Mendelson and Crawford 1998: 391-3). On the Protestant side, the female sustainers of the Marian martyrs decisively influenced English Protestantism (Freeman 2000). These women formed the bulk of their covert congregations, sheltering particular preachers, providing them with money in prison, smuggling books and letters, and engaging in passionate written debate on issues such as predestination. On the Catholic side, aristocratic women suffered for their faith, ‘a number of them famous for harbouring secular priests and Jesuits during the fiercest times of persecution’ (Marotti 1999: 9; Eales 1998: 94; Rowlands 1985: 157-9).

The role of women in appointing domestic chaplains in wealthier households also promoted certain preaching orientations. Dorothy Lawson, an energetic Catholic proselytizer despite her Protestant husband, built and lived in St. Anthony’s in 1616, a centre for Jesuits in the north-east of England (Bossy 1975: 156-7). Lady Montague’s house at Battle Abbey included a chapel complete with pulpit where ‘almost every week was a sermon made’ during Elizabeth’s reign (quoted in Hanlon 1965: 382). Reform-minded women such as Lady Anne Bacon furthered their religion by illegally sheltering delicensed preachers, including those who preached ‘improvised sermons’ instead of reading the prescribed homilies (Schleiner 1994: 39). Lady Isabel Bowes, on the radical fringes of Puritanism, gave £1000 a year to maintain preachers where there were none. Unlike the conservative Lady Hoby, Bowes promoted an ‘aggressive’ form of religion by patronizing ‘silenced’ ministers (Newman 1999: 419). These women formed strong, long-lasting relationships with their clergy, building clerical networks of considerable complexity and variety with consequences for the stability of English religious communities and structures throughout the period (Willen 1992: 571-77).

The patronage of powerful court women was also extensive. Lucy Countess of Bedford’s enormous cultural influence extended to her patronage of Reform-minded preachers such as John Burges and Nicholas Byfield, whose printed sermons, dedicated to her, she had heard ‘with great attention’ (Lewalski 1993: 103). Lady Anne Clifford was also an avid patron of preachers (including John Donne). She supported divinity students, including one Dr. Fairfax (likely Henry Fairfax) to whom she gave £40 a year (Williamson 1922: 306), her first husband’s chaplains (Henry King and Brian Duppa), and Bishop George Morley of Winchester. She is also supposed to have sent £1000 to two or three of her chaplains when they were forced to flee the country.
Additional Resources


