

**Protestant Epistolary Counselling in Early  
Modern England,  
c. 1559-1660**



**Lucy Busfield  
St John's College  
University of Oxford**

Thesis and abstracts submitted in the  
Faculty of Theology and Religion  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term 2016



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**Long Abstract**

This thesis argues for the importance of individual spiritual counselling in both the pastoral theory and practice of English Protestantism in the century between the Elizabethan settlement and the Restoration. In particular, it aims to demonstrate the prevalence of pastoral letter-writing throughout the post-Reformation period and to explore the purpose and dynamics of these networks. These pious epistolary practices have received little attention in secondary literature, chiefly because much of the evidence constitutes scattered manuscript survivals. As the first large-scale and comparative examination of the provision of spiritual counselling through the epistolary form, this research constitutes an original contribution to early modern scholarship. Chapters two to four illustrate the potential which existed for Protestant clergy, who could assert their professional, pastoral expertise, to form remarkably authoritative and spiritually intimate relationships with laypeople. The fifth chapter demonstrates the mutually instructive character of godly sociability, uncovering a significant degree of commonality between lay- and clerical-authored pastoral correspondence, whilst also showing that ministers exercised authority in distinctive ways within what was evidently a pervasive contemporary culture of spiritual counselling. This thesis draws on a varied and wide-ranging body of source material, exploring little-known letter collections and a significant number of unstudied manuscripts, as well as shedding new light on the correspondence of well-known figures, such as Nehemiah Wallington and Richard Baxter. Through a variety of informative case studies, my research provides an innovative perspective on the devotional culture of mid sixteenth- to mid seventeenth-century English Protestantism, offering fresh insights into an often neglected aspect of the pastoral relationship.

The initial introductory chapter of this thesis considers the nature of pastoral ministry and lay-clerical relations throughout the period 1559 to 1660. I first situate my research in relation to the existing limited secondary literature on individual spiritual counselling and confession and on the role of ministers as so-called 'physicians of the soul'. Spiritual guidance and direction are neglected themes in existing scholarship on post-Reformation Protestant piety, in contrast with their established place within the historiography of early modern Catholicism. Notably, it has been commonly suggested by historians that contemporary accounts of the post-Reformation ministry emphasise the centrality of preaching at the expense of almost all other pastoral functions. This chapter includes a close contextual analysis of a more diverse range of printed pastoral literature and ecclesiastical biographies, which actually demonstrate the importance which many Protestant divines attributed to counselling the individual conscience, especially in times of spiritual crisis. In addition, I investigate what prescriptive literature reveals about the practices of lay conference, mutual exhortation and the counselling of consciences amongst the communion of saints. This discussion provides an important framework for chapter five, which compares and contrasts lay and clerical cultures of advice-giving. Both sections of chapter one supply crucial historical and theological context for the subsequent epistolary case studies, enabling comparisons to be drawn between pastoral theory, as reflected in prescriptive literature, and historical reality. Attention is also afforded to the

periodisation of this study, which extends from the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth I, when the earliest examples of Protestant epistolary counsel appeared in print, up to the Restoration, which marks a significant change in ecclesiastical context. This section concludes with a methodological analysis of the issues raised by the textual genres on which my research is based.

Chapter two chiefly draws on a surprisingly understudied manuscript which was compiled by the London puritan woodturner, Nehemiah Wallington, around the year 1650. British Library Sloane manuscript 922, entitled ‘Coppies of profitable and comfortable letters’, contains a broad range of both printed and manuscript epistolary sources, which date from between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. This remarkable text provides an important lens through which to consider the origin and development of Protestant epistolary counselling and the importance of spiritual advice letters in relation to wider practical divinity. Chapter two analyses Wallington’s manuscript as indicative of a common trend of disseminating records of private spiritual direction on account of the broad pastoral significance which they were considered to possess. The first half of this chapter makes use of the contents of Wallington’s letter-book to demonstrate the importance of pastoral epistolary counselling in the ministries of Protestant clerics such as Edward Dering, Richard Greenham, Paul Baynes and Joseph Hall. Their wider works reveal a recurring discourse of the professional and authoritative expertise of Protestant clergy as doctors of the soul, proficient at diagnosing and treating the spiritual maladies of the laity. The second section explores Wallington’s own activity as both a giver and receiver of spiritual guidance between the 1620s and 1650s and argues the case that his engagement with epistolary counselling ultimately served to uphold ministerial expertise. The broader historical and theological implications of the letter-book are also explored. Although Wallington’s piety is often depicted as the epitome of puritan individualism and interiority, this chapter highlights a coexisting trend of sustained clericalism and a concurrent emphasis on external hierarchical authority within godly religious culture. When faltering under the burden of doubt and spiritual anxiety, many post-Reformation laypeople turned to clerical specialists for expert resolutions and interpretations of their religious estates, rather than relying purely on self-examination and individual prayer and devotion. Wallington’s letter-book particularly clearly demonstrates how Protestant clergy continued to be regarded as the spiritual experts on whom the welfare of souls principally depended.

The third chapter of this thesis examines a body of epistolary source material which sheds light on religious interactions between Protestant clergymen and members of the early modern English gentry and nobility. These sources, which chiefly date from between the late 1610s and the late 1640s, are used to investigate the impact which social status had on spiritual counselling relationships. The chapter commences by offering fresh insights into an area of current scholarly interest – the role of the domestic chaplain. I first explore *The Returnes Of Spiritual comfort and grief In A Devout Soul* (1648), an illuminating epistolary document produced by the Laudian cleric, John Duncon, for his patroness, Lettice Cary, Viscountess Falkland. This provides a framework for the main body of the chapter, which consists of a comparative analysis of the correspondence of clergymen with three puritan gentlewomen: Lady Joan Barrington, Lady Mary Vere and Lady Jane Bacon. My analysis both expands and questions some of the contentions of existing secondary literature, offering a fresh perspective on the character of these relationships, which shifts the power dynamic away from gentry patrons towards their clergy. I argue that there was significant potential for clergymen to exercise religious influence and agency with pious

elites through intimate spiritual counselling relationships. The epistolary case studies explored in this section of the thesis reveal only occasional evidence of friction and provide some important indications that pious gentry were willing to defer to competent and respected clerical advisers. The importance of gender with respect to patterns of clerical advice-giving is afforded particular attention. This chapter also examines the opportunities which death and bereavement presented ministers to bestow authoritative guidance and consolation. Various scholars have suggested that seventeenth-century opinion was far more tolerant of displays of grief than an earlier Reformation culture which fiercely condemned mourning and sought to stifle its expression. Conversely, I demonstrate here that regulating grief remained a central priority of the pastoral care of the bereaved throughout this period. Finally, attention is directed towards the conspicuous absence of the theology of predestination in contemporary grief counselling. This observation has interesting implications for understanding how this doctrine was articulated within the post-Reformation pastoral tradition.

My fourth chapter focuses on the epistolary counselling of the celebrated divine, Richard Baxter, in the period between the early 1650s and the Restoration. Baxter is well-known amongst early modern historians as one of the most significant pastoral theorists of the seventeenth century. However, the considerable time and energy which he dedicated to providing counsel on an individual level by means of letter-writing remains an underexplored aspect of his pastoral ministry and offers significant scope for further historical and theological reflection. The first section of this chapter chiefly draws on a significant body of manuscript letters which highlight the spiritual intimacy of Baxter's interactions with individuals from across the social spectrum who applied to him for advice and guidance. Baxter's epistolary responses are situated within the context of his printed devotional and pastoral literature, most notably his *Right Method For a settled Peace Of Conscience* (1653) and his seminal treatise, *Gildas Salvianus* (1656). Particular attention is paid to his recommendation of a Protestant practice of making confession to a minister, which has gone almost without comment in secondary literature. Baxter's lay correspondents appealed to him for expert and reliable counsel, often declaring their willingness to defer unequivocally to his authority and revealing a surprising eagerness to submit to close clerical scrutiny.

Scholarly interest in Baxter's written counsel of the laity has predominantly centred on his lengthy correspondence with the Derbyshire gentlewoman, Katherine Gell, between 1655 and 1658. This chapter significantly expands current knowledge of Gell's pious letter-writing, principally by drawing comparisons with her unstudied correspondence with the local Derbyshire minister, Robert Porter. I explore Gell's case with a fresh focus on her recourse to extended networks of pastoral guidance and consider how this impacted on the ability of Protestant ministers to exercise religious authority through spiritual counselling. Whilst Gell certainly possessed an eager enthusiasm for authoritative pastoral oversight, she frequently sought out multiple clerical opinions on various aspects of her spiritual condition. These efforts to obtain the most specialist and dependable ministerial assistance betray a potentially subversive streak in her otherwise deferential demeanour. This chapter concludes with an exploration of the use to which letters of spiritual advice were put in this period by Gell, and other individuals from across the Protestant spectrum, as a resource for individual devotion and self-examination.

Following on from the preceding three case studies concerning clerical epistolary counselling, chapter five addresses the phenomenon of religious advice-giving amongst the

laity, across the full chronological range of this study. A significant proportion of the primary source material on which this chapter draws has not received scholarly attention. This includes manuscript copies of letters written by the London Presbyterian merchant, alderman and ruling elder, Walter Boothby, and the letter-book of a young puritan and future member of Clement's Inn, Matthew Dodsworth, who was a native of Romalldkirk in the North Riding of Yorkshire. When these rich sources are considered alongside better-known epistolary material, they allow fresh light to be shed on both the nature and substance of contemporary lay counselling. This chapter demonstrates that lay epistolary advice-giving was frequently motivated by a pressing sense of religious obligation to edify, instruct and admonish one's fellow believers. This didactic letter-writing was a characteristically godly activity, which could provide participants with a comforting reassurance of their place amongst the elect. Chapter five contributes to current understanding of the relationship between the godly and the ungodly in early modern England by drawing attention to evangelistic impulses in epistolary source material. This section also brings to light the significant place of fraternal admonition within godly religious culture and the real potential which this generated for friction and hostility. This is a neglected theme in the existing secondary literature, which gives the impression of an entirely harmonious culture of mutual edification and encouragement. Through a close analysis of complementary case studies, this chapter explores how mutual exhortation and lay assumption of spiritual authority compared, contrasted and frequently went hand in hand with the more dominant model of clerical counselling. In addition, I add nuance to current understanding of the potential which the mutually instructive culture of godly sociability presented for equal participation of the sexes. In recent years, many historians and literary scholars have paid close attention to the genre of mother's advice literature. Chapter five concludes with a complementary examination of some illuminating records of paternal spiritual counselling, which provide an interesting comparative case study in religious instruction within the early modern family.

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**Short Abstract**

My thesis argues for the significance of individual spiritual counselling within post-Reformation English Protestantism. In particular, it demonstrates the prevalence of pastoral letter-writing and explores the purpose and dynamics of these networks. This research represents the first large-scale, comparative examination of a frequently neglected topic. It draws on many little-known letter collections and a number of unexplored manuscripts, alongside some more familiar epistolary sources.

Chapter one situates my research in relation to existing literature on individual spiritual counselling and confession. As a counterpoint to the scholarly claim that contemporary accounts of the post-Reformation ministry emphasise the centrality of preaching at the expense of almost all other pastoral functions, I demonstrate the importance which many divines attributed to directing individual consciences, as well as highlighting contemporary thought on the role of the laity as providers of religious counselling. Chapter two uses Nehemiah Wallington's manuscript volume of exemplary spiritual correspondence to demonstrate the importance of epistolary counselling in the ministries of several early modern clergymen. The second section of the chapter argues that Wallington's own engagement with epistolary counselling ultimately served to uphold ministerial authority. Chapter three investigates the spiritual letter-writing relationships of early seventeenth-century Protestant ministers and their gentry patrons and demonstrates the significant potential which existed for clergymen to exercise religious agency and influence with pious elites. Chapter four explores the authoritative and spiritually intimate correspondences in which Richard Baxter engaged with laypeople from across the social spectrum during the 1650s. Current knowledge of his counselling of the Derbyshire gentlewoman, Katherine Gell, is extended through an original reflection on the significance of networks of pastoral direction in early modern English Protestantism. Chapter five explores the nature of religious advice-giving amongst the laity and uncovers its pious motivations. This characteristically 'godly' activity is both compared and contrasted with contemporary clerical counselling.

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## Abbreviations and Conventions

<i>ANQ</i>	<i>ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews</i>
<i>BFL</i>	<i>Barrington Family Letters 1628-1632</i> , ed. Arthur Searle (London, 1983).
BL	British Library
Bodl.	Bodleian Library
<i>CCEd</i>	<i>The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835</i> , < <a href="http://theclergydatabase.org.uk/">http://theclergydatabase.org.uk/</a> >
<i>ChH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office
<i>DSR</i>	<i>The Diary of Samuel Rogers, 1634-1638</i> , eds. Tom Webster and Kenneth Shipps (Woodbridge, 2004).
DWL	Dr Williams's Library
<i>EEBO</i>	<i>Early English Books Online</i> , < <a href="http://eebo.chadwyck.com">http://eebo.chadwyck.com</a> >
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>EMLS</i>	<i>Early Modern Literary Studies</i>
ERO	Essex Record Office
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office
<i>JBS</i>	<i>The Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>The Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
KHLC	Kent History and Library Centre
<i>LJD</i>	<i>Letters of John Davenport, Puritan Divine</i> , ed. Isabel MacBeath Calder (New Haven, 1937).

<i>Notebooks</i>	<i>The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654, A Selection</i> , ed. David Booy (Aldershot, 2007).
NUA	Nottingham University Archives
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004-2016) < <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com">http://www.oxforddnb.com</a> >
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary Online</i> (Oxford, 2014) < <a href="http://www.oed.com/">http://www.oed.com/</a> >
<i>Rawlinson</i>	William D. Macray, <i>Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae Partis Quintae Fasciculus Tertius...</i> (Oxford, 1893).
<i>Rawlinson Index</i>	William D. Macray, <i>Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae Partis Quintae Fasciculus Quintus...</i> (Oxford, 1900).
<i>SAC</i>	<i>Sussex Archaeological Collections</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>The Seventeenth Century</i>
<i>SCJ</i>	<i>The Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
<i>TAMO</i>	John Foxe, <i>The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online</i> (Sheffield, 2011) < <a href="http://www.johnfoxe.org">http://www.johnfoxe.org</a> >
TNA	The National Archives

The original spelling and punctuation have been retained for early modern manuscripts and printed works, except where raised letters have been silently lowered and contractions have been expanded. Missing letters have been supplied in italics.



# **1. Introduction: The Protestant Spiritual Advice Tradition**

This thesis argues for the importance of individual spiritual counselling in both the pastoral theory and practice of English Protestantism in the century between the Elizabethan settlement and the Restoration. In particular, it demonstrates the prevalence of pastoral letter-writing and explores the dynamics of these epistolary networks. The chapters which follow provide fresh insights into authoritative clerical instruction, revealing the significant attention which many late sixteenth- to mid seventeenth-century ministers afforded to directing individual consciences. I also explore how lay epistolary advice-giving practices compared, contrasted and frequently went hand in hand with the more dominant model of clerical counselling. As the first large-scale, comparative assessment of the use of letter-writing as a medium for spiritual counselling, this research offers a contribution to current understanding of Protestant devotional culture, illuminating a frequently neglected and underestimated aspect of early modern pastoral practice and charting the emergence and evolution of a distinct religious genre.

## **Historiographical Overview**

In a well-known 1989 essay, Patrick Collinson observed that accounts of the post-Reformation pastoral ministry dating from between 1570 and 1640 are heavily restricted and one-dimensional. The near sole focus of these works on preaching, or occasionally on preaching and catechising, at the expense of all other functions, exposes a problematic ‘credibility gap’ between how contemporaries depicted the ministry and ‘what we know, or may think that we know, it must really have entailed’. Collinson also highlighted the inbuilt bias of these sources; many printed accounts of Protestant ministry are themselves

sermons, or else texts stemming from an initial homiletic scenario.<sup>1</sup> He did note the exception of George Herbert's comprehensive character of the exemplary Church of England pastor. Herbert's endorsement of 'particular confession' for the sick and afflicted, and of the ideal that parish ministers would engage in regular visitation and counselling of individual parishioners, is well known.<sup>2</sup> Whilst Collinson also briefly reflected on 'the healing of wounded consciences' in Protestant pastoral practice, he downplayed the significance of this activity, identifying it as merely one aspect of the broader 'pipe dream' of enforcing Calvinist discipline in England.<sup>3</sup>

Collinson was not the first to observe this emphasis on the sermon,<sup>4</sup> but in the wake of his article the notion of a pulpit-centred ideal has become commonplace. Addressing 'the image of a godly minister' in 1997, Tom Webster remarked: 'it is a truism to suggest that the ministry as conceived of by the godly focused on the act of preaching almost to the exclusion of all else'.<sup>5</sup> In 1998, Eric Carlson and Kenneth Parker published an important study of the practical divinity and spiritual counselling of the Elizabethan pastor, Richard Greenham (see below, pp. 46-52). However, a 2003 article by Carlson on ideals of pastoral ministry is overwhelmingly concerned with the crucial importance placed on the public ministry of the Word.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, in his 2004 exploration of accounts of the ministerial

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'Shepherds, Sheepdogs, and Hirelings: The Pastoral Ministry in Post-Reformation England', in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (eds.), *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay* (Oxford, 1989), 189, 194.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 196-8. George Herbert, *A Priest To the Temple, Or, The Countrey Parson His Character* (London, 1652), 60-8. See especially Philip Sheldrake, 'George Herbert and *The Country Parson*', in G. R. Evans (ed.), *A History of Pastoral Care* (London, 2000), 294-312. Although composed in the early 1630s, Herbert's conformist text was first published during the Interregnum with a preface by the Laudian, Barnabas Oley: Elizabeth Clarke, 'The Character of a Non-Laudian Country Parson', *The Review of English Studies*, 54/216 (2003), 479-96. This hints at the broad acceptability of his recommendations across churchmanship.

<sup>3</sup> Collinson, 'Shepherds, Sheepdogs, and Hirelings', 217-19.

<sup>4</sup> See John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes Towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640* (Cambridge, 1986), 81-4.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge, 1997), 96.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth L. Parker and Eric Josef Carlson, '*Practical Divinity*': *The Works and Life of Revd Richard Greenham* (Aldershot, 1998). Eric Josef Carlson, 'Good Pastors or Careless Shepherds? Parish Ministers and the English Reformation', *History*, 88 (2003), 426-7.

role dating from the Edwardian Reformation to the early Stuart period, J. William Black observed ‘a monolithic commitment to the ideal of a pulpit-centred pastoral ministry’ and a focus ‘on the minister’s pulpit responsibilities almost to the exclusion of all other forms of pastoral ministry except catechising’. Following Collinson, Black maintained that this professed ideal obscures a more diverse reality and he likewise identified Herbert as a crucial exception.<sup>7</sup> Drawing a rather problematically sharp contrast between Geneva and Strasbourg, Black presented this ‘Calvinist’ ideal as being at odds with a Bucerian commitment to the personal pastoral oversight of all members of a congregation. According to Black, Bucer’s vision was only truly realised in England during the mid-1600s by Richard Baxter, whose celebrated pastoral treatise, *Gildas Salvianus* (1656), advocated the catechising and personal counselling of parishioners of all ages and conditions (see below, pp. 145-7).<sup>8</sup>

In 1997, Neal Enssle did present a more rounded portrait of the ideal Protestant pastor. He underscored the value placed on ministers’ godly character and education, citing contemporary discussions of the importance of their engagement in public and private prayer, peacemaking, charity, hospitality and admonition, as well as noting the significance which early modern commentators attributed to preaching. Yet even Enssle had little to add with respect to ‘care for the spiritually afflicted’, which he, nevertheless, identified as ‘one of the parson’s most important duties’.<sup>9</sup> However, by going further back in the historiography, it is possible to glean some considerably more informative insights into what might be termed the Protestant spiritual advice tradition and the role of ministers as counsellors of the individual conscience. Jane Freeman’s 1979 doctoral thesis provides an

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<sup>7</sup> J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors: Richard Baxter and the Ideal of the Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, 2004), 17-18, 195, also 39, 33, 47-8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 55, 75.

<sup>9</sup> Neal Enssle, ‘Patterns of Godly Life: The Ideal Parish Minister in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English Thought’, *SCJ*, 28/1 (1997), 3-28, at 27.

unpublished precedent for Collinson's exploration of ministerial handbooks and related literature on the pastorate. Freeman similarly highlighted the contemporary emphasis on preaching, but she also underlined the value which various individuals attributed to the practice of making private confession to a minister, across churchmanship. According to Freeman, by the early seventeenth century 'an exalted view of the ministerial responsibility for individual souls' was widespread. In stark contrast with Black, she identified 'pastoral supervision of every member of the flock' as an especially characteristic Protestant pastoral ideal prior to 1640.<sup>10</sup>

Earlier, in 1971, Keith Thomas had briefly, and rather sweepingly, observed that 'everyone agreed' on the value of having 'recourse to a minister at times of trouble', although the practices of private confession and counselling which Protestants advocated were 'too informal and unco-ordinated to be capable of filling the gap left by the confessional'.<sup>11</sup> Particularly important to consider are the relevant sections of John T. McNeill's 1951 exploration of pastoral care from the ancient world to modernity, which includes a fairly full discussion of the endorsement of private confession to a minister within what he termed the 'Anglican' tradition. McNeill noted the recommendation in the Book of Common Prayer that if a layperson 'cannot quiet his own conscience' he should seek out a 'discrete and learned Minister of Gods woorde ... open his grieffe ... [and] receiue suche ghostly counsaile, aduise, and comfort, as his conscience may be relieued'. He also cited seventeenth-century endorsements of this practice by such figures as Francis White, John Overall, Lancelot Andrewes, Peter Heylin, William Laud and Richard Allestree, and incorporated several paragraphs on Jeremy Taylor's particularly fulsome recommendations

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<sup>10</sup> Jane Freeman, 'The Parish Ministry in the Diocese of Durham, c. 1570-1640', Ph.D. thesis (Durham University, 1979), 207, 218-27, at 218, 255.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971), 157-9.

for private confession towards the end of the chronological period of this study.<sup>12</sup> Some of these references to conformist works also feature in Martin Thornton's study of Caroline divinity, which includes the claim that 'it would be hard to find a writer of this age to whom personal spiritual guidance was not a normal and necessary part of Christian living'.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, McNeill's analysis is far from comprehensive; many additional seventeenth-century conformist churchmen preached and published on this theme. In 1625, the future Bishop of Chichester, Henry King, encouraged a free, voluntary practice of approaching 'our *ghostly Father*, the *Minister*: who hath authoritie to divest vs of any scruples ... and to pronounce an *Absolution* on our hearty *Repentance*', in accordance with the Prayer Book.<sup>14</sup> Three decades later, in 1657, the sequestered minister, Robert Mossom, advised laypeople 'under the weight of Spiritual troubles' to 'betake themselves to some *holy Confessor*, some faithful Minister of Christ' who, as their 'Spiritual Guide', could 'administer ... saving comfort' and 'assist thee in the better regulating thy duties of Holiness'.<sup>15</sup> The attempt of Laudians, such as Anthony Sparrow, to assert the necessity of private confession of sins for salvation has, however, been well addressed by Eric Carlson. In addition, Carlson briefly remarked on the widespread endorsement, prior to the 1630s, of an optional practice of individual confession 'all along the ecclesiological spectrum'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (3rd edn., New York, 1977), 221-36. *The Booke of common praier, and administration of the Sacramentes...* (London, 1559), sigs M6<sup>r</sup>, also P1<sup>r</sup>. Kenneth Leech drew on McNeill's research in *Soul Friend: Spiritual Direction in the Modern World* (London, 1994), 73-5, 81-2, 193-4.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Thornton, *English Spirituality: An Outline of Ascetical Theology According to the English Pastoral Tradition* (London, 1963), 237, 240-1. Also Thomas Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity During the Seventeenth Century: with Special Reference to Jeremy Taylor* (London, 1952).

<sup>14</sup> Henry King, *Two Sermons. Vpon The Act Sunday, Being the 10th of Iuly. 1625. Deliuered at St Maries in Oxford* (London, 1625), 9-15, at 11.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Mossom, *The Preachers Tripartite, In Three Books* (London, 1657), ii. 3, 51.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Josef Carlson, 'Confession and Absolution in Caroline Cambridge: The 1637 Crisis in Context', in Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds.), *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation* (Woodbridge, 2004), 180-93, at 187.

Conversely, McNeill's discussion of individual pastoral care within English puritanism leaves much scope for expansion. Aside from a few references to Richard Baxter's pastoral theory, he cited no contemporary recommendations for private conference with ministers, focusing instead on the development of a flourishing printed literature on cases of conscience. Indeed, McNeill himself observed a lack of 'extended studies' of the 'parochial labors' of exemplary pastors.<sup>17</sup> The same is true of wider historiography. In an article which is as closely concerned with modern Reformed pastoral theology as with historical practice, Daniel Webber observed that, for the English puritans, 'counselling was *a priority to be pursued with the utmost vigour*'. Yet his overwhelming emphasis was on the public counselling which was delivered from the pulpit and on printed devotional literature.<sup>18</sup> However, in contrast with Webber's assertion that spiritual counselling was not viewed as an 'optional gift' for ministers, Winthrop S. Hudson has highlighted the particular expertise and specialisation of some puritans in this sphere,<sup>19</sup> a theme which will be developed in chapters three and four of this thesis.

McNeill was, by his own admission, far more interested in the fact that there was a 'demand for such literature', than in what 'its contents' actually reveal about how Protestant clerics understood their counselling role. Yet Patrick Collinson was acutely aware of the need for deeper insights into these less easily observable aspects of pastoral activity.<sup>20</sup> J. William Black claimed to offer a comprehensive account of pre-1640 printed works which, as their principal theme, directly address the clergy on ministerial practice.<sup>21</sup> However, by moving beyond this restricted category to survey a broader variety of

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<sup>17</sup> McNeill, *History of the Cure of Souls*, 263-9, at 268.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Webber, 'The Puritan Pastor as Counsellor', in *The Office and Work of the Minister: Papers Read at the 1986 Westminster Conference* (London, 1986), 77-95, at 80.

<sup>19</sup> Winthrop S. Hudson, 'The Ministry in the Puritan Age', in H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (eds.), *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives* (New York, 1956), 196-201.

<sup>20</sup> McNeill, *History of the Cure of Souls*, 236. Collinson, 'Shepherds, Sheepdogs, and Hirelings', 207.

<sup>21</sup> Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 17, 23.

devotional and pastoral literature, which addresses the laity and their responsibilities as well as instructing clergy on pastoral obligations, further light can be shed on this theme.

Amongst puritans, straightforward recommendations that laypeople acquire personal ministerial direction on issues of spiritual importance were certainly numerous. In 1595, the celebrated preacher, Henry Smith, expressed concern that believers were not more ‘inquisitiue concerning the meanes of their saluation’: keen to ‘aske their Pastor what they must doo to bee saued, or which way they may come to heauen?’ The following year, the Calvinist, Henry Holland, observed that in ‘waightie matters wee must conferre with our godly pastors’.<sup>22</sup> Failure to comprehend anything heard in sermons or read in Scripture often met with the same advice. The London minister, William Chibald, recommended that where ‘the Gospel were hard and darke’ Christians should avail themselves of ‘learned and godly Ministers, to whom they may have recourse to instruct and direct them’. Likewise, the puritan pastor, Arthur Hildersham, advised those who ‘after the hearing of the Word ... doubt of anything’ to ‘resort to the Minister, and seeke resolution from him’.<sup>23</sup> Unsurprisingly, conformist authors made corresponding recommendations. Charles Sonnibank counselled lay readers who encountered ‘any thing that is hard, which you desire to vnderstand, but cannot ... [to] desire some of Gods learned and faithfull Ministers’ to ‘conferre with you, that so they may resolue your doubts’.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, godly clergymen might be expected to inspect and verify those lists of evidences of a regenerate life which parishioners were encouraged to draw up following self-examination (see below, pp. 99-100). Nicholas Byfield advised ‘the weak Christian’ in need of ‘establishment and cleare

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<sup>22</sup> Henry Smith, *The Lavviers Question* (London, 1595), sig. B1<sup>r</sup>; Henry Holland, *The Christian Exercise Of Fasting, Private and Pvblike: Plainly set forth by testimonies of holy Scriptures* (London, 1596), 38.

<sup>23</sup> William Chibald, *A Tryall Of Faith: By The Tovch-Stone Of The Gospel* (London, 1622), 83; Arthur Hildersham, *CLII Lectvres Upon Psalme LI. Preached, At Ashby-Delazouch in Leicester-shire* (London, 1635), 43.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Sonnibank, *The Evnche's Conversion. A Sermon preached at Paules Crosse* (London, 1617), 92-3.

assurance' to compile a 'paper-book' of signs of grace and election, 'carry them to thy godly Pastor, and desire him to peruse them, and accordingly give thee his ministeriall testimonie concerning them', which would likely 'adde much satisfaction and rest to thy conscience'.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, numerous seventeenth-century clergymen, ranging from the Arminian, Richard Allestree, to the Presbyterian, Ralph Robinson, insisted that a faithful minister would be 'better able to *judge*' the religious estate of a layman 'then he of himself'.<sup>26</sup>

### **Private Confession**

In the historiography of puritan devotional culture, one frequently encounters the claim that the spiritual journal became the substitute for the Catholic confessional. This assertion can be traced back to William Haller in 1938. Despite having been disputed as early as 1957 by Gordon Stevens Wakefield, who maintained that puritans continued to regard 'the minister as above all else a spiritual director', Haller's contention has proved enduring.<sup>27</sup> Yet even during the Edwardian Reformation, there were calls for the reinstatement of a Protestantised practice of confession to a minister. During Elizabeth I's reign, in a printed letter of spiritual counsel addressed 'to a godly Merchant', the puritan leader, Thomas Cartwright, endorsed this practice for the purpose of acquiring 'knowledg of the Lawe of the Lord, and of the waye of saluation' and 'to satisfie their consciences in doubtfull causes'. A troubled believer was to approach some 'discreete ghostlye father'

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<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Byfield, *The Marrow Of The Oracles Of God* (London, 1640), 178, 183.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Allestree, *The Whole Duty of Man laid down In A Plain Way for the use of the Meanest Reader* (London, 1659), 87. Also Ralph Robinson, *Christ All and in All. Or, Several Significant Similitudes by which the Lord Jesus Christ is described in the holy Scriptures* (London, 1656), 151-2.

<sup>27</sup> William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (3rd edn., New York, 1957), 38, 98. Gordon Stevens Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion: Its Place in the Development of Christian Piety* (London, 1957), 111. See Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Cranmer to Hooker 1534-1603* (Princeton, 1970), 300; Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience* (London, 1972), 18; David Cornick, 'Pastoral Care in England: Perkins, Baxter and Burnet', in Evans (ed.), *History of Pastoral Care*, 315. Alec Ryrie recently made a somewhat similar comment: *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), 396.

who would ‘laboure ... to beate into this spirituall patients minde & remembrance, the most sweet, plain and euident promises of Gods aide’.<sup>28</sup> Although Kenneth Leech labelled this letter ‘remarkable’, its recommendations conform to those of a significant number of other puritans.<sup>29</sup> William Perkins’s insistence that clergymen needed ‘a particular and distinct knowledge of the state of’ their flock (for ‘if the Minister be to confesse his peoples sinnes ... then it followeth also that they must discouer & confesse them vnto him’) has not gone unnoticed. Both he and Hildersham closely distinguished this voluntary exercise of unburdening one’s soul from Catholic auricular confession, which was ‘a rack to the consciences of poore Christians’.<sup>30</sup> The later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century assertion that the earliest reformers erred in indiscriminately refuting the value of making confession to a clergyman is discussed further in chapters two and four.

Misunderstanding continues to surround post-Reformation private confession; in 2013, Lisa McClain mistakenly declared that, amongst English Protestants, ‘the word “confession” was not used nor was the cleric to examine or absolve the parishioner’.<sup>31</sup> Eric Carlson has suggested that most Protestants considered a minister to be ‘the best qualified to help but accorded him no definitive advantage over a godly lay person’.<sup>32</sup> However, this conclusion does underestimate the particular pre-eminence which many commentators afforded to ministerial confessors. The Prayer Book did not envision any role for the laity

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Cartwright, *Two very Godly and comfortable Letters, written ouer into England* (London, 1589), sigs C8<sup>v</sup>, C10<sup>v</sup>, D4<sup>f</sup>-D5<sup>f</sup>, D2<sup>v</sup>. Revealing manuscript evidence of Cartwright’s epistolary counselling of one ‘Mistris D. B.’, whose ‘spirituall sicknes’ blinded her to the fact that she was one of ‘the Children of god’, also survives: Corpus Christi College MS 294, 176-7. Interestingly, by the 1540s, the Lutherans had adopted a modified version of private confession. See Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Leech, *Soul Friend*, 81.

<sup>30</sup> William Perkins, *Of The Calling of the Ministerie two Treatises, discribing The Duties and Dignities of that Calling* (London, 1605), ii. 26-8. W. B. Patterson, *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England* (Oxford, 2014), 98-100. Hildersham, *CLII Lectvres*, 162-4.

<sup>31</sup> Lisa McClain, ‘Troubled Consciences: New Understandings and Performances of Penance Among Catholics in Protestant England’, *ChH*, 82/1 (2013), 121.

<sup>32</sup> Carlson, ‘Confession and Absolution’, 189.

in terms of counselling or hearing confessions; since Christ ‘hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners’, the minister alone (‘by his auctoritie committed to me’) could declare: ‘I absolve thee from all thy sinnes’.<sup>33</sup> Whilst Cartwright acknowledged that believers ‘mayest freely chuse any discrete Christian man’ to be their confessor, he insisted that ‘there is none so meete for thy purpose in that behalfe as thine owne Curate’ as long as he is ‘honest, discrete & well exercised in Gods holie woord’. In line with the Prayer Book, Cartwright viewed absolution as an exclusively ministerial function: as the divinely chosen ‘shepherd of thy soul’, a clergyman is ‘appointed of God to preach unto thee’ and ‘what other thing is the private absolution of the priest, but a private or secret preaching of Christs Gospell’.<sup>34</sup> Perkins concurred that it was ‘the peculiar office of a Minister of God’ and his ‘*proper function*’. Similarly, the bishop and devotional writer, Lewis Bayly, observed that, ‘as the servants of Christ ... to whose fidelitie their Lord and Master hath committed his keys’, God’s ministers had been ‘<sup>a</sup> *chosen* <sup>b</sup> *separated*, and <sup>c</sup> *set apart* for this worke’. In Bayly’s judgement, a layman could declare absolution, but it could not possess ‘the like *efficacio* and *power* to worke on the conscience’.<sup>35</sup> The conformist, Samuel Page, agreed that since ‘God hath ordained some in his Church’ to comfort, instruct and absolve penitents ‘*ex officio*’, then ‘our using of their ministry in these things is strengthened with warrant’. He drew comparisons with the authoritative advice of physicians and lawyers, which it is always ‘safest to trust’, over the guidance of practised, yet ‘unprofessed’, amateurs.<sup>36</sup> Hildersham did expressly uphold the value of ‘faithfull, and experienced’ lay counsellors. Reflecting on the ministerial duty of absolution, he acknowledged the objection that: ‘so much every private Christian may

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<sup>33</sup> *Booke of common praier*, sigs P1<sup>r</sup>, A2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Cartwright, *Two very Godly*, sigs D7<sup>v</sup>-D8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Perkins, *Of The Calling*, i. 32. Lewis Bayly, *The Practise Of Pietie Directing a Christian how to walke that he may please God* (London, 1619), 758-9.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Page, *The Broken Heart: Or, Davids Penance, Fully exprest in holy Meditations upon the 51 Psalme* (London, 1637), 20-22, at 22.

doe'. Elsewhere, he also cited the example of the lay Marian martyr, John Careless, who pronounced forgiveness in a letter.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, Hildersham's continued insistence that 'yet is the faithfull Minister the fittest to bee advised with in this case', is very revealing. In his opinion, distressed Christians could 'more confidently rely upon the testimony, and sentence which ... they give of his estate', because of both their 'speciall authority and commission' and Christ's promise 'that hee by his spirit will give more efficacy to the word of his Ministers in this case then to the word of any private man'.<sup>38</sup>

Whilst such divines denounced the Catholic requirement for auricular confession of all sins, they were united in advising laypeople to submit to intimate clerical scrutiny, despite the fact that Protestant confession was not sacramentally sealed.<sup>39</sup> The moderate puritan, Richard Sibbes, exhorted his lay readers to 'better acquaintance with their spiritual Pastors', that they might 'lay open the case of their soules to their spiritual Physicians upon all good occasions'.<sup>40</sup> Hildersham, who paired his discussion of private counselling with a striking reflection on ministerial authority and the respect which the clerical office merited, warned his readers against living 'without a faithfull Minister whom thou mayest depend upon, whom as thy spirituall father thou mayest reverence and obey' and 'boldly acquaint with the secrets of thy soule'. Perkins portrayed clerical counsellors in similarly reverential terms, exhorting his lay readers: 'hast thou then a godly Pastor, run to him for conference, for comfort, for counsell ... and blesse GOD for bestowing his mercy to thee'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hildersham, *CLII Lectvres*, 151-2, 165-6.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 152, 166.

<sup>39</sup> One clerical biography concerning the 1650s recounts that some episcopal and puritan divines expected an equivalent degree of confidentiality from 'spirituall Physitian[s]' and condemned 'ripping up the sacred seale of confession': DWL MS 38.35, 547-50.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Sibbes, *A Learned Commentary Or Exposition Upon The first Chapter of the Second Epistle of S. Paul to the Corinthians* (London, 1655), 535.

<sup>41</sup> Hildersham, *CLII Lectvres*, 168; Perkins, *Of The Calling*, i. 28.

## Physicians of the Soul

That laypeople were to engage in mutual conference and exhortation was widely asserted. The prominent Essex puritan, Richard Rogers, highlighted the universal obligation of ‘stirring vp’ one another to holiness and observed that ‘there should be not Ministers onely, (who yet chiefly should do it) but euen priuate Christians also, who should be able in some measure to comfort one another in their heauinesse’.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, the Calvinist clergyman, Thomas Draxe, advised the afflicted Christian to ‘conferre with and communicate his doubts and irresolutions to Gods Ministers, *and his Christian friends*’.<sup>43</sup> However, the title of ‘spiritual physician’ was, by and large, reserved for clergy. Although not specific to puritans, this language was especially common amongst them. The renowned pastor, Robert Bolton, believed that ministers must act as ‘Surgeons’, drawing out their parishioners’ particular confessions of sin and spiritual grievances just as physicians bring a ‘sore to an head, that the corruption may have issue, and then heale’.<sup>44</sup> This application of medical rhetoric to the pastoral practices of confession and counselling was frequently underpinned by a discourse of professional expertise. Ministers maintained that the skilled clergyman’s knowledge and experience merited as much esteem as the advice of a learned physician, or, for that matter, a proficient lawyer. According to Sibbes, just as a patient is reassured when ‘his Physician come to him, whom he knowes to be wise, and speaks by his book’, offering remedies which he can guarantee will be effective, so ‘Physicians of our soules’ who can declare a man’s ‘state to be good, by discerning signes of grace in his abasement’ possess the same ability to comfort and assure.<sup>45</sup> Naturally, such medical rhetoric also has roots in the biblical portrait of Christ as physician

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises, Containing Svch Direction As Is Gathered Ovt Of The Holie Scriptvres* (London, 1603), 372-3, also 162.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Draxe, *The Christian Armorie: Wherein Is Contained All manner of spirituall munitio* (London, 1611), ii. 32. (My emphasis).

<sup>44</sup> Robert Bolton, *Instructions For A Right Comforting Afflicted Consciencs* (London, 1631), 216.

<sup>45</sup> Sibbes, *Learned Commentary*, 122, also 535.

and healer, in accordance with passages such as Mark 2:17 and its parallels.<sup>46</sup> As Ralph Robinson asserted:

Jesus Christ is the great principal Physician. Under Christ the Ministers of the Gospel are Physicians. ... 'Tis their office to be helpers of Gods people in their spiritual condition, and 'tis the duty of the servants of God to consult them about the state of their souls.<sup>47</sup>

Interestingly, in turn, some seventeenth-century physicians attempted to bolster their 'moral authority' through appeals to this religious application of medical imagery, presenting themselves as 'heirs of God's healing power'.<sup>48</sup> This was certainly more than mere metaphor and 'literary device'. As Christi Sumich has observed, in contemporary understanding 'the health of the body and that of the soul were intimately connected' and links were frequently perceived between spiritual and bodily maladies.<sup>49</sup>

George Herbert's insistence that the ideal country parson must be able to provide his parishioners with essential medical assistance (as well as rudimentary legal advice) is well known.<sup>50</sup> These roles were certainly combined in the early seventeenth-century activity of the celebrated conformist clergyman and astrological physician, Richard Napier. Convinced of the inter-connectedness of physical and spiritual afflictions, Napier prescribed prayer and offered spiritual comfort and counselling, alongside amulets, magical charms and such conventional treatments of humoral medicine as bloodletting and emetics to hundreds of emotionally and religiously disturbed patients.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, this could also work in the opposite direction. In several late Elizabethan or early Jacobean

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<sup>46</sup> 'The whole have no need of the Physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance'.

<sup>47</sup> Robinson, *Christ All*, 151.

<sup>48</sup> Christi Sumich, *Divine Doctors and Dreadful Distempers: How Practicing Medicine Became a Respectable Profession* (Amsterdam, 2013), 8-11, 19-35, at 29, 49-50. Andrew Wear, 'Religious Beliefs and Medicine in Early Modern England', in Hilary Marland and Margaret Pelling (eds.), *The Task of Healing: Medicine, Religion and Gender in England and the Netherlands* (Rotterdam, 1996), 145-69.

<sup>49</sup> Sumich, *Divine Doctors*, 53-7.

<sup>50</sup> Herbert, *Priest To the Temple*, 94-7.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981), 176-7, 213-29.

manuscript letters, the Cambridge physician, William Butler, (who was known for his rather eccentric methods) supplied spiritual counsel to recently bereaved individuals. To one gentlewoman suffering with ‘Inward pensifnes and Anguyshe of mynde’, extreme ‘passions and melancolique humores’, he offered only scriptural consolations and cautions against excessive grief, by which ‘you worke your owne mischife [and] seeke your owne distrucktion’. In further correspondence, he appropriated explicitly pastoral imagery, referring to one of his medical patients, the Bishop of Chichester, as ‘a sheepe of my flocke nowe under my handes for cure’.<sup>52</sup>

Clerical claims to professional expertise will be examined in greater detail in chapters two to four. The latter also includes a discussion of seventeenth-century interpretations of melancholy in both spiritual and physiological terms.

### **Pastoral Rhetoric and Reality**

In 2013, Alec Ryrie observed that the ‘post-Reformation clergy continued formally to offer the opportunity to confess your sins’ and ‘to recommend individual spiritual counsel’. However, he firmly downplayed the significance of such recommendations, expressing doubts both about whether laypeople actually took their ministers up on these offers and whether clergy even truly intended them to do so. Ryrie did allow that ‘it was more common to seek out spiritual counsel when troubled by sin or fear of damnation’.<sup>53</sup> To be sure, some clerics envisioned personal instruction as being chiefly, or even exclusively, of benefit to the distressed and doubt-ridden. For the Lincolnshire conformist minister, William Willymat, it was ‘the Ignorant ... that stande in this dangerous estate’ of ‘desperation’, who must ‘repaire with all diligence and attentiuenesse vnto the learned

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<sup>52</sup> Clare College CCPP/BUT, unfoliated.

<sup>53</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 396-7.

Ministers & dispensers of Gods most sacred word'.<sup>54</sup> Yet others placed no such limitations on the practice. The godly clergyman, John Rogers, advocated the sort of comprehensive oversight of all parishioners which Richard Baxter would later promote: a pastor must be prepared to privately 'deal with every one as the cause requireth' for 'whomsoever he meeteth with, he hath something to say to him'.<sup>55</sup> This went beyond the requirements of the Prayer Book and pre-empted the stipulations of the Westminster Directory. The latter advocated private and particular admonition and counselling 'upon all seasonable occasions' and urged laypeople 'to confer with their Minister about the estate of their souls' both 'in time of health ... and, in times of sicknesse'.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, even staunch conformists such as Henry Hammond later insisted on the value of '*private*, frequent spiritual *conference* betwixt fellow-Christians, but especially (and in matters of high concernment & difficulty) between the *presbyter* and those of his charge, even in the time of health'.<sup>57</sup>

Ryrie's intimation that such recommendations were not wholly sincere (since they would only have been made if the ministers in question did 'not expect to be overwhelmed by pestering parishioners') does not account for the fact that the majority of these clerics would have considered their flock to be sharply divided between a scrupulous godly minority and an ungodly majority who were prone to neglect spiritual duties. Ministerial recommendations were not 'formal' but fulsome and effusive. Yet as the Presbyterian, Robert Jenison, asserted, whether or not the laity heeded their 'aking and quaking consciences' and sought out God's appointed 'Directours, Instructors and Comforters' was

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<sup>54</sup> William Willymat, *Physicke, To Cvre The Most dangerous Disease of Desperation* (London 1605), 35.

<sup>55</sup> John Rogers, *A Godly & Fruitful Exposition Upon all the First Epistle Of Peter* (London, 1650), 624-5. This treatise was composed before Rogers's death in 1636.

<sup>56</sup> *A Directory For The Publique Worship of God...* (London, 1644), 64-5.

<sup>57</sup> Henry Hammond, *Of The Power Of The Keyes: Or, Of Binding and Loosing* (London, 1647), 113.

a sure indication of the ‘*difference* between the elect and reprobate’.<sup>58</sup> Hildersham certainly seems to have agreed. He considered it a bad sign if Christians willingly maintained ministers and attended sermons but ‘neuer moue any questions to them, nor seek to be directed and informed by them ... concerning any their particular and priuate occasions’.<sup>59</sup> That the puritan, John Downame, qualified his exhortations to seek ministerial resolutions for religious uncertainties with the conditions that these doubts ‘be not slight and triuiall’ and that laypeople should, in the first instance, attempt to obtain personal satisfaction, does not indicate that ‘if the offer of pastoral counsel was ever seriously taken up, it was swiftly withdrawn’. Downame seems to have been chiefly disgruntled that it was ‘the custome of many’ to seek their pastor’s advice when they ‘themselues are at best leysure’ rather than making ‘choice of such times ... as he is vsually most free’.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, John Rogers was acutely aware that zealous parishioners ‘will expect too much at the Ministers hands, as to visit them at their houses more often then the largeness of the place, and his strength and time will permit’. Whilst this was ‘a good fault and a rare, & therefore to be much born with’, it was, nonetheless, an undesirable ‘extremity’.<sup>61</sup>

Godly ministers persevered in exhorting the less scrupulous to partake of this opportunity and such encouragements did frequently go hand in hand with complaints of neglect. Of course, it is important to remember that ministerial claims of declining standards in all aspects of pious activity were customary. The moderate puritan, Thomas Taylor, observed that ‘a conscience truely wounded’ and ‘supported by faith’ would seek spiritual direction, but he marvelled ‘that of so many thousands stung so deadly, so few are

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<sup>58</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 396. Robert Jenison, *Compunction Or Pricking of Heart* (London, 1648), 259.

<sup>59</sup> Arthur Hildersham, *CVIII Lectvres Upon The Fovrth Of Iohn. Preached At Ashby-Delazovch in Leicester-shire* (London, 1632), 320-2, at 321.

<sup>60</sup> John Downame, *A Gvide to Godlynesse Or a Treatise of a Christian Life* (London, 1622), 645-6. Cf. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 396.

<sup>61</sup> Rogers, *Godly and Fruitful Exposition*, 626.

sensible; that so few trouble ... the Ministers with questions concerning their estates'.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, the clergyman, William Gurnall, remarked that 'some now and then' do seek out comfort and counsel, but 'a poor Minister' would have to 'sit in his study' for a long time 'before any of the ignorant sort will come upon such an errand'. Gurnall's solution, like Baxter's, was to encourage pastors proactively to 'seek them out, and not expect that they will come to you'.<sup>63</sup> Clerics regularly bemoaned the fact that the clergyman's professional counsel was not clamoured for as the lawyer's or the physician's guidance was. Jenison lamented that in 'most Congregations ... there is so little recourse to the spirituall Physician'; although 'the *Physician* for the body [is] sought to' and 'the Lawyers house or chamber is frequented ... the Divines house by all is passed by'.<sup>64</sup> Some, like the Cheshire nonconformist, Henry Newcome, combined analogous complaints with profuse reassurances of ministers' willingness to engage in 'personall instruction'. However, others freely admitted that ungodly pastors who neglected to make provision for counselling were part of the problem.<sup>65</sup>

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that the pastoral literature discussed in this chapter can provide more than a merely idealistic portrait of lay-clerical relations. A number of authors made concrete references to either their own practices or the activities of contemporaries. In his *Instructions For A Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences*, Robert Bolton directly addressed other seventeenth-century clerics, whom he was aware were undertaking to 'deale with others about their Spirituall states'. This text contains various personal anecdotes concerning particular individuals whom 'I have sometimes

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<sup>62</sup> Thomas Taylor, *Christ Revealed: Or The Old Testament Explained* (London, 1635), 327-8.

<sup>63</sup> William Gurnall, *The Christian In Compleat Armovr. Or, a Treatise Of The Saints War against the Devil* (London, 1656), 235, 239-40.

<sup>64</sup> Jenison, *Compunction*, 257-8. Also Willymat, *Physicke*, sigs A4<sup>v</sup>-A5<sup>f</sup>; Hildersham, *CVIII Lectvres*, 322; Robinson, *Christ All*, 151-2. See Freeman, 'Parish Ministry', 233.

<sup>65</sup> Henry Newcome, *The Sinners Hope: As His Priviledge, and Duty, In his worst Condition, Stated, Cleared, and Improved* (London, 1659), 53-4, 88, 91. Rogers, *Godly & Fruitful Exposition*, 383.

visited'. In one place, Bolton referred to his interaction with a number of afflicted believers whom the devil had attempted to hinder from 'discover[ing] their mindes', even in the presence of a 'spirituall Physition'. He also observed flaws in the counselling practices of his ministerial brethren, citing the example of 'a Man of conscience and credit' who had too readily declared '*hopes of spirituall safety*' to one troubled in conscience for sin.<sup>66</sup> In a similar effort to foster better practice amongst contemporaries, Richard Greenham observed that 'many visiting afflicted consciences' make comfortable speeches but neglect the thorough 'searching of their sores'.<sup>67</sup> Richard Rogers invoked the cautionary example of 'many monstrous persons whom I haue visited' who, despite privately promising repentance and amendment, had since 'to my great grieffe ... turned backe againe ... *as the dog to his owne vomite*'.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, in an effort to convince lay readers to disclose the details of their spiritual conditions (however grave) to ministerial counsellors, Robert Mossom remarked encouragingly that 'in the service of my Ministry, amongst other *afflicted Consciences*, I have met with ... very many, who had been thus *buffeted by Satan*. ... And these have been *persons of no mean piety*'.<sup>69</sup> Although brief, such comments do indicate that the pastoral recommendations of both puritan and conformist clergy had a basis in concrete practice.

Even more valuable are texts such as *The Safeguard Of The Soule* (1619), penned by the Gloucestershire minister, Lawrence Bankes. It represents the cumulative experience of 'fortie yeeres' of supplying 'ghostly counsell and comfort' to 'the Sicke', the 'Lunatique', those 'troubled in their passions' and those 'fearfull of Death and Damnation'. Having

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<sup>66</sup> Bolton, *Instructions*, 161, 210, 466, 316.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Greenham, *The Workes Of The Reverend And Faithfull Servant Of Iesvs Christ M. Richard Greenham* (London, 1612), 106. Greenham's *Workes* includes his 'Grave Covnsels', which documents numerous concrete counselling scenarios. For example, *ibid.*, 2, 4, 5-9. See below, p. 47.

<sup>68</sup> Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, 598.

<sup>69</sup> Mossom, *Preachers Tripartite*, ii. 16.

found the Prayer Book order for ‘the visitation of the Sicke’ to be lacking in specifics, Bankes compiled this detailed handbook to supplement its provision. It contains extensive counsels and prayers, as well as explanations of the duties of both pastors and their spiritual patients.<sup>70</sup> The existence of this text belies the claim that George Herbert’s treatment of the conformist clergyman’s duties of visitation, counselling and admonition is uniquely expansive.<sup>71</sup>

Primarily prescriptive sources can also be supplemented by the evidence of personal autobiographies and journals. For instance, further tangible insights into Richard Rogers’s pastoral practices can be gleaned from his late sixteenth-century diary. It recounts his private dealings with several godly sick persons whom he ‘visited ... with comfort’ and with one ‘woefull creature’ who, ‘hardened against god ... dispaireinge’ of his mercy and ‘seeking to undoe her selfe’, proved rather less receptive to his counselling.<sup>72</sup> Tom Schwanda has discovered various interesting references to the Lancashire puritan Isaac Ambrose’s private spiritual counselling of troubled laypeople (and some clerical companions) in the surviving published extracts of his diary.<sup>73</sup> Ryrie cited the journal of the young navigator and mathematician, Richard Norwood, as evidence that Protestants struggled to find ‘an appropriate counsellor’ to whom they could unburden their souls. Whilst Norwood’s narrative does recount an incident in which this troubled and distracted youth, who had developed an attraction to Catholicism, was alienated by the ‘imperious’ counsels of a London minister who considered him ‘infected’ with heresy, Ryrie has failed to note that on further occasions Norwood was aided and resolved in ‘all my doubts’ by

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<sup>70</sup> Lawrence Bankes, *The Safeguard Of The Sovle. Declaring Svndry Sovereigne salues tending to the comfort and saluation of the same* (London, 1619), sigs A2<sup>r</sup>-A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 48.

<sup>72</sup> *Two Elizabethan Puritan Diaries*, ed. M. M. Knappen (Chicago, 1933), 70, 62-3, also 56, 68, 88.

<sup>73</sup> Tom Schwanda, *Soul Recreation: The Contemplative-Mystical Piety of Puritanism* (Eugene, OR, 2012), 100-5.

several clerics whose advice he conscientiously followed. One of these spared ‘neither time nor diligence’, counselling Norwood on an individual basis for ‘a month or near upon’.<sup>74</sup>

Furthermore, clerical biographies can provide confirmation of private counselling practices. In his *Marrow of Ecclesiastical Historie* (1650), Samuel Clarke associated this activity with several English clerics, including John Fox, William Perkins, Robert Bolton and William Whately. Biographies of almost twenty additional individuals who were purportedly committed to providing personal religious instruction appear in Clarke’s *Lives of thirty-two English divines* (1677), and his *Lives Of sundry Eminent Persons* (1683) features another four pastors who engaged in spiritual counselling prior to the Restoration. These include the puritan, John Ball, who developed his ‘ability to counsell and comfort dejected, tempted Christians’ through his particular dealings with the wife of his patron, ‘Mistresse Sarah Mainwayring ... who was much exercised in that kind’. Another of Clarke’s subjects, the Hertfordshire rector, Herbert Palmer, carried out family visitations ‘to afford personal directions’ and penned numerous ‘Christian letters’, containing ‘frequent directions and encouragements in the wayes of God’.<sup>75</sup> Patrick Collinson has observed that these *Lives* owe something to the genre of ‘hagiography’; Clarke presented his subjects through ‘a wide variety of clichés’ as exemplary proponents of a respectable, moderate puritan tradition which eschewed schism. Notwithstanding these underlying ‘theological’ and ‘partisan’ motivations, both Collinson and Enssle have maintained that

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<sup>74</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 396-7. *The Journal of Richard Norwood, Surveyor of Bermuda*, eds. Wesley Frank Craven and Walter Brownell Hayward (New York, 1945), 33-5, 98-103.

<sup>75</sup> Samuel Clarke, *The lives of thirty-two English divines* (London, 1677), esp. 149, 186-99, at 186; idem, *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical Historie...* (London, 1650), 340-9, 414-18, 487-500; idem, *The Lives Of sundry Eminent Persons In This Later Age* (London, 1683), 20, 81-93, 161-2, 165-6, 168, 203. John Machin and Edmund Staunton also wrote letters of spiritual counsel.

Clarke's *Lives* shed important light on ministerial counselling practices.<sup>76</sup> However, in 2004, J. William Black expressed doubts concerning their reliability. Black's somewhat circular argument hinges upon his contention that, prior to the mid-1650s, printed models of parish ministry were almost entirely 'pulpit-centred'. The prominence of individual oversight, visitation and catechising in these *Lives* convinced Black that Clarke was influenced by a later 'Baxterian perspective on ministry' which he 'read back into the practise' of early Stuart clergy.<sup>77</sup> However, the existence of corroborating sources, such as Herbert Palmer's printed reflection on the 'Calling of a Minister' (1644), appears to undermine Black's contention. This text confirms that Palmer was, at the least theoretically, committed to an ideal of godly ministry involving regular private visitation, universal catechising, personalised counsel and a particular awareness of '*the tempers and spirits of every*' layperson under his charge, several years before Baxter resolved to implement such practices in his Kidderminster parish.<sup>78</sup> John Rogers's 'Form for a Minister's Life' is another fascinating survival. It contains sixty rules penned for his personal improvement sometime between 1592 and 1636, including an 'Aim (if it be possible) to spend one Afternoon in a Week, in visiting the Neighbours houses ... for Direction[,] to speak the more fitly in my Ministry'. Although Rogers lamented falling short of this target, being 'so distracted with Journeyings about', his professed ideal of

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<sup>76</sup> Patrick Collinson, "'A Magazine of Religious Patterns": An Erasmian Topic Transposed in English Protestantism', in idem, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), 505, 513-16, 510. Peter Lake has more extensively assessed the polemical concerns underlying Clarke's collections: 'Reading Clarke's Lives in Political and Polemical Context', in Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (eds.), *Writing Lives: Biography and Textuality, Identity and Representation in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2012), 293-318. Collinson, 'Shepherds, Sheepdogs, and Hirelings', 215, 217. Enssle, 'Patterns of Godly Life', 26-7.

<sup>77</sup> Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 199-200, 220-2.

<sup>78</sup> In Herbert Palmer, *Memorials Of Godlinesse And Christianitie. Part I. Of making Religion ones Businesse* (London, 1644), 44-5, 48, 50-3. Importantly, twelve of Clarke's *Lives*, including that of Palmer, were actually published as early as 1651, appended to *A General Martyrologie Containing A Collection Of all the greatest Persecutions...* (London, 1651) and a further ten featured in *A Martyrologie, Containing A Collection of all the Persecutions...* (London, 1652). Furthermore, Black overlooks that many were not actually composed, but merely compiled or simply reprinted by Clarke from earlier biographies and funeral sermons.

regular ‘*private Visiting*’ to discover his parishioners’ ‘particular Wants and States’ constitutes a remarkable precedent for Baxter’s pastoral priorities.<sup>79</sup>

Alternatively, similar references in Edmund Calamy’s generally briefer biographical portraits of ejected nonconformists likely refer to pastoral activity which post-dated Baxter’s endorsement of universal catechising and private counselling. During the 1650s, these practices were adopted by many members of the clerical Association Movement which he established to foster pastoral commitment and Protestant unity. Presbyterian clerics including Thomas Wadsworth and Richard Fairclough instructed their people ‘House by House’, conversing ‘with every one that was capable, labouring to understand the present State of their Souls’ and supplying ‘Instructions, Reproofs, Admonitions, Exhortations, and Encouragements’.<sup>80</sup> More revealing references to spiritual counselling occur in ‘*Icones Sacrae Anglicanae*’, a collection of manuscript biographies of English divines composed by the ejected West Country clergyman, John Quick, towards the end of the seventeenth century. Quick included a life of John Conant, the puritan rector of Limington, Somerset, who during the 1620s and 1630s ‘gave such seasonable & suitable prescriptions & divine medicines as cured, recovered, & established’ many ‘sin-sick souls’ to whom he was ‘a most judicious, expert, & able spirituall Physitian’.<sup>81</sup> He wrote also of the Devon Presbyterian, George Hughes, who acted as ‘Ghostly Father’ to a troubled young parishioner (the future nonconformist minister Ralph Venning), quietening his ‘Terrors’ of conscience through ‘dayly converse ... Instructions, directions, & fervent prayers’. Hughes was ‘a great Casuist’ who received ‘Letters written him about various Soul-concerns from sundry persons labouring under sore troubles of mind, & most intricate

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<sup>79</sup> In Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England* (London, 1702), Book III, 112, 110.

<sup>80</sup> Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (London, 1965), 66-74. Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgement Of Mr. Baxter’s History Of His Life and Times. ... The Second Edition: In Two Volumes* (London, 1713), ii. 26, 583.

<sup>81</sup> DWL MS 38.34, 364-5.

perplexing Circumstances'. Hughes's corpus of spiritual correspondence was apparently disposed of by his son after his death, but Quick claimed to have 'perused' many of these letters and he recounted details of a few of the 'multitude' of cases which Hughes 'resolv'de by writeing'.<sup>82</sup>

### **Letters of Spiritual Counsel**

First-hand evidence of verbal spiritual counselling may be disappointingly limited, but surviving correspondence can shed light on the substance of early modern religious guidance. This fact has long been apparent to scholars of the European Reformations. In 1951, McNeill remarked 'that Luther, Bucer, Calvin, Spener and countless other Protestants have written in quantity letters of "advice that tends" to Christian living, and often offered spiritual direction in that sense'. Extant letters provide valuable insights into 'the content of the advice given'.<sup>83</sup> McNeill drew on some of Luther's 'numerous letters of advice or consolation', highlighting the particular effort which this 'eminent and busy' man afforded 'to the personal problems of others'.<sup>84</sup> He also examined similar correspondence by John Calvin, citing the earlier research of Jean-Daniel Benoît, who depicted Calvin as, above all else, a pastor and 'counsellor of men's souls' and argued for the appropriateness of applying the term 'spiritual direction' to his pastoral activities.<sup>85</sup> This terminology will be used at times in this thesis to refer to the authoritative and intimate relationships which various English Protestant counsellors formed with laypeople who desired their instruction or encouragement as an aid to spiritual progression.

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<sup>82</sup> DWL MS 38.35, 501, 546-7. These epistolary requests came from fellow ministers as well as laypeople. Also MS 38.34, 4, 75.

<sup>83</sup> McNeill, *History of the Cure of Souls*, 200-1.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-4. Some of Luther's pastoral letters appeared in English in 1955: *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (London, 1955).

<sup>85</sup> McNeill, *History of the Cure of Souls*, 200-9. Part of Jean-Daniel Benoît's research was translated into English: *Calvin in His Letters: A Study of Calvin's Pastoral Counselling, Mainly From His Letters* (Oxford, 1986), 14.

During the 1980s, Calvin's correspondence with women received particular scholarly attention from Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell, who argued that, unlike Luther, the Genevan reformer was more concerned with securing the support and financial assistance of prominent noble women than with providing personalised counsel for their souls. Nonetheless, Blaisdell acknowledged Calvin's more 'occasional offerings of spiritual comfort', even proposing that the women who corresponded with him, and with other celebrated pastors, may have 'looked to them for a re-creation of that unique traditional relationship with the priest-confessor'.<sup>86</sup> The theme of gender will receive particular attention in chapter two and will recur throughout all subsequent sections of this study. Women are notably prominent amongst those early modern English laypeople who engaged in correspondence of a spiritually instructive nature and this thesis contends that, whilst epistolary counselling was not gender-specific, it was gender-related.

With respect to England, Patrick Collinson's research on spiritual counselling correspondence is most relevant to this thesis. His publications include several essays which address religious letter-writing in the ministries of a few sixteenth-century British divines, principally John Knox and Edward Dering. These will be discussed in detail in chapter two, but it is important to note here that Collinson depicted the spiritual letter as an important manifestation of voluntary religion and 'a distinct literary and religious genre'.<sup>87</sup> My thesis extends this existing scholarship on English Protestant epistolary counselling.

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<sup>86</sup> Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell, 'Calvin's and Loyola's Letters to Women: Politics and Spiritual Counsel in the Sixteenth Century', in Robert V. Schnucker (ed.), *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of John Calvin* (Kirksville, Mo.: 1988), 248; idem, 'Calvin's Letters to Women: The Courting of Ladies in High Places', *SCJ*, 13/3 (1982), 68.

<sup>87</sup> Especially Patrick Collinson, "'Not Sexual in the Ordinary Sense": Women, Men and Religious Transactions', in idem, *Elizabethan Essays* (London, 1994), 119-50; idem, 'Dering, Edward (c.1540-1576)', *ODNB*. See also Norman Keith Clifford, 'Casuistical Divinity in English Puritanism During the Seventeenth Century: Its Origins, Development and Significance', Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1957), 83-4, for brief references to Puritan casuists' letter-writing.

Drawing on a wide-ranging body of devotional correspondence, I present extensive evidence of the personalised instruction which Protestants acquired from both clerical and lay counsellors and provide revealing insights into the character of these relationships. Commencing roughly around the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign, when the earliest examples of English Protestant spiritual letters appeared in print, this thesis explores a variety of case studies spanning the century leading up to the Restoration. As is true of spiritual autobiographies, devotional miscellanies and similar genres which offer insights into lay piety, the volume of extant spiritual letters increases considerably across the course of the seventeenth century. A notable proportion date from the years of the Civil Wars and Interregnum. Interestingly, the 1650s also saw a particular concentration of printed pastoral and devotional literature which advocates private spiritual counselling and confession. It is perhaps unsurprising that pastoral oversight of all individuals within a congregation proved a particular priority during this period of especially intense confessional competition.<sup>88</sup>

### **Thesis Outline**

The next chapter of this thesis centres on a surprisingly underexplored volume of exemplary correspondence compiled by the well-known puritan woodturner, Nehemiah Wallington. This manuscript provides a window onto the emergence of the genre of the Protestant letter of spiritual counsel in England and its development across the course of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I demonstrate the importance of pastoral epistolary counselling in the ministries of several clergymen, shedding light on the role of clerics as physicians of the soul, who conceived of themselves as indispensable experts at diagnosing and curing the spiritual afflictions of lay devotees. Wallington and others, seeking resolutions for their doubts and anxieties, affirmed the particular authority of such

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<sup>88</sup> Although most of the secondary literature surveyed here only addresses the period up to 1640, Jane Freeman has noted the increasing expression of this ideal in subsequent decades: 'Parish Ministry', 224.

clergy as pastoral specialists. The second half of this section addresses Wallington's own use of the letter form as both a giver and receiver of spiritual instruction and argues that his encounters with epistolary counselling ultimately served to reinforce, rather than undermine, ministerial authority. Finally, this chapter reflects on the intersection of concurrent trends of sustained clericalism and spiritual individualism within Protestant piety.

Chapter three considers the impact of social status on spiritual counselling relationships, chiefly through a close comparative analysis of the correspondence of ministers with three puritan gentlewomen: Lady Joan Barrington, Lady Mary Vere and Lady Jane Bacon. In dialogue with existing secondary literature, I offer a fresh interpretation of the character of these relationships which shifts the power dynamic away from gentry patrons towards their clergy, exposing the potential which existed for ministers to exercise considerable religious influence with pious elites. Particular consideration is afforded to the opportunities which death and bereavement presented ministers to impart comfort and authoritative instruction. Regulating the expression of grief is highlighted as a central priority of the pastoral care of bereaved individuals. Conversely, attention is drawn to the conspicuous absence of the theology of predestination, which has an important bearing on our understanding of the articulation of this doctrine within Protestant practical divinity.

Chapter four provides a comprehensive examination of the pre-1660 epistolary counselling of Richard Baxter. Despite his significant reputation as a pastoral theorist, limited attention has been afforded to exploring Baxter's counselling on an individual level through letter-writing. Lay correspondents from across the social scale appealed to

Baxter's expert guidance, articulating surprising enthusiasm to submit to his authority and be subject to intense clerical scrutiny. Current scholarly interest in Baxter's written counsel of the laity predominantly centres on his epistolary relationship with the Derbyshire gentlewoman, Katherine Gell. By drawing comparisons with Gell's extensive, unexplored correspondence with the Presbyterian cleric, Robert Porter, this chapter extends current knowledge of her case through an original assessment of the importance of networks of pastoral counselling within English Protestantism and the implications which this held for ministers' ability to exercise religious authority. Lastly, the interesting use to which letters of spiritual instruction were put as resources for personal devotion is considered.

The final chapter highlights the mutually instructive character of godly sociability through an exploration of religious advice-giving amongst Protestant laypeople. Drawing on a considerable quantity of both understudied and unexplored correspondence, I demonstrate the powerful sense of obligation to exhort and admonish one's fellow believers which motivated this pious activity. This chapter uncovers a notable degree of overlap between lay and clerical practices of pastoral guidance, whilst also maintaining the particular dominance of ministers within this sphere. Attention is drawn to the role of fraternal admonition within puritanism and revealing insights are offered into the practical complexities of religious interactions between the godly and ungodly. Using gender as a category of analysis, I nuance current assessments of the potential which didactic letter-writing presented for equal participation of the sexes. Finally, in response to recent historical interest in the genre of maternal advice literature, I offer a comparative exploration of paternal spiritual counselling correspondence.

The epistolary sources employed in this thesis raise certain methodological issues which require careful navigation. Within literary scholarship there has been a recent backlash against the prevailing interpretation of letters as ‘transparent’, unmediated reflections of private beliefs and attitudes. Of late, scholars have presented early modern correspondence as the product of varied cultural, literary and linguistic conventions and as a form of self-construction equivalent to other varieties of life-writing. It is, thus, necessary to trace a careful interpretive course through the rhetorical conventions and politeness strategies inherent in the genre.<sup>89</sup> Where only one side of a correspondence survives, particular caution will be exercised in interpreting the dynamics of relationships. Moreover, it is important to recognise that letters of spiritual counsel which survive only as manuscript or printed copies, or entries within letter-books and miscellanies, may have been subject to modification or revision.<sup>90</sup> In fact, as James Daybell has observed, the existence of these documents does not constitute objective proof that such correspondence was actually sent – although in various cases this is confirmed by additional surviving letters within a series or other contextual evidence.<sup>91</sup> Aware of the particular difficulties of differentiating between printed letters transferred from genuine manuscript originals and those which may have been composed for publication, at a few points in this thesis caveats will be raised surrounding documents which are designated ‘letter’ or ‘epistle’.<sup>92</sup> Yet although it is necessary to keep these complex methodological issues in mind, when sensitively interpreted, these sources can provide many uniquely valuable insights into the

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<sup>89</sup> James Daybell, ‘Women’s Letters, Literature and Conscience in Sixteenth-Century England’, in Harald E. Braun and Edward Vallance (eds.), *The Renaissance Conscience* (Oxford, 2011), 82-5.

<sup>90</sup> Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Newark, 2005), 275. The Marian martyrs’ correspondence was certainly carefully edited, prior to printing, to remove personal references and augment its scriptural style: Susan Wabuda, ‘Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale, and the Making of Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*’, in Diana Wood (ed.), *Martyrs and Martyrologies* (Oxford, 1993), 254-8.

<sup>91</sup> James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635* (Basingstoke, 2012), 10.

<sup>92</sup> Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 184.

nature and content of Protestant spiritual counselling, as well as indicating the importance of the epistolary form as a medium for religious advice-giving.

## 2. Nehemiah Wallington's Letter-book and the Dissemination of Religious Counsel

### Introduction

On account of the seven extant manuscript notebooks which he penned between 1618 and 1654, the London puritan woodturner, Nehemiah Wallington (1598-1658), has become a favoured exemplar of popular Protestantism for early modern historians. Wallington, who became a freeman of the Turners Company in 1620, lived a modest married life in the parish of St Leonard, Eastcheap, from 1621, fathering five children, of whom only one reached adulthood. He meticulously documented his unremitting pursuit of evidence of his election to salvation, regarding the maintenance of this record as an important spiritual obligation. Wallington's frequent bouts of melancholy, which ultimately resulted in multiple suicide attempts, have led historians to depict him as an archetypal example of the emotional turmoil which experimental Calvinism could engender.<sup>93</sup> His notebooks have proved conducive to conventional explanatory narratives of a Reformation-era shift away from clerical mediation towards heightened individualism and subjectivity. In the recent historiography of puritan devotional culture there has been an increasing backlash against traditional interpretations of the rise of spiritual self-writing as a key trigger in the emergence of the modern individual. Scholars have underscored the limited manifestation of autonomous selfhood in spiritual memoirs, as well as the important communal dimension of both diary-writing and wider godly religious culture.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, historians continue to regard Wallington's writings as epitomising a puritan focus on personal self-scrutiny as the chief tool by which believers could interrogate their

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<sup>93</sup> David Booy, 'Introduction', in *Notebooks*, 3, 19-20, 24.

<sup>94</sup> See Andrew Cambers, 'Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580-1720', *JBS*, 46/4 (2007), 796-825; J. C. Davis, 'Living with the Living God: Radical Religion and the English Revolution', in Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (eds.), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), 31-5.

own experiences and triumph over their doubts.<sup>95</sup> Yet although he has become a byword for Calvinist introspection, Wallington's manuscripts also reveal illuminating insights into the importance which early modern Protestants attributed to obtaining expert guidance in their religious anxieties and scruples.

Wallington's writing took a distinctive form in the collation of spiritual correspondence within a duodecimo letter-book of over two hundred folios. James Daybell has recently characterised the letter-book as a primarily 'bureaucratic' and 'administrative' genre, but British Library Sloane manuscript 922, entitled 'Coppies of profitable and comfortable letters', appropriates the form in a unique manner.<sup>96</sup> Wallington's own epistolary exchanges with neighbours, friends and ministers are anthologised alongside exemplary manuscript letters which circulated amongst the godly community and excerpts from the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century printed correspondence of martyrs and clerics. This manuscript has received surprisingly modest attention. Paul Seaver exploited the considerable biographical potential of Wallington's own letters in his excellent monograph, *Wallington's World*, which sparked a wave of interest in the notebooks. David Booy also referred to this text in his overarching exploration of how Wallington constructed an 'image of self' through his writings.<sup>97</sup> However, neither scholar has explored Wallington's role as reader and compiler of key examples from the interesting and underexplored genre of printed religious correspondence. A paragraph-

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<sup>95</sup> See, amongst many, Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England: Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (Farnham, 2012), 94-5, 97, 104-6, 115-21; James S. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, 1998), 34-5; Susan Doran and Christopher Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England, 1500-1700* (2nd edn., London, 2003), 97-8; Ian W. Archer, 'Religious Identities', in Suzanne Gossett (ed.), *Thomas Middleton in Context* (Cambridge, 2011), 137-8. A strong emphasis on individualism remains characteristic of broad introductory texts, such as Jeffrey Forgeng, *Daily Life in Stuart England* (Westport, 2007), 230-1.

<sup>96</sup> Daybell, *Material Letter*, 175-7, 208.

<sup>97</sup> Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, 1985). Booy, 'Introduction', 12-14. Booy's recent abridged edition of the notebooks contains twelve of Wallington's letters.

length outline by Daybell constitutes the only scholarly discussion of the manuscript as a whole.<sup>98</sup>

Wallington prefaced his collection with an address ‘To All Readers’, dated May 1650, which commences: ‘contrary to my purpos and intents, God altering my minde, I now begin to write another Booke which doth consarne manye pious, holy Godly and Christian letters’.<sup>99</sup> Wallington’s personal correspondence dates back to the mid-1620s, but the idea of compiling a letter-book came to him late in life and he bitterly lamented having ‘through negligence lost’ ‘many sweet and comfortable and vsefull letters that I haue sent’ as well as ones ‘receiued from diuers others’.<sup>100</sup> Wallington organised the entries in his letter-book in roughly chronological order and prefaced letters with titles indicating their subject matter or exemplary value, which he either composed or copied from printed works. Insights can be gleaned into the personal significance which these letters held; the manuscript contains a declaration, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1658, that ‘I haue read ouer this my writing Booke ... where in I obserue a few things’. A brief list of topics follow with references to the pages on which they are discussed, including ‘2 Rules to find whither God be with vs or no’ and ‘3 Motiues why we should bare the losse of Relations’, which exemplify Wallington’s wider predilection for recording checklists of observations for use in self-examination and meditation. Poignantly, Wallington consulted these ‘precious Letters’ only a matter of weeks before his death – although he apparently revisited several

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<sup>98</sup> Daybell, *Material Letter*, 208-9. Reproduced in idem, ‘Early Modern Letter-Books, Miscellanies, and the Reading and Reception of Scribally Copied Letters’, in Joshua Eckhardt and Daniel Starza Smith (eds.), *Manuscript Miscellanies in Early Modern England* (Farnham, 2014), 65-6. The most recent large-scale assessment of Wallington’s writings makes no reference to correspondence. Robert M. Oswald III even mistakenly asserted that this manuscript is non-extant: ‘Death, Piety, and Social Engagement in the Life of the Seventeenth Century London Artisan, Nehemiah Wallington’, Ph.D. thesis (University of Edinburgh, 2012), 177-8.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Nehemiah Wallington his Booke 1635’ is also written on the back of a speech appended to the volume after the index, but this entry is copied on a different size of paper and seems to be an insertion into the collection. BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>, 206<sup>r</sup>-9<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., fos. 4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

notebooks during this time.<sup>101</sup> But aside from personal utility, Wallington undoubtedly intended this volume to be read widely both ‘for Gods glory and the good of souls’. He insisted that he did not want his works to be printed during his lifetime, protesting a lack of expertise and originality. This may amount to little more than modesty and anxiety about the sin of pride, for Wallington furnished his collection with letter headings, a dedicatory epistle and a table of contents.<sup>102</sup> In any case, this volume is an illuminating witness to the scribal dissemination of religious correspondence. The functions which Wallington ascribed to these letters echo the didactic functions of the clergy: ‘some are to instruct and aduise, some to reprove and admonish some are sweete and comfortable & some are to stir vp to praise and thankfulness’.<sup>103</sup> In a sense, he constructed a proxy ecclesiastical community, envisaging these writings ministering to the wider society of the godly.

This remarkable text provides a window onto the wider practice of spiritual letter-writing and its significance within Protestant practical divinity. Centring on this unique collection of documents, this chapter will explore the dissemination of epistolary counsel. Recent scholarship on early modern epistolarity has challenged a traditional understanding of letters as private, dyadic documents. Research has ranged from examining the role of third parties in the transmission of letters to investigating webs of communication and intentional and unintentional epistolary communities.<sup>104</sup> These insights have a particular bearing on letters of a spiritual, interiorised nature. Patrick Collinson has suggested that the genre of ‘godly and comfortable letters’ helped to fill the lacuna produced by the post-Reformation abandonment of ‘the regular practice of spiritual direction’ and auricular

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., fo. 205<sup>v</sup>. For example, *Notebooks*, 147, 263.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>103</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>104</sup> Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 23-8, 68-72. Daybell, ‘Women’s Letters’, 82-5, 90, 99.

confession.<sup>105</sup> Yet the print and manuscript dissemination of such letters problematises the comparative analytical category of ‘the confessional’ and suggests the need for an assessment of the secondary reception of epistolary advice. This chapter will propose that Wallington’s reading of printed epistolary literature may have influenced his own engagement with spiritual counselling. Contributing to an already increasingly nuanced understanding of puritan individualism through the illuminating perspective of lay-clerical relations, I will underscore the significant authority which Protestant ministers could acquire on account of their pastoral expertise. Drawing more broadly on the wider devotional context of Wallington’s letter-book, this chapter will isolate a recurring discourse affirming the dignity of the ministerial office which emerges from the works of the clerical dispensers of epistolary counsel featured within it. Clergy encouraged the laity to have recourse to their expertise and conveyed these ideals through their practical performance of spiritual counselling. These sources support Rosemary O’Day’s assertion that, deprived of their elevated sacramental status and seeking ‘a new *raison d’être*’, the post-Reformation clergy particularly emphasised their commitment to the exercise of their duties of pastoral care and oversight.<sup>106</sup> As this chapter will demonstrate, Wallington seems largely to have internalised these models of pious practice, so that his own encounters with epistolary counselling ultimately served to affirm, rather than undermine, ministerial authority.

### **The Model of the Martyrs**

Wallington’s manuscript traces a tradition of religious letter-writing which extended back to the New Testament and forward to his own time. Having declared: ‘what

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<sup>105</sup> Patrick Collinson, ‘The Role of Women in the English Reformation Illustrated by the Life and Friendships of Anne Locke’, in idem, *Godly People*, 275.

<sup>106</sup> Rosemary O’Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979), 126.

were St Pauls and the rest of the Aposles Epistles but Letters sent to the saints and children of God ... which now sarue for much vse in the Church', he commenced his collection by transcribing the second Johannine epistle. This, Wallington observed, was 'out of the fountaine[:] the word of God', whereas he bolstered the authority of his own and other contemporary letters by characterising them as 'springs from the fountain', claiming continuity with apostolic precedent.<sup>107</sup> Wallington likely selected 2 John because of its distinctive brevity; expressions of regret at being unable to transcribe all the exemplary letters which he treasured pervade this manuscript. However, its ostensibly individual, rather than communal, address would also have appeared to provide a scriptural precedent for the type of correspondence which constitutes the bulk of Wallington's collection: personal letters of direction. Modern scholars generally conclude that the elect 'Ladie and her children' of 2 John refers to an ecclesiastical community, but the preface which Wallington copied, unattributed, from the Geneva Bible, reinforces the common contemporary interpretation that this epistle proffered counsel on an individual level.<sup>108</sup> Of course, the New Testament provided the natural model for instructive religious letter-writing. Scriptural epistles were frequently an implicit textual influence on early modern correspondents and, at times, the paradigm could be overt.<sup>109</sup> Nor was Wallington unique in tracing this sort of historical spiritual letter-writing tradition. In 1627, the puritan clergyman, John Davenport, declared: 'how are we bound to blesse God for those Epistles, which the Apostles wrote, not onely to whole Churches, but also to private persons?' This was not a 'course extraordinary and proper onely to those persons and times'; Davenport traced a long evolution through the casuistical and instructive correspondence of Greek and

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<sup>107</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 2<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., fos. 22<sup>v</sup>, 30<sup>v</sup>, 51<sup>v</sup>, 68<sup>v</sup>, 6<sup>r</sup>. Judith Lieu, *I, II & III John: A Commentary* (Louisville, 2008), 244-5.

<sup>109</sup> In 1650, John Gunter, a Fellow of New College, Oxford, and future Congregationalist minister, sent an instructive letter to his sister which took 'one of the Apostle Pauls epistles for my patern'. The first folio largely consists of a collage of references to chapters one, two, three and five of 1 Thessalonians: BL Add. MS 4275, fos. 249<sup>r</sup>-50<sup>r</sup>.

Latin Fathers (including Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine) to Calvin, Beza and ‘those holy Letters of Bradford, and other blessed Martyrs in our owne language’.<sup>110</sup>

It was to the Marian martyrs that Wallington also subsequently turned, introducing twelve carefully transcribed entries with the declaration: ‘heere be some letters of those that suffered for the cause of God where you may see many more at large in the Booke of Mareres [*sic*]’.<sup>111</sup> This choice was a natural one, for the martyrs’ epistles represent the initial forays into a genre of Protestant epistolary counsel which came to acquire a significant place within Elizabethan and seventeenth-century religious culture and paved the way for the pastoral ministries of clerics such as Edward Dering and Richard Greenham. William Haller first noted this in 1963, when he described John Bradford ‘as a prototype of all the physicians of the soul who would presently be undertaking the spiritual direction of more and more of Elizabeth’s subjects’.<sup>112</sup> More recently, Thomas Freeman has highlighted this thread of continuity in his examination of the intimate spiritual relationships which some martyrs forged with female sustainers.<sup>113</sup> The epistolary model of St Paul looms large in these letters. Many commence with a characteristic Pauline salutation wishing grace, peace and comfort and a minority even bear communal addresses.<sup>114</sup> During their imprisonment, the future martyrs adopted letter-writing as a means of communicating with underground Protestant communities and proffering counsel and encouragement to friends and relations suffering trial and persecution. On account of

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<sup>110</sup> John Davenport, ‘The Epistle to the Reader’, in Henry Scudder, *The Christians Daily Walke in holy Sevritie and Peace* (London, 1628), sigs A9<sup>v</sup>-A10<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>111</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>112</sup> William Haller, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London, 1963), 207-11. Interestingly, Foxe himself was famed as a spiritual counsellor and he wrote a number of pastoral letters to individuals who sought his guidance: Thomas S. Freeman, ‘Through a Venice Glass Darkly: John Foxe’s Most Famous Miracle’, in Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds.), *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church* (Woodbridge, 2005), 307-20.

<sup>113</sup> Thomas S. Freeman, ‘“The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuose Women”: The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs’, *JBS*, 39/1 (2000), 20.

<sup>114</sup> John R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563-1694* (Cambridge, 1993), 87-93.

its homiletic nature, this material fits within Gary Schneider's category of 'the letter-sermon'.<sup>115</sup>

Ongoing research by Freeman and Mark Greengrass is illuminating the full significance of these letters, revealing the extent of their scribal circulation and the differences between printed and extant manuscript versions. Less than a year after the publication of the first edition of the *Acts and Monuments*, John Foxe, John Bull and Miles Coverdale collaborated in the production of a discrete anthology of the martyrs' correspondence.<sup>116</sup> The fascination which these letters held for readers is revealed in the work's preface, in which Coverdale presented them as 'a cleare glasse' wherein one might behold the martyrs' virtues, faith and heroism and obtain intimate insights into their prayers and 'the verye thoughts of their hartes'.<sup>117</sup> As a result of their ultimate witness to the faith under persecution, some martyrs gained considerable religious authority and individuals sought them out for spiritual guidance. Many, such as Bradford, Lawrence Saunders and John Hooper, were clergymen, but godly laymen including John Careless acquired an equivalent spiritual stature. Some of the most popular epistles by Bradford and Careless, chiefly concerned with assuaging salvation anxieties, were reproduced separately in print. Letters such as those sent by Bradford to troubled gentlewomen, which were appended to Clement Cotton's 1613 abridgement of the *Book of Martyrs*, have been interpreted as evidence of female susceptibility to religious melancholy – although they were subsequently published to profit a broad readership.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 187-9.

<sup>116</sup> Mark Greengrass and Thomas S. Freeman, 'Scribal Communication and Scribal Publication in Early Calvinism, The Evidence of the *Letters of the Martyrs*', in Irene Dingel and H. J. Selderhuis (eds.), *Calvin und Calvinismus: Europäische Perspektiven* (Göttingen, 2011), 391-416, esp. 397.

<sup>117</sup> Miles Coverdale, *Certain most godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true Saintes and holy Martyrs of God* (London, 1564), sigs Aii<sup>v</sup>-Aiii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>118</sup> Clement Cotton, *The Mirror Of Martyrs ... Whereunto is added two godly Letters written by M. Bradford, full of sweet consolation for such as are afflicted in conscience* (London, 1613). John N. King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge, 2006), 142.

Despite the popularity of such collections, it is clear from Wallington's selection of epistles and their titles that he copied his entries directly from the *Acts and Monuments*. His inclusion of John Rough's letter to his congregation, which was first printed in 1583, indicates that Wallington worked either from this edition or from one produced after Foxe's lifetime.<sup>119</sup> The British Academy John Foxe Project has sparked a wave of interest in martyrology and scholars are now well informed about the extensive afterlife of the *Book of Martyrs* in Protestant England.<sup>120</sup> Evidently, Wallington considered the martyrs' written counsel to possess a universal significance, reminiscent of scriptural epistles, which could be profitably applied to his contemporary context.

The letters which Wallington transcribed are primarily farewell messages addressed to friends and relations which display a domestic, but also a broadly authoritative, model of spiritual instruction. Several are exhortations to endure suffering, a theme emerging from an original context of persecution, which Wallington's compilation implicitly reapplies to the everyday strife and afflictions experienced by seventeenth-century puritans. Lawrence Saunders employed St Paul's model of apostolic suffering in 2 Corinthians 4:9-10 to counsel his wife on remaining steadfastly 'merry and glad'. His consoling reminder that God will 'wipe away all teares from our eyes' (Revelation 21:4) features in another of Wallington's selected epistles, alongside the similarly recurring assurance that 'in all your troubles' the Lord will 'keepe you within his wings' (Psalm 91:4).<sup>121</sup> Wallington heavily edited one letter which John Bradford sent to his mother, but preserved its striking imagery

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<sup>119</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 21<sup>r-v</sup>. *TAMO* (1583 edition), 2054-5.

<sup>120</sup> The accounts of the martyrs were a staple of devotional reading. Wallington's own mother studied them closely: Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 74.

<sup>121</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 7<sup>r-8v</sup>, 12<sup>r</sup>, 21<sup>v</sup>.

of afflictions as purificatory.<sup>122</sup> He also used a manicule<sup>123</sup> to draw attention to a phrase in a letter which John Hooper addressed to his friends: ‘imprisonment is painfull, but yeet libertie vpon euill conditions is more painfull, The prisons stincke, but yet not so much as sweet houses, whereas the feare and true honour of God lacketh’. This is suggestive of a concern to retain a sense of the godly community as a church under the cross in a more complacent age and it demonstrates the continued resonance of martyrological literature within Stuart puritanism.<sup>124</sup>

Affective farewell epistles to wives were naturally engaging texts, but their chief appeal to Wallington seems to have been the lists of advice that they frequently contained, which held general relevance for godly readers. He lamented his inability to include ‘a very sweet profitable letter of Docter Taylors to his wife’ because of its length, but he extracted much of the detail from Thomas Haukes’s address to his spouse, retaining a summary of ‘lessons out of Gods booke’.<sup>125</sup> Particularly interesting is Robert Smith’s ‘sententious letter’ of ‘ghostly instruction’ for his wife, composed almost entirely of generally applicable pithy aphorisms.<sup>126</sup> In a document ‘annexed’ to his will, the puritan minister, Robert Harris, instructed his wife to read John Careless’s letter to his spouse as a summary of the ‘Advice and Counsel’ which he would similarly recommend.<sup>127</sup> Extrapolating from this case, John King has argued that Wallington also transcribed this epistle ‘as a means of extending spiritual counsel to his wife’.<sup>128</sup> Like Harris, Wallington may have been inspired to adopt the convention of bequeathing farewell domestic counsel inscribed in the *Acts and Monuments*, for he made reference to a non-extant ‘paper book ...

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., fo. 14<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> ☞ A symbol consisting of a pointing hand, used to identify passages of interest or importance.

<sup>124</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 10<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., fos. 11<sup>v</sup>-12<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., fo. 15<sup>r-v</sup>. *TAMO* (1583 edition), 1725.

<sup>127</sup> Clarke, *Lives of thirty-two*, 336.

<sup>128</sup> King, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, 293.

wherein I have written ... my will and testament, and sweet exhortation to my wife and child'. However, Wallington's letter-book passed to his son-in-law on his death and there is no evidence that his wife ever read it.<sup>129</sup> It is far more likely that Wallington transcribed Careless's letter into this universally-addressed collection because he regarded the significance of its counsels to transcend their original gendered context.

John King has further claimed that, by overlooking letters written by female correspondents of the martyrs, Wallington 'constructs this manuscript as a patriarchal collection'.<sup>130</sup> This charge of patriarchal prejudice seems unwarranted, not least because the *Acts and Monuments* actually contains very few letters written by women. From an examination of Foxe's and Bull's unpublished papers, Freeman has demonstrated that, on occasion, the epistolary relationships of martyrs and female sustainers were surprisingly reciprocal. However, their editors either abridged or entirely omitted any letters which hint at women assuming an advisory role.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, account must be taken of Wallington's transcription of several letters composed by mid seventeenth-century laywomen. In five epistles, Katherine Lanes and Mary Lawrence counselled Anne Wade on profiting by afflictions (see below, pp. 271-3, 275). Although Wallington described Lanes as 'a very poore woman', noting that 'the Lord hath chosen the poore of the world that they may be rich in faith', he commended her 'sweet comfortable letters'.<sup>132</sup> Wallington also copied further female-authored epistolary counsel in the form of a printed letter exchange between Mary Love and her husband, the Presbyterian royalist minister, Christopher Love, who was beheaded for treason in 1651. Christopher emulated the example of the Marian martyrs, bequeathing his wife 'a few practicall counceiles', but, in turn, she offered comfort and

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<sup>129</sup> In Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 200. BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>130</sup> King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'*, 294.

<sup>131</sup> Freeman, "'Good Ministrye'", 9-10, 26-30.

<sup>132</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 181<sup>r</sup>-91<sup>v</sup>, at 186<sup>v</sup>.

exhortation. Through her letters, Mary constructed an image of her husband as a faithful martyr, echoing various commonplaces contained in both Foxe's and Coverdale's collections. She counselled Christopher to don his 'wedding clothes' in preparation for his heavenly marriage, advising him to look forward to 'a sweet supper with the Lord Iesus Christ' whilst consuming this first dinner with bitter herbs.<sup>133</sup> Wallington's selection of these letters indicates both the inclusiveness of his collection and his perception of the general applicability of such records of personal epistolary instruction.

### **Elizabethan Epistolary Counselling: Edward Dering and Richard Greenham**

The rest of the printed materials on which Wallington's collection draws present an exclusively clerical model of epistolary counselling, which reflects the contemporary evolution of Protestantism from its more revolutionary origins into the hierarchical model of the established Elizabethan church. Selections from Edward Dering's (c.1540-1576) *Certaine Godly And Verie comfortable Letters* are the next to be transcribed. First published posthumously in Middelburgh in 1590 'for the proffite of the church of God', this text is one of the earliest examples of a single-author printed letter collection in English.<sup>134</sup> It formed the basis of a short study by Patrick Collinson, who characterised Dering as 'the archetype of the puritan divine'.<sup>135</sup> Dering attended Christ's College, Cambridge, and later became preacher of St Andrew's, Norwich, a city lecturer and

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., fos. 196<sup>f</sup>, 192<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>; Mary Love, *Love's Letters, His and Hers, To each other: a little before his Death* (London, 1651), 1-2. See parallels in *TAMO* (1583 edition), 1225, 1244, 1882, 1703, 1793, 1521, 1582, 1964. Johanna Harris, 'Love, Mary', in Garrett A. Sullivan and Alan Stewart (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of English Renaissance Literature*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 2012), ii. 618-19.

<sup>134</sup> Edward Dering, *Certaine Godly And Verie comfortable Letters, full of christian consolation* (Middelburgh, 1590). Although Greengrass and Freeman have emphasised the difficulty of tracing the impact of the martyrs' letters on wider epistolary practice, the title of Dering's collection may have been intended to evoke Coverdale's. One of his letters also employs the 'quasi-epigrammatic sentiment', 'pray, pray, pray', with which many martyrs concluded their correspondence. Greengrass and Freeman, 'Scribal Communication', 407. John N. King, 'Literary Aspects of Foxe's Acts and Monuments', *TAMO*, Editorial Commentary. Dering, *Certaine Godly*, sig. B5<sup>r</sup>. Wallington also transcribed a letter of Greenham's which concludes in this way: BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 33<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>135</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'A Mirror of Elizabethan Puritanism: The Life and Letters of "Godly Master Dering"', in idem, *Godly People*, 290.

chaplain to Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. Several of his letters are addressed to high-ranking public figures and his own social standing, as the younger son of a gentleman, may have emboldened him to admonish the transgressions of some of these correspondents. Dering's conviction of the inadequacy of contemporary preaching and pastoral care likely encouraged his adoption of the epistle as an alternative vehicle for his ministry, particularly during the years of ill health which preceded his untimely death.<sup>136</sup> Most of Dering's printed letters are precisely dated and copies of eleven of these survive in two manuscript volumes, alongside four additional epistles. These manuscript versions differ from the printed texts in terms of spelling and typographical features and there are various minor additions, deletions and substitutions of words.<sup>137</sup>

Patrick Collinson used Dering's letters to make the case that sixteenth-century spiritual counselling was heavily gendered. He argued that many female followers of Protestant divines found the doctrine of election particularly 'perplexing' and 'leant on the preachers as a Catholic would lean on his confessor'.<sup>138</sup> Dering's fourteen extant letters addressed to women, including Catherine Killigrew, Mary Honywood and Lady Elizabeth Golding, are certainly striking. However, Dering also sent a notable number of correspondingly pious and instructive letters to male correspondents, although these do not all conform to the same pattern of regular epistolary exchanges. One such missive, addressed to his uncle, Thomas Brent, 'in the tyme of sicknes', was never printed. It contains remembrances of God's 'precius testament made in the deathe of his sonne' and

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 294-8, 290, 300-1, 316.

<sup>137</sup> KHL C U350 C1/1 and U350 C1/2 are the most extensive witnesses for these eleven letters. They supply names, an extra date and, on two occasions, lengthier phrases lacking in print. Yet, there are also discrepancies between the two volumes. Most noticeably, Dering's letter to Thomas Howard is heavily edited in U350 C1/2.

<sup>138</sup> Collinson, 'Role of Women', 275. Also Collinson, "'Not Sexual'", 135-8.

pious exhortations to die a good death in the hope of ‘a godlye entranc’ into bliss.<sup>139</sup> Collinson’s interpretation of Dering’s letters also appears somewhat prejudiced by his research on earlier manuscript correspondence between John Knox and his future mother-in-law, Elizabeth Bowes. Collinson’s references to ‘spiritual hypochondria’ seem rather incongruous in relation to *Certaine Godly And Verie comfortable Letters*. Although Mary Honeywood (who had earlier corresponded with John Bradford) certainly experienced bouts of religious despair, Dering’s letters are not principally concerned with predestination and assurance of election, but with enduring earthly trials and bearing the cross of affliction.<sup>140</sup> Whilst these letters undoubtedly shed light on the sixteenth-century roots of puritan practical divinity, as Theodore Dwight Bozeman has observed, Dering ‘stopped well short of the anxious cultivation of “signs” that soon was to emerge’.<sup>141</sup>

Wallington transcribed four of Dering’s printed letters, supplying explanatory titles. The first two, addressed to his brother, Richard, contain generic exhortations to grow in faith and knowledge of God. They also include a defence of Dering’s recent outspoken preaching and assaults on ecclesiastical polity, which had seriously hindered his chances of progression. Their anti-episcopalian rhetoric may have particularly appealed to Wallington, a convinced Presbyterian.<sup>142</sup> A third letter addressed to Mary Honeywood, who feared that her child was close to death, reflects a scenario in which Wallington would himself seek out ministerial epistolary counsel. Dering encouraged Honeywood to suppress ‘inordinate

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<sup>139</sup> KHLC U350 C1/2, n.pag.

<sup>140</sup> Collinson, ‘A Mirror’, 317. A. Daniel Frankforter has also objected to the use of the term ‘spiritual hypochondria’ in relation to Bowes: ‘Elizabeth Bowes and John Knox: A Woman and Reformation Theology’, *ChH*, 56/3 (1987), 335. On Knox’s epistolary counselling, see especially Christine M. Newman, ‘The Reformation and Elizabeth Bowes: A Study of a Sixteenth-Century Northern Gentlewoman’, in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *Women in the Church* (Oxford, 1990), 325-33 and W. Stanford Reid, ‘John Knox, Pastor of Souls’, *Westminster Theological Journal*, 40/1 (1977), 1-21.

<sup>141</sup> Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Williamsburg, 2004), 66 n. 5.

<sup>142</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 23<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>v</sup>.

affections’, obediently surrender all earthly ties and cleave only to Christ.<sup>143</sup> Lastly, in response to a ‘case’ presented by Catherine Killigrew, who was faltering under the burden of bodily suffering, Dering evoked the habitual theme of the trial of the faithful through tribulation, observing: ‘this is the lot of Gods saints to enioy his blessings with afflictions’.<sup>144</sup>

Interestingly, Wallington was not alone in regarding Dering’s individually-addressed counsel to possess broad devotional significance. A number of his letters were also anthologised in later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century manuscript miscellanies. Gilbert Frevile of Bishop Middleham, County Durham, included ‘Mr Dearing’s *lettre* to a godly gentlewoman being in heavines of spiritt’ amongst a selection of ‘Sondry prayers, catechysmes, & other godly & holy instruccions’ within his diverse commonplace book. Frevile, who transcribed this letter alongside ‘a comfortable & a godly prayer for a troubled conscience’ and printed excerpts from William Perkins and other affectionate divines, doubtless considered it an exemplary pastoral discourse and a profitable resource for practical divinity.<sup>145</sup> Another letter, addressed to the Duke of Norfolk on the eve of his execution, survives only within a manuscript collection of correspondence assembled to serve as functional templates, analogous to the vernacular letter-writing instruction manuals which appeared in print from the later sixteenth century.<sup>146</sup> This unpublished letter, which proffered hope of salvation, was copied as a model of ‘consolatorye’ writing and it may indicate that some of Dering’s correspondence was subject to scribal circulation during or shortly after his lifetime.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., fos. 27<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>, 71<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., fo. 29<sup>r</sup>-v.

<sup>145</sup> BL Egerton MS 2877, fos. 84<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>v</sup>, 82<sup>r</sup>, 93<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>v</sup>. Dering, *Certaine Godly*, sigs A7<sup>r</sup>-B5<sup>r</sup>. See Daybell, *Material Letter*, 207.

<sup>146</sup> BL Add. MS 33271, fo. 40<sup>v</sup>.

Dering's wider works reveal a lofty conception of the pre-eminence of the clerical office, which sat somewhat awkwardly alongside strict predestinarianism: the minister is the one 'by whom the people do beleue'. Collinson argued that 'few English Protestants have held such a "high" doctrine of the ministry', but the notion of the minister's indispensability as God's very mouthpiece was an orthodox Reformed understanding,<sup>147</sup> which was regularly evoked amongst puritan proponents of a pastorally sensitive ministry with spiritual counselling at its core. Dering's pastoral correspondence is underpinned by this awareness of his own spiritual authority. Although Jason Yiannikou has suggested, from his frequent use of the homiletic first-person plural, that Dering's letters reflect an 'intense reciprocity' and 'fellow-feeling', they are certainly not lacking in authoritative exhortation.<sup>148</sup> On several occasions he assured correspondents of the present reality of their salvation, once evoking the apostolic model of St John, who could likewise 'see in the people to whom he wrote' the marks of election.<sup>149</sup> This pastoral authority is clearly conveyed in Wallington's selected transcriptions, which include firm pronouncements of 'the blessed life, which God shall giue vnto you and to all his saints', calculated to soothe and console.<sup>150</sup>

Of course, Dering was not unique in engaging in epistolary counselling. Thomas Wilcox, another godly minister of the same generation, was memorialised in Benjamin Brook's *Lives of the Puritans* for composing copious letters to provide 'answers to cases of conscience' and 'promote family and personal religion'.<sup>151</sup> Collinson has drawn on the

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<sup>147</sup> Edward Dering, *M. Derings workes: More at Large then euer hath heere-to-fore been printed in any one volume* (London, 1614), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>. Collinson, 'A Mirror', 299. Dering was probably alluding to 1 Corinthians 3:5. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Edinburgh, 1992), 41-4. Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh, 1953), 82-95.

<sup>148</sup> Jason Yiannikou, 'Protestantism, Puritanism and Practical Divinity in England, c.1570-1620', Ph.D. thesis (University of Cambridge, 1999), esp. 48, 51, 42-3.

<sup>149</sup> Dering, *Certaine Godly*, sigs C8<sup>r</sup>, also C7<sup>r</sup>, D3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>150</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 28<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>151</sup> Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, 3 vols. (London, 1813), *ii*. 193.

seventeenth-century historian Roger Morrice's account of Wilcox's non-extant correspondence in support of his claim that women constituted the majority of the spiritual patients of godly clergymen. Most of Wilcox's letters were sent 'to confirm those he writ to in the true Christian Reformed Religion ... exhort them to dilligence in reading the Scripture, and in Prayer Domestick and private ... and to reprove them for their faults'. Yet although Wilcox wrote to various gentlewomen, Morrice also listed many male 'persons of Quality' amongst his correspondents, including Sir Francis Walsingham, Sir Fulke Greville, Sir John Brockett and Sir Peter Wentworth.<sup>152</sup> Wilcox presided over the printing of three such epistles, two of which possess precise dates and were addressed to male petitioners, and one to a woman. In an epistolary dedication, he defended the publication of these records of 'conflicts in conscience' with reference to the many earnest requests which he had received 'to make that common to many, which was written for some particulars'.<sup>153</sup>

This same impulse to publicise the private exchanges of clerics and their spiritual patients is revealed in the posthumous publication of the *Workes* of Richard Greenham (early 1540s-1594), minister of Dry Drayton, Cambridgeshire. Greenham has been recognised, both in his own time and amongst modern historians, as an exemplary godly pastor. A graduate of Pembroke College, Cambridge, he is remembered particularly for establishing a prototype Protestant seminary in his rectory where students could gain practical pastoral training. Greenham firmly prioritised piety over polity, eschewing ecclesiastical controversy and devoting himself to ministering on an individual level.<sup>154</sup> His 'singular dexteritie in comforting afflicted Consciences' was renowned and he bequeathed

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<sup>152</sup> DWL MS Morrice I, 617 (2) and (4). Collinson, 'A Mirror', 316. Collinson, 'The Role', 275.

<sup>153</sup> Thomas Wilcox, *Large Letters. Three in number, containing much necessarie matter, for the instruction and comfort of such, as are distressed in conscience* (London, 1589), sig. A5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>154</sup> John H. Primus, *Richard Greenham: Portrait of an Elizabethan Pastor* (Macon, 1998), 12, 24, 42, 2.

‘vnto posteritie a commentarie of such particular maladies, as through Gods blessing hee hath cured, together with the meanes vsed to that end’. According to Greenham’s editor and ministerial disciple, Henry Holland, this was ‘a very great mysterie’ and a most expert skill, lacking in even the majority of Greenham’s clerical contemporaries. Evoking a discourse of professionalism, Holland contrasted Greenham’s practice with the spiritual quackery of ‘blinde Empyrikes’ who, lacking any ‘certaine rule of art’ and relying exclusively on experience, ‘gesse vncertainlie’ at cures with potentially perilous consequences for the afflicted.<sup>155</sup>

Greenham’s pastoral ministry has provided a focus for several scholarly studies, but the importance of epistolary counselling within it has been largely overlooked. In their 1998 volume, Kenneth Parker and Eric Carlson did not quote at all from Greenham’s letters, although these represent detailed case studies of his dealings with spiritual patients and were evidently amongst his most popular works.<sup>156</sup> Historical focus has chiefly centred on John Rylands Library English Manuscript 524, a collection of Greenham’s sayings and records of his pastoral counselling compiled by a student during the 1580s, which bears a close relationship to the printed text ‘Grave Covnsels, And Godly Observations’. Greenham’s followers apparently perceived a connection between these two genres, for a copy of Greenham’s ‘Letter Against Hardnes Of Heart’ was appended to this manuscript, perhaps to serve as an exemplary epistolary model.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Elizabeth Holland, ‘To The High And Mightie Monarch, James’, in Greenham, *Workes*, n.pag. Henry Holland, ‘The Preface to the Reader’, in *ibid.*, n.pag. Here, ‘empiric’ refers to an unqualified medical practitioner who rebuffs formal learning and theory: ‘empiric, n. and adj.’, *OED*.

<sup>156</sup> The letters were frequently reproduced in partial collections of Greenham’s works and other anthologies: Parker and Carlson, *Practical Divinity*, 362-6. Stanley Jebb has remarked on the ‘considerable time’ which Greenham spent ‘in writing letters of counsel to needy people’: ‘Richard Greenham and the Counselling of Troubled Souls’, in *Puritans and Spiritual Life: Papers Read at the 2001 Westminster Conference* (Mirfield, 2001), 89-90.

<sup>157</sup> Primus, *Richard Greenham*, 9-11. Parker and Carlson, *Practical Divinity*, 34-5, 252-9. The manuscript is reproduced in *ibid.*, 129-259.

The entry which Wallington transcribed is not a true example of the letter form, but a series of ‘Short Rules sent by Mr Richard Greenham to a Gentelwoman troubled in minde for her direction and consolation’. In 1612, it was published as a broadsheet with the subtitle: ‘also very necessary for euery Christian to be exercised withall’.<sup>158</sup> This text is composed of discrete portions of sententious wisdom, some of which Wallington reordered or omitted for reasons which remain unclear. It commences with the comforting reassurance that no sin can be attributed to a believer ‘which in heart you long to be freed from’ and to which ‘you giue not consent’. Evidently, encouraging the godly with this sentiment was one of Greenham’s characteristic pastoral strategies, for Samuel Clarke highlighted it in his short biography of the divine. Interestingly, Wallington actually applied this consolation to himself in a letter of 1650.<sup>159</sup> From similar statements, Karen Bruhn has observed a striking flexibility within Greenham’s theological system; when addressing scrupulous doubters in need of solace, he readily tempered the harsh logic of predestination, finding ‘ways to make wide the gate’.<sup>160</sup> Encouragements to regard ‘your present estate to be none other then the estate of Gods children’ and to remember that ‘whom God loueth he loueth (to the ende) for euer’ follow in turn. The concluding paragraph implies an authentic address to an individual. Greenham defended his pastoral intervention, remarking: ‘pardon me if I be bold in this one thing I trust I reioyce more in the good of your soule then euer I should reioyce in the fruit of mine own body’.<sup>161</sup>

Jeremy Schmidt has used this source as evidence for his contention that it was primarily women who sought out ‘spiritual therapy’ in their ‘doubts and anxieties’. He

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<sup>158</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 31<sup>r</sup>. Richard Greenham, *Short Rules Sent by Maister Richard Greenham to a Gentlewoman troubled in minde* (London, 1612). Since Wallington made no reference to any further letters from which readers might profit, it seems he was unacquainted with Greenham’s complete printed works.

<sup>159</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 31<sup>r</sup>, 175<sup>r</sup>. Clarke, *Lives of thirty-two*, 14.

<sup>160</sup> Karen Bruhn, “‘Sinne Unfolded’: Time, Election, and Disbelief Among the Godly in Late Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century England”, *ChH*, 77/3 (2008), 592-3.

<sup>161</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 31<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>.

bolstered this claim with reference to Collinson's research and the notorious case of the melancholic gentlewoman, Joan Drake, who was attended by a dozen ministers at the height of her spiritual turmoil.<sup>162</sup> However, it is interesting to observe that Greenham's *Short Rules* is actually an amalgamation of two discrete texts, bearing the non-gendered titles: 'More speciall directions to be obserued, for the comfort of afflicted Consciencs' and 'Certaine rules for an afflicted minde, concerning seuerall temptations', which feature in editions of his *Workes* from 1605.<sup>163</sup> Whilst the address 'to a gentlewoman' may not be merely a fiction of print, it seems likely that Greenham recycled his aphoristic advice, reapplying it to different individuals or contexts. Although the number of references to women in his commonplaces is conspicuous, as John Primus has observed, references to male enquirers are still more numerous and the gender of most counselees is unspecified. Indeed, the only explicit reference to epistolary counselling in this source concerns a case of conscience presented by 'a godly learned man'.<sup>164</sup> Moreover, despite Parker and Carlson's assertion that 'a number of people, especially women, sent the editors copies of personal letters of spiritual advice which they had received from Greenham and had obviously preserved and treasured', only one letter of consolation, which was sent following the death of a child, is definitely addressed to a woman.<sup>165</sup> Of the three extensive spiritual letters which were published, two were penned for a former Cambridge student, a 'Master M.', and there is nothing to indicate that Greenham's other 'very good and louing friend' was female.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2007), 63 n. 72, 79-81. The term 'therapy', unlike the related 'therapeutic', has decidedly anachronistic connotations of modern psychological theory, an interpretive paradigm which actually influenced Collinson's treatment of this subject: Collinson, "'Not Sexual'", esp. 147-50.

<sup>163</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 854-7.

<sup>164</sup> Primus, *Richard Greenham*, 45-6. Parker and Carlson, 'Practical Divinity', 134.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 33. Leif Dixon similarly asserted Greenham's particular popularity with distressed 'godly gentlewomen': *Practical Predestinarians in England, c. 1590-1640* (Farnham, 2014), 128. Greenham, *Workes*, 863.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 865, 869, 871.

These further letters provide additional insights into Greenham's pastoral approach. One, concerning 'Hardnes of Heart', was written to reassure 'Master M.' that his spiritual lassitude was merely a temporary trial. Although the young man might have 'no feeling' of faith, this did not prove its non-existence. In an interesting allusion to making confession to a minister, Greenham shored up this assurance through a scriptural comparison with David who, 'euen after he had confessed his sinne, and had receiued absolution & pardon from God, by the Ministerie of *Nathan*', remained 'far off from feeling' divine mercy.<sup>167</sup> Despite such consolations, Greenham's correspondent continued to lament his condition. In a second letter, dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 1591, Greenham pondered whether to 'rebuke' him with God's law or extend the 'comfort' of the gospel.<sup>168</sup> Here, we see evidence of the stark 'dialectic of law and gospel' which Primus labelled Greenham's 'principal hermeneutical key'. Evidently settling on the latter, Greenham concluded this epistle with the pledge of Isaiah 42:3: 'the Lord Iesus *came not to breake the bruised reede, nor to quench the smoking flaxe*'. Assuming the expertise to pronounce on the spiritual estate of laypeople, he even assured his addressee that, although he might deem his own condition grave, there was 'no cause of dispaire dare I graunt, because I am perswaded, that your perswasion is somewhat false'.<sup>169</sup>

Evidently, much of Greenham's spiritual counselling was conducted through face-to-face dialogue; Clarke particularly highlighted his custom of 'confer[ing]' with his parishioners as they laboured in their fields.<sup>170</sup> But, although letters constitute only a small portion of his extant works, one addressed to 'A Friend Afflicted In conscience for sinne' illuminates the broader role of epistolary counselling within Greenham's ministry and the

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 859-61. See 2 Samuel 12.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 869.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 870, 859. John H. Primus, 'Lutheran Law and Gospel in the Early Puritan Theology of Richard Greenham', *Lutheran Quarterly*, 8 (1994), 290.

<sup>170</sup> Clarke, *Lives of thirty-two*, 15.

ministries of other contemporary pastors. This correspondent, who perhaps more accurately reflects Collinson's category of 'spiritual hypochondria', had already received extensive correspondence from Greenham aimed at assuaging salvation anxieties. In a further attempt to soothe and console, the Cambridgeshire pastor invited his friend to return all his previous letters so that he might better discern what consolations he still had to offer. Moreover, Greenham alluded to a broader culture of pastoral letter-writing, of which only limited examples have evidently survived, by observing that an 'innumerable' number of other 'excellent Physitions of the soule' had also offered 'great comforts ... by word in presence, and by letters in absence'.<sup>171</sup> With such a troubled case, Greenham went to great pains to underscore the dignity of the clerical office and the authority of ministerial counsel. Evoking the clerical capacity to 'binde and loose', he assured his friend that because so 'many of the faithfull and expert seruants of Christ haue examined your estate ... & haue found all signes vnto health and saluation' their 'testimonie ... must bee as the voyce of God himselfe'.<sup>172</sup>

Greenham's wider works affirm this elevated view of the clerical office: 'the Minister is the mouth of God to speake vnto the people'. The latter ought to 'feare ... reuerence and honour him' for his words are 'most angelical documents'. Like Dering, he insisted that 'there is no other meanes in the world to come vnto Christ than by the preaching of the word'. For Greenham, personal counselling was subsumed under this overarching didactic function. Intensely attuned to the anguish of afflicted consciences, he reportedly asserted that it was 'a greater thing in a Pastor' to comfort or instruct on an individual level 'then to preach publickly and learnedly' and he urged tempted believers to

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<sup>171</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 871, 877.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 877-8.

‘aske counsell at his [i.e. God’s] word, at the mouth of his minister’.<sup>173</sup> Greenham bemoaned the fact that:

Eare confession, the grosse abuses whereof hauing been reproofed, but the right vse of confession passed ouer vntaught ... all conference and examination is taken from the Minister, to whom examination is not to be denied, though al things be not to be disclosed.<sup>174</sup>

Indeed, when an individual was ‘in such a perplexitie’ of conscience, ‘we require these things to be the matter of our Ministerie ... to draw out of them the confession of some seuerall, especiall, & secret sinne’. In Greenham’s estimation, few took the initiative in conferring privately with their pastors, for few were ‘willing to bee ruled’ as they ought.<sup>175</sup>

### **The Epistles of Joseph Hall**

Wallington’s transcriptions from the *Epistles* (1608-1611) of Joseph Hall (1574-1656) are a superficially incongruous inclusion in his letter-book. Hall, an exemplar of Calvinist conformity who became bishop of Exeter and then Norwich, is well-known for his writings on the practice of meditation and his attempt to integrate a long Catholic devotional heritage into Protestant piety. However, in his youth he experimented with various genres, including publishing sixty religious epistles in three volumes.<sup>176</sup> Hall’s episcopalianism and royalism sit awkwardly alongside Wallington’s Presbyterian and parliamentary views. Wallington’s personal letters and notebooks include various references to the ‘wicked Bishops’ and he even commemorated Parliament’s impeachment of a dozen bishops, including Hall, on charges of treason in December 1641.<sup>177</sup> Wallington

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 345, 352-3, 341, 39. Parker and Carlson, *Practical Divinity*, 221, 239. Such statements accord with John Calvin’s theology of preaching: the ‘perfecting of the saints’ comes through ‘listen[ing] to his ministers’ performing their ‘truly angelic office’. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (2nd edn., Chicago, 1990), 328-9.

<sup>174</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 359.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 107. Greenham also advocated public confession and mutual confession between private Christians, particularly when an individual had sinned against their brother: *ibid.*, 359-63. Parker and Carlson, *Practical Divinity*, 202-3.

<sup>176</sup> Richard A. McCabe, *Joseph Hall: A Study in Satire and Meditation* (Oxford, 1982), 151.

<sup>177</sup> BL Add. MS 40883, fo. 24<sup>v</sup>; *Notebooks*, 161, 121; BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 106<sup>r-v</sup>, 142<sup>r-4<sup>r</sup></sup>.

prefaced his transcriptions with the statement: ‘some Epistles or letters of Ios Hall D of Diuinitie and Deane of Worchester in 1620’. Paul Seaver has emphasised that Wallington did not refer to Hall as a Bishop, although the original publication of the *Epistles* did, of course, long precede his episcopal appointment.<sup>178</sup> This aspirational collection actually reflects Hall’s early attempts to acquire patronage and ecclesiastical preferment; many of the epistles were addressed to prominent court figures with whom he had become acquainted following his appointment as Prince Henry’s chaplain.<sup>179</sup> Notably, by 1639, Hall had been enlisted by Archbishop Laud as a rather unwilling advocate of *jure divino* episcopacy and employed as a weapon against the puritan faction which he had earlier defended.<sup>180</sup> By 1650, when Wallington actually transcribed these entries, he was in retirement, although he remained active, publishing prolifically and regularly performing illicit ordinations.<sup>181</sup>

Hall claimed a scholarly, rather than a biblical, model for his *Epistles*, associating them with European Humanist familiar letter-writing. He wrote of ‘a new fashion of discourse, by Epistles; new to our language, usual to others ... more free, more familiar. Thus, we do but talke with our friends by our pen, and expresse our selues no whit lesse easily’.<sup>182</sup> Consequently, some modern literary scholars have critiqued the *Epistles* for their lack of conversational style and presented them more in the mould of essays.<sup>183</sup> These

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., fo. 34<sup>r</sup>. Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 187. Wallington may have made his transcriptions from the version of the *Epistles* which was reproduced in Joseph Hall, *A recollection of such treatises as haue bene heretofore seuerally published...* (London, 1621). The title page supplies the date 1620 and Hall is identified by these titles.

<sup>179</sup> Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, ‘Popularity, Prelacy and Puritanism in the 1630s: Joseph Hall Explains Himself’, *EHR*, 111/443 (1996), 861-3.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 876-7.

<sup>181</sup> Kenneth Fincham and Stephen Taylor, ‘Vital Statistics: Episcopal Ordination and Ordinands in England, 1646-60’, *EHR*, 126/519 (2011), 326-7, 333-4.

<sup>182</sup> Joseph Hall, *Epistles The First Volvme: Containing II. Decads* (London, 1608), ‘To The High And Mightie Prince, Henrie’, n.pag.

<sup>183</sup> Frank Livingstone Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall, 1574-1656: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Cambridge, 1979), 61-7; T. F. Kinloch, *The Life and Works of Joseph Hall, 1574-1656* (London, 1951), 191.

carefully crafted epistles, all but one of which are undated, were likely composed, or at least revised, with publication in mind; Hall presumably always intended them to speak to a wider audience than merely their addressees. Manuscript originals do not exist, but, as Leonard D. Tournay has observed, ‘most seem to have been actual correspondence’.<sup>184</sup> Frank Livingstone Huntley has suggested that, following composition, the majority were promptly ‘addressed to a single person, posted, and then published’.<sup>185</sup> There is certainly concrete evidence that Hall engaged in epistolary counselling later in his career. Following his death in 1656, a few pastoral letters were published in a collection of Hall’s outstanding works. These include a ‘Paraeneticall’ letter ‘To A Worthy Knight Ready to Revolt from the Religion Established’, a letter of consolation addressed to a gentleman ‘Under Censure’ and another sent from Exeter on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1630 ‘To An Unknown Complainant’ who sought Hall’s guidance concerning his many afflictions.<sup>186</sup> An additional revealing reference to his epistolary counselling survives in a late seventeenth-century manuscript collection of clerical biographies composed by the ejected puritan, John Quick. Quick recounted having been shown ‘a Letter, *which* that blessed man of God, Dr Joseph Hall Lord Bishop of Exon’ wrote ‘with his own hand’ containing ‘directions for the remedy & recovery’ of the ‘Godly daughter’ of ‘an ancient Lady’, who was tormented by temptations to blasphemy.<sup>187</sup>

Although Hall was a prolific letter-writer and the first Englishman to publish an extensive collection of his own correspondence, his epistolary output has been largely

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid. Leonard D. Tournay, *Joseph Hall* (Boston, 1979), 55. Two are clearly open letters directed at generic groups, including ‘the Gentlemen of his Highnesses Court’: Joseph Hall, *Epistles, The Second Volume: Containing two Decads* (London, 1608), 99.

<sup>185</sup> Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall*, 67. Schneider is hesitant about categorising them, but accepts that some ‘may have begun existence as real letters’: *Culture of Epistolarity*, 244.

<sup>186</sup> Joseph Hall, *The Shaking of the Olive-Tree. The Remaining Works Of that Incomparable Prelate Joseph Hall, D. D.* (London, 1660), 401-4, 414-16, 411-13.

<sup>187</sup> DWL MS 38.35, 551-2.

overlooked by scholars.<sup>188</sup> Here, I will offer a fresh perspective on Hall's *Epistles*, locating many within a developing Protestant tradition of spiritual counselling, which took inspiration from the pastoral works of godly Elizabethan divines and paved the way for developments in later seventeenth-century practical divinity. Whilst a student at the Cambridge puritan stronghold, Emmanuel College, Hall was influenced by the ministry of Greenham, whom Richard McCabe has labelled his 'spiritual mentor'.<sup>189</sup> He was open in his admiration, composing two epitaphs on the elder minister's death. In an epistle to his clerical friend, William Bedell, Hall noted Greenham's excellence 'in experimentall diuinity' and located him within a distinguished line of deceased Calvinist divines, concluding with William Perkins.<sup>190</sup> By doing this, Hall appears to have been consciously situating himself within an impeccably Reformed ecclesiastical tradition. Elsewhere, he even commemorated Edward Dering as a predecessor in divine meditation.<sup>191</sup> Peter Lake has remarked that 'Hall personified many of the ideological ambivalences and ambiguities' of the early Stuart church. He and Kenneth Fincham are amongst the few scholars who have utilised Hall's *Epistles* – as evidence of his fierce opposition to papistry, separatism and the anti-Calvinism of William Laud and his allies. However, they passed over Hall's many letters of spiritual counsel, from which Wallington made his selection, dismissing their content as 'general moral nostrums'.<sup>192</sup> These epistles are actually equally revealing about Hall's confessional colouring. They expose his undoubtedly puritan style of piety, revealing him in the role of physician of the soul.<sup>193</sup> In the context of Nehemiah Wallington's letter-book, the ease with which puritans could embrace Hall's divinity is

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<sup>188</sup> Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 237.

<sup>189</sup> McCabe, *Joseph Hall*, 5-7, at 7.

<sup>190</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, n.pag. Hall, *Epistles The First Volvme*, 71-4.

<sup>191</sup> Joseph Hall, *The Arte Of Divine Meditation: Profitable for all Christians to knowe and practise* (London, 1606), 15.

<sup>192</sup> Peter Lake, 'The Moderate and Irenic Case for Religious War: Joseph Hall's *Via Media* in Context', in Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (eds.), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1995), 56. Fincham and Lake, 'Popularity', 861-3, 867.

<sup>193</sup> McCabe has suggested that certain letters owe a debt to the methods of Greenham: *Joseph Hall*, 210.

particularly well illuminated. Evidently, there is much truth in the contemporary observation that ‘all men honoured the *Doctor*, though some loved not the *Bishop*’.<sup>194</sup>

A few of Hall’s *Epistles* contain illuminating biographical insights. Wallington was particularly drawn to one, addressed to Sir Robert Darcy on ‘the estate of a true, but weake Christian’, in which Hall reflected introspectively on his spiritual condition. The puritan woodturner used manicules to underscore the ‘feeling possession of my God’ which Hall experienced though meditation, although the converse threat of ‘senselesse dulnesse’ presumably also struck a chord.<sup>195</sup> But Wallington’s transcriptions predominantly reveal Hall in the role of a counsellor to friends and relations, some of whom apparently applied to him for guidance. For Hall, the importance of this pastoral activity was doubtless underscored by the fact that his own mother had leant on the radical puritan incumbent of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Anthony Gilby, for the relief of her spiritual anxieties.<sup>196</sup> In response to his father-in-law George Wenyffe’s ‘complaint of dulnes, a common disease, and incident to the best mindes’, Hall prescribed a joint cordial of mortification and meditation on the delights of heaven. He wrote also to his sister, ‘Mistris B. Brinsly’, praising her anxious ‘lamentation’ of being unable to ‘enough grieue’ for her sins. According to Hall’s diagnosis, her very doubts about the sufficiency of her sorrow constituted tangible evidence of true penitence.<sup>197</sup> Similarly, he branded Sir Richard Lea a ‘sensible patient’,

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<sup>194</sup> John Whitefoote, *Deaths Alarum, Or The Presage of approaching Death: Given In A Funeral Sermon ... For the Right Reverend Joseph Hall, D. D.* (London, 1656), 66. Of course, Hall’s *Epistles* were also favoured by those who, like himself, combined commitment to the Prayer Book with puritan-esque personal devotion. Elizabeth Isham found them comfortable reading when troubled by her ‘Brothers absences’: Elizabeth Isham, *My Booke of Remembrance*, eds. Elizabeth Clarke and Erica Longfellow <[http://www.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/index\\_bor.htm](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/index_bor.htm)>, fo. 27<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>195</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 34<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>196</sup> Kinloch, *Life and Works*, 135.

<sup>197</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 41<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>, 38<sup>r</sup>. In 1640, Hall’s episcopal friend, William Bedell, was similarly petitioned for spiritual guidance by his sister, who complained in a letter of ‘coldness and deadness under the means of grace’: Bodl. MS Tanner 65, fos. 96<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>r</sup>.

for having requested a remedy before his disease had progressed too far.<sup>198</sup> Hall's pastoral sensitivity is displayed in a further consolatory letter on 'the signes and proofes of a true Faith', addressed to a 'Mistris A. P.', who had apparently confided to him her fear that she lacked 'true Faith'.<sup>199</sup> Nor did he shirk his duty of reprimanding sin. Wallington also copied a letter which admonished an unnamed merchant's inability to endure the material losses that had befallen him and warned of further trials to come if he repined at such 'an easie correction'.<sup>200</sup>

Another letter which Wallington transcribed reveals interesting interplay between Hall's correspondence and his meditative works. He wrote to advise Mr Robert Haye on how a Christian 'may keepe his heart from hardnesse, and his ways from error'. Hall advocated a daily scheme of meditation, which commenced with thanksgiving for favours external, spiritual and celestial, progressing on to a request for divine aid, a period of self-examination and a concluding confession of sin. On account of Hall's claim to have learnt 'much of this good counsell ... from the Table of an vnknown Author, at *Antwerpe*', several scholars have identified it with a medieval contemplative scheme appended to his 1606 *Arte Of Divine Meditation*.<sup>201</sup> Wallington concluded his transcriptions with two letters on the theme of death. Hall considered personal deathbed instruction to be an essential duty of faithful pastors and he expected ministers to 'priuatly prepare men for death, and arme them against it', composing 'comfortable letters' to 'stir vp their fainting

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<sup>198</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 46<sup>r</sup>. This letter continues: 'if you shall with mee, take out my lessons, neither of vs shall repent it'. Joseph Hall, *Epistles, The Third And Last Volvme. Containing two Decades* (London, 1611), 57-8. That the addressee, Sir Richard, was labelled 'since deceased' (having died some two years previously) further suggests that these *Epistles* had actually been subject to transmission.

<sup>199</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 44<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 45<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 43<sup>r-v</sup>. Hall, *Epistles, The Second Volume*, 88. McCabe, *Joseph Hall*, 182. Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall*, 76-9.

harts'.<sup>202</sup> One such epistle, addressed to a 'Master I. B.' (and secondarily dedicated to Hall's father), was calculated to assuage 'feare of death'. Echoing Dering's earlier assurances of election, it concludes with the consoling pledge: 'take but these, and I dare promise you securitie'.<sup>203</sup> Another letter counsels on the need to moderate grief. Hall's assertion: 'this is Gods doing, Kisse his rod in silence and giue glory to the hand that rules it', is closely paralleled amongst the candid clerical epistolary counsel which Wallington received during one of his many bereavements.<sup>204</sup> Interestingly, although two of Hall's epistles which Wallington transcribed are addressed to female correspondents, women make up only a small minority of his addressees. Strikingly, Hall felt the need to defend a densely theological letter to his patroness, Lady Honoria Hay, who had sought clarification over the necessity of paedobaptism after having lost a child, with reference to the epistolary model of St Jerome (that 'Oracle of Antiquitie') who similarly furnished many 'deuout Ladies, with learned canuases of the deep pointes of Diuinity'.<sup>205</sup>

Hall was quick to affirm the dignity of the clerical office. In one epistle, he counselled his brother who was considering ordination by declaring: 'what higher or more worthy imploiment can there be'.<sup>206</sup> Like Greenham, he privileged pastoral care over other forms of ministry and lamented the laity's reluctance to approach their pastors for spiritual counsel. He may even have been influenced by Greenham's teaching on private confession, for in other works he advocated an analogous 'Meane ... betwixt two extremes'; although 'the Romish Laity makes either Oracles, or Idols of their ghostly

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<sup>202</sup> Hall, *Epistles, The Second Volume*, 202. Epistolary counsel was especially fitting when contagious disease prevented the minister's personal presence.

<sup>203</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 50<sup>r</sup>-1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 49<sup>v</sup>, 71<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>. Wallington similarly collected together three letters written by Paul Baynes on the theme of death, using manicules to highlight the 'motiues' for patiently bearing grief which Baynes recommended to one correspondent: *ibid.*, fos. 58<sup>v</sup>-63<sup>v</sup>, esp. 60<sup>v</sup>-1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>205</sup> Hall, *Epistles, The Third And Last Volvme*, 43-5, 54.

<sup>206</sup> Hall, *Epistles, The Second Volume*, 157.

fathers ... we make Ciphers of ours'.<sup>207</sup> Highlighting the benefits which troubled and afflicted believers could receive at the hands of their clergy, he encouraged his readers to 'run to your ghostly Physitian', consent to his 'searching the wound to the bottome' and 'make carefull use of such spirituall applications as shall be by him administered'. Like many contemporary divines, Hall drew comparisons between 'the ghostly counsell of your Minister' and the expert, professional advice of learned lawyers and physicians. He even advised those who might 'attaine to such a measure of knowledge and resolution, as to be able to give your selfe satisfaction concerning the state of your soule', that 'it cannot be amisse, out of an abundant caution to take Gods minister along with you ... to unbosome your selfe to him freely, for his fatherly advice and concurrence'.<sup>208</sup>

### **Soul Care in Paul Baynes's *Christian Letters***

The radical puritan cleric, Paul Baynes (c.1573-1617), is the final Reformed divine whose printed letters were transcribed by Wallington. Baynes is a minister of whom few biographical details are known with any certainty and his works have received limited attention. He was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, and he succeeded William Perkins as lecturer at St Andrew the Great. Baynes was banned from St Andrew's in 1605 on account of unlicensed preaching, but he was soon back in the pulpit and was only finally suspended during Archbishop Bancroft's 1608 metropolitanical visitation.<sup>209</sup> Despite his disillusionment with the established church, Baynes was one of those puritan divines

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<sup>207</sup> Joseph Hall, *Resolutions And Decisions Of Divers Practical Cases of Conscience* (London, 1649), 327, 344.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 334-7, 343. See above, p. 12.

<sup>209</sup> Although the details of this event have been variously reported, Andrew Atherstone has cleared up much of the confusion: 'The Silencing of Paul Baynes and Thomas Taylor, Puritan Lecturers at Cambridge', *Notes and Queries*, 54/4 (2007), 386-9. Baynes referred to this 'great businesse' in one letter, remarking that he had been 'warned to preach' at the upcoming 'Metropolitans visitation': Paul Baynes, *Christian Letters, Of Mr. Paul Bayne. Replenished with diuers Consolations, Exhortations, Directions, tending to promote the honour of godlinesse* (London, 1620), sig. G2<sup>v</sup>.

whom Perry Miller identified as ‘non-separatist Congregationalists’.<sup>210</sup> His *Christian Letters* were printed posthumously in 1620 and were amongst his most popular writings, being reproduced in three editions up to 1637. According to the work’s preface, which promises ‘many sweete motiues to heauenly mindednesse’ and ‘effectuall considerations to qualifie the bitterness of sorrow’, a portion of this ‘bundle of Letters’ was also transcribed during Baynes’s lifetime, ‘full many a time; yea, hundreds of times, or nearer a thousand times, if some godly persons haue not misreckoned’.<sup>211</sup> This implies a significant manuscript circulation of correspondence and a drive to disseminate spiritual guidance which was originally supplied on an individual level. Unfortunately, Baynes’s correspondents are largely anonymised. However, scattered references to the transmission process and other context-specific details provide a sense of epistolary continuity and a few letters are even dated to the day and month. As Schneider has noted, ‘the letters ... feel like correspondence that had circulated and was now gathered together’.<sup>212</sup>

Baynes was famed for his practical divinity. Samuel Clarke particularly associated his activities as an ‘excellent *Casuist*’ with the period after he was prohibited from exercising a preaching ministry, but he also identified Baynes’s dealings with afflicted believers as a trigger for his suspension, noting that because so ‘many doubting Christians repaired to him for satisfaction in cases of Conscience’ the Bishops accused him of

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<sup>210</sup> Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts 1630-1650* (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), 76-101.

<sup>211</sup> Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sigs )(3<sup>r</sup>)-(4<sup>r</sup>. I have discovered a manuscript version of a lengthy piece of spiritual counselling which was apparently sent in epistolary form to an individual who offered it for publication following Baynes’s death: Paul Baynes, *A Letter Written By Mr. Pavl Bayne, Minister of Gods word, lately deceased* (London, 1617). Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.1350, fos. 248<sup>r</sup>-60<sup>v</sup> differs from the printed version in various ways.

<sup>212</sup> See references to letter carriers: Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sigs G2<sup>v</sup>, H6<sup>v</sup>, K4<sup>r-v</sup> and to a letter miscarrying sig. H10<sup>v</sup> and see sigs C2<sup>v</sup>, C10<sup>v</sup> and O2<sup>r</sup> for dates. Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 245. Nicholas Tyacke observed that the *Christian Letters* reflects ‘genuine case histories’: *Aspects of English Protestantism, c.1530-1700* (Manchester, 2001), 117. It is not certain that all Baynes’s addressees were laypeople, although this is clear in the cases of the many female correspondents and those with gentry styles and titles.

keeping Conventicles.<sup>213</sup> Interestingly, Baynes's letters also hint at his commitment to fulfilling his pastoral duties on an epistolary level. He informed one correspondent: 'I am called more on for writing, then my strength can well afford'.<sup>214</sup>

Wallington compiled nine of Baynes's letters, supplying his own descriptive titles and omitting lengthy illustrations. In one instance, he removed context-specific detail, presumably in an effort to fashion a more universal piece of pastoral counsel.<sup>215</sup> Several of Baynes's letters place particular emphasis on the importance of spiritual fellowship and mutual exhortation amongst the communion of saints. Wallington evidently appreciated the sentiment that 'One candle [should] Lighteth another' and he used manicules to underscore Baynes's assertion that: 'a good man cannot tell how to goe to Heauen alone, the communion of saints must be a point of practis as well as an Article of beleefe'. Baynes generally construed his epistolary interventions as a Christian, rather than a specifically ministerial, obligation and a 'common debt' of love.<sup>216</sup> Yet it seems that he did conceive of clerical counselling as a particular and specialist duty. Elsewhere, he specifically linked the minister's responsibility for spiritually sustaining his flock with letter-writing, observing that, contrary to St Paul's example, 'many Pastors now-adaies, whose Epistles if one read, you shall finde nothing they listen after, but newes'. According to Baynes, in order to 'discharge ... [their] duty more fruitfully', ministers must 'looke into the manners more neerely of their people', since 'it behoveth Shepheards to know their flocke', just as 'naturall parents[,] if they have children at the University, they will inquire how they goe on in learning and vertue'. In contrast, he considered it a 'great wickednesse' for 'a private

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<sup>213</sup> Clarke, *Lives of thirty-two*, 23.

<sup>214</sup> Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sig. F11<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>215</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 62<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 56<sup>r</sup>. Also Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sig. L5<sup>r</sup>. The title page features a quote from Hebrews 3:13 concerning mutual edification. *Ibid.*, sigs C6<sup>v</sup>, A5<sup>v</sup>, B7<sup>v</sup>, G6<sup>v</sup>, Q8<sup>r</sup>.

person without any calling to be so inquisitive, and to prie into others' so as 'to cast something in their teeth'.<sup>217</sup>

Baynes's extensive epistolary reflections on suffering, affliction and spiritual physic convey an air of expert authority, which Wallington's transcriptions capture. His *Christian Letters* address members of a godly minority, an elect remnant in a corrupt age, who defined themselves through suffering.<sup>218</sup> Baynes repeatedly emphasised that afflictions are a test sent from God, intended to confirm the godly in faith and righteousness. Since 'good mettall is discerned from drosse not by being in the fire onely but by waxing more bright and refined', he counselled extensively on the proper response to hardship and misfortune. In one letter which Wallington transcribed, Baynes informed a female correspondent faltering under bodily suffering: 'I will at this time teach you, how you may come to profit by this hand of God' and he supplied a list of numbered directives.<sup>219</sup> In another, he addressed a man weighed down with doubts because of the great sufferings 'visited' upon his wife, declaring: 'if I had sooner knowen of your heauines, I would before this haue written vnto you'. Whilst Baynes recognised that such sorrows had left his friend 'shaken in beleefe', he assured him that afflictions could 'confirm faith', for amongst great tribulation 'many precious graces are discerned'.<sup>220</sup> Baynes employed medical imagery to compare healing 'afflictions' with bitter 'potions' and purges. In two phrases which Wallington transcribed, he noted that 'the physicke must make vs sicke that that [*sic*] doth vs any good' and that 'God will not excede that quantity any whit which is fit for his patients', just as 'a wise physitian will not put in his prescribt a Drame too much'. For Baynes, God was the supreme spiritual physician, a designation

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<sup>217</sup> Paul Baynes, *An Entire Commentary Vpon The Whole Epistle Of The Apostle Paul To The Ephesians* (London, 1643), 152.

<sup>218</sup> Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sigs L4<sup>r-v</sup>, X6<sup>v</sup>-X7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>219</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 66<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 64<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

which occurs frequently amongst godly writers. However, ‘the Minister of the Gospell’, as the mediator of heavenly physic to the laity, was himself ‘a wise Physitian’ of souls.<sup>221</sup> In a further parallel with Dering, Baynes identified ministers as God’s ‘blessed instruments to save their [people’s] soules’, the ultimate channels of grace.<sup>222</sup> It is in this expert, professional capacity that Wallington’s letter-book presents Baynes. In one letter, the puritan cleric pressed for details of a friend’s spiritual condition with the caution that, since he could ‘easily ... procure that which would refresh you seasonably’, his addressee ought not to ‘neglect a good meanes which Gods prouidence doth shew you’. In another, Baynes wrote of the need to determine a precise spiritual diagnosis before profitable counsel could be prescribed.<sup>223</sup>

Baynes’s wider correspondence reveals that his commitment to supplying spiritual exhortation and reproof led him, at times, to address bold pastoral interventions to laypeople who outranked his own social standing as a clergyman. He sent one lengthy letter to an unidentified gentlewoman, to frankly ‘aduertise ... out of loue, of some diseases which I feare grow vpon your soule’.<sup>224</sup> In his commentary on Ephesians, Baynes censured what he saw as the arrogant estimation of their own learning which led gentry to ‘scorne the Minister and his admonitions, being ready to say, What a sawce-box is he to medle with me, and why should I be under his controll?’ He maintained that it was within the remit of ministers to offer candid correction, admonishing the educated laity’s mistaken

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., fos. 54<sup>r</sup>, 59<sup>r</sup>, 62<sup>r</sup>, 63<sup>v</sup>, 67<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>. Wallington personally expressed this same notion: *Notebooks*, 166-7. See David Harley, ‘Spiritual Physic, Providence and English Medicine, 1560-1640’, in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London, 1993), 109-10. Baynes, *An Entire Commentary*, 394. This density of medical terminology evokes suggestive comparisons with epistolary medical advice. Letters sent by physicians to their patients, examples of which were also reproduced in print, conform to a similar model of expert, professional counsel. According to Susan Fitzmaurice, medical advice letters from family and friends lack the same authoritative weight: *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A Pragmatic Approach* (Amsterdam, 2002), 87-9, 109-16.

<sup>222</sup> Paul Baynes, *A Commentarie Vpon The First And Second Chapters Of Saint Paul To The Colossians* (London, 1635), 143.

<sup>223</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 54<sup>v</sup>, 57<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>. Similarly, Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sig. B8<sup>r</sup>-v.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., sigs D9<sup>r</sup>-F1<sup>v</sup>.

belief that they could discern God's 'most deep and high Counsell's' for themselves.<sup>225</sup> Wallington, who enthusiastically affirmed the value of 'Ministers of Christ that will tell men plainly of their sins', was drawn to several such admonitory letters, including one which bluntly advocated repentance for 'great vnprofitablenes' in the service of God, urging: 'let not any indisposition & slothfulnes hinder you, shake vp yourselfe'.<sup>226</sup>

Like the correspondence of Dering, Greenham and Hall, Baynes's letters present an authoritative clerical model of spiritual counselling and demonstrate the significance of the epistolary form as a vehicle for Protestant practical divinity. Jason Yiannikou has claimed that printed letters of counsel declined after 1600. In his 1999 Cambridge thesis, he commented on 'the loss of the printed epistle of comfort as a major form'.<sup>227</sup> The evidence of the correspondence of Hall and Baynes, in addition to various works discussed in later chapters of this thesis and further examples cited in Gary Schneider's study of early modern epistolarity, certainly suggests that Yiannikou's argument is overstated.<sup>228</sup> Schneider has isolated a pervasive early modern discourse which characterised letter-writing as a pale substitute for face-to-face communication.<sup>229</sup> Such rhetoric is expressed by both Dering and Greenham, who make apologies in several letters for being unable to visit and converse directly with spiritual patients. However, on one occasion, Baynes actually overturned this conventional wisdom to present written spiritual direction as superior. He informed a female correspondent:

a letter will dwell by you and talke with you, so often as you reade it atentiuely, yea it will be ready whensoever you are the fittest for such businesse, with conueniency my comming to visite you can not alwayes attaine.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Baynes, *An Entire Commentary*, 439.

<sup>226</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 169<sup>r</sup>, 55<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>227</sup> Yiannikou, 'Protestantism, Puritanism', 123, 142, 155, 158-9.

<sup>228</sup> Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 191, 197, 242-8.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-37.

<sup>230</sup> Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sigs C10<sup>v</sup>-C11<sup>r</sup>. This is reminiscent of a statement of St Augustine in a letter sent to instigate an instructive spiritual correspondence with the pagan, Volusian, around 411/12 AD: Augustine, *Letters 100-155 (Epistulae)*, trans. Roland Teske and ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York, 2003),

This may well have struck a chord with Wallington, for he evidently regarded the rereading of epistolary advice as a devotional exercise.<sup>231</sup> Indeed, he first began to compile his manuscript on encountering ‘some profitable and comfortable letters’ which ‘did lye by me’.<sup>232</sup> The final sections of this chapter will investigate Wallington’s use of the epistolary medium as both a giver and receiver of religious instruction and will consider the impact which his engagement with printed epistolary literature may have had on his own approach to spiritual counselling.

### **Lay Advice-giving and Fraternal Correction**

Wallington’s letter-book testifies to his awareness of being part of a community of faithful professors, comprising not only English puritans but also godly settler communities across the Atlantic. Accordingly, he included a letter from the Massachusetts minister, Thomas Weld, to his former congregation at Terling, Essex, and another from a puritan colonist, Anthony Thacher. Both bear witness to an extensive and far-flung practice of scribal circulation of godly correspondence.<sup>233</sup> Wallington also copied various personal letters which conform to the model of mutual counsel and exhortation amongst the fellowship of saints to which he drew particular attention in his transcriptions from Baynes’s *Christian Letters*. His reading of such texts doubtless heightened his awareness of this reciprocal Christian obligation. In 1634, Wallington sent firm advice to a fellow tradesman, James Cole, who, overcome by debt, had abandoned his wife and family to escape imprisonment. At this time, counsel descended upon Cole from various quarters and

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202. Greenham likewise remarked, ‘if my Letters remaine with you, they may alwaies speake for mee that which I am able to say to that poynt’: *Workes*, 871.

<sup>231</sup> This is demonstrated by his decision to revisit his manuscript in 1658.

<sup>232</sup> Quoted in Oswald, ‘Death, Piety, and Social Engagement’, 177-8.

<sup>233</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 90<sup>f</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>, 109<sup>f</sup>-15<sup>v</sup>. David D. Hall, ‘Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century New England: An Introduction and a Checklist’, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 115/1 (2005), 32-3, 48, 50 explores the place of letters within the wider culture of scribal transmission.

Wallington's father also echoed his son's appeal for Cole to return home.<sup>234</sup> However, Wallington's and Cole's broader correspondence is characterised by mutuality, with both parties offering edification and encouragement. Wallington expressed gratitude for times when Cole had 'stirred mee vp' and reminisced on 'those sweet comforts I haue had from you'. In 1650, he laid bare his spiritual condition to Cole, as earlier to a fellow woodturner, Edward Browne. Wallington maintained contact with both men after they emigrated to New England and Browne continued to send him pious exhortations.<sup>235</sup> Wallington engaged in similarly reciprocal correspondence with his Nottingham friend, Francis Wilsmore, with the aim that 'wee should stirr vp one another'. Wilsmore's surviving letters do perhaps imply that it was he who more particularly leant on Wallington for support. In 1640, the death of Wilsmore's 'Reuerent Pastor Mr Coates' left him especially in need of encouragement: 'though your ould letters are a comfort to mee, yet I desire to haue some renewed letters & lines of your loue to mee'.<sup>236</sup>

In his *Reading Revolutions*, Kevin Sharpe highlighted the ambivalence of early modern print culture, observing the interesting paradox whereby publication both extended authority as it was inscribed and disseminated in text and, unintentionally, passed it on to others by enabling it to be appropriated.<sup>237</sup> Whilst the publication of records of clerical counselling bore witness to the expertise and authority of ministers, it also made available to lay readers exemplary models which they themselves might use to engage in spiritual counselling. James Daybell has recently concluded that 'Wallington's own correspondence represents him in the role of spiritual counsellor'.<sup>238</sup> His epistolary preface certainly

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<sup>234</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 94<sup>r</sup>-103<sup>v</sup>. Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 95-100.

<sup>235</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 107<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>, 97<sup>r</sup>, 104<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>, 174<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>, 144<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>, also 39<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 120<sup>r</sup>-1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>237</sup> Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 2000), 27-8.

<sup>238</sup> Daybell, *Material Letter*, 208.

indicates that he composed some letters, including one ‘to my Sister Hind at Chelensford when her deare brother Mr Crosse was sicke to the death’, for which the epistolary literature he enthusiastically consumed may well have provided a model.<sup>239</sup> Additionally, from the 1640s, Wallington penned several letters which sternly admonished the transgressions of neighbours and relations. He addressed one Master Waddington ‘out of conscience in obedience of my duty to God and of loue to your poore soule’. This letter, framed as ‘a New yeers guift’, reprimands Waddington for ‘breach of the Lords day in selling of your ware’, for lying and for sleeping during church services. Wallington wrote similarly to his ‘Cozen Iohn’ that ‘I here intend to deale plainly and louingly with you shewing you your woefull and miserable condition that you are in’.<sup>240</sup> Comparable admonitions were addressed to an old companion, Master Wade, ‘vnto another freend’ mired in the ‘misible sine of Drunkennes’ and to his wife’s sister-in-law, who had been ‘liuing in secret sinne’ with an Irish Catholic.<sup>241</sup>

As Paul Seaver has noted, these letters display a conviction of the necessity of reproving fellow believers.<sup>242</sup> Wallington drew particular encouragement from Leviticus 19:17: ‘thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine heart But thou shalt plainly rebuke thy Neigh[b]our and suffer him not to sinne’. He cited this verse in each instance and in some letters he subsequently quoted Matthew 18:15: ‘if thy brother trespasse against the goe and tell him his falt between him and thee alone’. This latter command for private admonition is somewhat incongruous, for Wallington proceeded to copy these letters into his manuscript with the intention of their becoming decidedly public for the edification of his

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<sup>239</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., fos. 134<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>, 160<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., fos. 148<sup>r</sup>, 162<sup>v</sup>, 155<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>242</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 145-6.

wider godly circle.<sup>243</sup> Wallington's evocation of these verses also reads as an attempt to bolster the weight of his counsels, signalling a felt need to justify his authority to reprimand. At times, he claimed a near-prophetic mandate, defending his bold speech as 'wholsome instructions which he [i.e. God] hath put in my minde to speake to you'. Several letters conclude with a disquieting warning that, if they went unheeded, they would 'rise vp in Iudgment against you at the great day'.<sup>244</sup> Yet Wallington also clearly envisaged admonition as a reciprocal duty. He informed his neighbour Waddington that 'if at any time when you see me do amisse (as many tims I do) I shall be thankfull to you if you will tell me in as louing a maner'.<sup>245</sup>

Seaver has outlined a process of spiritual development whereby Wallington gradually became less susceptible to bouts of despair and, from around the 1640s, began to exercise a more confident role within his godly community. However, it is also important to observe that most of these letters were composed either subsequent to, or around the time of, his election as a 'lay' or 'ruling' elder for St Leonard, Eastcheap, in the fourth London Classis in 1646.<sup>246</sup> The disciplinary duty of admonition which they reflect constituted an important aspect of the ruling elder's role. According to Calvin's *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541), elders were 'to admonish amicably those whom they see to be erring', providing 'fraternal corrections'.<sup>247</sup> During the Presbyterian ascendancy, elders were expected to assist ministers in monitoring the spiritual estates of private Christians, chiefly for determining admission to the Lord's Supper.<sup>248</sup> William Abbott has

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<sup>243</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 134<sup>v</sup>, 148<sup>r</sup>, 155<sup>f</sup>, 160<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 157<sup>r</sup>, 158<sup>v</sup>, 137<sup>r</sup>, 162<sup>v</sup>. He even penned verses to this effect which he enclosed with a letter: *ibid.*, fo. 151<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 138<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>246</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 109-11, 147.

<sup>247</sup> John Calvin, 'Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances', in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. and ed. J. K. S. Reid (London, 1954), 63.

<sup>248</sup> *Propositions Concerning Chvrch-Government And Ordination Of Ministers* (London, 1647), sigs C3<sup>v</sup>-C4<sup>r</sup>, E1<sup>f-v</sup>; *A Vindication Of The Presbyteriall-Government, And Ministry* (London, 1649), sig. H4<sup>r</sup>.

highlighted the ambiguity which surrounded this quasi-clerical office, concluding that ‘no one in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made the ruling elder the exact spiritual equal of a minister, while all authorities agreed that he was something more, in a moral and spiritual sense, than the average layman’.<sup>249</sup> For Wallington, being elected to this ecclesiastical office was profoundly significant; even as a mere householder, he had been intensely aware of his responsibilities for souls in his care. He initially resisted (as many English laypeople did), being ‘full of feares’ for ‘though I haue liued this thirty yeers vnder the Gospel yet I have more need to be taught my selfe then to instruct others’.<sup>250</sup> Consequently, it seems fair to assume that this appointment heightened his pre-existing sense of obligation to reprove sinners.

Most importantly though, Wallington’s admonitory correspondence conforms to a pattern of fraternal correction which fundamentally differed from the paternal pastoral model of detailed consideration of intricate cases of conscience, which he encountered through his reading of epistolary advice literature. The main body of these highly formulaic letters generally constitutes little more than extensive scriptural quotations copied out for his addressees’ easy reference (‘truths that I write out of Gods word’), sometimes followed up with recommendations to read printed texts and sermons.<sup>251</sup> A few brief references in Wallington’s notebooks do reveal him in the role of spiritual counsellor to afflicted and doubt-ridden individuals. During the 1640s, he twice mentioned being called on to advise godly women who were troubled in conscience, presumably because of his significant personal experience in battling with despair. This was a qualification which ministers did consider to be particularly advantageous in a counsellor. Despite his high

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<sup>249</sup> William M. Abbott, ‘Ruling Eldership in Civil War England, the Scottish Kirk, and Early New England: A Comparative Study of Secular and Spiritual Aspects’, *ChH*, 75/1 (2006), 43-4, also 46, 53-5.

<sup>250</sup> Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 33-4, 79, 93. BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 153<sup>r</sup>. Abbott, ‘Ruling Eldership’, 42.

<sup>251</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, esp. fos. 156<sup>r</sup>, 137<sup>v</sup>, 148<sup>v</sup>-50<sup>v</sup>, 161<sup>r</sup>, 162<sup>v</sup>.

sense of the clerical office, Greenham acknowledged that the most effective comforts might be those proffered by an individual who had suffered similarly.<sup>252</sup> Wallington reported of the first occasion: ‘I could not fasten any comfort on her, but the other woman that I went vnto I myselfe did recieve good by’ and, of the second: ‘I did the best I could’, again noting that ‘I receiued much comfort from her’. In 1654, he reported having successfully related ‘such counsell as I Received of the Lord’ to two afflicted believers. However, Wallington does not appear to have actively sought out opportunities to assume this authoritative role and seems to have chiefly valued these encounters for the potential which they presented for mutual spiritual growth.<sup>253</sup>

#### **‘A Skilfull Phis[i]tion for My Soule’**

When plagued by affliction, doubt and troubles of conscience, it was to ministers of the Gospel that Wallington turned for resolution. Seaver has noted that godly clergy ‘were in an obvious sense the technical experts’ to whom he looked for aid and Booy has observed the importance which ‘ministerial guidance’ exerted over his various notebooks. Yet Seaver also maintained that Wallington’s godly community was ‘not a priest-ridden people’, underplaying the striking degree of respect for the pastoral office and dependence on clerical guidance which emerges from this manuscript.<sup>254</sup>

Wallington anthologised four letters which he received from his brother-in-law, Livewell Rampaigne, rector of Broxholme, Lincolnshire, between 1625 and 1632. In character, these display an interesting development, from the first which appears to have been sent shortly prior to Rampaigne’s progression from deacon’s orders to the priesthood,

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<sup>252</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 871.

<sup>253</sup> BL Add. MS 40883, fos. 169<sup>r</sup>, 172<sup>r-v</sup>; *Notebooks*, 336.

<sup>254</sup> Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 187-8. Booy, ‘Introduction’, 17-20.

through to the last in which he assumed a highly authoritative voice to supply ‘Answers of Comfort to his troubled spirit’.<sup>255</sup> In 1625, Rampaine responded to the news of Wallington’s daughter’s death and his wife’s grave illness with stern exhortations to regulate grief and submit meekly to divine trials. His assertion that ‘it is now no time for me to teach or you to learne ... now is the time of triall’ implicitly assumes a hierarchical model of lay-clerical relations.<sup>256</sup> Another letter, ‘concerning consoling [*sic*] and Instructings’, reveals that Rampaine was intimately acquainted with Wallington’s turbulent religious condition. From this position of trust and respect, he chided his brother-in-law for dwelling excessively on sorrows and knowledge of his ‘corrptions ... least you be ouerwhelmed and swallowed vp of it’. In 1632, Rampaine sent a series of instructions to assist Wallington in diagnosing the cause of his ‘cheerelessnesse’ in worship. Endeavouring to quieten his anxious qualms that he had fallen out of divine favour, Rampaine urged him to consider the many ‘causes of comfort the Lord reacheth out to you’ and ‘from them conclude a continuance of his kindnes’.<sup>257</sup>

These letters strongly suggest that Wallington was the instigator of their pious correspondence. He applied to his brother-in-law in an analogous way to the spiritual patients addressed in the epistles of Hall, Baynes and others, voicing a ‘complaint’ or ‘grievance’ against his own behaviour and expecting Rampaine to supply lists of ‘rvles’ for his consolation and direction. On 30<sup>th</sup> October 1628, Wallington’s father received a letter from a nephew, John Bradshaw, detailing ‘the misery and troubles’ of Huguenots in La Rochelle. In response, Wallington seems to have immediately sought out Rampaine’s judgement. On 18<sup>th</sup> November, he received a letter concerning ‘the vses that ought to be made of the miserys of Rochel’, which commenced: ‘I receiued your too last letters one the

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<sup>255</sup> ‘Rampaine, Livewell’ (44577), *CCEd*. BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 80<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 71<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>, at 73<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 75<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>, 82<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>.

last weeke, the weeke before Sad relatours of publick and priuate calamities, that from Rochell'. That Wallington also copied these 'vses' into another notebook in 1632 indicates the premium which he placed on those examples of clerical counsel which he could obtain.<sup>258</sup> For his part, Rampaigne sometimes failed to offer prompt responses, complaining of the many duties which consumed his time. Once, he even had to thank Wallington, rather remorsefully, 'for putting me in minde of my great weighty charge'.<sup>259</sup>

Such evidence sits awkwardly alongside Kate Narveson's recent portrayal of Wallington's confident spiritual self-sufficiency and her assertion that he did 'not need a minister to explain how to regard and respond to any particular occasion'.<sup>260</sup> Further revealing letter exchanges, dating from 1638 to 1643, also survive between Wallington and his parish curate, Henry Roborough. Roborough had provided Wallington with personal counsel during his youthful bouts of despair and attempts at suicide.<sup>261</sup> In 1638, prompted by Malachi 2:7 ('the prest lips shall presarue knowledg and thou shalt seeke it at his mouth'), Wallington made 'bould to write my mind vnto you desiering you to helpe me in this my temptations'. He further justified his address to Roborough by evoking the gendered image of a woman having recourse to her husband in time of spiritual trial, as the one set in loving authority over her. Through this letter, Wallington bared his soul to his pastor, pouring out a particular confession. Tormented by the potential consequences of having broken a vow of spiritual 'reformation' made during a life-threatening sickness almost fifteen years previously and overcome by fear that he might have profaned the sacrament by receiving it not 'with cherefulnes and delight' but out of 'costom, or for feare to ofend my Father', Wallington besought Roborough: 'I pray you do not bauke with me in

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., fos. 76<sup>v</sup>-80<sup>r</sup>. BL Sloane MS 1457, fo. 53<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>259</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 80<sup>v</sup>, 76<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>260</sup> Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 119.

<sup>261</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 22-4, 30.

anything but deale as a faithfull dispenser of the truth'.<sup>262</sup> In a later letter, he frantically sought confirmation of 'whither my trouble and sorrow were a right trouble and sorrow and my ioy a true and right ioy'. Labelling Roborough 'a skilfull phis[i]tion for my soule', the only occasion on which he employed this precise terminology of spiritual direction, Wallington implored: 'take some paines to studdy and finde out ... whether my graces and comforts be of the right stampt [*sic*] or no'.<sup>263</sup> Seaver has remarked of this letter that Wallington 'somehow believed Roborough could correctly diagnose' his spiritual condition. However, from a holistic examination of the letter-book, such a request appears unsurprising, corresponding to the kind of aid to intricate emotional self-scrutiny which Baynes, Hall and others were apparently called upon to provide.<sup>264</sup>

Wallington was exceedingly conscious of the spiritual authority of godly clergy. In another letter, which outlined various reasons for concurring with the 'holy and learned Deuines' of the Westminster Assembly, he addressed Roborough as 'him whom God hath set ouer mee for to teach and establish mee in the ways of God'.<sup>265</sup> In other notebooks, he remarked that 'the true beleuer doth euidence his loue to Christ by his loue to the Ministers of Christ' and he even observed that a Christian who was disinclined to hear a godly preacher might well lack 'that high and reuerent respect of him as a Minister of God should haue'.<sup>266</sup> Wallington undoubtedly considered clergymen to be pre-eminent authorities in determining issues of conscience. He explicitly advised James Cole, who appeared unmoved by the stern exhortations of relatives and neighbours, to 'goe to some of Gods Faithfull Ministers and powre out your minde to them and Aske their Aduise And[,]

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<sup>262</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 118<sup>r</sup>-19<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 122<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>264</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 105. See the analogous request from Hall's sister and Baynes's offer to diagnose a correspondent's condition in this way: BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 38<sup>r</sup>-9<sup>v</sup>, 57<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 140<sup>r</sup>-1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>266</sup> BL Add. MS 40883, fos. 124<sup>v</sup>, 41<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>.

as they shall direct you[,] so yeeld'. Notably, Cole took up Wallington's particular suggestion of using the celebrated Ipswich minister, Samuel Ward, as a counsellor and on his advice he immediately reunited, albeit briefly, with his wife.<sup>267</sup>

Wallington wrote his counsels to Cole in a letter which he carried to Ipswich and presented to him in person, in order to ensure its safe delivery. Interestingly, he also employed the letter form superfluously to communicate with his own curate, justifying these epistolary exchanges with the remarks: 'as much as I can not speake [my] mind to you. I make bould to write to you' and 'I am but an ill writter, but a worse speker'. Consequently, Seaver has attributed this action to Wallington's evident 'diffidence in speaking', but it seems that further reason must be sought in the embarrassment and discomfiture which Christian conferring evidently caused many early modern laypeople.<sup>268</sup> Greenham and Hall both lamented the unwillingness of believers to seek out their minister for individual examination and instruction. Likewise, Wallington entreated Roborough to instigate face-to-face counselling, remarking that if he did not 'send for me and examin me ... I know I shall be ashamed and seeke to put of time to doe it'.<sup>269</sup> Of course, Wallington could also have taken his lead from the epistolary model which his own letter-book traced from the apostolic era through to the seventeenth century. These letters provide a paradigm of written spiritual conference which he may have been only too willing to adopt.

### **'Take Heede vnto the Ministry ... That Thou Fulfill It'**

Wallington's belief in the vital importance of a dedicated, authoritative ministry prompted him to write several letters which boldly admonished individual clerics for

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<sup>267</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 98<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., fos. 122<sup>r</sup>, 123<sup>v</sup>. Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 11-12.

<sup>269</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 123<sup>r</sup>. See Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 132-40 for further evidence of letters being favoured over face-to-face interaction because they allowed correspondents to evade shame and embarrassment.

falling short in their essential didactic duties. In 1642, he warned the absentee rector of his parish, Abraham Colfe, ‘to have a care of soules’, attributing the sinful conduct which he had witnessed locally to Colfe’s refusal to instruct his ‘poore hungger starued soules’. Wallington’s reproof of Colfe’s failure to have ‘*priuatly* and publikly tolde your people plainely of their wicked wayes’, demonstrates the vital importance which he attributed to individual pastoral instruction. In addition, he begged Colfe to enlist the assistance of ‘some more faithfull Minister to preach and cry down these sinnes’.<sup>270</sup> This facet of Wallington’s writing has been heavily emphasised in secondary literature. Peter Lake has drawn on these letters to suggest that ‘Wallington was anything but servile in his overall relations with the ministry’. Recently, Kate Narveson has proposed that it was scriptural literacy and the contemporary lay culture of Bible-based writing which furnished Wallington with the necessary confidence to admonish clergymen.<sup>271</sup>

However, it is necessary to observe that it was on account of his elevated view of the ministerial office, that Wallington felt compelled to reprove clerics whose actions he believed undermined its dignity. Thus, he warned his young ministerial cousin, Nathaniel Church, that his unbecoming lifestyle and overmuch liberty in worldly amusements threatened to ‘disable his Ministry’. Wallington exhorted him to ‘walke worthy’ of his ‘high calling’, lest he ‘be guilty of the death of the soule: nay of many soules’.<sup>272</sup> Interestingly, Wallington’s admonitions may actually have been influenced by his own curate, Henry Roborough, who expressed his particularly fervent belief in the clerical duty to reprove sin in a series of sermons delivered at St Leonard, Eastcheap, which were

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<sup>270</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 132<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>. (My emphasis). Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 106.

<sup>271</sup> Peter Lake, *The Boxmaker’s Revenge: ‘Orthodoxy’, ‘Heterodoxy’ and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester, 2001), 77-9. Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 8. Also David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004), 451-2.

<sup>272</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 166<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>.

subsequently printed.<sup>273</sup> In two final letters, Wallington took it upon himself to address a local minister, George Griffith, and another, Matthew Barker, who assumed responsibility for St Leonard's after Roborough's death, praising their 'uery sweet and profitable' prayer and preaching, but urging them to adopt an alternative tack to ensure much needed moral reformation of the laity. Thus, he exhorted Griffith: 'ah sir that you would now be a Sonne of Thunder, as you haue been of consolation', imploring each in the words of Isaiah 58:1: 'crye aloud spaire not lift vp your voyce like a trumpet and shew my people their transgression'.<sup>274</sup> These letters were not doctrinal interventions, but were aimed solely at reviving discipline. Evidently, Wallington's conception of the ideal godly pastor was analogous to that of Richard Greenham: 'hee must not spare to thunder out the iust iudgements of God ... vntill he hath beaten them down to hell with the terrors therof'.<sup>275</sup>

Seaver and, subsequently, David Como have argued that Wallington's particular dispute was with the Independents, of which both Barker and Griffith were representative. Wallington certainly informed Barker that only the 'despised Prespeterions' were committed to combating the godlessness of the age. Alternatively, it must be observed that Wallington's notebooks generally display a remarkable ecumenism, including numerous appreciative references to Independent preachers. Indeed, his respect for Joseph Hall implies a more inclusive, albeit solidly Reformed, conception of the Church of England.<sup>276</sup> Nonetheless, it was perhaps the case that Wallington, professing a responsibility as ruling elder within a Presbyterian system of ecclesiastical governance which his Independent pastor would not have recognised, was brought into particular tension with Barker and

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<sup>273</sup> Henry Roborough, *Balme from Gilead, To cure all Diseases, especially the Plague* (London, 1626), 76-9, 173-4, 274-5. Roborough used several of the same biblical images contained in Wallington's letters.

<sup>274</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 168<sup>r</sup>-70<sup>v</sup>, 165<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>. His address to Barker is labelled 'a supposed letter', for Wallington actually read it aloud to his pastor.

<sup>275</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 344.

<sup>276</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 107, 149-50, 171-3. Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 451-2. BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 169<sup>v</sup>.

others. Wallington's awareness of the incongruity of his authority may well have provoked such a forthright response to the iniquity which he encountered in his parish.

Importantly, Wallington's letters employ a language of deference which suggests that the clergy continued to compel his respect, even when he saw fit to admonish their failings. Thus, he assured Colfe that he was 'loth to be to tedious or to trouble you any further for you know far more then I can tell you'. Whilst this might be regarded as mere rhetoric and politeness strategy, his address to Griffith does imply sincere respect:

I hope you will pardon my bouldnes in putting yov in minde of so waighty a matter ... of which you know farr more then I can tell you, hoping you will conster all that I haue said to the best, for I doe reuerence you and highly esteeme of you.<sup>277</sup>

Here, Wallington had a clear epistolary precedent. In 1635, his father outlined 'the hie calling of the Ministry of God' in a letter to his clerical nephew, John Allen. The older Wallington reflected confidently and extensively on the duties of godly clergymen, but concluded with a respectful, scriptural defence of his intervention:

I may not teach a fish to swime, but out of my loue vnto you I am bolde to say to you as St Paul counselled the Colosians to say vnto their Minister ... Take heede vnto the Ministry ... that thou fulfill it.<sup>278</sup>

Nehemiah's decision to transcribe this letter indicates both his sense of the dignity of the clerical office and of the godly layperson's obligation to impede the breakdown of pastoral ministry.

Importantly, aside from the stern admonitions which Wallington addressed to Colfe, these letters were all composed around his fiftieth year, when he had served as an elder for a significant time.<sup>279</sup> Despite commanding a notable degree of authority in such

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., fos. 134<sup>r</sup>, 165<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., fo. 108<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>279</sup> Interestingly, some contemporaries actually defended the office of ruling elder as a bulwark against ministerial misuse of authority: *Vindication Of The Presbyteriall-Government*, sigs F1<sup>v</sup>-F2<sup>r</sup>, Y4<sup>r</sup>-Z1<sup>r</sup>.

issues of parish discipline, Wallington was always very hesitant to reprove clerics. In one notebook, he recorded fifteen cautionary answers ‘to those that do so condeme Ministers and professors for their failings’ and, in another, he composed a list of ten reasons why, if a layperson failed to benefit at his pastor’s hands, it was more likely to be his fault than his minister’s.<sup>280</sup> Yet even some contemporary clerics acknowledged that a layperson might need to intervene to ensure the maintenance of the efficacious ministry which was integral to his and others’ salvation. Richard Greenham enthusiastically advocated the laity’s ‘duty to obey the true Minister’, but also their need to ‘beware that we suffer not our selues to be seduced by false teachers’. Crucially, if any ‘infirmite’ was discovered in a pastor, ‘it is our dutie christianlike to admonish him thereof’.<sup>281</sup> Although this elusive distinction between true and false teachers may have been something of a double bind for the conscientious layperson, this sort of reasoning does appear to underpin Wallington’s own sense of obligation in this sphere.

## **Conclusion**

In 1654, Wallington penned a revealing note in his final extant manuscript, recording that he had sent ‘for some practical rules how I may glorify God this little time I have to remain here’ from Nathaniel Church, the ministerial cousin whom he had sternly admonished five years previously. On receiving the desired rules, he reported his immense ‘joy in them, as if I had some great estate given me’.<sup>282</sup> Seaver has rather simplistically remarked that Wallington’s literacy freed him ‘from clerical dependence’, but as this brief recollection suggests, the reality was rather more complex.<sup>283</sup> This chapter has highlighted concurrent trends of both spiritual individualism and sustained clericalism. Throughout his

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<sup>280</sup> *Notebooks*, 276-7, 171.

<sup>281</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 351-2. See also Richard Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest: Or, A Treatise Of the Blessed State of the Saints* (London, 1650), 489-90.

<sup>282</sup> Quoted in Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 187.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

life, Wallington's religious attitudes continued to be shaped by the ministerial directives, both oral and written, which he so esteemed. The wider devotional context of his letter-book confirms that for many in a post-Reformation age, religious doubts and anxieties could not be combated merely through introspection and self-examination, charting a lone course of spiritual progress through to a final assurance of salvation. An alternative tendency to seek out expert judgements and resolutions is also prevalent in the source material.

Fresh insights have been offered here into early modern religious epistolary culture. Wallington's letter-book has been analysed as part of a wider trend of publicising records of private spiritual counselling for the benefit of a godly community with a strong sense of their universal pastoral application. Scrutiny of the printed letters and wider works of prominent exponents of spiritual counselling has uncovered a recurring discourse of the professional, authoritative expertise of Protestant ministers. Whilst Rosemary O'Day's contention that this period witnessed the professionalisation of the clergy has not met with universal acceptance, the writings of these pastors certainly suggest a desire for their office to be viewed in these terms.<sup>284</sup> Finally, it has been proposed that Wallington's reading of such epistolary literature influenced his conception of the indispensable role of ministers as providers of pastoral support to individual laypeople. Whilst the personal correspondence of this scrupulous artisan reveals his commitment to mutual exhortation, admonition and godly lay conference, it also demonstrates his belief that the clergy retained a particular and distinct status, reminiscent of pre-Reformation times, as the spiritual experts upon whom the welfare of souls principally rested.

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<sup>284</sup> O'Day, *The English Clergy*. See critiques in Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 79-81, 88-9 and Michael Hawkins, 'Ambiguity and Contradiction in the "Rise of Professionalism": The English Clergy, 1570-1730', in A. L. Beier, David Cannadine and James M. Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society: Essays on English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989), 241-69.

### 3. Counselling the Gentry: Status, Gender and Clerical Patronage

#### Introduction

The preceding chapter of this thesis drew heavily on the scribal remains of Nehemiah Wallington, a well-known but non-elite artisan of humble social and economic status. As a contrast, this chapter will examine some epistolary sources which shed light on relationships between Protestant ministers and members of the landed gentry and nobility who have been the focus of limited research.

In her seminal work on the professionalisation of the clergy, Rosemary O'Day argued for a post-Reformation crisis in clerical status brought about by the loss of the ministerial '*raison d'être*' as 'mediator between the individual soul and God'.<sup>285</sup> In 1986, John Morgan challenged O'Day's claim, noting that the godly frequently attributed responsibility for the loss of souls to 'insufficient or negligent ministers'.<sup>286</sup> Morgan may have too straightforwardly equated the continuance of a vocal discourse of ministerial dignity and indispensability with clerical mediation, but it certainly seems clear that pastoral instruction continued to be regarded as an essential aid to salvation. Nonetheless, as Barbara Donagan has convincingly observed, there were significant 'social constraints' on the clergy. By the early seventeenth century, clerical recruitment was predominantly at graduate level. Many ministers were highly educated, towering intellectually above the majority of their congregations, but lacking the wealth associated with the gentry. Evidently, much contemporary anxiety surrounded how to place the minister socially. In many cases, his dependence on lay patronage amplified this precarious position; his

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<sup>285</sup> O'Day, *English Clergy*, 126.

<sup>286</sup> Morgan, *Godly Learning*, 79-84, at 81.

reputation and prospects for advancement hinged upon his ability to demonstrate skill and diligence in his religious provision and maintain a close relationship with his patron. Causing offence to the latter could jeopardise his livelihood. And yet the clergy, as individuals distinct from the ordinary laity, could also provide the gentry with ‘intellectual companionship’ and even friendship.<sup>287</sup>

Relevant to these issues of rank and clerical patronage is the question of the role and status of the domestic chaplain, the ministerial position which most particularly entailed interaction with, and dependence on, gentry. William Gibson has emphasised the practically servile status which some chaplains occupied in the homes of landed elites. In various cases, they were young men ‘at the bottom of the clerical hierarchy’, too inexperienced to gain a benefice.<sup>288</sup> Gibson’s conclusions are well illustrated by a letter of advice written from one domestic chaplain to another at the very end of our period, which counsels on the need to adopt a deferential demeanour when interacting with patrons and recommends that all religious provision be carefully devised so as to avoid causing offence.<sup>289</sup> The chaplain’s position did, however, allow an unparalleled degree of independence from ecclesiastical control, a fact which encouraged puritan gentry to maintain recalcitrant nonconformists within their households.<sup>290</sup> More recent research has underscored the ambiguity of the position of chaplains as ‘spiritual guides’, who were well

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 2-3, 96, 142, 159. Barbara Donagan, ‘Puritan Ministers and Laymen: Professional Claims and Social Constraints in Seventeenth Century England’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 47/2 (1984), 81-4, 88, 98. O’Day, *English Clergy*, 86-104. Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church: From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1963), 119-22. Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), 7, 341-4, at 342.

<sup>288</sup> William Gibson, *A Social History of the Domestic Chaplain, 1530-1840* (London, 1997), 48, also 38-43, 53, 112.

<sup>289</sup> William Gibson, ‘Some Advice to a Domestic Chaplain in 1663’, *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 137 (1993), 123-6.

<sup>290</sup> Gibson, *Social History*, 2.

positioned to exert influence over their patrons, but whose attempt to exercise religious authority might meet with a range of obstacles.<sup>291</sup>

Chapter two of this thesis briefly touched on the tensions which could arise when clerics forcefully asserted their spiritual authority, forgoing the deference which was considered appropriate in dealings with gentry. The decision to admonish a social superior was, presumably, not an easy one to make. Paul Baynes carefully framed an instructive letter to an unidentified gentlewoman with declarations of his love for her and disapproval of ‘couetous flatterer[s]’ who fail to reprove those to whom they owe particular spiritual ‘dutie[s]’.<sup>292</sup> In 1662, the Presbyterian royalist cleric, Thomas Cawton, was posthumously commended for his ‘plain dealing’ with his patron’s ‘Family, from the highest to the lowest’, yet his use of admonition marked him out from many ‘great mens Chaplains’ who ‘were so apt to flatter their Masters’.<sup>293</sup> With reference to the Isham family of Northamptonshire, Erica Longfellow has recently proposed that ‘even clergy of higher social status found it difficult to exercise social and spiritual agency ... with the local gentry’.<sup>294</sup> On the basis of a detailed study of several bodies of early to mid seventeenth-century correspondence, this chapter will offer a more optimistic perspective on the clergy’s ability to command religious influence with pious elites, especially women, through intimate spiritual counselling relationships.

In chapter two, I sought to nuance Patrick Collinson’s conclusions concerning the particularly gendered nature of spiritual counselling by highlighting the recourse which

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<sup>291</sup> Hugh Adlington, Tom Lockwood and Gillian Wright, ‘Introduction’, in idem (eds.), *Chaplains in Early Modern England: Patronage, Literature and Religion* (Manchester, 2013), 3-4.

<sup>292</sup> Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sig. D9<sup>r-v</sup>. Baynes also criticised educated elites who scorned their minister and undermined his authority. See above, pp. 63-4.

<sup>293</sup> Thomas Cawton Jr., *The Life and Death Of That Holy and Reverend Man of God Mr. Thomas Cawton* (London, 1662), 14.

<sup>294</sup> Erica Longfellow, ‘The Isham Family and Their Clergy’, in Adlington, Lockwood and Wright (eds.), *Chaplains*, 161.

both laywomen and men had to eminent physicians of the soul. However, evidence of epistolary counselling of Protestant gentry does predominantly reflect spiritual relationships between ministers and their prominent female patrons. Whilst, assuredly, clerics could encounter significant tensions in their ministry amongst the less devout, the sources on which this study is based reveal only occasional indications of friction and some notable evidence that gentle and noble clients willingly sought and embraced clerical instruction and correction. Whilst many of these records of personal spiritual counselling have received attention in secondary literature, there has been little in the way of in-depth analysis or comprehensive cross-comparison, the predominant scholarly tendency being to focus on individual letter-writers in isolation. Drawing links across several case studies, this chapter will further demonstrate that the provision of comfort and counsel surrounding death and bereavement provided particular opportunities for authoritative pastoral interactions with gentry.

### **A Pastoral Ideal: John Duncon and Lettice Cary**

Before considering the spiritual letter-writing relationships which form the basis of this chapter, I want to focus attention on an illuminating mid seventeenth-century epistolary document which reflects a contemporary ideal of the relationship between a noble patron and her domestic chaplain. *The Returnes Of Spiritual comfort and grief In A Devout Soul* (1648) was composed by the sequestered parson, John Duncon (1602/3-1652), as a devotional resource for Lettice Cary, Viscountess Falkland (c.1612-1647). Despite offering insights into the chaplain's role and status, subjects which are rarely alluded to in surviving primary sources,<sup>295</sup> this printed text has been largely neglected by scholars. During the 1630s, Lettice Cary's husband, Lucius, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Falkland, gathered around

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<sup>295</sup> See Gibson, *Social History*, v.

himself an important intellectual circle and their Oxfordshire estate of Great Tew became a centre of irenicist and rationalist religious thought. Lucius formed close relationships with many Oxford clergymen and prominent theologians such as William Chillingworth. He even personally authored several theological works.<sup>296</sup> His wife, Lettice, was devoted to the Book of Common Prayer, which she continued to use clandestinely after its abolition in 1645. Following Lucius's death at the first battle of Newbury in 1643, John Duncon, who had been deprived of his benefice of Rettendon, Essex, by a parliamentary commission (probably on account of his royalist views) was welcomed into Lady Falkland's household as her chaplain. During the few years of her widowhood, she lived a life of particular piety alongside her mother, her maids and possibly her aunt. She apparently had ambitions to establish a community of piety and learning for young gentlewomen and widows at Burford Priory, possibly modelled on Nicholas Ferrar's prototype of a 'Protestant Nunnery' at Little Gidding.<sup>297</sup> Duncon's views can be characterised as Laudian; a set of depositions against a patron of his, Matthew Wren, Bishop of Norwich, reveal controversial aspects of his ministry, including his distribution of communion only at the altar rail and his belief in 'a holines in the communion table, in the timber of the Church and in the surplice'.<sup>298</sup>

*The Retvrnes* takes the form of a letter exchange between Cary and Duncon, through which he instructed and comforted his widowed patroness. These letters are 'not a strict Relation, but a Representation' of their spiritual relationship, in which their author, Duncon, took 'the Liberty of a Representer'. He emphasised that, by 'Representation', he

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<sup>296</sup> Kurt Weber, *Lucius Cary Second Viscount Falkland* (New York, 1940), 25, 34, 82, 159-60, 193-4.

<sup>297</sup> Elizabeth Allen, 'Cary, Lettice, Viscountess Falkland (c.1612-1647)', *ODNB*. 'Lady Lettice Vi-Countess Falkland' by John Duncon, ed. M. F. Howard (London, 1908), 6-8, 14-15, 27-9. A print which accompanies Duncon's text depicts Lettice in a widow's veil reminiscent of the habit of a religious.

<sup>298</sup> Mary-Millicent Egan, 'Laudians, Puritans and the Laity in Essex c. 1630-1642', Ph.D. thesis (University College London, 2001), 36-7, 56.

did not mean a false or distorted portrait; through ‘frequent Communication with this Lady’, Duncon discovered her spiritual complaints, ‘composed them into these Letters[,] ... annexed these Answers to them, and left them with Her’ as a personalised manual of spiritual direction. Duncon exercised creative license to compile an exemplary devotional text which would be secondarily useful to others, ‘heighten[ing] here and there, the matter of which he writes’ and concealing the particularities of their relationship.<sup>299</sup> After Lady Falkland’s death in 1647, *The Retvrnes* were printed alongside Duncon’s biography of his patroness, which also took epistolary form as a letter of consolation to her grieving mother.<sup>300</sup> The work proved popular, being reissued in 1649 and expanded in a 1653 edition. Its most perplexing aspect is Duncon’s decision to commence all the letters with the address, ‘Sir’. Being concerned to underscore the historicity of this correspondence, Cary’s early twentieth-century biographer failed to mention this peculiarity. Duncon claimed to have deliberately ‘*disguised*’ the letters in this way before presenting them to his patroness, out of modesty, not wanting to ‘be too *particular* with a *person* of that quality’ or forgo ‘that *distance* and *respect*, which otherwise would have become *me*, in *my addresses to her Honor*’.<sup>301</sup> Thus, *The Retvrnes* represents a manipulation of the epistolary genre; Duncon employed fictive elements to communicate an ideal of lay-clerical relations which may have been more candid and familiar than that which he actually enjoyed with Lady Falkland. Yet these letters are also grounded in historical reality. Duncon emphasised how much of Cary’s ‘*Character*’ was contained within them, asserting their consistency with the annexed *Life* which was ‘a strict Relation’ of her

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<sup>299</sup> John Duncon, *The Holy Life and Death Of The Lady Letice, Vi-countess Falkland* (London, 1653), sigs A3<sup>r</sup>-A4<sup>v</sup>; idem, *The Retvrnes Of Spiritual comfort and grief In A Devout Soul. Represented (by intercourse of Letters) to the Right Honourable, the Lady Letice, Vi-Countess Falkland* (London, 1648), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>300</sup> What appears to be a revised autograph draft of this biography survives as BL Add. MS 45388.

<sup>301</sup> Duncon, *Retvrnes*, sig. K5<sup>v</sup>. This certainly cannot have been intended to conceal her identity in print, for Duncon included Lady Falkland’s name in the work’s title and appended her biography.

spiritual experiences.<sup>302</sup> But, whilst Gary Schneider has observed the ‘ventriloquized’ nature of Cary’s side of the correspondence, other scholars have utilised this text in problematic ways. In his recent magisterial survey of Protestant devotion, Alec Ryrie repeatedly quoted from *The Retvrnes* as a straightforward, unmediated record of Cary’s own religious beliefs and practices. Moreover, Lucinda Becker has mistakenly asserted that the letters were ‘written almost entirely by Lady Letice’, a conclusion which she appears to have drawn from Duncon’s reference to his having removed them from amongst her papers after her death.<sup>303</sup>

In an important article on edificatory practices amongst the godly laity, Diane Willen identified Lady Falkland as an example of ‘a traditional Anglican’ who acquired authority as a ‘spiritual counsellor’.<sup>304</sup> Duncon’s *Life* of Lettice Cary does depict her providing religious instruction to servants, children and ‘poor *unlearned neighbors*’ on her estate, primarily by reading from ‘Books of *spirituall exhortations*’ but also ‘by administring words of *holy counsel*’ (although ‘she trusted not in her own instructions of them, but desired the Chaplains help also to *examine* them, and to *instruct* them farther’). However, Willen’s desire to uncover lay, and particularly female, spiritual agency, led her to disregard the overwhelming emphasis of *The Retvrnes* on the authoritative influence of Duncon and other ministers in the devotional life of this pious noblewoman.<sup>305</sup> The work is framed by a reflection on the indispensability of domestic chaplains, which is aimed at combating contemporary disrespect for their position. Duncon prefaced his epistolary collection with two elegies on the death of the Viscountess, one of which commences with

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid., sig. K5<sup>r</sup>; Duncon, *Holy Life*, sig. A5<sup>r</sup>. Duncon expected that Cary’s mother would recognise ‘many of the *objections*’ as her daughter’s, although he claimed that Lettice also contributed to some of the ‘*answers*’.

<sup>303</sup> Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 194. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, esp. 8, 25, 94, 159, 193. Lucinda M. Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman* (Aldershot, 2003), 183-4.

<sup>304</sup> Diane Willen, ‘“Communion of the Saints”: Spiritual Reciprocity and the Godly Community in Early Modern England’, *Albion*, 27/1 (1995), 30.

<sup>305</sup> Duncon, *The Retvrnes*, sigs H6<sup>v</sup>-H7<sup>r</sup>, H9<sup>v</sup>-H12<sup>r</sup> and amongst others, H4<sup>v</sup>, H13<sup>r</sup>, H14<sup>r</sup>.

a gendered address to ‘some Ladies of these Times’, exhorting those ‘who thought *Chaplains* only things / of state / And count Them (*Coachmen Preaching*) / out of date ... [to] Learn here their *holier use*’. Drawing on widespread notions of clerical professionalism, gentlewomen are advised to ‘hold the *Casuists* as Dear’ as ‘Your costly *Lawyer*, or *Physitian*’. The collection is secondarily dedicated, as a work of pastoralia, to ‘*New-Teachers*’ who, if they ‘make this Book their schole / Here they might learn to *set a broken soul*’ by the example of Duncon, a ‘*holy Chymist*’ and ‘*Oracle*’.<sup>306</sup>

In the letters themselves, Duncon presents himself as an authoritative ‘Ghostly director’, employing medical imagery to foster a sense of professional expertise. Able to ‘prescribe’ for Cary’s spiritual afflictions, he promises his patroness that ‘if I find out your *Disease*, you may follow my directions for the *cure*, or the *ease* of it’. In turn, Lady Falkland implores her chaplain: ‘put to your Hand, I beseech you, and by your *spiritual* Directions ease me’.<sup>307</sup> Lettice Cary is depicted as highly responsive to clerical advice, confident that Duncon has ‘found out my *disease*’ and quick to implement his recommendations. Her replies affirm: ‘I was most diligent in observing your prescriptions’ and ‘I Peruse your *directions* daily’.<sup>308</sup> The overriding conceit of this epistolary discourse is the potential for the pious soul to, at one moment, experience the joy of assurance and devotional engagement and, at the next, be plunged into the depths of spiritual ‘*heaviness*’ and ‘*greif*’. Duncon instructs his patroness on the necessity of distinguishing between ‘sensible and spiritual Consolations’; purely outward, transient comforts, acquired through affective (particularly tearful) devotion, must not be allowed to stand in place of the higher,

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., sigs A7<sup>r</sup>-A8<sup>r</sup>. See above, p. 12. This elegy was not written by Duncon, as Becker asserts, but may well have been composed by another Laudian cleric. The author is ‘R: W:’, a member of an Oxford college: Duncon, *Holy Life*, sig. A12<sup>v</sup>; cf. Becker, *Death*, 189-90. M. F. Howard associated these elegies with Lucius Cary’s fellow contributors to *Jonsonus Virbius*, an elegiac collection for Ben Johnson: ‘*Lady Lettice*’, 3-4. Amongst numerous clerical contributors was one Richard West of Christ Church: *Ben Johnson. Volume XI*, eds. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford, 1970), 470.

<sup>307</sup> Duncon, *Retvrnes*, sigs C1<sup>v</sup>, B9<sup>v</sup>-B10<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., sigs C2<sup>r</sup>, C8<sup>r</sup>.

rational comforts of the soul.<sup>309</sup> Here, Duncon seeks to foster spiritual maturity in his devotee, exhorting Lady Falkland to examine herself in line with his directives and report back on her findings. In a puritan-esque reflection on the necessity of self-scrutiny, Duncon declares that all must ‘humbly labour, to make our *Calling* and *Election* sure’.<sup>310</sup> He also passionately censures those Protestants who overly esteem their ministers as ‘infallible guides’, like the papists.<sup>311</sup> Nonetheless, Duncon’s biography of Lady Falkland emphasises her laudable deference towards the clerical estate and regular recourse to ‘the advice of good Divines’, for ‘she trusted not *her own* judgment, nor *mistrusted theirs*; but presently applied her self to do, as *they* directed *her*’.<sup>312</sup>

In his classic study of pastoral care, the church historian and Calvin scholar, John T. McNeill, cited the examples of Luther, Calvin and other Reformation-era letter writers to argue that, unlike his Catholic counterpart:

the Protestant director does not ... seek to make permanent the relationship in which he gives counsel. He is a physician for a crisis ... he does not expect to continue in attendance, examining and prescribing for the patient ... over an indefinite period.<sup>313</sup>

However, this model of a long-term relationship of spiritual intimacy is clearly evoked in Duncon’s work. Following her recovery from a bout of melancholy, he placed a fervent entreaty on his patroness’s lips: ‘I pray *Sir*, let not this my health and tranquillity of mind deprive me of your letters; I am now at good leasure to receive what further *directions* you shal thinke fit for me’.<sup>314</sup> It is useful to bear in mind the apparent currency of this ideal of pastoral relations when moving on to address the genuine correspondence which forms the

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., sigs A3<sup>r</sup>, B8<sup>r</sup>, B3<sup>r</sup>, E11<sup>r</sup>-E12<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., sigs B4<sup>r</sup>, C3<sup>v</sup>, C6<sup>r</sup>, D2<sup>r</sup>-D3<sup>v</sup>, at D2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>311</sup> He associates this with cults of personality surrounding famed nonconformists, whose ‘*extemporary Praiers* and *Sermons*’ are favoured over ‘*Set Forms* and well-studied *Sermons*’: ibid., sigs F2<sup>r</sup>-F4<sup>v</sup>. Duncon was just as fiercely anti-Catholic: ibid., sigs F1<sup>r</sup>-F2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., sigs H3<sup>v</sup>, I5<sup>r</sup>, also H4<sup>v</sup>, I1<sup>r</sup>-I2<sup>r</sup>, I6<sup>v</sup>-I7<sup>r</sup>, I12<sup>v</sup>, K2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>313</sup> McNeill, *History of the Cure of Souls*, 200. McNeill was influenced by Jean-Daniel Benoît, *Direction Spirituelle et Protestantisme: Étude sur la Légitimité d’une Direction Protestante* (Paris, 1940), esp. 276-82.

<sup>314</sup> Duncon, *Retvrnes*, sig. E6<sup>v</sup>.

basis of this study. Since it might be argued that this is merely reflective of a High Church paradigm of the lay-clerical relationship, it is important to underscore that the Laudians were not exceptional in exalting the ministerial office. An elevated view of clerical authority had come to be shared by Protestant divines of all shades, with the characteristic emphasis of the Laudians being their belief that the indispensability of the minister for the laity's salvation stemmed from his sacramental, as opposed to his merely didactic, role.<sup>315</sup>

This subsection has underscored the constructed nature of Duncon's epistolary text, but even authentic letter exchanges between ministers and their patrons present certain methodological difficulties for the investigator. There are limitations to what this type of formal correspondence can reveal about the dynamics of lay-clerical relationships and it is necessary to trace a careful interpretative course, navigating 'the distortions of approved discourse'.<sup>316</sup> Although, generally, only the clergyman's side of the correspondence survives, when sensitively interpreted, these sources do allow illuminating insights into seventeenth-century spiritual counselling relationships. They reveal that a number of contemporary ministers did acquire at least some degree of that commanding spiritual influence which Duncon claimed to have exercised with his noble patroness.

### **The Barrington Family Clergy**

The extensive correspondence of the Barrington family has inspired several investigations into the religious life of these seventeenth-century puritan gentry. Their correspondence extends across nine British Library Egerton manuscript volumes, but scholars have largely limited their enquiries to the body of letters, dating from 1628 to

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<sup>315</sup> See Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: the Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge, 1995), 470-2.

<sup>316</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, "'Prudentia ultra Sexum': Lady Jane Bacon and the Management of Her Families", in Muriel McClendon, Joseph Ward and Michael MacDonald (eds.), *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society, and Self-Fashioning in post-Reformation England* (Stanford, 1999), 111.

1632, which was published by Arthur Searle in 1983. Central to this correspondence network was the matriarch, Lady Joan Barrington (c.1558-1641), wife of Sir Francis Barrington, a prominent Essex landowner and politician. The family were known for their patronage of puritan ministers; they held two advowsons in Yorkshire and maintained a lectureship in their Essex parish of Hatfield Broad Oak. Sir Francis died in 1628 following a spell of imprisonment for failing to pay the forced loan ordered by Charles I. Much of the surviving correspondence dates from the period of Lady Barrington's early widowhood. During this time, she exchanged letters with family, friends and a notable number of clergymen, particularly those occupying the family's Yorkshire livings and her then lecturer and domestic chaplain, James Harrison (early 1570s-1642/3).<sup>317</sup> Searle has argued that Lady Barrington was exposed to a burdensome supply of religious instruction, with ministers exploiting their 'privileged position ... in offering advice for the supposed good of her soul' which 'exceed[ed] social decorum'.<sup>318</sup> In a brief chapter on the family, William Hunt similarly depicted Lady Barrington as a grieving widow floundering under a bombardment of unsolicited clerical direction which equated to 'godly terrorism'. Hunt's rather crudely drawn conclusions are underpinned by an interpretation of these relationships in terms of a power contest between 'hectoring' clergy and the patrons whom they attempted to 'bully' into spiritual submission.<sup>319</sup> This exploration of the Barrington correspondence will provide a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis than has been supplied previously, centring on the pivotal theme of spiritual guidance. I will particularly highlight the opportunities which death and bereavement presented clerics to exercise spiritual agency as esteemed counsellors.

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<sup>317</sup> Jared van Duinen, 'The Obligations of Governing Masculinity in the Early Stuart Gentry Family: The Barringtons of Hatfield Broad Oak', in Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline van Gent (eds.), *Governing Masculinities in the Early Modern Period: Regulating Selves and Others* (Farnham, 2011), 116-19. Arthur Searle, 'Introduction', in *BFL*, 2-3, 8-9, 12-13.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16. Arthur Searle, "'Overmuch Liberty": Roger Williams in Essex', *Essex Journal*, 3 (1968), 89.

<sup>319</sup> William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of a Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 222-3.

Searle's and Hunt's interpretations of Lady Barrington's relationships with her clerical associates owe much to the emphasis which both have placed on her dealings with one particular clergyman, who later acquired significant stature within New England puritanism. Roger Williams's (1606-1683) first appointment after graduating from Pembroke College, Cambridge, aged twenty-two, was as chaplain to Lady Elizabeth Masham, daughter of Joan Barrington, and her husband, Sir William. Williams joined the Masham household in the winter of 1628. Over that Christmas, the recently widowed Lady Barrington stayed with her daughter and son-in-law for several weeks and, presumably, became acquainted with Williams for the first time.<sup>320</sup> Two letters sent by him to the then seventy-year-old Lady Barrington are extant. The first is an undated proposal of marriage to her motherless niece, Jane Whalley. The second letter of early May 1629 post-dates Lady Barrington's rejection of this proposal and contains what Searle has rather crudely labelled, 'a massive attack on Lady Joan's spiritual condition'.<sup>321</sup> Williams, who claimed to write with the authority of a messenger of 'the lord himself', informed Lady Barrington: 'I know not one professor ... whose ... faythfullness to Jesus Christ is more suspected, doubted, feared, by ... not only inferior christians, but ministers, eagle eyed, faythfull and observant to your ladship' who are 'driven to sigh, to say litle, to suspend their judgments, to hope, but feare and doubt'.<sup>322</sup>

Searle and Hunt have interpreted this letter as the malicious outpourings of an affronted minister, firm evidence of 'the potential conflict between the material power of

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<sup>320</sup> Searle, 'Introduction', 17.

<sup>321</sup> Searle, "'Overmuch Liberty'", 85-9, at 88. Since Jane Whalley went on to marry another minister, William Hook, it was presumably Williams's lack of either a benefice or immediate prospects for advancement which rendered him unsuitable: *BFL*, 153, 162-3.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-7.

the aristocracy and the ideological pretensions of the clergy'.<sup>323</sup> Whilst it certainly demonstrates the potential for friction, it is equally important to note the lengths to which Lady Barrington's daughter and son-in-law went to resolve the situation. Clearly embarrassed that her mother had subsequently refused to 'see Mr Willyams', Elizabeth Masham later wrote to express her joy that she had finally 'overcom your pashon'. The Mashams apparently defended their chaplain's actions throughout; Sir William later observed that he was even 'more confirmed in my former opinion that what he did proceeded out of love' and 'desire of your spirituall good, which is most pretious to him'. Evidently, the Mashams believed that ministers must be allowed significant free reign in their admonitions. Interestingly, Williams's letter also refers to the 'incouragements to be naked and plaine' in his spiritual dealings which Lady Barrington had previously afforded him – presumably during Christmas 1628.<sup>324</sup> Hunt has erroneously claimed that she never forgave the forthright cleric, but by high summer she had once more requested his presence. Delighted, her daughter reassured her that Williams had 'took noe unkindnes that I colde perceave' and would 'be very glad to atend you asoone as he can'.<sup>325</sup>

In a 1992 article, Raymond L. Camp critiqued Hunt's interpretation of this altercation, asserting that genuine religious motivations did underlie Williams's letter of May 1629. He sought to contextualise his 'rhetoric of admonition' against that of Lady Barrington's other clerical associates, in order to emphasise that reproach was an expected part of a chaplain's duty.<sup>326</sup> Yet Camp's seemingly ardent desire to rehabilitate the famous puritan colonist ultimately led him to an unconvincingly idealistic depiction of Williams as

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<sup>323</sup> Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, 223. Also Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Master Roger Williams: A Biography* (New York: 1957), 81-6.

<sup>324</sup> *BFL*, 78-9, 91, 66.

<sup>325</sup> Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, 223. *BFL*, 78-9.

<sup>326</sup> Raymond L. Camp, 'Context and "Godly Terrorism": Roger Williams and Chaplaincy Rhetoric', *The Journal of Communication and Religion*, 15/2 (1992), 131-4. Of course, since Williams was not actually Lady Barrington's chaplain, she may have viewed his intervention as unwarranted interference.

thoroughly 'altruistic' and her most 'helpful' ministerial contact.<sup>327</sup> It would seem that a *via media* is necessary in interpreting these events. Camp and others have failed to observe that it was not merely Williams's 'fear-arousal language' which so offended Lady Barrington, but his devastating assertion that many suspected her to be reprobate. This was not at all the sort of pastoral strategy which the celebrated Richard Greenham employed with similarly melancholic individuals. Although never slow to acknowledge sin, he always extended comfort and reassurance to laypeople who were eager to strive for spiritual growth. Williams's outburst contrasts sharply with the more conventional approach of Lady Barrington's own domestic chaplain, James Harrison, who assured her that September, that she would soon 'come into the possession of that inheritance of the saintes in that glorious light'.<sup>328</sup> Moreover, it is clear that Williams was prone to be tactless, lacking the pastoral sensitivity of contemporary physicians of the soul. He later blundered through an attempt to initiate a similarly instructive relationship with the Prayer Book devotee, Anne Sadleir, who answered his letters with increasingly brusque and irritated replies, finally declaring that Williams had 'a face of brass, so that you cannot blush'.<sup>329</sup>

It is my suggestion that an overemphasis on the case of Roger Williams has served to obscure Joan Barrington's wider clerical patronage and intimate and harmonious dealings with other ministers. Searle has suggested that a further incident to which the letters allude also reveals her son Thomas Barrington's negative 'reaction to constant clerical scrutiny'. In 1631, he departed Essex for his estate on the Isle of Wight, writing to his mother:

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 140, 142. Camp also seems to misunderstand the location of Lady Barrington's various clerical correspondents: *ibid.*, 138.

<sup>328</sup> *BFL*, 85.

<sup>329</sup> Trinity College R.5.5, (31-6), at (36).

I can and doe desyre my freinds advices, but thare is ... an indevor to deprave that nothing but reproch can satisfye; I desyre to heear of any fault, but doe not desyre to live where people search and hunt after faults.

However, Thomas's frustratingly opaque references to this 'inquisition of ovr examiners' from which his journey freed him,<sup>330</sup> may actually be a sign of Lady Barrington's responsiveness to ministerial advice. The previous year, her clerical protégé and former domestic chaplain, Ezekiel Rogers (1588-1660), saw fit to criticise her 'choise of ... neighbours for converse', twice counselling her to 'make much account of the society of God's saints' by engaging in conference with local godly laity and household servants.<sup>331</sup> It is notable that Sir Thomas complied with his mother's request that he take one 'Mr Rogers' with him to 'the Wight'. This Rogers was likely a member of the same family of celebrated Essex ministers with whom the Barringtons had close contacts. Interestingly, during the following two years, Lady Barrington made significant financial gifts to Ezekiel's older brother, Daniel.<sup>332</sup> Ezekiel had certainly provided spiritual succour to Thomas in former times; he remarked on the great 'paines' to which he had gone, his 'watchings with *you* in the time of *your* melancholy, & risings at midnight to cherish & comfort *you*'. Yet by 1636 their relationship had deteriorated. Some six months after Ezekiel's suspension for persistent nonconformity, Sir Thomas, who then held the advowson for his living, became minded to bestow it upon his own young chaplain. Ezekiel recounted Sir Thomas's appeal to him: 'to consider, it might be to the preiudice of *your* family, if the ministers that liued with you, shoulde misse of such preferment, upon vacancy'. Aware that other clerics now had claims upon his resources, and not wanting the living to be enjoyed by anyone outside of his family's web of patronage, Sir Thomas seemingly offered Ezekiel generous (borderline simoniacal) compensation. Ultimately,

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<sup>330</sup> Searle, 'Introduction', 16. *BFL*, 207-8, 217.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 130, 167.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 207. ERO D/DBa A15, fos. 33<sup>v</sup>, 38<sup>f</sup>.

however, they became locked in a protracted, unedifying financial quarrel over reimbursement for repairs which Rogers had financed on his former rectory.<sup>333</sup>

Certainly, it had always been Lady Barrington who cultivated particularly strong relationships with these puritan ministers, which raises the important question of the significance of gender in relation to spiritual counselling. Clearly, it was not gender-specific; during his imprisonment, Sir Francis Barrington was visited by various clerics, including the famed nonconformist, John Dod (1550-1645), and he received letters of spiritual encouragement from his chaplain, James Harrison. These reflected on God's 'holy and vnerreing providence' and offered reassurances that 'the patient abideing of the godly shall not be forgotten for euer'.<sup>334</sup> A former chaplain and incumbent of the family's Yorkshire living of Walkington, William Chantrell, also wrote letters to both Sir Francis and Lady Barrington, although the difference in their nature is striking. Chantrell's correspondence with Joan Barrington is deeply devotional, comprising 'stirring lynes' which 'wilbe a speciall irritament to yowr Christian soule'. Making 'noe question but yow esteem it, the pretiousest pearell in yowr diademe, that god of his free grace hath enrowled yowr name in the booke of life', he sent her 'Fowre sweet steepes ... which lead to a reposed life, and a chairfull death'. In contrast, Chantrell noted that Sir Francis's 'more important employmentes' would not allow him time to peruse extensive exhortations, which, in any case, could be amply supplied in person by 'this my fellow laborer' (most likely Ezekiel Rogers), who seems to have carried this letter from Yorkshire to Essex.<sup>335</sup> Without endorsing Patrick Collinson's rather condescending remark that it was women, in

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<sup>333</sup> BL Egerton MS 2646, fos. 104<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>, 109<sup>r</sup>, 163<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>; Egerton MS 2650, fo. 333<sup>r</sup>. See Ronald A. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York, 1560-1642* (London, 1960), 98-102; G. Alan Lowndes, 'The History of the Barrington Family', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, n.s. 2 (1879-1883), 33-4.

<sup>334</sup> ERO MS D/DBa F43; BL Egerton MS 2644, fo. 250<sup>r</sup>. Searle, 'Introduction', 12. J. T. Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families of Early Stuart England* (London, 1984), 152.

<sup>335</sup> BL Egerton MS 2650, fos. 209<sup>r</sup>-11<sup>r</sup>.

particular, who ‘had leisure to cultivate religious neuroses’, these letters do effectively exemplify how the gendered division of time might result in more gentlewomen fostering such pious relationships.<sup>336</sup>

Lady Barrington maintained her association with Ezekiel Rogers across several decades. There is evidence to suggest that their epistolary relationship was, at times, particularly propelled from Rogers’s side. Following his move to Rowley, Yorkshire, he expressed concern that Joan Barrington might have withdrawn her ‘former affection’ because she seemed less inclined to engage in the ‘holy conuerse’ which she had previously ‘much delighted in, & did then require me to afforde you’. (Importantly, this remark actually seems to have been Rogers’s way of glossing a rather bold admonition of the ‘declination of *your* affections from the meanes of grace’).<sup>337</sup> Nonetheless, a decade later, Ezekiel was still being invited to visit his patroness and he could reflect gratefully on her ‘love and kindnesse both of olde and still’.<sup>338</sup> Rogers’s early letters to Lady Barrington reveal an admiration for this woman who was ‘the first with whom I had any so serious & solemne conuerse about matters tending to the worke of grace’. Searle has observed his use of affective language; in 1623, Rogers urged a reply from Lady Barrington which would inform him of the state of her soul: ‘letters you know doe arise & flow out of letters. I shoulde then know how to apply myselfe to *your* estate, if I had but *your* hand to feele *your* pulse’. This use of bodily imagery to illustrate written interaction, a ‘textualization’ of ‘physical presence’, was characteristic of emotive early modern letter-writing. Imaginative notions that, through the epistolary medium, the writer could kiss his reader’s hand or

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<sup>336</sup> Collinson, ‘The Role of Women’, 276.

<sup>337</sup> BL Egerton MS 2644, fo. 196<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>338</sup> *BFL*, 128, 199. Rogers was also held in great ‘esteeme’ by Sir Thomas’s first wife: BL Egerton MS 2648, fo. 120<sup>r</sup>.

prostrate himself before them frequently feature in contemporary correspondence.<sup>339</sup> Yet significantly, this is also a striking medical metaphor, which exposes Rogers's perception of his own expertise as a spiritual physician to his patroness. By 1630, he could still pride himself on being 'well acquainted with' her 'state and temper'.<sup>340</sup>

It delighted Rogers that their association had brought mutual spiritual benefits. In 1628, he reminisced about occasions when 'the Lorde working powerfully on *your* soule, made you (in seeking my poore helpe) an occasion of much quickning & benefitt to me'.<sup>341</sup> Yet other letters conform to a conventionally hierarchical model of pastoral relations. In 1627, Ezekiel advised Lady Barrington 'to retire *your* thoughts from *your* worldly occasions' and 'be more vacant to the serious meditation of that solemne change *which your* age & my infirmities may putt us in minde of'.<sup>342</sup> Notably, during her widowhood, Rogers proved a reliable source of authoritative guidance. At this time, there is evidence of Lady Barrington actively involving him in her religious estate. Reflecting on her doubts and 'weaknes of faith', Rogers penned what is likely a veiled reference to Roger Williams's letter of the previous May: 'the opinion that others have of you doth sometime sway you more then your owne knowledge as I observed when I was last with you by occasion of that letter which you shewed me'. Assuming the authority to prescribe for his spiritual patient, he continued: 'thus, I have mentioned somewhat concerning your disease. Now what is the remedy (you will say)?'<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> BL Egerton MS 2644, fos. 196<sup>r</sup>, 203<sup>r</sup>. Searle, 'Introduction', 13. Schneider, *Culture of Epistolarity*, 115-23. The letter continues with Rogers reflecting in a quasi-romantic vein on 'that name that I haue cause to loue best, Johan I meane'.

<sup>340</sup> *BFL*, 128.

<sup>341</sup> BL Egerton MS 2644, fo. 240<sup>r</sup>. Diane Willen has observed this mutuality: 'Godly Women in Early Modern England: Puritanism and Gender', *JEH*, 43/4 (1992), 572.

<sup>342</sup> BL Egerton MS 2644, fo. 251<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>343</sup> *BFL*, 129.

James Harrison was lecturer at Hatfield Broad Oak from 1626 and he also assumed the duties of a domestic chaplain to the Barringtons. He was the cleric who was most frequently in their presence and most overtly dependent on their favour. As might consequently be expected, Harrison's letters often contained fulsome expressions of gratitude, commencing: 'I know not how to be sufficiently thankfull to your good ladship for your great bounty to me and myne, at all tymes and upon all occasions'.<sup>344</sup> Whilst such rhetoric was commonplace amongst ministers addressing letters or dedicatory epistles to their patrons, the potential existed for significant freedom of expression to underlie such a deferential exterior.<sup>345</sup> Harrison was certainly not the conventional young, unqualified cleric seeking a first post. Already an experienced minister when he was appointed lecturer, by Sir Francis's death in 1628 he must have been at least in his mid-fifties.<sup>346</sup> Evidently, the Barringtons were keen to have a chaplain of skill and substance and not merely a man who could be easily commanded. Hunt has suggested that they chose to keep Harrison close because he was 'bland' and inoffensive, unlike the 'captious' Rogers whom they safely ensconced in Yorkshire. However, this interpretation seems misguided. Rogers served the first twelve years of his career as the family's chaplain (the town lecturer then being a Mr John Huckle) and, in line with the Barringtons' recognition of the need to provide suitable career progression for the ministers engaged in their household, he was rewarded with a highly lucrative parochial living.<sup>347</sup> Moreover, Hunt has disregarded how, in his own more judicious and discreet way, Harrison could similarly deal firmly and plainly with his patrons.

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 111 and 70, 66, 140, 160.

<sup>345</sup> See Donagan, 'Puritan Ministers', 95-7.

<sup>346</sup> Searle, 'Biographical Appendix', in *BFL*, 256. Harrison matriculated at Cambridge in 1588.

<sup>347</sup> Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, 222. BL Egerton MS 2650, fo. 333<sup>r</sup> and 2646, fo. 104<sup>r-v</sup>. Sean Kelsey has followed Hunt's line of argument: 'Barrington, Joan, Lady Barrington (c.1558-1641)', *ODNB*.

Harrison was certainly confidently assured that Lady Barrington respected his counsel; separated from her in 1629, he looked forward to performing that spiritual service 'which formerly I have ... not without acceptation and profit'. He similarly followed up a paragraph of religious directives: 'I write not these things as doubting, onely I thinke it not amisse to exhort, which even the best have need of and I know your ladship will take well'.<sup>348</sup> Harrison evidently possessed his patroness's particular favour. Her account book contains countless references to gifts for him and his wife and, amongst other ministers, he was remembered in her will. In 1629, she even stood as godmother to his son.<sup>349</sup> At times, their relationship could certainly reflect that of an authoritative teacher and his spiritual pupil. Earlier that year, Harrison sent Lady Barrington a list of seven elaborate rules for 'maynetayneing fayth and a good conscience' in an effort 'to doe your soule all the service' he owed it. Analogous to numbered directives sent by Williams, they encouraged 'dayly' self-excoriation for her sins, which were deserving 'even of a 1000 hells', and counselled against the tendency 'to question our being in the state of grace'.<sup>350</sup> This was presumably an instructive technique which Lady Barrington found profitable, for in 1630, Ezekiel Rogers similarly urged her to gather lists of 'evidences' of election, supplying various suggestions and referring to the 'many rules' which he had hitherto provided. That Joan Barrington entertained doubts about her salvation is clear from Rogers's comment, that, in 'the matter of assurance', God 'hath not dealt so largely with you as with many of his saints'. In 1632, he further exhorted her to 'followe harde the matter of assurance ... with a fresh assault. Adde to the rules which I have sometime given you'.<sup>351</sup> Theodore Dwight Bozeman has used both printed and manuscript examples of such lists to chart an

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<sup>348</sup> *BFL*, 70-1.

<sup>349</sup> ERO D/DBa A15, *passim*; TNA PROB 11/187/526; Searle, 'Biographical Appendix', 256; *BFL*, 86, 111-12.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-5, 67-8.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-30, 225-6.

increasing devotional emphasis on compiling ‘signs’ of election.<sup>352</sup> Interestingly, as early as 1599, when Lady Barrington was preparing for her ‘lying in’, Ezekiel Culverwell (c.1554-1631), rector of Great Stambridge, Essex, wrote to encourage her to take the opportunity to examine ‘the particulars of your lyf’ and ‘find the ioy of your salvation dayly moving you to prepare’ for future judgement. This rather self-promoting letter reads as an attempt to instigate a close pastoral relationship. Culverwell evidently saw the offer of his counselling services as a way of securing Lady Barrington’s favour – ‘beyng well assured how welcome this peece of dutye, of that christian love I beare you’ would be. It was sent following his marriage to Winifred Barefoote (née Hildersham), through whom Culverwell could claim a family connection to the Barringtons.<sup>353</sup> Addressing Joan Barrington as his ‘very deare cosin’, Culverwell expressed confidence in his ability to ‘proffit’ her spiritually, of which he had already ‘given some proof when I was present with you’. Since his letter reveals a preference for bestowing this ‘spirituall ofyse’ in person, it is not possible to determine whether Lady Barrington maintained the desired contact.<sup>354</sup> However, it is interesting to note that Culverwell was commended for his dedicated engagement in ‘familiar conference’ and individual instruction.<sup>355</sup>

Another minister who has been largely overlooked in assessments of the Barringtons’ clerical patronage is William Chantrell. His correspondence alludes to the extensive supply of religious edification which Lady Barrington made provision for in her household: ‘your plentifull and frequente instigations by your faithfull pastor shall not need

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<sup>352</sup> Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 133-5.

<sup>353</sup> Brett Usher, ‘Culverwell, Ezekiel (ca. 1554-1631)’, in Francis J. Bremer and Tom Webster (eds.), *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, 2006), i. 69-70. Culverwell was granted a license to marry Winifred in October 1598: *Allegations for Marriage Licenses Issued by the Bishop of London, 1520-1610*, eds. J. L. Chester and G. J. Armytage (London, 1887), 256. BL Egerton MS 2644, fo. 111<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> William Gouge, ‘To the Christian Reader’, in Ezekiel Culverwell, *A Treatise Of Faith* (London, 1623), n.pag.

any sharpening from me'. This did not deter him from sending regular exhortatory letters when 'convenient sendinge' could be acquired. Chantrell was even bold enough to counsel her to intervene in her son's decision to sell some of the family's 'ecclesiasticall endowmentes' in Yorkshire. This, alongside Ezekiel Rogers's admonition of his patroness for failing to give bountifully to the local poor, illustrates the potential clash of gentry and clerical priorities. Importantly, these clergymen evidently did not feel inhibited from making such bold demands of their patroness.<sup>356</sup> Even Harrison felt able to implore her material charity for some poor Suffolk Christians and his insistence that 'relying the saintes' would be 'a fruit that will further your reckoning' certainly fell on receptive ears.<sup>357</sup>

Additional evidence of Lady Barrington's engagement in spiritual counselling and maintenance of intimate relationships with local clergymen can also be gleaned. In a 1633 dedicatory epistle, Daniel Rogers recounted having enjoyed serious spiritual converse with her and he acknowledged the 'love and respect, which ... sundry of our name and Tribe', including, of course, his brother, Ezekiel, 'have received from your Ladiship'.<sup>358</sup> Adam Harsnett, minister of Cranham, Essex, dedicated a pastoral treatise to Joan Barrington on the theme of affliction, which she presumably found instructive, for he later wrote to acknowledge her lavish 'pledge of your love', delighting in the thought of having 'added but one cubit unto your spirituall growth'.<sup>359</sup> Finally, some brief insights can be gathered into her relationship with the puritan preacher, Arthur Hildersham, who was related to the

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<sup>356</sup> *BFL*, 168-9, 130. BL Egerton MS 2650, fo. 213<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>357</sup> *BFL*, 108-9, 112.

<sup>358</sup> Daniel Rogers, *A Treatise Of The Two Sacraments Of The Gospell: Baptisme And The Sypper Of The Lord* (London, 1633), sig. A2<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>359</sup> Adam Harsnett, *A Cordiall For the Afflicted: Touching The Necessitie and Utilitie of Afflictions* (London, 1632). *BFL*, 231.

Barringtons through their mutual links to the Pole family.<sup>360</sup> Once a student of Richard Greenham, Hildersham was renowned for his expertise in ‘private conference’ with troubled laypeople. Like his mentor, he appears to have been an admired epistolary counsellor; in 1629, John Cotton referred to his ‘Letters touching cases of Conscience’, which being a ‘fruitfull labour’, merited publication. Although Hildersham’s surviving correspondence with Lady Barrington is not of this nature, she does seem to have profited from his spiritual conversation for, in 1630, her daughter observed that she would be ‘much revived’ with Hildersham’s impending ‘company’.<sup>361</sup>

### **Death and Bereavement in the Barrington Correspondence**

This preliminary examination of the Barrington correspondence has demonstrated the important role which Lady Barrington’s ministerial associates assumed in overseeing her devotional life. Although many of these clergymen were heavily dependent upon her family’s patronage, they were also relatively unrestrained in their counsels and even admonitions, belying Hunt’s depiction of the pre-1640 clergy as characteristically ‘docile’.<sup>362</sup> The various epistolary relationships which Lady Barrington maintained across the decades illustrate something important about the way in which spiritual counselling could operate amongst the gentry. Chapter four will reflect in greater detail on the recourse which some laypeople had to extensive networks of pastoral support. Yet in order to discern whether the clergy performed a distinctive spiritual function, it is necessary to draw comparisons with lay practices of mutual exhortation and instruction, which are also attested in the Barrington correspondence. In particular, I will compare letters of

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>361</sup> Clarke, *Lives of thirty-two*, 122. John Cotton, ‘To the Godly Reader’, in Hildersham, *CVIII Lectvres*, sig. A3<sup>v</sup>. These letters are sadly non-extant. Hildersham did pen a rather patronising epistle against separatism to a gentlewoman, ‘Mrs N’, who had apparently sought his expert advice on this issue. It was printed by a detractor. See Lesley Ann Rowe, ‘The Worlds of Arthur Hildersham (1563-1632)’, Ph.D. thesis (University of Warwick, 2009), 173-6, 249-51. *BFL*, 161.

<sup>362</sup> Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, 223.

condolence sent to Lady Barrington by friends and relatives on her husband's death, with her ministerial correspondents' responses to her bereavement, integrating my discussion into a broader reflection on contemporary religious attitudes to the expression of grief.

Joan Barrington regularly engaged in pious written discourse with relatives. Religious sentiments were addressed to her by her daughter, Lady Masham, her brother, Henry Cromwell, her son-in-law, Sir Gilbert Gerard, and her erstwhile brother-in-law, Richard Whalley.<sup>363</sup> At times, their interaction included the giving and receiving of religious advice. This could involve the dissemination of clerical instruction, as when Sir Gilbert conveyed a pithy counsel from the puritan preacher, Richard Sibbes, that believers should ascertain 'what is that thing that our hartes doe desire' and determine whether they would be willing to forsake it 'to purchase that priceles pearle in the gospell'.<sup>364</sup> Diane Willen has also depicted Lady Barrington as a 'pre-eminent' and towering spiritual figure within her godly community.<sup>365</sup> Her son-in-law did once respectfully qualify his advice to her by noting: 'I am fitter to bee scholler then a director unto your ladiship'. In 1629, her nephew, Thomas Bouchier, also wrote imploring 'a line from your ladiship' for 'yow cannot be ignorant what need I have of such divine counsell as yow maye easilye enrich me with'. In 1631, Bouchier appealed to her for consolation as 'a mother in Israel', disclosing his 'secret doubttes of the truthe of grace', which he attributed to 'melancholli' and frailty of faith. The aged Lady Barrington's decades of spiritual 'experience' rendered her 'inferiour to few' in this respect. And yet on other occasions Bouchier addressed her as a spiritual equal; despite being a mere 'striplinge', he was eager to 'advise' his aunt's 'wise

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<sup>363</sup> See *BFL*, 56, 92, 161, 157, 44, 204; BL Egerton MS 2644, fos. 202<sup>r-v</sup>, 207<sup>r</sup>, 234<sup>r</sup>, 243<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>364</sup> *BFL*, 202. Matthew 13:45-6.

<sup>365</sup> Willen, "'Communion of the Saints'", 26.

gravitye', instructing her respectfully, but assertively and at length, to examine her standing before the Lord and embrace his call to repentance.<sup>366</sup>

Letters on religious themes constitute only a small percentage of the Barrington correspondence, but a cluster of these were received in the wake of Sir Francis's death in 1628. The Christian duty of providing reciprocal comfort in times of grief was often articulated during this period.<sup>367</sup> This obligation could be fulfilled by writing letters of consolation, a practice which became increasingly common from the latter half of the sixteenth century as standards of literacy rose significantly.<sup>368</sup> Exemplary illustrations of the genre were frequently produced in letter-writing instruction manuals. It has been suggested that early modern condolence letters were characteristically formulaic, conforming closely to these available printed models.<sup>369</sup> Whilst standard religious conventions do recur frequently in contemporary examples, the extent to which ordinary people's compositions were actually governed by the exact formulations of printed manuals remains open to debate. Either way, these letter-writing handbooks provide confirmation of the role which the laity were expected to play in offering pious consolations to the bereaved.

In 1985, G. W. Pigman argued for a shift in attitudes concerning the expression of grief which occurred around the beginning of the seventeenth century. He observed intense anxiety surrounding grief in early Reformation England: stoic self-control was generally urged and a very small minority of English Protestant authors even criticised all mourning

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<sup>366</sup> *BFL*, 44, 49, 176-7, 60-1. Sir William Masham similarly proffered counsel to his mother-in-law: *ibid.*, 210-11.

<sup>367</sup> For example, *LJD*, 57.

<sup>368</sup> See Hannah Newton, *The Sick Child in Early Modern England, 1580-1720* (Oxford, 2012), 150 for examples.

<sup>369</sup> James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford, 2006), 158-9; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford, 2000), 245-7; Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 2002), 115-16.

as indicative of distrust in the resurrection, in line with 1 Thessalonians 4:13. According to Pigman, by 1600 these attitudes were being replaced by ‘increasingly more tolerant conceptions of moderation’. He articulated this as a shift away from consolation, with its underlying purpose of suppressing grief, towards condolence. In recent years, various scholars have endorsed Pigman’s claims, affirming a seventeenth-century shift to ‘a more sympathetic approach to consolation’ and ‘a growing acceptance by divines of the grief that was a normal element of “human sensibility”’.<sup>370</sup> Pigman’s research chiefly focused on the genres of elegy and poetry, but he also claimed to observe this trend in ‘moral-theological tracts’ and letter-writing manuals. With respect to the latter, he contrasted the rigorist grief suppression strategies of the ‘bullying letter of consolation’ modelled in Erasmus’s 1522 Latin treatise, *De conscribendis epistolis*, with the more empathetic approach of the vernacular epistolary instruction manuals which emerged from the later sixteenth century.<sup>371</sup> Even accounting for Pigman’s repeated qualifications of this argument, his conclusion of ‘a definite trend towards greater tolerance of grief’ appears overstated, for these sources actually reveal a remarkably mixed picture. In 1586, Angel Day forcibly asserted the need to ‘tolerate’ the death of loved ones through numerous Erasmian reflections on the foolishness of mourning, in light of the Christian promise of immortality. However, almost two decades earlier, William Fulwood presented a model of far greater empathy. Responding to a plea for the letter-writer to ‘wayle with’ the bereaved,

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<sup>370</sup> G. W. Pigman III, *Grief and English Renaissance Elegy* (Cambridge, 1985), 2-3, 27-31, 39, 125-6. Amongst others, see Ralph Houlbrooke, ‘Royal Grief in England, 1485-1640’, *Cultural and Social History*, 2 (2005), 64-6, at 66; idem, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 221-8, 245-6; W. Scott Howard, “‘Mine own Breaking’: Resistance, Gender, and Temporality in Seventeenth-Century English Elegies and Johnson’s “Eupheme””, in Jennifer C. Vaught (ed.), *Grief and Gender: 700-1700* (New York, 2003), 221-3, at 221; Stephen Pender, ‘Rhetoric, Grief, and the Imagination in Early Modern England’, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 43/1 (2010), 57-8; Paul Parrish, ‘Moderate Sorrow and Immoderate Tears: Mourning in Crashaw’, in Margo Swiss and David A. Kent (eds.), *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton* (Pittsburgh, 2002), 217-18. Although Andrea Brady has painted a rather more diverse and ambiguous picture of attitudes to grief: *English Funerary Elegy in the Seventeenth Century: Laws in Mourning* (Basingstoke, 2006), 32-61.

<sup>371</sup> Pigman, *Grief*, 12-26, 3, 125.

he offered condolence and consolation in equal measure.<sup>372</sup> Interestingly, consolation predominated in the model epistles of two seventeenth-century Protestant authors who, despite having diverse literary outputs, were particularly known for publishing on devotional themes. Nicholas Breton's distinctively moralistic letter-writing instruction manual, which was repeatedly reissued between 1602 and 1678, firmly counselled against excessive grief, as did Gervase Markham's 1617 contribution to the genre.<sup>373</sup>

Being based solely on didactic documents rather than on genuine correspondence, Pigman's conclusions are of limited significance for determining how laypeople actually comforted and exhorted bereaved friends and relatives. However, the Barrington correspondence does provide some interesting insights. Of the six letters which Lady Barrington received, four contained expressions of empathetic grief 'bewayling' Sir Francis's death, although the same number presented reasons for which she should, nevertheless, 'rejoyce', recalling her marital blessings and her husband's resurrection 'in glory eternall'.<sup>374</sup> Several of her correspondents also effusively praised the deceased and his virtues. Interestingly, only her goddaughter, Lady Mary Eliot, explicitly counselled on moderating grief, using the language of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to advise Lady Barrington not to 'morne as without hoope, excesiflye'. She interpreted Sir Francis's death as an eschatological 'singn [*sic*]', observing: 'the worthyes of our kinddome ar swept awaye, the blowe is not fare off'. In contrast, several correspondents penned only the briefest of condolences, which they combined with reports of news and more mundane matters.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Angel Day, *The English Secretorie* (London, 1586), 204-7, 211-16, at 204. William Fulwood, *The Enimie of Idlennesse: Teaching the maner and stile how to endite, compose and write all sorts of Epistles and Letters* (London, 1568), fos. 40<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>, at 41<sup>r</sup>. The anonymous *President For Yovng Pen-Men. Or The Letter-Writer* (London, 1615), sigs G1<sup>v</sup>-G2<sup>f</sup> entirely prioritised instructive consolation over sympathetic condolence.

<sup>373</sup> Nicholas Breton, *A Poste With A Packet Of Mad Letters* (London, 1650), 4-5. Gervase Markham, *Hobsons Horse-load of Letters: Or, A President for Epistles* (London, 1617), sigs K3<sup>v</sup>-K4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>374</sup> *BFL*, 29-30, 32-5. Houlbrooke noted that they are 'varied in tone and content': Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 247.

<sup>375</sup> *BFL*, 29-30, 32-4.

These condolence letters present a contrast with the attention which Lady Barrington's clerical contacts dedicated to counselling her through her bereavement. William Chantrell waited a few months before addressing his patroness, affording her some limited time to mourn. Having then assured himself 'that the resolution which your ladishipe hath of the compleat happiness your late worthy knight doth now injoy swallows up all worldly sorrow for that uncomparable loss', he shifted his focus to offering specific, practical directives to further her spiritual development. Chantrell proposed that the signs of the current age should arouse in Lady Barrington a desire to follow her husband into death. He reminded her of the 'fountainnes of sweet comfort to sollace your selfe amidst these trialls' which could be obtained from 'Christian readinge, hearing and experience' and of the constancy of her 'heavenly husbände'.<sup>376</sup> In November, he wrote again, acknowledging her continued grief, but exhorting her to focus instead on the religious instruction of her children, nurturing 'the plantes of your own loynes' so that they might follow 'in the steepest of their worthy father'. This became his recurring refrain and the subsequent years all saw epistolary reminders that the loss of Sir Francis, 'that second Nehemiah', ought to inspire Lady Barrington with a commitment to discharge her widow's obligation of inculcating piety in the younger generations.<sup>377</sup>

Further evidence of clerical counselling in the months immediately following Sir Francis's death is lacking, but, whereas Lady Barrington's relatives and friends did not refer subsequently to her loss, her ministerial contacts frequently resurrected the subject. Roger Williams's letter of May 1629 construed the 'deprivall of a deare and tender yoake fellow' as a punishment for sin, a great 'thunderclap' sent from the Almighty. This was an

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<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 38, 63, 168.

inflammatory interpretation, which many contemporary clerics would not have endorsed. However, Ola Winslow's claim that Williams's references to the 'few gray haire[s]' which separated Lady Barrington from her own impending judgement were 'monstrously untactful' and a particular cause of offence, is not confirmed by the rest of her correspondence.<sup>378</sup> For Chantrell, it was just as important to emphasise that Sir Francis's passing ought to impel her 'to make sure and sounde preparation ... against the like stroke', welcoming death, in turn, as the doorway into God's 'presence'. Other clerical correspondents were equally eager to remind their patroness that her own time was nigh and this was even something which Daniel Rogers articulated in a printed epistolary dedication.<sup>379</sup>

In 1630, Ezekiel Rogers expressed a heightened sense of spiritual obligation to Lady Barrington on account of her having been 'bereaved ... of your heade and helper'.<sup>380</sup> He apparently perceived a godly husband's role to encompass the spiritual guidance of his spouse and, following this loss of domestic patriarchal authority, considered it fitting for a cleric to act as substitute. More than two years after her husband's death, Rogers was still acknowledging her loss: 'that deare companion of yours [is] ... gone, of whom every your walkes, table, chamber, bed, tell you that David's place is empty'. He similarly asserted that Sir Francis's death should spur Lady Barrington on 'to prepare dayly to followe him' and he counselled her thus: 'your time and mine cannot be long; the lord teach us to husbände it so that when death cometh it may be welcome'. Across the following two years, Rogers reinforced this advice with regular reminders of the impending approach of

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 66. Winslow, *Master Roger Williams*, 83. John Davenport firmly denied that the bereaved's 'demerits' could be a cause of their loved one's death: *LJD*, 64-5.

<sup>379</sup> *BFL*, 38, 155. Similarly BL Egerton MS 2650, fo. 211<sup>r</sup>. Rogers, *A Treatise*, sigs A2<sup>v</sup>-A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>380</sup> *BFL*, 128.

death.<sup>381</sup> Whilst, during this time, Gilbert Gerard was similarly willing to raise the matter with his mother-in-law, the extent of specifically clerical instruction concerning preparation for death is a characteristic feature of this correspondence.<sup>382</sup> The pastoral support and direction offered to the widowed Lady Barrington provides further confirmation of the particular authority with which ministers felt able to address gentry patrons. Their belief in the superiority of ministerial counselling is best encapsulated in Rogers's 1631 advice that Joan Barrington engage in 'frequent opening of your hart and cases ... in speciall ... with your reverende pastor, though to others too, as you have opportunity'.<sup>383</sup>

### **Handling Grief: Lady Vere and Her Clerical Contacts**

Death and post-Reformation shifts in religious beliefs and practices surrounding it have recently proved fruitful areas of scholarly enquiry. Despite this surge of historical interest, the majority of research has focused on the pious deathbed and the *ars moriendi* tradition, with little attention being afforded to the pastoral care of the bereaved and clerical perspectives on grief. Significant scope for developing current understanding in this regard is presented by some additional early to mid seventeenth-century letter collections. Surviving correspondence between Lady Mary Vere (1581-1671) and her clerical contacts constitutes an underexplored body of source material which offers a valuable comparison with the better-known Barrington case study.

In 1607, Mary, the widow of William Hoby, married Sir Horace Vere, a military commander in the Low Countries. Vere's brother, the governor of Brill, died in 1609 and

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<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 167, 130, 199, 225.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 199.

Sir Horace succeeded him in his post. He was subsequently made commander of the English volunteer forces in the Palatinate and then Baron Vere of Tilbury. After Horace Vere's sudden death in 1635, Lady Vere resided at Clapton and then at Kirby Hall near Castle Hedingham, Essex.<sup>384</sup> The Veres were known for their clerical patronage. For many years, the minister of the English congregation at The Hague also served as chaplain to Sir Horace. They patronised several radical nonconformist churchmen, including the exiled William Ames (1576-1633), who enjoyed freedom from episcopal control in the Netherlands. Yet their concurrent support for conformist clerics, including the Prayer Book Protestant, Stephen Goffe, has been largely overlooked. This serves to illustrate the often eclectic form which gentry patronage could take.<sup>385</sup> Mary Vere's extant correspondence with clergymen dates from the late 1610s through to the 1640s, encompassing the period of her early widowhood. These letters reveal that she leant on ministerial associates for support, particularly during her many bereavements, and they demonstrate the religious agency which clerics exercised in offering extensive spiritual instructions, calculated to moderate grief.

One of Mary Vere's most significant displays of clerical patronage was securing the position of vicar of St Stephen's Coleman Street, London, for the young puritan, John Davenport (c.1597-1670), in 1624, with the help of her brother-in-law, Secretary of State Sir Edward Conway. Following this initial display of favour, Davenport maintained a correspondence with Mary Vere which lasted until the late 1640s, by which time he had become minister of a church in New Haven.<sup>386</sup> Davenport's enthusiastic assertion of the value of religious epistolary counselling has already been observed (see above, pp. 35-6).

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<sup>384</sup> Clements R. Markham, *The Fighting Veres: Lives of Sir Francis Vere ... and of Sir Horace Vere* (London, 1888), 380-2, 397, 431, 453-5.

<sup>385</sup> Keith L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1982), 142-3, 247, 287-8, 352.

<sup>386</sup> Isabel MacBeath Calder, 'A Biographical Sketch', in *LJD*, 2-7.

In 1627, he remarked that it ‘hath beene of no small vse for the direction, and comfort of Gods people in all ages’.<sup>387</sup> Davenport utilised the letter form to provide Lady Vere with extensive spiritual instruction. In the wake of her husband’s death, he wrote ‘to express my sympathy with your La[dysi]p, in this affliction’, praising Horace Vere’s delight in the ministry, his maintenance of clerics to direct ‘the soules committed to his trust’ and his engagement in ‘christian conference’ and putting of ‘many questions and cases ... for clearing to his owne heart, the assurance of his acceptance with God’. However, Davenport’s letter quickly turned to pious instruction. Just as William Chantrell exhorted Lady Barrington to take comfort in her spiritual marriage to Christ, Davenport reflected on the ‘inviolable’ nature of this superior union. He reminded Lady Vere that her husband’s death was a pre-ordained trial to which she must contentedly submit, fearing God and ‘greive[ing] for having displeased him’. Calling to mind the habitual theme of afflictions as fatherly rebukes, Davenport penned three rules for discerning ‘betweene punishments wherewith bastards are afflicted, and chastisements wherewith children are exercised’ and for meekly enduring the latter.<sup>388</sup> Despite remarking that ‘the relation which once you had to this earthly husband is ended, and ceaseth in his death’, Davenport comforted Lady Vere with an assurance of being reunited with him in heaven. Citing 2 Samuel 12:23, concerning David’s resignation in the face of his son’s death, Davenport encouraged her likewise to affirm: ‘I shall returne to him, though he shall not returne to me’.<sup>389</sup> Although significant contemporary debate surrounded the possibility of ‘preservation of individual identity beyond death’ and the resumption, or even awareness, of earthly relationships in the afterlife, this epistolary consolation supports Peter Marshall’s contention that pastoral literature frequently skirted over such ‘theological caveats’.<sup>390</sup> In 1637, Davenport was

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<sup>387</sup> Davenport, ‘Epistle to the Reader’, sig. A10<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>388</sup> *LJD*, 57-60.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>390</sup> Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002), 215-20.

again writing to comfort and instruct Lady Vere, this time following the death of her son-in-law, Sir Roger Townshend. Keenly aware that she still mourned her husband (that ‘former wound [being] not fully cured’), he counselled against ‘excess of sorrow’, warning that ‘immoderate greife will disable you’. For Davenport, this was an ‘unseasonable’ response to her current afflictions; since God had ordained that she consume this ‘bitter pill’, Lady Vere ought simply to rejoice that her daughter had been spared.<sup>391</sup> In 1639, the death of her son-in-law, Oliver St John, occasioned further counsel from Davenport to learn to profit by such ‘tryalls’.<sup>392</sup>

The life and letters of another of Mary Vere’s ministerial contacts, the recalcitrant nonconformist, John Dod, effectively exemplify how a clergyman could acquire a respected pastoral reputation which particularly centred on his provision of consolation in bereavement and authoritative deathbed counsel. Scholars have observed Dod’s connection to the renowned Elizabethan pastor, Richard Greenham, through his marriage to his stepdaughter, Ann Bownd, and it actually seems reasonable to suggest that Dod modelled his ministry on that of his father-in-law.<sup>393</sup> Samuel Clarke’s godly *Lives* recount an occasion on which Dod profited from Greenham’s counsel on the necessity of withstanding afflictions – advice which he carried with him throughout his life. Like Greenham, Dod encouraged mutual conference and confession amongst the laity, but was also similarly renowned for his ministerial expertise in the ‘comforting of afflicted consciences’ and he devoted significant time to communing with parishioners after sermons to answer questions and satisfy doubts. Clarke’s description of these casuistical gatherings resonates strikingly with his account of Greenham’s table-talk sessions. Furthermore, just as the

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<sup>391</sup> *LJD*, 64-5. It is generally impossible to discern precisely what a correspondent considered to be ‘moderate’ and ‘excessive’ grief.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>393</sup> J. Fielding, ‘Dod, John (1550-1645)’, *ODNB*.

latter's extensive aphoristic sayings were compiled and disseminated, collections of Dod's sententious wisdom were collated during his lifetime and circulated long after his death in manuscript and printed broadsheets.<sup>394</sup>

Five letters which Dod sent to Lady Vere survive in manuscript. These were composed over a period of several decades and most likely do not represent the full extent of their correspondence. Three were sent in the wake of further bereavements: the deaths of Vere's brother, an unidentified friend and, in 1623, her adult son, William, the only surviving offspring of her first marriage. On hearing of her brother's death, Dod penned a letter which commenced with an unabashed exhortation against grief. Disregarding expected conventions of condolence or praise for the deceased, Dod counselled his high-status correspondent to rejoice in her lot rather than mourn that 'god hath reaped his owne come in the fittest season'. Although he evoked a common discourse of the perversity of stoic impassivity, conceding that 'it is farre better to haue to much, than to little naturall affections', he urged moderation with a reminder of the eternal joy which the deceased was experiencing.<sup>395</sup> According to Clarke, Dod was famed amongst contemporaries for his pious desire for death. Consequently, he exhorted Lady Vere, in words which closely echo a printed epistolary consolation of Greenham's, to remember that 'it is happie for us, that since *our* liues are miserable, they are also mortalle, and that mortallitie shalbe swallowed uppe of lyfe aeternall'. In 1642, he further sought to inculcate this lesson in his devout pupil, holding himself up as a model of being piously 'wearie of this world'.<sup>396</sup> Presumably Lady Vere was responsive to this counsel, for in her funeral sermon William Gurnall

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<sup>394</sup> Clarke, *Lives of thirty-two*, 169-72, 177. See John Dod, *Old Mr Dod's Sayings* (London, 1671); DWL MS 28.2, esp. 33-4, 97, 250.

<sup>395</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fo. 186<sup>r</sup>. See Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 221.

<sup>396</sup> Clarke, *Lives of thirty-two*, 175. Also DWL MS 28.2, 53-6. Greenham, *Workes*, 863. BL Add. MS 4275, fos. 186<sup>r</sup>, 184<sup>v</sup>.

associated her own attitude with that of the famous cleric, despite being apparently unaware of their epistolary relationship:

she was one of those very few Christians, which stood in need of old Mr. *Dods* use of Exhortation; which I have heard he would make to the Saints ...: *That they would be content and patient, though they were not taken up to Heaven so soon as they desired.*<sup>397</sup>

Jacqueline Eales has interpreted this passage as an acknowledgement that a laywoman's virtue could rival that of a minister.<sup>398</sup> However, it is also important to observe that Gurnall's praise is underpinned by a conventional portrayal of Dod as an authoritative clerical director and Vere as the fitting object of his instructions. Importantly, when Dod addressed Mary Vere following her son's death, he presented his epistolary counsel as a crucial clerical intervention to correct an errant indulgence in mourning. Being unable to visit in person, he considered it his 'dutie to doe my best indeuour by writinge, to mitigate your grieffe, which (as I heare) hath much affected you'. He followed up this counsel by evoking various biblical consolations; Dod reflected on the favourable exchange of her 'welbeloued and onelie sonne' for the divine son, Jesus Christ, and, in what was apparently a signature move, he recalled the counsel of Eliphaz to the bereaved Job: 'doe the consolations of god seeme smalle unto the[e]?' Having been appointed the 'nursing mother' of a child briefly lent her by God, Lady Vere ought now joyfully to endure his return to his heavenly father. The letter ultimately came full circle, concluding with a final exhortation to 'putte away passions of grieffe, and possess your soul by patience'.<sup>399</sup>

Such consolations apparently held significant popular appeal and, in printed form, continued to be a source of comfort for bereaved individuals well into the eighteenth

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<sup>397</sup> William Gurnall, *The Christians Labour and Reward; Or, A Sermon, Part of which was Preached at the Funeral of the Right Honourable the Lady Mary Vere* (London, 1672), sig. K4<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>398</sup> Jacqueline Eales, "'An Ancient Mother in our Israel': Mary, Lady Vere", in Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (eds.), *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680* (Basingstoke, 2010), 91.

<sup>399</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fo. 188<sup>r-v</sup>. See John Dod, *A Second Sheet of Old Mr. Dod's Sayings: Or another Posie gathered out of Mr. Dod's Garden* (London, 1670).

century.<sup>400</sup> Indeed, Dod's ability to instruct and comfort on the theme of death was one of the chief ways in which he established a commanding pastoral authority. Although Diane Willen has claimed that the clergy were not 'dominant in the process of spiritual counseling' at the end of life, Dod's aptitude at the Protestant deathbed certainly furnished him with religious influence on a national scale. He was famously engaged as 'the only fit person' to counsel the tormented gentlewoman, Joan Drake, through the spiritual crisis which consumed her middle years, leaving her convinced that she was guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost. Across more than a decade, numerous ministers offered direction, both in person and through letters, but it was Dod who was summoned to re-attend Drake at her deathbed and who helped her to a final assurance.<sup>401</sup> Of course, the successful effecting of spiritual cures was mutually beneficial to both gentry patrons and clergy. As Tom Webster has observed, such cases 'reveal the ground where pastoral reputations were made and advanced'.<sup>402</sup> Interestingly, Dod's skills were as much in demand amongst clergy; as a pastor 'mightie with god', he was implored to attend the deathbeds of Thomas Peacock and one Mr Throgmorton, amongst others. In such cases, Dod's primary task was to comfort the godly sufferers with reminders of the many signs of their election, but he also frequently applied himself to consoling their grieving families.<sup>403</sup>

It is interesting to observe how the demand for pastoral care of this nature served to separate off a company of skilled clergy from their wider ministerial brethren who did not specialise in counselling individual consciences. A particular minister's pre-eminence in this sphere could foster interesting clerical hierarchies. Here, it is important to highlight

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<sup>400</sup> Brook, *Lives of the Puritans*, iii. 5.

<sup>401</sup> Willen, "'Communion of the Saints'", 20. Hart On-Hi, *Trodden Down Strength, By The God Of Strength, Or Mrs Drake Revived* (London, 1647), 17-19, 41, 83-5, 108-16, 135-9. George Huntston Williams, 'Called by Thy Name, Leave Us Not: The Case of Mrs. Joan Drake, A Formative Episode in the Pastoral Career of Thomas Hooker in England', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 16 (1968), 117-20, 126, 287.

<sup>402</sup> Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 52.

<sup>403</sup> BL Add. MS 25037, fos. 94<sup>v</sup>, 88<sup>v</sup>-90<sup>v</sup>, 85<sup>v</sup>. Robert Bolton, *The Last Conflicts and Death Of Mr. Thomas Peacock* (London, 1646), 6, 30-1.

Dod's dealings with the Ishams of Northamptonshire, for Erica Longfellow has cited his relationship with this family as an atypical instance of clerical influence over gentry. The Ishams' conformist parish minister and quasi-chaplain, Daniel Baxter, frequently failed in his attempts to exercise pastoral authority, being hampered in his duty of consoling his bereaved patrons when his own emotions overcame him. So concerning were these outbursts that, after witnessing his sorrowful reaction to her mother's death, Lady Judith Isham requested that he not attend her own deathbed. She was also disappointed by Baxter's inability to diagnose and treat her religious melancholy.<sup>404</sup> Consequently, the Ishams came to rely on the ministrations of the more 'precise' John Dod. The young Elizabeth Isham's autobiographical manuscript, her 'Booke of Rememberance', is scattered with references to the family's appreciation of his counselling and other spiritual gifts.<sup>405</sup> Longfellow has proposed that Dod's 'relative independence' from the Ishams' patronage was the crucial factor in his successful assumption of religious authority, but it seems that greater emphasis must also be placed on his proven pastoral expertise, especially in counselling troubled consciences.<sup>406</sup> Elizabeth Isham's reference to the many contemporaries 'who extole Mr Dod above all others', indicates that something of an early modern personality cult surrounded this godly preacher.<sup>407</sup> It was only after the Isham family's own minister failed to provide the expert guidance and consolations which they desired, that they turned to a cleric of particular reputation and renown. Interestingly, Sir John Isham so highly esteemed Dod's abilities in dealing with the grief-stricken that he actually co-opted him to break the news to his wife of her brother's death – a task which Dod performed with elaborate care and sensitivity, advising her, on the basis of his

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<sup>404</sup> Longfellow, 'Isham Family', 165-6, 169-72. See Isham, *My Booke*, fos. 17<sup>r</sup>, 19<sup>r</sup>, 11<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 5<sup>v</sup>, 11<sup>r</sup>-12<sup>r</sup>, 13<sup>r</sup>-v, 15<sup>r</sup>, 19<sup>r</sup>. For more on Dod's spiritual influence on Elizabeth Isham, see Peter Lake and Isaac Stephens, *Scandal and Religious Identity in Early Stuart England: A Northamptonshire Maid's Tragedy* (Martlesham, 2015), 296-7, 339-42.

<sup>406</sup> Longfellow, 'Isham Family', 172-4.

<sup>407</sup> Isham, *My Booke*, fo. 15<sup>r</sup>.

personal experience of bereavement, to seek comfort in the biblical narrative of Job. The positive outcome was that Judith Isham ‘weept[,] yet not ex seeded in mourning’.<sup>408</sup> Overall, Dod’s interactions with this family demonstrate the notable degree of influence which some clergymen were able to exercise in the religious lives of their gentry patrons, on account of their particular pastoral abilities.<sup>409</sup>

Lady Vere’s clerical contacts provided her with a dependable stream of comfort and instruction in bereavement, which it seems she could not have relied upon receiving from her godly lay companions. This is strikingly evidenced by a 1623 letter which her husband sent to his friend, the prominent puritan politician, Sir Robert Harley (c.1579-1656), following the death of Lady Vere’s son. Sir Horace respectfully reproached Harley for failing to send ‘letteres of consolation [which] woold haue bine cumfortable’ to his wife in ‘the extremitie of her grieffe’.<sup>410</sup> Whilst other friends may have proved more dependable, it was the correspondence of her ministerial associates which Mary Vere valued and preserved. However, her interactions with the puritan rector of Sutton Coldfield and chaplain to the volunteer forces in the Palatinate, John Burgess (1563-1635), are characterised by a greater degree of mutuality than her exchanges with Dod. In correspondence with his patroness, Burgess readily reflected on his own spiritual condition, acknowledging how difficult he found it to embrace both God’s ‘giftes & rodds’ as equally providential and noting his need of divine ‘scoolinge’ in this regard. Reflecting in 1630 on the recent death of his third wife, he remarked that ‘your good *Ladiship* doth

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid., fos. 13<sup>v</sup>-14<sup>r</sup>. Horace Vere similarly used his chaplain, Obadiah Sedgwick, to break the news to his ‘Cosen Holles’ of the death of his young son: NUA Ne C 15404, 16-18.

<sup>409</sup> Lake and Stephens have made rather too much of the fact that Elizabeth Isham felt able, at least privately in her autobiographical manuscript, to express qualified disagreement with Dod’s strict opposition to all card playing: *Scandal and Religious Identity*, 343-5, 362.

<sup>410</sup> BL Add. MS 70001, fo. 266<sup>r</sup>.

well remember me of our duties of submitting willingly to the hand of god'.<sup>411</sup> On the basis of this comment, Jacqueline Eales has asserted that Burgess was equally willing to receive epistolary direction from his patroness, whom he considered 'well practised in the demands of the genre'.<sup>412</sup> However, it is important to note that Burgess followed up this polite remark with a page of enthusiastic description of his own exemplary response, assuring Lady Vere that, in this, he did 'preach vnto my selfe as well as vnto others'. He concluded by reiterating: 'therefore, good Madam beleive it, I doe not foolishly charge, but holely reverence the good hand of god in what he hath donne'.<sup>413</sup> Unlike Daniel Baxter, who sought epistolary support from Judith Isham when his wife died, Burgess never relinquished his ministerial dignity in grief. Indeed, his own pastoral consolations were so commendable that a letter he penned in December 1621 to counsel his surviving children after their sister's death was subject to manuscript circulation and found its way into Nehemiah Wallington's collection of exemplary spiritual correspondence.<sup>414</sup> Moreover, despite Burgess's greater reticence to instruct, it seems clear that Mary Vere desired his epistolary counsel. He was once led to remark:

when I consider how you abounde in other meanes for instruction & incitation: I see not what I can propownd to my selfe that might seeme vsefull vnto you: who ... are so farr advanched in the exercise of christian duties, that you may seeme rather worthy to bee showred *with* dew prayses ... then to bee quickned by any exhortation.<sup>415</sup>

Nonetheless, Burgess could offer his religious guidance in the confident awareness that his ministry was spiritually profitable for both Lady Vere and her husband, 'the noble Generall'. In 1617, he even responded to a direct acknowledgement from his patroness that

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<sup>411</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fos. 66<sup>r</sup>, 69<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>412</sup> Eales, 'Ancient Mother', 87. Also Willen, 'Godly Women', 574-5.

<sup>413</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fo. 69<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>414</sup> Longfellow, 'Isham Family', 159. BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 69<sup>r</sup>-70<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>415</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fo. 64<sup>r</sup>.

God had made him an important ‘meanes’ to ‘accomplishe all that good upon’ her, which her soul desired.<sup>416</sup>

### **Arthur Kemp’s ‘Letters: On Seuerall Occasions’**

The case of Mary Vere provides a valuable comparison with that of Joan Barrington, confirming the lengths to which some clerics went to sustain gentlewomen through difficult bereavements which could threaten spiritual collapse. Further interesting evidence survives in an unexplored set of British Library letters, addressed by the clergyman, Arthur Kemp, to various correspondents, particularly gentry. In 1641, Kemp subsequently dedicated this epistolary collection ‘To the noble and vertuous Lady: the Lady Walgrae’, as an act of ‘charitie[,] becoming my function’.<sup>417</sup> Not only was Kemp the younger son of a gentleman, but his family also had links to the Walgraves, or Waldegraves. His mother’s maternal grandfather was Sir William Waldegrave (1507-1554) of Smallbridge, Suffolk, and his niece, Jane Kemp, also married into the family. Some insight into his confessional colouring may be gleaned from his bequest of a book to one Doctor Thomas Browne, whom Fred Hitchin-Kemp identified as the future Sir Thomas Browne, author of *Religio Medici*, who also resided in Norwich.<sup>418</sup> This would suggest highly educated as well as conformist and royalist connections. Kemp’s learning is certainly evidenced by his frequent citations of classical authors, his knowledge of Latin, Greek, French and Italian, and by the library of books which he apparently accumulated at

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<sup>416</sup> Ibid., fos. 68<sup>r</sup>, 61<sup>r</sup> and similarly 64<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>417</sup> BL Add. MS 10435, fos. 3<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>. Kemp, who wrote on the authority of a ‘Diuine’ (fos. 23<sup>r</sup>, 77<sup>v</sup>), can be identified as the son of Robert Kemp of Gissing, Norfolk, who matriculated from Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1617, held benefices in Kent, Essex and Norwich and died in 1645. See *Alumni Cantabrigienses ... Part I*, 4 vols., eds. John and J. A. Venn (Cambridge, 1922-1927), iii. 5 and ‘Kemp, Arthur’ (4242), *CCEd*. Fred Hitchin-Kemp made the same identification in his *General History of the Kemp and Kempe Families of Great Britain and Her Colonies* (London, 1902), section ii, 34.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., section ii, 33-4. TNA PROB 11/193/180.

Norwich and his London Chambers.<sup>419</sup> Kemp's collection, with its scholarly style of counsel, reminiscent of Joseph Hall's *Epistles*, provides a valuable counterpoint to the epistolary literature thus far cited. A likely candidate for the 'Lady Walgrau' of his dedication, who was then entangled in 'the intricate mazes of a law-suit', is Jemima, daughter of Sir Nicholas Bacon and widow of Sir William Waldegrave (c.1573-1613) of Smallbridge, Suffolk, and Wormingford, Essex. In June 1641, the House of Lords heard a petition against this 'Lady Waldegrave' from one of her tenants.<sup>420</sup>

Bereavement counselling features heavily in this small epistolary collection. Kemp addressed several letters 'To my Lady' on the deaths of her son, daughter and husband. These carefully crafted, poetic compositions are chiefly concerned with consoling and regulating grief. Keen to emphasise that he did not denounce mourning entirely (being 'not so stoically moulded to quarrell the soft impressions of humanitie'), Kemp acknowledged his gentry correspondent's suffering, but insisted that 'Christianitie must limit you to moderation', for 'all our vertue' lies in 'the moderation of unruly passions'.<sup>421</sup> Evoking the customary example of Job, alongside Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son, Kemp counselled absolute submission to the divine decree: 'will we not suffer god to do *with* his owne what he please?' Thus, he advised his correspondent to 'stint but your teares and giue god his owne', urging: 'Madam you cannot now help these departed infants: hurt not your self *with* in-temperate greef'.<sup>422</sup> With reference to the Lukan parable of Dives and Lazarus, Kemp frequently evoked an image of the deceased reposing in the 'bosome of Abraham'. As Peter Marshall has demonstrated, the location of this resting place remained

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid. For example, BL Add. MS 10435, fos. 42<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>, 83<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>, 88<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>420</sup> Following her husband's death in 1613, Jemima married a man of lesser status, Henry Killigrew, but retained her first husband's name. *Fourth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1874), 78; Winifred Beaumont and Ann Taylor, *Wormingford: an English Village* (Colchester, 1989), 31-2. Jemima was acquainted with the Essex clergyman, Ralph Josselin: *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683*, ed. Alan Macfarlane (London, 1976), 54.

<sup>421</sup> BL Add. MS 10435, fos. 14<sup>r</sup>, 16<sup>r-v</sup>, 99<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., fos. 12<sup>v</sup>-13<sup>r</sup>, 8<sup>r-v</sup>, 17<sup>v</sup>, 21<sup>v</sup>.

subject to contemporary debate, with some Protestant theologians resurrecting patristic notions of Abraham's bosom as the 'atrium of paradise'. However, it was widely considered to denote heaven and, as such, proved a comforting pastoral metaphor.<sup>423</sup>

Kemp reflected on death as the great leveller, in the face of which, all advantages of 'noble pedigree' or 'opulent means' were eroded. In one letter, he remarked boldly on the negative example provided by 'many of our gentry' whose wealth he regarded as the ruin of their virtue.<sup>424</sup> Kemp's own family standing may have emboldened him to admonish gentry correspondents. The final entry in his collection, addressed 'To a gentleman tormented *with* the gout', presents the 'temporall paine' of bodily affliction as an opportunity for mortification and repentance. Observing that 'these strokes should fix in our memory, gods gifts, and our owne guilt', Kemp exhorted his addressee to 'inweigh ... *against* thy sins, that haue drawne such an harsh companion vpon thee'.<sup>425</sup> This went hand in hand with more conventionally deferential rhetoric; Kemp evidently sought the favour of 'the Lady Walgrae' whom he begged to 'harken the humble deuoir of *Your* Ladiships most faithfull obseruer'. Nonetheless, his message of the folly of un-moderated grief could hardly have been more starkly conveyed.<sup>426</sup>

By way of comparison, it is interesting to observe the pastoral approach to death adopted by the Reformed Scottish minister, Zachary Boyd (1585-1653). Although not an English example, both Pigman and the literary scholar, Bettie Anne Doebler, have cited Boyd's 1629 *ars moriendi* work, *The Last Battell Of The Soule In Death*, as the epitome of a seventeenth-century shift towards tolerating lavish extremes of grief. This vast dialogical

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid., fos. 45<sup>r-v</sup>, 8<sup>r</sup>. Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, 193.

<sup>424</sup> BL Add. MS 10435, fos. 15<sup>r</sup>, 30<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid., fos. 112<sup>r</sup>, 128<sup>r</sup>, 131<sup>r</sup>, 135<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid., fos. 3<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>r-7<sup>v</sup></sup>.

text, which underscores the Protestant pastor's vital role as deathbed counsellor, features an imaginative lament placed on the lips of the former Queen of Bohemia, Elizabeth Stuart, on the death of her son, Frederick. Elizabeth berates God: 'thou hast vtterlie rejected vs' and apostrophises the reader: 'mine heart is broken ... come yee all and condole with mee'.<sup>427</sup> For Pigman, the empathetic mode of this lament is highly revealing about seventeenth-century attitudes towards grief. He argued that its vivid display of mourning would have proved shocking to an earlier generation of readers.<sup>428</sup> However, neither scholar has observed the very different tenor of Boyd's exemplary epistolary collection, *Four Letters of Comforts*, which was printed in Glasgow around the same time that Arthur Kemp compiled his manuscript. In these brief didactic letters, which were doubtless composed for jointly devotional and patronage purposes, Boyd adopted an authoritative pastoral voice to counsel four prominent Scottish noblewomen following the deaths of their husbands, brothers and children. These letters contain one of the clearest contemporary expressions of the need to moderate grief, encouraging obedient submission in the face of divine chastisement. Boyd exhorted his addressees '*to behave and quiet your self like a childe that is wained of his mother*', reminding them that 'what God hath done, or permitted to be done, must not bee said against', since 'it is great weaknesse of faith, to be too grieved for the death of Gods servants'. He even concluded with a reflection on the Hebrew term for widow, '*Almanah*, from a word that signifieth *dumb*, to teach her to seal her mouth ... [and] stoup humbly under Gods hand'.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Zachary Boyd, *The Last Battell Of The Sovle In Death* (Edinburgh, 1629), *i.* 4-7 and *ii.* sig. \*5<sup>r-v</sup>. Bettie Anne Doebler, '*Rooted Sorrow*': *Dying in Early Modern England* (Rutherford, 1994), 230-41. Pigman, *Grief*, 36-9.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>429</sup> Zachary Boyd, *Four Letters of Comforts, for the Deaths of the Earle of Hadingtoun, and of the Lord Boyd* (Glasgow, 1640), 5, 11, 13-14, also 8, 9. This image actually also features in Boyd, *Last Battell*, *i.* 1221-2.

These case studies have demonstrated both that the pastoral care of bereaved individuals was an important strand of wider seventeenth-century spiritual counselling and that many ministers prioritised consolation over mere empathetic condolence.<sup>430</sup> None of the letters surveyed here display the outright condemnation of all manifestations of grief which Pigman referred to as ‘rigorism’ and was able to associate with one or two mid sixteenth-century English authors. Nevertheless, seventeenth-century ministerial advice to the bereaved could be undeniably severe, displaying notable continuity with earlier Reformation attitudes. With respect to this genre, the evidence does not support Pigman’s general claim that ‘sympathy for bereavement is more prominent than anxiety at exceeding the bounds of moderation’ during the seventeenth century.<sup>431</sup>

### **Consolation, Assurance and Predestination**

In Kemp’s collection, a principal consolation offered to moderate the grief of the bereaved was the assurance that their loved one was enjoying the delights of heaven. Whilst Kemp’s confessional colouring cannot be conclusively determined, it is striking that many ministers of decidedly firm predestinarian convictions lacked any qualms about asserting the same. John Dod promised as much to Mary Vere on several occasions. He counselled her following her brother’s death to ‘reioice at the happines of the partie beloved’ since God ‘hath taken hym in the best tyme unto hym selfe’. Dod likewise remarked that a ‘deere friend’ of Vere’s was ‘now with hir god’ and he unambiguously asserted that her adult son, William, ‘now enioyeth euerlastinge lyfe in the heauen whither *your* selfe also shall come *within* a while’.<sup>432</sup> Such consolations were not only addressed to gentry patrons. In 1628, Livewell Rampaigne consoled his brother-in-law, Nehemiah

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<sup>430</sup> For a later seventeenth-century example, see the widowed Lady Russell’s correspondence with her various clerical counsellors: *The Letters of Lady Rachel Russell: From the Originals at Woburn Abbey*, 2 vols. (London, 1819).

<sup>431</sup> Pigman, *Grief*, 2.

<sup>432</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fos. 186<sup>r</sup>, 190<sup>r</sup>, 188<sup>v</sup>.

Wallington, with the assurance that his son had returned ‘to the Lord and in the day of restitution of all things, hee shall be restored againe to you neuer more to be deuided’. This minister had previously attempted to restrain Wallington’s grief with a severe reminder that the Lord ‘will be feared euen in his mercys ... and will be yet more angrey if wee be stubborne and doe not kisse the rod with which he hath drawen blood of vs’.<sup>433</sup> Admittedly, it could be argued that in the cases of the deaths of young children, the Reformed belief that the offspring of the godly automatically shared in God’s covenant with his faithful elect may have influenced ministerial consolers – even though they did not articulate it.<sup>434</sup> Yet in other instances it is clear that covenantal theology did not underpin bold pronouncements of salvation. Richard Greenham sought to assuage the grief of ‘Mistris *Mary Whitehead*’ by assuring her of her son’s ‘holy change to eternall felicitie’, who despite being ‘young in yeares, yet was hee come to sufficient yeares to goe to God’. Here, the implication is that Whitehead’s son had been old enough to acquire spiritual awareness and a personal faith commitment.<sup>435</sup>

Additional examples are contained in further letters which both puritans and moderate Calvinist clergy addressed to grieving correspondents. All those who consoled Joan Barrington after her husband’s death, including the minister, William Chantrell, firmly asserted that Sir Francis was enjoying eternal rest.<sup>436</sup> Joseph Hall similarly comforted one ‘Mr. W. R.’ who had lost both his wife and son, declaring: ‘see whether your losse or their gain be greater. ... They are gone to their preferment’. He concluded this letter with the comforting reassurance: ‘let God haue them with cheerefulnesse, and you

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<sup>433</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 80<sup>r</sup>, 72<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>434</sup> See Hannah Cleugh, ‘Baptism and Burial in the Reformation Church of England: Theological Tensions and Controversies’, D.Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 2008), 41, 46-51.

<sup>435</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 863.

<sup>436</sup> *BFL*, 29-30, 32-5, 37.

shall enjoy God with them in glory'.<sup>437</sup> Although less explicit, the same assumption underlies Paul Baynes's letters to several correspondents who had lost a brother and a wife, as well as children. He assured one woman that 'God hath taken' her older brother when 'he was the ripest, & fittest to be ga [sic] gathered'.<sup>438</sup> Comparable Scottish examples can be found in the epistles of Zachary Boyd, as well as in various letters of spiritual counsel penned by the Presbyterian divine, Samuel Rutherford, during the 1630s and 1640s.<sup>439</sup> With respect to funeral sermons and epitaphs, this tendency to express certainty in the deceased's heavenly inheritance has been explored by scholars such as Ralph Houlbrooke and Peter Marshall. In a similar vein, Hannah Cleugh has emphasised the Prayer Book burial service's confident assumption that the deceased possessed 'sure and certain hope of resurrection'.<sup>440</sup> Ministers' letters of consolation provide another perspective on this theological tension; in this genre, the need to display pastoral sensitivity frequently appears to have won out over strict predestinarian logic.

Of course, it could be objected that the sort of individuals whose deaths were condoled in ministers' correspondence were, in any case, likely to have been pious believers.<sup>441</sup> In 1629, the episcopalian divine, Daniel Featley (1582-1645), beseeched the wife of the recently deceased Dean of Exeter, Matthew Sutcliffe, 'to consider not so much *what you haue lost as what he hath gained. ... [He] now weares his garland of glory*'.<sup>442</sup> John Davenport actually prefaced his assurance that Lady Vere would shortly be reunited

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<sup>437</sup> Hall, *Epistles The First Volvme*, 181, 184.

<sup>438</sup> Baynes, *Christian Letters*, sigs N2<sup>r</sup>-N7<sup>v</sup>, P3<sup>r</sup>-P9<sup>r</sup>, G2<sup>v</sup>-G6<sup>r</sup>, at N4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>439</sup> Boyd, *Four Letters*, 6, 9-12, 14-15. Samuel Rutherford, *Joshua Redivivus, Or Mr Rutherford's Letters* (Rotterdam, 1664), 56-8, 385-7, 532-3, 543-4.

<sup>440</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 317-20; Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, 197-202; Dixon, *Practical Predestinarians*, 309-19; Ralph Houlbrooke, 'Funeral Sermons and Assurance of Salvation: Conviction and Persuasion in the Case of William Lord Russell of Thornhaugh', *Reformation*, 4 (1999), 120, 127-9. Cleugh, 'Baptism and Burial', 182, 197-201. Also Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), 61.

<sup>441</sup> Although it is not always clear that the deceased was actually personally known to the cleric.

<sup>442</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.47, fo. 4<sup>v</sup>.

with her husband in heaven with references to his observable piety, concluding: ‘you cannot but have comfort in his death, when you call to mind his life’.<sup>443</sup> And yet strictly speaking Horace Vere’s outward godliness might be evidence, but not actually proof of his election. Leif Dixon has recently observed that, since assurance of salvation relied on an individual’s self-assessment of their internal faith, there was ‘broad agreement that ... one’s knowledge of the salvation of others could be no better than *conjectural*’.<sup>444</sup> Crucially, it should be observed that in nearly all of the epistolary examples cited, the theology of predestination is actually entirely absent, even in its positive formulation of the decree of election. Instead, the deceased’s place in heaven is simply asserted. Commenting on ‘the relative absence of the double decree’ in funeral sermons, Dixon has observed that the *ars moriendi* was frequently ‘used to plug the epistemological gap’. The fact that an individual met with an edifying death for which they were well-prepared seemed to provide observable evidence of the soundness of their religious estate.<sup>445</sup> But *ars moriendi* references are equally uncharacteristic of such correspondence. Overall, the evidence appears to suggest that in this pastoral context, where the minister’s exclusive focus was on comforting the bereaved and moderating grief, many Reformed clergymen simply did not consider predestination to be a helpful doctrine.

### **Clerical Direction in Lady Vere’s Correspondence**

Moving beyond these themes of death and bereavement, a broader examination of Mary Vere’s correspondence provides further confirmation of the influence which respected ministerial advisers enjoyed with their powerful patroness. Jacqueline Eales’s 2010 essay on Lady Vere displays a particular concern to emphasise her subject’s spiritual

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<sup>443</sup> *LJD*, 57-8.

<sup>444</sup> Dixon, *Practical Predestinarians*, 303. Of course, as several chapters of this thesis demonstrate, many ministers were equally willing to identify living individuals as members of the elect.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, 319-32, at 319-20.

agency in these relationships.<sup>446</sup> Furthermore, in a biographical entry on Vere, Peter Lake has asserted that her correspondence casts her in the role of ‘spiritual adviser ... almost an exact reversal of the customary relationship between a single lady and her clerical protégés’.<sup>447</sup> This striking suggestion seems to misconstrue the nature of Vere’s epistolary contact with clergymen. Whilst she was once labelled ‘*an ancient mother in our Israel*’,<sup>448</sup> her biographers were overwhelmingly concerned with underscoring the full extent of her deference to the clerical office. In her funeral sermon, William Gurnall noted that, since ‘few ever exceeded her, in loving and honouring’ Christ’s faithful ministers, she merited the title ‘*Deliciae Cleri, The Ministers Delight*’.<sup>449</sup> Vere’s relationships with clergy were certainly mutually sustaining, for she dedicated significant effort and resources to clerical patronage and support. Her success, in 1625, in securing the Archbishopric of Armagh for James Ussher (1581-1656), a clergyman of a rather different confessional hue to Dod, Burgess and Davenport, was the pinnacle of her patronage achievements.<sup>450</sup> Following this impressive intervention, their relationship appears to have continued in some form through correspondence. Gurnall quoted from a non-extant 1628 letter in which Ussher assured Vere that he could discern God’s spirit within her. Gurnall interpreted this as an exemplary display of pastoral sensitivity: the Archbishop recognised that one so easily ‘dejected from an ouer deep sence of her unworthiness’ required just such a ‘Cordial to revive her Humble Spirit’.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Eales, ‘Ancient Mother’, 87.

<sup>447</sup> Peter Lake, ‘Vere, Lady Mary (1581-1670)’, in *A Historical Dictionary of British Women* (London, 2003), 441.

<sup>448</sup> John Gere, *KATAΛΥΝΑΣΤΗΣ: Might Overcoming Right. Or A Cleer Answer to M. John Goodwin’s Might and Right well met* (London, 1649), sig. A2<sup>v</sup>. As was Lady Falkland: Duncon, *Retvrnes*, sig. I12<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>449</sup> Gurnall, *Christians Labour*, sigs. K5<sup>v</sup>-K6<sup>r</sup>, also K1<sup>v</sup>-K2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>450</sup> Eales, ‘Ancient Mother’, 86. See *The Correspondence of James Ussher, 1600-1656*, ed. Elizabethanne Boran (Dublin, 2015), 303.

<sup>451</sup> Gurnall, *Christians Labour*, sigs A6<sup>v</sup>-A7<sup>v</sup>. Interestingly, Ussher apparently engaged more widely in epistolary counselling. Samuel Clarke highlighted the ‘Incessant pains’ to which he went ‘to answer those many Letters, which came to him ... some for resolution of difficulties in Divinity, others about Cases of Conscience’: *Lives of thirty-two*, 292, also 289. Some of these letters were penned by divines who ‘were wont to apply themselves to him as to a Father’. He was also petitioned by letter to direct his pastoral

Unlike in the case of Joan Barrington, Vere's former chaplains did not necessarily continue to provide counselling services after they left her family's service. William Ames wrote to acknowledge gratefully her 'respect unto my poore ministrie' and lament 'that I cannot any longer performe that office toward you, which for some time I have'. Exhorting her to continue to 'use all dilligence for the stirring up, confirming & increasing of the grace of God in your self', he penned a final bold 'warning' against keeping ungodly company.<sup>452</sup> Yet other clergymen seized upon opportunities to offer her spiritual advice. When the cleric and master of Emmanuel College, John Preston, wrote requesting support for one 'Doctor Wilson', to ensure that 'the best minister [is] in the most eminent place this church hath', he inscribed some rules for domestic prayer and meditation in tiny letters on the reverse of his folded letter packet.<sup>453</sup> One must assume that Preston would not have incorporated religious counselling into a letter of petition if he did not expect Lady Vere to appreciate his efforts. Furthermore, Vere seems to have been equally keen to forge relationships with an extensive network of ministers who could perform this task for her. In 1635, Davenport expressed regret that distance had hampered his service to his benefactress, but acknowledged that he would have been no better 'able to strengthen your spirit with more healing and comforting words then were ministred by diverse'.<sup>454</sup> This attitude would certainly have pleased Dod, who candidly asserted in print that the wealthy and powerful should surround themselves with 'faithfull Ministers' and 'hearken to their wholesome counsels' in order to avoid the iniquity which their rank predisposed them to. Records of Dod's wider counselling indicate that he frequently reprimanded gentry with

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attention to the case of Joan Drake, who was 'in her minde troubled and tossed': *Correspondence of James Ussher*, 111-13, 115-16, 156-7.

<sup>452</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fo. 8<sup>r</sup>. Although the BL catalogue dates this letter to 1615, it must surely have been penned in 1619 when, under pressure from England, Sir Horace was forced to terminate Ames's chaplaincy at The Hague. See Francis J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610-1692* (Boston, 1994), 94.

<sup>453</sup> BL Add. MS 4276, fo. 88<sup>r</sup>. Irvonwy Morgan, *Prince Charles's Puritan Chaplain* (London, 1957), 15-17.

<sup>454</sup> *LJD*, 62.

whom he came into contact.<sup>455</sup> Once, he frankly reproved Vere for dwelling unappreciatively on the lack of ‘popular applauses’ which her husband’s latest military escapades had engendered, urging her, instead, to offer prayers of thanksgiving for his safe return from the Low Countries.<sup>456</sup>

Theirs was evidently a true, open friendship, albeit one in which Dod never laid aside his pastoral authority. In 1642, despite being then in his nineties, he responded compassionately and lengthily to the fears which he was sure Vere entertained concerning tumultuous current events. Employing providentialism as a powerful source of pastoral comfort amidst the turmoil of the first Civil War, Dod repeatedly reminded his ‘much honored good friend’ that ‘mans power ... is directed by God’ and ‘yowr dayes and those of yowr seed are ... seald up under Gods decree ... neither in the divels power: nor malice of owr enemies to determine or shorten’. He concluded this letter with a pledge of his continuing readiness to act as her spiritual physician: ‘to resolute yow of anie doubts or questions in yowr hart’.<sup>457</sup> Lady Vere’s relationship with John Burgess was equally close and similarly paternalistic. Eagerly embracing the persona of a spiritual father, he remarked: ‘I that knowe the affection of a naturale father to his deere children can not finde that I love myne owne naturale children more deerly then I doe you in the Lorde’.<sup>458</sup> That Vere actually cared for Burgess’s offspring following his third wife’s death evidences their emotional tie and she similarly acted as guardian to Davenport’s son when his father first departed for New England.<sup>459</sup> Davenport certainly maintained the persona of an authoritative religious adviser throughout their extensive correspondence. He repeatedly

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<sup>455</sup> John Dod, *A Plaine And Familiar Exposition Of The Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seuenteenth Chapters of the Prouerbs of Salomon* (London, 1609), 69-72, at 71. Dod, *Second Sheet*. Clarke, *Lives of thirty-two*, 172.

<sup>456</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fo. 182<sup>r-v</sup>. Davenport similarly counselled her against valuing ‘outward and empty titles and vanities’: *LJD*, 81.

<sup>457</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fos. 184<sup>r-5r</sup>.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 61<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 69<sup>v</sup>. *LJD*, 75-6.

advised Vere on her devotional practices, urging her to maintain a written ‘record of speciall mercyes’ and counselling her through the gendered scriptural models of Sarah, Hagar, Naomi and Ruth.<sup>460</sup> In turn, she actively sought out his guidance and allowed him a considerable degree of license. In 1628, after conferring with Richard Sibbes, Davenport instructed Vere to remain in residence at The Hague where she would be able to further the ‘course of Religion’. This directive was apparently supplied in response to a case of conscience which she had posed, for Davenport followed up his verdict by remarking: ‘if this be not sufficient, we desire that you would propose the quæstion with your owne opinion and reasons more fully, and we will indeauour to satisfye your La[dys]hip by a more full answer’.<sup>461</sup>

Alternatively, it is necessary to note that Lady Vere’s relations with another clerical contact, Samuel Rogers (c.1613-c.1643), the nephew of Ezekiel Rogers, were less harmonious. His mid-1630s diary provides illuminating insights into the domestic chaplain’s role and status. Rogers acted in this capacity for Lady Vere during her early widowhood. At first, he delighted in his appointment, for Vere maintained a significantly more pious household than his first patroness, Lady Margaret Denny.<sup>462</sup> The two were initially close; he ‘rejoice[d] greatly in the humble society of Lady Vere’ and, as Eales has noted, they enjoyed some degree of spiritual reciprocity. Rogers briefly recorded having received ‘consolation’ at his mistress’s hands.<sup>463</sup> However, their relationship apparently deteriorated over the period covered by the diary, for Rogers later remarked on Vere’s ‘darke, dusty, dulsome cariage’. Whilst his use of the term ‘huswife’ to refer to his patroness cannot have been as offensive as Tom Webster and Kenneth Shipps suggest, for

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid., 28, 64-5.

<sup>461</sup> *LJD*, 31.

<sup>462</sup> Tom Webster and Kenneth Shipps, ‘Introduction’, in *DSR*, xxx-xlii.

<sup>463</sup> *DSR*, 135-9 also, 123, 129-30, 142. Eales, ‘Ancient Mother’, 90.

his uncle twice used it in direct discourse with Lady Barrington, on another occasion, Rogers recorded his anger that Vere had interrupted him when leading lengthy family prayers.<sup>464</sup> The sporadic tensions in their relationship were invariably a product of Rogers's intense zeal; his precision conflicted even with Lady Vere's celebrated piety. This doubtless made him a difficult man to get along with, although he encountered no occasion for criticism during his frequent visits to the Barrington and Masham families at nearby Hatfield Broad Oak. Rogers himself practiced both epistolary and face-to-face counselling, providing spiritual edification to his sisters and fellow servants. However, his diary (a genre which, of course, encouraged the unhindered expression of personal grievances) does stand as evidence of the day-to-day frictions which could mar relations between clerics and patrons of even the godliest hue.<sup>465</sup>

However, Rogers's journal entries must be weighed against the far more abundant evidence from Vere's correspondence of her respect for the clerical office and recourse to ministers for spiritual guidance. Such attitudes are evidenced in a copy of an illuminating 1628 letter which she sent to 'Mr Yates[,] preacher at Stuky in Norfolk'. This was John Yates, the puritan incumbent of Stiffkey, whose patron was Vere's son-in-law, Sir Roger Townshend. Townshend was another gentry benefactor whose respect for the ministry and esteem of clerical guidance was praised in print. Around 1626, in an interesting letter of religio-political counsel, Yates assumed 'that boldnesse you haue alwise granted unto mee' to reprove bluntly his pious patron's apparent reluctance to stand for election, though 'the Countrey desires your seruice, and grieues to see you so unwilling'. He frankly informed Sir Roger that 'it argues a minde Christianly noble, to be encouraged with the

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<sup>464</sup> *DSR*, 150, 164, 160. Longfellow, 'Isham Family', 167-9. Webster and Shipps, 'Introduction', xlii. *BFL*, 199. BL Egerton MS 2644, fo. 251<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>465</sup> *DSR*, 75, 80, 83, 95, 102, 108, 34, 52, 56. Webster and Shipps, 'Introduction', lxx.

need of your labours'.<sup>466</sup> In her letter to Yates, Lady Vere entrusted her 'daughter Townsend' into his care, exhorting him to 'watche ouer her soule, as her pastor, ... stirring her up to the practise of the dewties of a wife', providing 'good directions & counsell' and reporting back on her spiritual progress. She evoked a fascinating image of spiritual surrogacy, deputising to Yates 'part of a parents power' over her married daughter in their absence. Interesting earlier letters reveal that, in addition to embracing her own maternal counselling responsibilities, Vere commended her children to the care and direction of clerics whilst she was occupied at The Hague. In particular, Nicholas Byfield (1578/9-1622), the minister at Isleworth with whom she enjoyed a close relationship, seemingly exerted significant spiritual influence over her daughters during their youth.<sup>467</sup> However, the Vere children were not the only ones to profit in this way. Byfield recorded in the epistolary dedication of his 1618 *Directions for the priuate reading of the Scriptures*, that Sir Horace and Lady Vere did often 'desire and accept directions of this kinde from me, in writing'.<sup>468</sup> Although Eales has suggested that Vere's letters to her son-in-law, John Holles, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Clare, reveal her in the role of spiritual counsellor, her epistolary interactions with this younger man differ significantly from the extensive written instructions which she received from clerical associates. They constitute merely a few brief consolations in a letter informing him of his newborn child's death and some other general pious sentiments. Interestingly, Holles maintained his own correspondence with John Davenport, which may well have encompassed spiritual guidance. It certainly seems likely that he was the 'Mr Dampod' whose 'good aduise' Vere's daughter, Mary, highly

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<sup>466</sup> 'Stuky' is Stiffkey spelt phonetically. Gurnall, *Christians Labour*, sig. K6<sup>r</sup>. Townshend sought deathbed counselling from the minister, Thomas Cawton: Cawton, *Life and Death*, 16. Norfolk Record Office MF/RO 27/3, no. 484. Linda Campbell, 'Sir Roger Townshend and His Family: A Study of Gentry Life in Early Seventeenth Century Norfolk', Ph.D. thesis (University of East Anglia, 1990), 88-9, 101-2.

<sup>467</sup> NUA Ne C 15404, 2-4.

<sup>468</sup> Nicholas Byfield, *Directions for the priuate reading of the Scriptures* (London, 1618), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

valued.<sup>469</sup> Viewed in overall perspective, Lady Vere's surviving correspondence reflects her particular esteem for clerical counsellors and appreciation of their advice concerning her religious estate.

### **'Lett My Counsell bee Acceptable': William Greenhill and Lady Bacon**

A collection of letters which were sent by the young puritan cleric, William Greenhill (1597/8-1671), to his patroness, Lady Jane Bacon (1580/1-1659), between 1622 and 1635 convey an analogous impression. Jane, who had received a substantial inheritance on the death of her first husband, Sir William Cornwallis, married the future Sir Nathaniel Bacon in 1614. Despite constituting a significant corpus of clerical correspondence, these Essex Record Office manuscripts have only received attention from one historian, Kenneth Shipps, in his unpublished 1971 Yale dissertation. Baron Braybrooke's mid nineteenth-century edition of Lady Bacon's correspondence includes samples from all her major correspondents apart from Greenhill and even Joanna Moody's expanded 2003 edition includes only two of his most uncharacteristically non-religious letters.<sup>470</sup> Moody herself demonstrates little interest in devotional source material; she asserted the value of Jane Bacon's correspondence as evidence of 'emotional, economic and cultural relations within an early modern family', disregarding its significance for understanding Protestant piety.<sup>471</sup> Through a concise analysis of several key themes of Greenhill's letters, this subsection will offer an important extension of Shipps's formative research, complementing both the Vere and Barrington case studies.

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<sup>469</sup> Eales, 'Ancient Mother', 89. NUA Ne C 15404, 33-4, 16-19, 25-7, 13. Eales mistakenly identified Roger Townshend as the recipient of these letters. *LJD*, 29, 31-2.

<sup>470</sup> Kenneth Shipps, 'Lay Patronage of East Anglian Puritan Clerics in Pre-Revolutionary England', Ph.D. dissertation (Yale University, 1971), 152-65. *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis, 1613-1644*, ed. Richard Griffin, Baron Braybrooke (London, 1842). *The Private Correspondence of Jane Lady Cornwallis Bacon, 1613-1644*, ed. Joanna Moody (Madison, 2003).

<sup>471</sup> Joanna Moody, 'Preface', in *ibid.*, 12.

William Greenhill was to become a prominent Independent minister at Stepney and a member of the Westminster Assembly, but the details of his early biography remain uncertain.<sup>472</sup> These letters reveal that during the early 1620s Greenhill resided at Lady Bacon's Suffolk manor, Brome Hall, acting as domestic chaplain and tutor to her children. Following a spell as lecturer at St Mary Woolchurch, London, he proceeded to her living of nearby Oakley where he remained until his suspension by Bishop Wren in 1636.<sup>473</sup> Greenhill always addressed his patroness with extreme deference, veiling his counsels with respectful qualifications that she: 'lett not any thinge intended or said, bee offensiuie, but thinke it in your owne power to contradict & to dispose of mee at your owne pleasure'. When advising her to reprint the works of Elnathan Parr (1577-1622), the deceased former puritan rector of her Palgrave living, Greenhill wrote: 'in my weaknes I should thinke it profitable for the Xurch of god but I leaue it to *your Ladyship*'.<sup>474</sup> Yet this deference did not prevent him from acting in accordance with his own desire and postponing his acceptance of her Oakley benefice until 1631. From 1629, Greenhill's letters are replete with apologies, but he remained firmly in his London lectureship.<sup>475</sup>

Greenhill's first surviving letter to Lady Bacon was penned in response to her extreme grief at Parr's death. Whilst professing to 'sympathise with' his patroness, his primary intention was to encourage her to ponder the divine motivation underlying this loss and learn to accept it meekly. He insisted that God, having jealously witnessed her love 'formerly diuided ... too hott below too coole aboue', afflicted her with Parr's death

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<sup>472</sup> Several contemporaries of his name are listed in the Oxbridge alumni registers. Richard L. Greaves, 'Greenhill, William (1597/8-1671)', *ODNB* identifies him as the William Greenhill, born 1597/8, who proceeded MA from Gonville and Caius, Cambridge, in 1622. But see also the William Greenhill, born 1591, of Magdalen College, Oxford: *Alumni Oxonienses ... 1500-1714*, ed. Joseph Foster (Oxford, 1891-1892), ii. 600.

<sup>473</sup> Shipps, 'Lay Patronage', 157-63.

<sup>474</sup> ERO D/DBY C24, fos. 9<sup>r</sup>, 33<sup>r</sup>. Heal and Holmes, "*Prudentia ultra Sexum*", 111. Shipps mistakenly calls him William Parr: 'Lay Patronage', 153.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-60. ERO D/DBY C24, fos. 6<sup>r</sup>-10<sup>r</sup>, 14<sup>r-v</sup>, 16<sup>r-v</sup>, 18<sup>r-v</sup>, 31<sup>r</sup>.

in order to ensure that she ‘only trusteth in the Lord’.<sup>476</sup> Jane Bacon had evidently been particularly close to this cleric, who had exercised social and spiritual agency as mediator in the negotiations surrounding her marriage to Nathaniel Bacon. In 1613, Parr implored Lady Anne Bacon to allow him ‘to speak boldly to your Christian hart’, instructing her to be ‘as wise as Solomon’ and grant a favourable marriage settlement to his patroness.<sup>477</sup> From Greenhill’s polite but pointed comments, it is clear that even he disapproved of Jane Bacon’s reverence for her former pastor:

I dare not saye you overualued the man, or ouermuch lean’d too his wisdome & counsell: yett I hope thus-much maye inoffensiuely bee said, god takes not awaye such men, but that wee acknowledge not him the giuer ... considering men are but instruments. this loss we maye ascribe to our selues, learne humilitie by it.<sup>478</sup>

Nonetheless, Greenhill soon found himself filling the now vacant position of esteemed spiritual counsellor of this pious gentlewoman. The principal theme on which he offered direction was the necessity of profiting by afflictions and being prepared to lose all for Christ’s sake. Although none of Greenhill’s surviving letters mention her husband’s death in 1627, he had previously warned his patroness to ready herself for future bereavements, in order ‘by premeditation[,] to preuent some, and to digest more[,] greife’. In March 1629, during a period of ‘sicknes’, he encouraged ‘meditacion of gods rich mercy’, writing: ‘I beesech you Good Madame hold fast your hope[,] quicken your faith & as the outward man declines so lett the inward bee renewed’.<sup>479</sup> He further instructed her not to ‘greiue at crosses’ but to ‘fasten’ her heart ‘uppon him that is all sufficient’. Later that year, he frankly reflected on the paradox at the heart of much contemporary Protestant devotional literature, that ‘the more affliction, the greater gods affection’. He simultaneously comforted Lady Bacon with the reminder that her sufferings were ‘working

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<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>477</sup> *Private Correspondence*, 5-6. John Dod also acted in this capacity for Elizabeth Isham: Longfellow, ‘Isham Family’, 172.

<sup>478</sup> ERO D/DBY C24, fo. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 1<sup>r-v</sup>, 20<sup>r</sup>.

the greatest good, enlarging & eternizing a crowne of glory for you' and cautioned, rather ominously, that wallowing in 'discontentment ... maye bee the downfall of your worthy family'. Greenhill employed a fascinatingly visual image of conformity to Christ:

when wee haue Christs nailes in our hands, his speare in our sides, his thornes on our heads ... then we haue undeniable argument that we are the sonnes of god ... cast into the same mould our elder brother was, made like him by suffering.

Such rhetoric belies the common assumption that puritans shunned expressions of *imitatio Christi*, as well as corporeal reflection on the crucifixion.<sup>480</sup> As well as providing his benefactress with advice on possible incumbents for her other livings (which she both desired and followed), Greenhill took it upon himself to counsel her on dealing with her unruly son, Frederick, who married clandestinely in 1631. In 1627, he advocated a firm stance against his undergraduate rebelliousness, but two years later was inclined to 'advise your Ladyship' to adopt 'a gentle hand' like 'the father of the prodigall'.<sup>481</sup>

The physical and affective imagery of these letters clearly reveals the intimacy of their spiritual relationship. In 1629, Greenhill expressed his longing to 'share in the burthen' of Bacon's sickness and, with his comforting lines, figuratively 'ease your Ladyshipps shoulders'. A few months later, he wrote fancifully of his soul having 'relinquish't' his body to flee to his distressed patroness's side.<sup>482</sup> Their relationship evidently encompassed some degree of reciprocity, for on realising that his fellow London ministers were unwilling to allow him to resign his lectureship, Greenhill sought Jane Bacon's advice. Elsewhere, he reflected on their mutual ability to assist one another through prayer, although he concluded this letter in a characteristically paternalistic and instructive vein:

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid., fos. 22<sup>r</sup>, 11<sup>r-v</sup>. Cf. Elizabeth K. Hudson, 'English Protestants and the *Imitatio Christi*, 1580-1620', *SCJ*, 19/4 (1988), 555-8. See further Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 289-92.

<sup>481</sup> ERO D/DBy C24, fos. 2<sup>r-v</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>, 17<sup>r-v</sup>. Shipps, 'Lay Patronage', 154.

<sup>482</sup> ERO D/DBy C24, fos. 20<sup>r</sup>, 16<sup>r</sup>.

I trust the great adversity your *Ladyshipp* hath had hath taught you ... not to trust ... notionall apprehensions of a christ & pardon but to search out realitie & to settle there where no affliction can ... worke disparagement.<sup>483</sup>

Indeed, their association was based, first and foremost, upon Greenhill's particular pastoral expertise; his local standing as a healer of souls can be inferred. During this period, one Edward Collins of Bramford, Suffolk, tormented by a scrupulous conscience and believing that his sins precluded him from communion with Christ ('I thought I should never have Him'), finally acquired much longed for 'peace' and assurance by journeying to visit 'Mr. Greenhill'.<sup>484</sup> The illuminating correspondence of this puritan clergyman and the wider example of Jane Bacon provides a valuable contemporary comparison with the Barrington and Vere case studies, further underscoring the notable degree of spiritual influence which some clerics were able to exercise with female patrons.

### **Gender and the Counselling Relationship**

Most surviving evidence of ministerial counselling of high status correspondents reflects pastoral relationships between clergy and their patronesses. This chapter has centred on three prominent gentlewomen, but some additional, although more limited, source material hints at supplementary examples. The Yorkshire puritan, Lady Margaret Hoby, led a life of intense piety under the authoritative direction of her pastor and chaplain, Richard Rhodes. She had frequent recourse to him, alongside other ministers, for face-to-face conference and her diary records their regular epistolary interactions during periods when they were separated from one another.<sup>485</sup> Although none of these letters are extant, one reference which Hoby made to having 'reed ouer certaine papers of instruction

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<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 31<sup>r</sup>, 35<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>484</sup> *Thomas Shepard's Confessions*, eds. George Selement and Bruce C. Woolley (Boston, 1981), 81-4.

<sup>485</sup> *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599-1605*, ed. Joanna Moody (Stroud, 1998), 27, 29, 42-3, 45, 48, 75, 81.

w<sup>ch</sup> I had received from Mr Rhodes', does intimate written spiritual counselling.<sup>486</sup> Interestingly, it could be argued that the strong gendered associations which Collinson posited in relation to the Elizabethan period are actually more characteristic of early to mid seventeenth-century epistolary counselling. The cases explored in this chapter also help to contextualise William Gibson's reflections on the intimate spiritual relationships which some women formed with chaplains during the post-Restoration era.<sup>487</sup> Notably, whilst Collinson argued that the chief function of the pastoral counselling of sixteenth-century women was to soothe crippling anxieties about salvation, this theme is not overtly dominant in these seventeenth-century examples. Several of these gentlewomen do seem to have experienced bouts of insecurity – John Dod labelled Mary Vere 'naturalie addicted unto melancholie' and the same 'melancholick disease' affected both Lettice Cary and Joan Barrington – but evidence of the same is lacking in relation to Jane Bacon.<sup>488</sup>

It may well have been the case that, in contemporary eyes, women made particularly fitting spiritual pupils.<sup>489</sup> They were generally less well educated and, therefore, seemingly more in need of direction than men of equivalent social standing. Shipps's explicit association between the 'popularity of chaplaincies' and their 'appeal to women' is perhaps overstated, for Joan Barrington and Mary Vere both had husbands who were similarly committed to maintaining domestic chaplains. Yet this was a tangible way in which women could freely exercise patronage and, in some cases, it seems likely that widowhood provided an additional spur to maintaining pious relationships with clergymen.<sup>490</sup> On the basis of Sir John Barrington, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet's, surviving correspondence with the rector of Walkington in his day, John Burnett, J. T. Cliffe has inferred a post-

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 132, also 118-21, 125-8.

<sup>487</sup> Gibson, *Social History*, 79-88.

<sup>488</sup> BL Add. MS 4275, fo. 184<sup>r</sup>; Duncon, *Retvrnes*, sig. H3<sup>r-v</sup>; *BFL*, 129, 167.

<sup>489</sup> See Daybell, 'Women's Letters', 90-1.

<sup>490</sup> Shipps, 'Lay Patronage', 151-2.

Restoration ‘decline of religious fervour even among the clergy who occupied livings in the gift of Puritan patrons’. Sir John’s letters are devoid of the spiritual advice which pervaded his grandmother’s correspondence with her clerical protégés.<sup>491</sup> However, a more convincing explanation for this lack may be sought in the particular piety, and indeed gender, of the matriarchal Lady Barrington, who was always the chief object of the family clergy’s counsels.

Although the sources employed in this chapter suggest that Protestant spiritual counselling had a strong gendered dimension, it is important to emphasise that, even amongst the gentry, it was not gender-specific. It is interesting to conclude by reflecting briefly on clerical epistolary counselling of male members of the puritan Harley family of Brampton Bryan, Herefordshire, in whose lives religious devotion and clerical patronage loomed large. Lady Brilliana Harley (c.1598-1643) is well-known for her copious surviving correspondence, much of which contains advice addressed to her son, Edward Harley (1624-1700), throughout his time as an Oxford undergraduate and during his later career. These letters have been analysed in relation to the wider genre of maternal advice literature (see below, pp. 277-9), but it is interesting to observe that Lady Harley also encouraged her son to maintain epistolary contact with clergymen.<sup>492</sup> Stanley Gower, the puritan minister of Brampton Bryan, addressed additional pious counsel to the teenage scholar, exhorting him to avoid the ‘temptations’ and ‘vice’ of fellow students, ‘patterne’ himself ‘by the Saints of old’ and ‘be always looking at *your* nature’.<sup>493</sup> Edward also kept up a familiar correspondence with his tutor, the puritan divine, Edward Perkins, who

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<sup>491</sup> J. T. Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged, 1650-1700* (London, 1993), 108.

<sup>492</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan...*, ed. Thomas Taylor Lewis (London, 1854), 18, 35, also 97, 115. See Raymond A. Anselment, ‘Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley: Maternal Letters and the Genre of Mother’s Advice’, *Studies in Philology*, 101/4 (2001), 431-53; Johanna Harris, ‘Lady Brilliana Harley’s Letters and the Epistolary Genre in Early Stuart England’, D.Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 2009), *passim*.

<sup>493</sup> BL Add. MS 70002, fo. 202<sup>f</sup>.

praised his piety and counselled him across numerous letters ‘to keepe close to your God’ and ‘increase your Communion with God in the duties wherin you are exercised’.<sup>494</sup>

According to J. T. Cliffe, in September 1653 the Herefordshire minister, Timothy Woodroffe, also wrote a letter to Edward Harley, ‘couched in the most condescending terms’, which recalled the young man’s conversion and offered devotional advice and exhortation.<sup>495</sup> However, this British Library manuscript has been wrongly catalogued and was, in fact, addressed to Edward’s father, the seventy-four-year-old puritan patriarch, Sir Robert Harley. It provides an illuminating comparison with letters sent to Lady Barrington, containing analogous counsels on preparing for a good and edifying death. Woodroffe exhorted Sir Robert to ‘beare vp then (souldier of Christ) against all discouragements in *your* iourney towards heavenly Canaan’. So exemplary did he consider his instruction, that he later saw this epistle into print, appended to a treatise on ‘the right manner of dying well’ which he described as the written record of his private direction of Sir Robert during the years of his final sickness.<sup>496</sup> Also interesting is the application of the mystical marriage motif to Sir Robert, whom Woodroffe designated the ‘bride’ of Christ ‘the bridegroom’. The letter concludes with a bold re-evaluation of earthly hierarchies, with Woodroffe reminding his high-status correspondent that ‘holines in heart, and life, is greater honour then to be borne the sonne of a King’.<sup>497</sup> Of course, this letter does not constitute evidence that Sir Robert forged long-term epistolary relationships with clerical directors, like the gentlewomen discussed in this chapter. Again, this may be reflective of a

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<sup>494</sup> BL Add. MS 70122, unfoliated. See Cliffe, *Puritan Gentry*, 88-9. Later in life, Edward requested religio-political counsel from the celebrated puritan, Richard Baxter: Richard Schlatter, *Richard Baxter and Puritan Politics* (New Brunswick, 1957), 45-60. See below, p. 166.

<sup>495</sup> Cliffe, *Puritan Gentry*, 17.

<sup>496</sup> BL Add. MS 70125, unfoliated. Timothy Woodroffe, *A Religious Treatise upon Simeons Song; Or, Instructions advertising how to live holily, and dye happily* (London, 1659), sigs a2<sup>v</sup>, also a3<sup>v</sup>-a4<sup>v</sup>, \*1<sup>r</sup>-\*8<sup>v</sup>. Woodroffe’s text also includes lengthy counsels against excessive grief, addressed to bereaved friends: *ibid.*, 201-20.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs \*2<sup>r</sup>, \*4<sup>v</sup>, \*8<sup>r</sup>. BL Add. MS 70125, unfoliated.

broader gendered distinction in practice. It was also in old age (after having survived ‘the great Climactericall yeare’) that the godly, Richard Willis Esq., sought epistolary ‘ghostly counsell’ on preparing ‘for the time of my change’ from ‘a worthy and reverend Divine’.<sup>498</sup> However, these sources certainly reveal that some ministers felt able to assume a comparable degree of authority in spiritual dealings with male gentry, hinting at a broader culture of respect for the clergy’s instructive function amongst early to mid seventeenth-century pious elites.

### **Conclusion**

These comparative case studies have presented a fresh perspective on the nature and content of Protestant spiritual counselling, underscoring the religious influence which respected clerical advisers could enjoy with pious patrons. My exploration of epistolary sources has highlighted the real possibilities which existed for friendships to form between clerics and their elite lay sponsors – although warmth and affection were consistently combined with instructive counselling. This chapter has reflected on contemporary ideals of the relationship between domestic chaplains and gentle and noble patrons, comparing John Duncon’s epistolary devotional manual with authentic records of spiritual counselling. The religious authority which clergymen frequently assumed to bestow consolations upon the bereaved and impart candid directions on preparing for death has been underscored and attention has been paid to the conspicuous absence of the theology of predestination from contemporary grief counselling.

William Gibson has argued that, throughout this period, an increasing puritan theological emphasis on the family, at the expense of the priesthood, and a ‘movement

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<sup>498</sup> Richard Willis, *Mount Tabor. Or Private Exercises Of A Penitent Sinner* (London, 1639), 164-9, at 164.

towards a “communion of saints” which accentuated the laity’s equal role as providers of spiritual support, jointly contributed to an increasing sense of the irrelevance of the ‘intercession of a chaplain’.<sup>499</sup> Whilst the spiritual relationships discussed here convey no impression that chaplains were perceived as mediators between God and laypeople, this chapter has revealed that clerical counselling continued to provide a significant means of spiritual support to contemporary lay elites, most especially women. Moreover, surviving epistolary records provide valuable insights into the appreciative response with which ministerial directives were often met from pious gentry.

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<sup>499</sup> Gibson, *Social History*, 169-76, 194.

## 4. Richard Baxter and Pastoral Advice Networks

### Introduction

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) is well known amongst historians as one of the most significant seventeenth-century pastoral theorists, but the considerable effort which he dedicated to providing personalised counsel to individual laypeople through the medium of letter-writing has been afforded comparably modest scholarly attention. Baxter's manuscript correspondence, comprising some 1,300 letters, was little explored before the 1950s, but was brought to broad historical attention when it was calendared by Neil Keeble and Geoffrey Nuttall in 1991.<sup>500</sup> Yet a substantial number of manuscript letters which bear witness to Baxter's written counsel of the laity remain largely untapped. These certainly piqued the interest of some of Baxter's chief biographers; William Orme remarked on the lengths to which the celebrated pastor went to assist those who 'applied to him' for spiritual guidance and George Eayrs was 'deeply stirred' by the many letters which he addressed 'to the weak, the wayward, the perplexed, the sinful, the disobedient'.<sup>501</sup> But aside from some brief, descriptive summaries included in Frederick Powicke's 1924 biography of Baxter, many of these surviving letter exchanges have gone without comment.<sup>502</sup> Only the case of the Derbyshire gentlewoman, Katherine Gell, who implored Baxter for epistolary direction between 1655 and 1658, has received substantial analysis.

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<sup>500</sup> Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Richard Baxter's Correspondence: A Preliminary Survey', *JEH*, 1/1 (1950), 85-95; N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1991). The forthcoming edition of Baxter's correspondence will likely have a correspondingly significant impact: <<http://emlo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/blog/?catalogue=richard-baxter>>.

<sup>501</sup> William Orme, *The Life and Times of Richard Baxter: with a Critical Examination of His Writings*, 2 vols. (London, 1830), ii. 442; George Eayrs, *Richard Baxter and the Revival of Preaching and Pastoral Service* (London, 1912), 32. Also William M. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution* (London, 1979), 33.

<sup>502</sup> Frederick J. Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter, 1615-1691*, 2 vols. (London, 1924), i. 140-52.

The nature of the sources provides a partial explanation for this lack of attention; surviving exchanges are brief and fragmented, occasionally consisting only of lay approaches without Baxter's answering returns. This stands in contrast to the fourteen lengthy letters which comprise his correspondence with Gell. Nevertheless, these letters of counsel and direction provide valuable insights into contemporary pastoral practices. This chapter will centre on Baxter's epistolary counselling in the period between the early 1650s and the Restoration. This discrete body of sources emerges from the context of his celebrated Kidderminster ministry, during which time he also composed many of his most popular devotional works. The first subsection will underscore the spiritual intimacy of Baxter's letter-writing relationships with individuals from a range of social backgrounds who sought out his counsel. Baxter's epistolary responses will be situated within the context of his printed devotional and pastoral literature. Present knowledge of the case of Katherine Gell will then be extended through an original reflection on the significance of pastoral epistolary networks, which also makes use of her unexplored correspondence with the Derbyshire minister, Robert Porter. I will then further reflect on the significance of gender by exploring several case studies of the use of epistolary counselling as a devotional resource. This chapter will contribute fresh insights into the pastoral practice of one of the most important seventeenth-century English divines, but the implications of this research extend beyond the boundaries of Baxter studies. This chapter provides further evidence of the significance of epistolary counselling and, through comparative examinations of the activities of local ministers who lacked Baxter's national standing, presents an important assessment of the way in which spiritual direction could operate within post-Reformation Protestantism.

## The Context of Baxter's Pastoral Thought

Chapter one of this thesis has provided some background context on Baxter's understanding of pastoral ministry, a topic which has been frequently addressed in secondary literature. Various historians have used his pastoral treatise, *Gildas Salvianus* (1656), and his posthumously published autobiography, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), to recreate a vivid account of his 'systematic parochial catechizing' of both children and adults and his programme of regular private instruction of families.<sup>503</sup> Baxter famously contended that preaching alone could not suffice to effect full-scale parish reformation. Since most laypeople would only come to comprehend vital religious truths through dialogue and particular application, ministers needed to supplement their public duties with pastoral work on an individual level. Baxter encouraged his fellow clergy to inform themselves about the religious estates of all their parishioners, so as to apply themselves effectively to each one's condition. It was the corresponding duty of laypeople to submit willingly to personal instruction at the hands of their faithful pastor.<sup>504</sup>

Baxter outlined detailed practical requirements for instructing and edifying parishioners on a family-by-family basis, but he also insisted that it was not enough for laypeople merely to wait to be catechised by their pastor. 'For their own safety' they must also 'have personal recourse to him, for the resolving of their doubts, and for help against their sins, and for direction in duty, and for increase of knowledge and all saving grace'.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Most recently Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 177-91. Black's monograph contains a comprehensive summary of *Gildas Salvianus*: *ibid.*, 81-95. Amongst many, see Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 57-9; Hugh Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter* (London, 1954), 152-7; David Sceats, 'Gildas Salvianus Redevisus – The Reformed Pastor, Richard Baxter', *Anvil*, 10/2 (1993), 138-45. Others have traced the historical significance of this text. See John T. Wilkinson, 'Devotional and Pastoral Classics: Richard Baxter's "The Reformed Pastor"', *The Expository Times*, 69 (1957), 16-19.

<sup>504</sup> Richard Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus; The Reformed Pastor* (London, 1656), sigs b2<sup>r</sup>, d1<sup>r</sup>-d2<sup>v</sup> and 10, 54, 61-2, 77-81, 316-17, 357. Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 135.

<sup>505</sup> Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae: Or, Mr. Richard Baxters Narrative Of The most Memorable Passages Of His Life And Times* (London, 1696), Part I, 83. Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, esp. sigs a3<sup>v</sup>, d1<sup>v</sup> and 82-3, 324-7, 361-5, 413-80, at 325.

Little scholarly attention has been dedicated to uncovering this complementary, but less regulated practice of personal conference which Baxter advocated. Nathaniel Harrington Mair came closest in an unpublished 1966 thesis, which outlined the content of advice recommended by Baxter in a range of different spiritual counselling contexts. However, by Mair's own admission, his study consisted primarily of extracts from Baxter's printed works with very limited application of 'interpretive and critical comment'.<sup>506</sup> J. William Black's recent examination of Baxter's pastoral ministry is closely focused on the stipulations of *Gildas Salvianus* and, thus, lacks detailed exploration of this less systematic practice. Baxter's encouragements to seek out personal counselling are most copious in his *Right Method For a settled Peace Of Conscience* (1653). In this work, which chiefly addresses godly, scrupulous readers, the onus is on the individual layperson to acquire expert guidance in their doubts and spiritual afflictions; all believers are required to 'knock oftner at your Pastors door, and ask his advice in all your pressing necessities'.<sup>507</sup>

In chapter three of this thesis, I called into question John T. McNeill's assertion that Protestant spiritual direction was intended only for periods of crisis and never expected to function, like its Catholic equivalent, in the form of continuous counselling relationships.<sup>508</sup> Baxter certainly insisted that 'it is not enough that you once opened your case to your Pastour; but do it as often as Necessity urgeth you to call for his advice'. Paying no heed to the world's 'malicious conceit, that we would be Masters of Mens Consciences', he advocated a form of pastoral relations whereby laypeople would 'live in

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<sup>506</sup> Nathaniel Harrington Mair, 'Christian Sanctification and Individual Pastoral Care in Richard Baxter', Th.D. thesis (Union Theological Seminary, 1966), esp. 4, 142-51, 161-74.

<sup>507</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Right Method For a settled Peace Of Conscience, and Spiritual Comfort*. In *32 Directions* (London, 1653), 516-17, also 499-501.

<sup>508</sup> McNeill, *History of the Cure of Souls*, 200. Also Benoît, *Direction Spirituelle et Protestantisme*, esp. 276-82.

such a Dependence on the advice and guidance of your Pastour'.<sup>509</sup> Moreover, Baxter was evidently concerned that publishing records of ministerial guidance might serve to democratise spiritual counselling to the extent that laypeople would come to regard their pastor as dispensable. Although his *Right Method* provided 'all the Directions' he could supply for promoting spiritual health, he expressly emphasised: 'I must (in the end hereof) advise you to take the Counsel of a skilfull Minister in applying and making use of them'.<sup>510</sup> Indeed, Baxter articulated an elevated view of ministerial authority; drawing comparisons with the expertise of physicians and lawyers, he urged deference towards one's pastor on account of the 'special regard' that must be paid 'to every mans Judgement in his own Profession'.<sup>511</sup> Baxter further insisted that believers should not delay whilst they 'tamper with every womans medicine, but go presently to the Physician'. Employing gendered imagery which would have held particular resonance in a contemporary context of the increasing professionalisation and masculinisation of medical practice, he decried the ineptitude of 'ignorant Women and Empirikes', who 'kill oft times more then they Cure'.<sup>512</sup> Elsewhere, Baxter contrasted the pastoral remedies of proficient godly ministers with the inexpert efforts of the Antinomians, whom he labelled 'Mountebanks and Quacksalvers'.<sup>513</sup> It is against this backdrop of Baxter's belief in the essential, authoritative role of godly clergy as the spiritual experts to whom troubled believers should have repeated recourse, that surviving records of his epistolary spiritual counselling should be interpreted.

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<sup>509</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 521-2.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. See above, p. 66.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, 504, 510.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, 501, 6. This gendered slur is paralleled in contemporary medical discourse. Frequently 'the limited medical knowledge of women stands in for the relative ignorance of all empirics when compared to learned physicians': Sara D. Luttfring, *Bodies, Speech and Reproductive Knowledge in Early Modern England* (New York, 2016), 14-16.

<sup>513</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 507.

## **Baxter's Written Counsel of the Laity**

Letter-writing undoubtedly constituted a significant element of Baxter's pastoral activity. His extant correspondence probably represents only a small proportion of the copious letters which he actually sent and received, for Baxter remarked in 1683 that he had been forced to destroy 'whole Volumes' of his manuscripts including 'Letters practical, and Cases of Conscience' when his house and goods were 'distrained' after the Restoration.<sup>514</sup> Those pieces which do survive may have been specifically preserved because Baxter regarded them as especially valuable records of his pastoral dealings. His practical divinity was influenced by various printed epistolary works which, it would appear, were coming to occupy the status of a canon. Baxter endorsed Paul Baynes's devotional letters and, after the Restoration, recommended those of the nonconformist, Joseph Alleine, and the Scottish Covenanter, Samuel Rutherford, for inclusion in even 'the *Poorest Library*'.<sup>515</sup>

Baxter, however, did not generally instigate epistolary relationships. Instead, laypeople from across the social scale sought him out for direction and comfort. It has previously been noted that individuals frequently wrote to Baxter after having been stirred up by reading his printed works.<sup>516</sup> Keeble has observed that Baxter's open and engaging writing style invited expansive and candid responses from his readers.<sup>517</sup> William Duncumbe, a student of King's College, Cambridge, first wrote to Baxter in 1652, seeking help for his sister, who was being kept from church by their royalist father. Duncumbe remarked that Baxter's writings had already 'plainely & clearely satisfied' his 'sundry

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<sup>514</sup> Richard Baxter, *Richard Baxter's Dying Thoughts Upon Phil. 1.23* (London, 1683), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>515</sup> Richard Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 406, 456-7. Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory: Or, A Summ of Practical Theologie, And Cases of Conscience* (London, 1673), 922.

<sup>516</sup> Powicke, *A Life*, i. 140.

<sup>517</sup> N. H. Keeble, 'Loving and Free Converse': *Richard Baxter in His Letters* (London, 1991), 9-10. Also Alison Searle, "'My Souls Anatomiste": Richard Baxter, Katherine Gell and Letters of the Heart', *EMLS*, 12/2 (September 2006), 7.24.

weighty doubts & difficultyes’, especially as to ‘the sincerity of my hart’. Indeed, despite being a ‘mere stranger’, Duncumbe felt such a close connection to the celebrated pastor that he ‘seriously professe[d] that the affections of my soule ... are most neerely related to the of any I know in the world’.<sup>518</sup> In 1659, John Greenbrough, the servant of a London merchant, wrote to inform Baxter that his *Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650) ‘hath made soe sinceere an impreshon vpon my speritts’. Having been ‘much edefied by *your* good counsell’ in print, Greenbrough entreated Baxter to ‘continnue *your* aduice to mee’ on a personal level through letter-writing.<sup>519</sup> The previous year, the young London apprentice, John Brand, had been overwhelmed by a pressing desire to communicate with Baxter after reading his *Call To The Unconverted* (1658). Brand’s letter is a touching entreaty from one with a ‘hart soe hard’ that true penitence for former sinful ways eluded him. Since his ‘Case was bad’, Brand was ‘loath to make a Strange[r acquai]nted with it’ and had held off for several months, before finally resolving to seek Baxter’s direct assistance on finding himself unable to adhere to the directions in his printed works on conversion.<sup>520</sup> Lastly, one Thomas Seale of London, who was acquainted with Baxter’s publications, referred to a precedent for epistolary counselling which he had encountered elsewhere and concluded to be within the remit of a committed pastor. Having ‘Read in the life of that godly Mr: Boulton, how divers from beyond the Seas have sent to him to be Resolved in Divers Cases of Conscience’, Seale was rendered ‘the more boulde to trouble you’, being assured that ‘the same spirit *which* dwelt in him dwelleth also in you’.<sup>521</sup> This reference to Robert Bolton situates Baxter within the established tradition of pastoral counselling outlined in chapter one of this thesis. Bolton, who according to his biographer had ‘an art in this kind of relieving afflicted consciences’, penned his famous treatise, *Instructions For A Right*

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<sup>518</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 226<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, v. fo. 98<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. fo. 268<sup>r</sup>. This manuscript has suffered significant damage.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, i. fo. 243<sup>r</sup>. Biographical information about Seale is lacking, but his doctrinal confusion and numerous references to sermons which he attended both indicate his lay status.

*Comforting Afflicted Consciences*, in response to the copious epistolary requests which he similarly received.<sup>522</sup>

Above all, individuals responded directly to Baxter's printed advice to seek out personal counsel from ministers of the Gospel. Barbara Lambe wrote to him in August 1658 after happening upon the thirty-first direction of his *Right Method*. She defended her boldness in seeking assistance from one with whom she was unacquainted, by reference to the importance of unhindered fellowship amongst 'the Communion of Saints'. This justification seems to echo Baxter's own printed declaration that since 'every member of the body may have need of another, and each be useful to the other. An Independency of Christian upon Christian, is most unchristian ... [and] next to separation'.<sup>523</sup> Lambe appealed to Baxter 'as a spiritual Physician', opening up 'the whole Case' of her husband, Thomas, who was plagued by misgivings about his decision to separate from John Goodwin's Congregational church and become 'Elder' to a gathered congregation, due to his opposition to infant baptism. Lambe recounted her husband's 'great Distress of soul', 'bitter Fears about apostacy' and subsequent 'hard Thoughts of God'.<sup>524</sup> Having encountered Baxter's direction to seek 'advice in all your extraordinary pressing necessities' from 'an able, faithful, prudent, judicious Pastor' with 'experience in this great work', she begged his counsel concerning their future course of action as a minister whom she judged 'faithful, and one of a Thousand in experience'.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Edward Bagshaw, *Mr. Boltons Last And Learned Worke of the Foure last Things, Death, Iudgement, Hell and Heaven* (London, 1639), sig. b7<sup>r-v</sup>. Interestingly, several other popular works of practical divinity apparently originated from an epistolary context. This is explicitly stated in Scudder, *The Christians Daily Walke*, sigs A9<sup>r</sup>-A12<sup>r</sup> and 1-2 and the various personal interjections of Robert Linaker, *A Comfortable Treatise For The reliefe of such as are afflicted in conscience* (London, 1595), 16, 18, 34, 37, 42 are similarly suggestive of an individually-addressed text that was subsequently revised for publication.

<sup>523</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Appendix III, 51. Baxter, *Right Method*, 500.

<sup>524</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Appendix III, 51-3.

<sup>525</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 499, 504. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Appendix III, 52.

Indeed, an apparently unforeseen, but understandable, consequence of Baxter's publication of such printed advice was that lay readers sought *him* out as their most fitting spiritual guide. In March 1660, John Brodnax, the younger son of a gentleman, wrote to Baxter in frustration that he had never attained 'any measure of Comfortable walking'. Despite having access to 'the best of Preaching', Brodnax drew an unfavourable contrast between the lack of spiritual 'dicipline' in his own parish and Baxter's commitment to personal ministerial oversight of all members of a congregation. He observed that 'with you (if I understand any thing by your writings) I should haue that *personall* Instruction, and soe that home Application, of those *precious* truths, wheron my Saluation depends, which I cannot haue heere'.<sup>526</sup> Brodnax's assertion of the essential importance of individual spiritual direction echoes Baxter's own reflections on this theme. In *Gildas Salvianus*, he argued both that the laity '*cannot be saved without knowledge*' and that '*they might be brought to knowledge, if they had but diligent instruction and exhortation privately man by man*'.<sup>527</sup> This conviction is actually best articulated in a letter of 1670, in which James Drummond, son of the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Perth, thanked Baxter for supplying personalised counsel. Drummond remarked that, although all general 'rules and instructions' are beneficial for Christians, those 'directed *immediatly* to themselues, from one whom they estime, it sinks deeper in ther minds: & is reddyer [sic] to work more powerfully'.<sup>528</sup> The remainder of Brodnax's letter consists of a request to be allowed to settle in Kidderminster where he might receive the personal assistance which he so desired. Brodnax assured Baxter of his intention to be ruled by 'noe other but your Advice',

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<sup>526</sup> DWL MS 59, *iv.* fo. 72<sup>r</sup>. Powicke has referred to this case under the mistaken name of 'John Brodnan': *A Life*, *i.* 147. Keeble and Nuttall, *Calendar*, *i.* 427.

<sup>527</sup> Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, 64-5.

<sup>528</sup> DWL MS 59, *iv.* fo. 17<sup>r</sup>.

concluding his letter with a deferential declaration of being ‘desirous to serue, and be obseruant of you’.<sup>529</sup>

Richard Baxter certainly held a high doctrine of the clerical office, which accorded with claims made by many of his contemporaries and forebears on behalf of the reformed ministry.<sup>530</sup> He compared the faithful minister to a ‘Master and Pilot’ who must be bold ‘in taking the Government of the Ship upon himself, and telling the Mariners that it is their duty to obey him’.<sup>531</sup> David Sceats has labelled Baxter’s attitude ‘deeply clericalist’, a description possessing negative connotations of vigorously imposed and overreaching authority.<sup>532</sup> Whilst Baxter was forthright in asserting that laypeople must defer to ministerial instructors, it is equally interesting to observe that many of his correspondents evidently embraced such rhetoric. Baxter’s incoming letters disclose the particular pastoral authority and ability which lay devotees attributed to him, as well as their eagerness to yield wholeheartedly to his direction. Barbara Lambe chose to address Baxter, rather than any other minister, because through ‘some Converse I have had with your Writings[,] ... I judge you to have the Tongue of the Learned, to speak a Word in Season’. This characterisation, along with her concluding wish ‘that the Son of Righteousness may shine through you, a Star in his Right Hand, to our Guidance in this Night of our Temptation’, chimes with Baxter’s printed direction to ‘use your Pastour as the ordained Instrument & Messenger of the Lord Jesus & his Spirit, appointed to speak a word in season to the weary, and to shew to man his Righteousness’.<sup>533</sup> One Jonathan Jenner, a ‘poor creature,

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid., *iv*. fo. 72<sup>v</sup>. Baxter’s reply was ‘disswasieue’, no doubt on account of his commitment to a parochially structured national church, in opposition to gathered churches of elite believers. See Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter’s Puritan Ecclesiology in its Seventeenth-Century Context* (Leiden, 2004), 32-4.

<sup>530</sup> On puritan clericalism see Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625* (Oxford, 1982), 105, 111-14 and Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 472.

<sup>531</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 521.

<sup>532</sup> Sceats, ‘Gildas Salvianus’, 141.

<sup>533</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Appendix III, 51, 53. Baxter, *Right Method*, 502-3.

made up of doubts & scruples’, also took the happy opportunity of passing through Kidderminster to address ‘conscience-busnes’ to the celebrated pastor. Despite having been ‘in some kind satisfied’ by his own perusal of Scripture and practical divinity, Jenner believed that ‘the particular resolution of some certain Men (whos ability I hav judgd to be great in such cases by thir writings) would contribute exceeding much’. That Baxter was chief amongst these men, and that Jenner presumed he was ‘not the first weak Christian who tho altogether unknown has after this or the like sort adventurd upon your patience’, hints at the illustrious reputation which the Kidderminster pastor had acquired by the close of his parochial ministry.<sup>534</sup>

Laypeople frequently articulated their willingness to submit unreservedly to Baxter’s authority. John Brand beseeched him, ‘for Jesus Sake to pitie me, for under god I am resolved to giue up my selef to your will and will as fare as euer I can obey what so eue[r you] command me’. William Duncumbe submitted a request for ‘counsell & instructions *which* I should (I dare promise thee) faithfully follow, so farre as I should be capable’.<sup>535</sup> It was seemingly on account of his distinguished pastoral expertise that Baxter’s guidance was so appreciated. In July 1659, Francis Youell, an apprentice to a London stationer, sought Baxter’s counsel on which church he should enter into fellowship with. Having long been troubled by ‘doubtings & sometimes feares of being deluded’, on account of the doctrinal diversity within Protestantism, he was ‘afraid to close with any till I haue had the advice of some Godly experienced Christians’.<sup>536</sup> Detailing the ‘instrumentall’ role which Baxter’s works had played in his recent conversion, Youell declared him to ‘haue beene the greatest part of a father unto me’. This enthusiastic tribute

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<sup>534</sup> DWL MS 59, *i.* fo. 3<sup>r</sup>. Again, biographical information is lacking, but Keeble and Nuttall convincingly conjecture that Jenner was a layman: *Calendar*, *ii.* 20.

<sup>535</sup> DWL MS 59, *iv.* fo. 268<sup>r</sup> and *v.* fo. 227<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, *iv.* fo. 229<sup>r-v</sup>.

is consistent with Baxter's own paternalistic portrayal of the ideal faithful pastor set in loving authority over his flock. In *Directions And Perswasions To A Sound Conversion* (1658), Baxter encouraged 'open[ing] your case' to a minister because 'God hath appointed Pastours in his Church to be Spiritual Fathers' and laypeople must 'think not to ... get to Heaven without the means that God hath appointed'.<sup>537</sup> Youell's comment is further illuminated with reference to the later remark of Jane Jones, a Suffolk minister's wife. Informing Baxter of her 'soule perplexing state', Jones evoked 1 Corinthians 4:15 to reflect that, despite having received assistance from 'divers godly and Able Devines', she had 'had many instructurs but not many fathers'.<sup>538</sup>

### **'Too Far on the Other Extream': Protestant Confession and Clerical Scrutiny**

Francis Youell's eagerness to lay bare the intimate details of his spiritual condition is particularly revealing. This letter outlines his apprehension, some eighteen weeks previously, of being 'in a dangerous lost condition' and his subsequent realisation of his 'great need of Christ & the necessity of being a new creature by regeneration'. Youell did not baulk at relating the 'insufficiency [*sic*]' of his 'owne performances', his need for 'true sauing Knowlidge' and his consciousness of being 'a most Vile Wicked abominable creature'.<sup>539</sup> In response, Baxter offered sincere encouragements to 'giue up yourselfe without reserue to the God that hath convinced you of his sufficiency & amiableness' and practical instructions to attend his parish church and shun the seductive Anabaptist error.<sup>540</sup> Youell's candour sets the tone for many of the letters which were addressed to Baxter in the hope of eliciting spiritual counsel. Equally willing to invite clerical scrutiny, John Brand offered to provide 'an exact account [of my] life if you thinke fet'. Another London

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<sup>537</sup> Ibid. Richard Baxter, *Directions And Perswasions To A Sound Conversion* (London, 1658), 512-13. Also Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, 153.

<sup>538</sup> DWL MS 59, iii. fos. 204<sup>r</sup>, 205<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>539</sup> Ibid., iv. fo. 229<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid., iv. fo. 231<sup>r</sup>.

apprentice, eighteen-year-old George Maynard, similarly proposed to ‘acquainte you with all my Sinns’ in further correspondence.<sup>541</sup> In January 1652, one Edmund Alderne of London, ‘though unknowen’, wrote entreating Baxter in the words of Acts 16:30 ‘Earnestley for Christ sake to direct me what I might doe to be saued’.<sup>542</sup> Alderne’s letter, amongst the earliest of its kind, was still composed subsequent to the publication of Baxter’s most popular devotional work, *The Saints Everlasting Rest*. On reading this treatise, Alderne became convinced of Baxter’s pastoral proficiency and, ‘Consulting with my selfe unto whom I should make my address to be directed in the matter of Eternitie[,] ... iudged non more Experienced nor more able’.<sup>543</sup> Alderne opened his heart to Baxter, confessing that, despite having been a godly professor for some three years, it had been a ‘while since I haue had any Thinge of the powre and sperit of Jesus acting and abiding in my soule’. Aside from a recent revelation ‘that Christ had satisfied the Justice of God for my sins’, which had briefly allayed his doubts, Alderne continued to be tormented by the possibility that he possessed false assurance. He implored Baxter’s ‘Best aduice In the Matters of Saluacion’ with a plaintive declaration which echoes a central theme of *The Saints Rest*: ‘faine would I haue a sure Interest in Christ’.<sup>544</sup>

Such examples suggest a very different concept of personal counselling from that depicted by John T. McNeill. For McNeill, Protestant spiritual direction, in contrast with its Catholic counterpart, involved ‘a relative absence of intimacy with respect to the state of the soul and its experiences’.<sup>545</sup> However, Baxter actually argued the case for clerical counselling to take this intimate, expansive form; in his *Right Method*, he advocated

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid., iv. fos. 268<sup>f</sup>, 263<sup>f</sup>. During the 1680s, the London merchant, Samuel Hutchins, penned a lengthy confession of his various sins: ibid., iii. fos. 294<sup>f</sup>-5<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., vi. fo. 134<sup>f</sup>. Subsequent correspondents similarly echoed the language of Acts 16:30. They were probably influenced by Baxter’s use of this passage to exemplify the godly layperson’s duty to approach their pastor for spiritual instruction: ibid., iv. fo. 229<sup>f</sup> and v. fo. 134<sup>f</sup>. Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, 82, 325.

<sup>543</sup> DWL MS 59, vi. fo. 134<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., vi. fos. 134<sup>f</sup>-5<sup>f</sup>. Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 1, 234, 300, 381, 542.

<sup>545</sup> McNeill, *History of the Cure of Souls*, 201.

confession to a minister, urging penitent Christians to ‘make the matter neither better nor worse then it is. ... The Vomit of Confession must work to the bottom and fetch up that hidden sin’.<sup>546</sup> Baxter extracted this latter image of the emetic power of confession from the puritan Thomas Hooker’s devotional treatise, *The Sovles Preparation For Christ* (1632), which reflects at length on the requirement for a troubled believer ‘to confesse his sinnes to a faithfull Minister’ and thereby receive comfort.<sup>547</sup> Like Richard Greenham and Joseph Hall before him, Baxter warned that ‘some in opposition to Popery have gone too far on the other extream’, resulting in a ‘neglect of personal Instruction’ which was actually more hazardous than papist excesses. Baxter was certainly keen to distinguish the practice which he advocated from its Catholic equivalent, rejecting popish formality, set penances and the notion that a sin could only be pardoned following confession. He defended a modified Protestant version of private confession against the claim that it would ‘bring Christians under the Tyranny of the Priests again’, with the rather ambiguous stipulation that ‘every man’ is not ‘bound to open all his sins to his Pastor: but those that cannot well be otherwise cured, he must’.<sup>548</sup> Whilst pastors should not ‘draw out your secrets, and scrue themselves deeper into your privatest thoughts and ways then is meet’, Baxter insisted that ‘a compassionate Minister’ who ‘seeth that poor Christians do endanger themselves by keeping secret their Troubles, or ... hazard themselves by hiding the greatest of their sins ... must urge them to deal openly’.<sup>549</sup>

Baxter’s promotion of a Protestantised practice of private confession is a fascinating aspect of his pastoral thought which has gone almost without scholarly

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<sup>546</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 511-12.

<sup>547</sup> Thomas Hooker, *The Sovles Preparation For Christ. Or, A Treatise of Contrition* (London, 1632), 219-45, at 228.

<sup>548</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 519, 514-16. Also Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, 322-3.

<sup>549</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 506.

comment.<sup>550</sup> This historical neglect doubtless owes much to the fact that Baxter did not set out lengthy practical requirements for this practice, in contrast with catechising. Nonetheless, it provides usefull context for interpreting the epistolary approaches of individuals such as Henry Pearsall, one of Baxter's own parishioners, who petitioned him for assistance in May 1655. Plagued by hardness of heart and 'vaine thoughts', Pearsall wrote out of fear that his condition was 'desparat & damnabell'. He poured out a written confession of 'rebellion against plaine convixtion & followen on in sinn' and of 'keeping vp a formall profeshon of duti' despite being utterly unmoved by prayer and religious ordinances. He went on to cite 'prid[,] pashon & warldlines' [*sic*] as 'the a bounden sines in mee', alongside 'vnthankfullnes for marsies reeseued'. The letter contains brief hints that Pearsall had previously engaged in private discourse with Baxter, although he was quick to observe that not all those 'that cumplain' of their guilt, nor 'thos that forsake many sins' and 'cum to thayer minester to inquier which waie thay shall take to be saued' will indeed be saved. Nonetheless, he beseeched his pastor with a particularly poignant entreaty: 'what shall I doe[,] for Sir this is my meserrie I haue liued vnder the powerfull preachen of the word tell hit is groune custamarry'.<sup>551</sup>

Although responses do not survive to either Alderne's or Pearsall's letters, further examples can be adduced which compound the image of Baxter as an approachable ministerial authority to whom troubled laypeople were willing to confess in writing via the epistolary medium. In August 1659, Baxter was addressed by William Stephens, a Bristol linen draper, who reproached himself for being 'soe exceedingly intangled with worldly

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<sup>550</sup> One exception is Nathaniel Mair's brief remark on this stipulation in his unpublished 1966 thesis: 'Christian Sanctification', 169-70. See also Paul Chang-Ha Lim, 'Puritans and the Church of England: Historiography and Ecclesiology', in John Coffey and idem (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2008), 231 for the briefest of references. Baxter's recommendations for public confession are, however, addressed in Bryan D. Spinks, 'A Seventeenth-Century Reformed Liturgy of Penance and Reconciliation', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 42/2 (1989), 183-97.

<sup>551</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fos. 225<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>r</sup>.

affayers ... that I cannot find any hoopes, as to my salvation'.<sup>552</sup> Stephens acknowledged that he was 'wholy Ignorant of the very principalls of Religion', although he had grown adept at hiding this deficiency, being 'able to deceue most, vnless they trye mee, to answer some poynts In reigion'. He lamented his 'sad condition', but was too 'ashamed to laye open my condition' to 'hee whome I most delight in, in this Citty ... Mr *Johne* paule; minister of St James'.<sup>553</sup> Yet to Baxter, with whom he was unacquainted, Stephens was willing to do just this, 'humbly begg[ing]', in markedly deferential terms, 'that you would giue mee *your* best aduice and assistance to redeeme mee, out of my Carnall Estate'.<sup>554</sup>

### **The Limits of the Epistolary Form**

Baxter's response to Stephens casts light on another almost unnoticed aspect of his practice of spiritual counselling. Despite being deeply sympathetic to his correspondent's plight, Baxter returned a firm declaration of his inability to act as Stephens's 'soules phisician': 'because I know you not, I am not neare so fit to be your counsellour ... as the ministers that are neere you are'. Evoking the medical imagery which recurs in printed pastoralia, Baxter continued: 'as to the sicke[,] a phisicion at hand that seeth the patient hath great advantage, so hath a faithfull pastour as to the soule'. Discounting Stephens's protestations of embarrassment and invoking the disturbing prospect of pastoral ineptitude, Baxter advised him to make a 'minister your counsellour ... who knowing you, may be more out of danger in mistaking your case, then such as I that are at a distance'.<sup>555</sup> Interestingly, this obstacle to which Baxter appealed was a drawback which some correspondents actually pre-empted; Alderne framed his request for advice by

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<sup>552</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 27<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid. John Paule was ejected from St James's, Bristol, around 1660: *Alumni Oxonienses*, iii. 1127.

<sup>554</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 27<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid. v. fo. 25<sup>r</sup>. With respect to Baxter's *Christian Directory*, John F. Brouwer has briefly reflected on the importance of a spiritual director's proximity to his patient: 'Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory*: Context and Content', Ph.D. thesis (University of Cambridge, 2005), 115-16, 181, 196.

acknowledging that he was ‘at shuch [*sic*] a distance here on Earth’.<sup>556</sup> In a later, but particularly revealing, example Jane Jones fretted over the possibility that letter-writing could hinder the practice of spiritual direction, since she might prove ‘guilty of my owne deception by Rendering y[ou] Liable to mistake my case through misinformation’.<sup>557</sup>

Consequently, Baxter was extremely cautious about penning definite conclusions or directives, even when presented with seemingly straightforward cases of conscience. Thus, in comparison with much of the written counsel encountered in earlier chapters of this thesis, his correspondence displays a more sophisticated application of casuistry, which mirrors contemporary printed works.<sup>558</sup> This calls into question Jason Yiannikou’s claim that letters were an inherently less systematic and authoritative medium for practical divinity than treatises or sermons.<sup>559</sup> In response to John Greenbrough’s enquiry into the permissibility of hearing Independent and lay preachers, Baxter wrote that ‘the resolution of your doubt dependeth upon the knowledg of many circumstances, which some able minister at hand is liker to understand than one at so great a distance’. Despite listing considerations such as the nature of the individual’s ordination and the need for Greenbrough to acquire his master’s permission, ‘being an incompetent adviser at a distance’, Baxter would offer no firm conclusions.<sup>560</sup> Keeble has noted that Baxter was so attuned to ‘the diversity of the affairs of men’ that he shunned ‘prescribing absolute norms of either behaviour or experience, never offering simplistic answers to moral questions’.<sup>561</sup> Yet it seems fair to conclude that he found the epistolary medium to be particularly limiting. In the case of Edward Jeffreys, a ‘Fellow-Commoner of Exeter Colledge’,

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<sup>556</sup> DWL MS 59, vi. fo. 134<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. fo. 204<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>558</sup> Including his own *Christian Directory* – a compilation of resolutions of cases of conscience, many of which date to before the Restoration.

<sup>559</sup> Yiannikou, ‘Protestantism, Puritanism’, 18, 123, 142, 155, 158-9.

<sup>560</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fos. 98<sup>r</sup>, 100<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>561</sup> N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford, 1982), 77-8.

Oxford, who wrote in 1659 to enquire whether a son might overrule his parents' choice of his calling in favour of the church, Baxter refused to do more than 'lay down a few propositions, which may be usefull towards your owne resolving of the case'. Since 'cases of conscience about matters of practice ... much depend on the complexion, temperament causes, concomitants &c which must be knowne before there can be a satisfactory resolution', it was 'the phisician that knowes the patient, that hath the great advantage'.<sup>562</sup>

The prospect of misconstruing a case of conscience or misdiagnosing an individual's condition and jeopardising their spiritual health loomed large in Baxter's consciousness. However, his concerns about directing consciences from afar extended beyond this. A recent article by Alison Searle reflects on 'Baxter's ... construction of authority ... through print publication and epistolary networks'. Whilst it must be acknowledged that his 'unique pastoral authority ... was achieved, in part, through the medium of the letter', certain evidence calls into question the implication that Baxter engaged in epistolary counselling with this intention in mind.<sup>563</sup> In *Gildas Salvianus* he endorsed the view that 'every Minister is ... a Bishop in his own Parish ... every Preacher is a Ruler, unto whom the people must submit'. In line with Baxter's ecclesiological vision for every pastor to possess unchallenged oversight over a particular flock which was small enough to enable personal attention to be afforded to all, he encouraged ministers to curtail the amount of 'time and help' which they dedicated to non-parishioners. This conviction that 'our obligation is not to all neighbour Churches, or to all straglers, as great as it is to those whom we are set over' had important implications for Baxter's exercise of an

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<sup>562</sup> DWL MS 59, iii. fos. 33<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>563</sup> Alison Searle, 'Writing Authority in the Interregnum: The Pastoral Letters of Richard Baxter', in Anne Dunan-Page and Clotilde Prunier (eds.), *Debating the Faith: Religion and Letter Writing in Great Britain 1550-1800* (Dordrecht, 2013), 49-51, also 60, 66.

epistolary ministry.<sup>564</sup> In print, Baxter advised spiritually afflicted individuals seeking counsellors that, '(he being fit) let it be rather your own Pastor then another' not merely 'because he is likelier to know you, and to fit his advice to your estate' but because 'it belongeth to his peculiar place and charge, to Direct the souls of his own Congregation'.<sup>565</sup>

As a general rule, Baxter did not actively employ letter-writing as a tool to extend his influence beyond the boundaries of his Worcestershire parish. Recognising that his pastoral ideals were unrealised in many quarters, he willingly offered assistance when called upon, but he did not encourage individuals to approach him with epistolary requests. Moreover, although some lay letter-writers appealed to him as a kind of superintendent minister with high-ranking oversight, in correspondence, Baxter did not portray himself as a supreme director of souls. He principally aimed to encourage laypeople to seek out spiritual counselling within the established framework of parochial oversight, upholding local pastoral authority and promoting a broader reformation of ecclesiastical discipline. This is exemplified by his correspondence with the young George Maynard, who had been 'Conuinsed of the nessesity of Conuertion' by reading Baxter's *Call To The Unconverted*. In August 1658, Maynard related his recent attempt to follow Baxter's printed advice 'to goe unto some minister'. He had approached one 'Mr Northen' whose response proved greatly disappointing: 'he gaue me very little Councell at all, nether bid me come vnto him an other time, and was very backward to talke with me'. This reaction left the troubled apprentice 'dishartened for to goe vnto any more' and so he resolved to write to Baxter, being assured of the value of 'a particular application unto my selfe' of those general

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<sup>564</sup> Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, sig. b6<sup>v</sup>, 60, also 49-50. Although Baxter was also averse to the notion that a minister enjoyed no authority outside of his own parish: *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part II, 144. See further Timothy R. Cooke, 'Richard Baxter, Puritan Churchman', Ph.D. thesis (University of Western Ontario, 1991), 90-1, 112.

<sup>565</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 511.

counsels contained in his printed works.<sup>566</sup> Despite acknowledging Maynard's reasons for soliciting written guidance, Baxter insisted that he should persevere in seeking direction at a local level, reassuring him that, 'if some ministers that be full of busyness, be shorter with you than you desire, be not discouraged, ... when you are familiar with them, you will find that they are not unwilling to helpe you'. Although he mentioned several neighbouring clerics who would not disdain to be Maynard's 'Directors' if he showed them his letter, Baxter stolidly maintained that 'the fittest [counsellor] if he be a godly able man, is the minister of the parish where you liue'.<sup>567</sup>

This characteristic response is underpinned by Baxter's ecclesiological priorities: he fiercely defended the parochial structure over the instability he perceived in the voluntarism of gathered churches. Consequently, he recommended to Youell several local London pastors whom he deemed more suitable instructors than himself, but firmly counselled against by-passing established authority, maintaining that his correspondent should 'first advise with the minister of your owne parish, if he be a Godly able man'. To encourage Youell to establish himself under his allotted parish minister, Baxter wrote both that 'God is not a God of confusion but of order' and that all 'must looke more at the order & benefit of the whole body, then at their personall advantage'.<sup>568</sup> He evoked similar arguments when counselling William Stephens to 'settle yourself in a regular state of life, under a faithfull pastor for your soule, to whom you may freely open your case'. But nonetheless, Baxter was still willing to offer whatever comfort and assistance he could. In addition to his principle advice to acquire a local spiritual guide, he supplied Stephens with eight numbered directives which would be beneficial 'in the meane time[,] supposing your

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<sup>566</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 263<sup>r</sup>. Baxter assumed that 'Mr Northen' was James Nalton, a London pastor who was ejected in 1662: A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised: Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660-2* (Oxford, 1934), 360-1.

<sup>567</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 264<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. fo. 231<sup>r</sup>. Baxter penned analogous advice to John Greenbrough: *ibid.*, v. fo. 100<sup>r</sup>.

case to be iust as you describe it'. These included a recommendation to 'looke not for high measures of knowledge or enioiments at the first, but come into christ schoole as a little child'.<sup>569</sup> Despite protesting to Maynard that he had 'no better directions to giue you in the worke [of conversion] than those that I haue printed', the very day after receiving his request, Baxter supplied eight points for careful consideration. Much of this 'generall advise' does merely echo central themes of his published works on conversion, including an emphasis on the necessity of 'humiliation', 'selfe abasinge' and mortification of the flesh, alongside instructions to embrace the society of godly Christians, consider the nature of 'God who is *our* happines' and 'apply *yourselfe* to Christ' and his promises in the Gospel.<sup>570</sup> Yet there is also evidence that Baxter tailored his guidance to the condition of this anxious young man. His recommendation that Maynard have recourse to a local clerical counsellor 'in every doubt ... & specially venture not on any new opinions or courses without acquaintinge him', conflicts with an earlier printed stipulation that laypeople need only seek ministerial assistance in 'weighty and dangerous' cases where the advice of 'judicious neighbours' had been found wanting. Although there is clearly some tension in Baxter's advice more generally in this regard, he was evidently keenest to censure troubling pastors 'in every small infirmity' or 'lesser Doubt' in printed guidelines aimed at scrupulous, godly believers. In contrast, in the case of Maynard, a poorly educated youth, not yet truly converted and vulnerable to the advances of religious radicals and controversialists, Baxter patently saw particular need for clerical intervention.<sup>571</sup> Yet this letter also documents the sole occasion on which Baxter authorised a lay correspondent to distribute epistolary counsel for wider edification. Supposing, on account of their shared trade, close habitation and near-simultaneous requests for advice, that

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 25<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid. iv. fo. 264<sup>r</sup>. Baxter, *A Call To The Unconverted To Turn and Live, And Accept of Mercy while Mercy may be had* (London, 1658), 277-8. Baxter, *Directions and Perswasions*, 39, 119-21, 191-3, 299.

<sup>571</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 264<sup>r</sup>. Baxter, *Right Method*, 499, 501. Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, 82.

Maynard and John Brand were acquainted, Baxter asked the former to communicate his lengthier directions to his fellow apprentice.<sup>572</sup> This secondary application of a letter of spiritual counsel to someone in a like condition does, however, stand in contrast to a general unstated assumption that Baxter's epistolary advice was both particular and private.

Interestingly, Baxter's correspondents often had very high expectations of the level of assistance which he could supply. Jonathan Jenner delivered a lengthy assortment of written queries to Baxter, including a request to know whether there is any 'certain rule ... to know when Afflictions ar punishments for sins, or ar from the Absolute dispensation of God as supreme', hoping to obtain his 'pious resolution[s]' by 'about 10 of the Clock to morrow night'.<sup>573</sup> Baxter's opening reply betrays perceptible irritation:

I suppose you a very quick & unwearyed person ... in that you expect a considerable volume to be written by a man not free from infirmityes or busynes, between nine of the clocke (*when* I receiued yours) & bed time, after a iourney yesterday ended, & preaching today.

Yet despite penning so hasty a reply that he passed over a whole page of Jenner's questions and had to return to rectify his mistake, Baxter went to significant pains to aid this passing stranger.<sup>574</sup> Interestingly, it was not only tailored counselling which he was called upon to supply; some correspondents expected Baxter to compose devotional texts for their personal use. This was the demand of one Abraham Garington of Tideswell, Derbyshire, whose soul was 'very Defective in and Disinclined vnto the Duty of Mourning and Sorrowing, for my Sinning against the Lord'. In August 1657, Garington entreated Baxter, 'for the Welfare of my Soule ... compose for mee some Briefe Soliloquy'.<sup>575</sup> Despite

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<sup>572</sup> DWL MS 59, *iv.* fo. 264<sup>r</sup>. See Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (Oxford, 2012), 250-1.

<sup>573</sup> DWL MS 59, *i.* fo. 3<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, *i.* fos. 5<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, *v.* fo. 76<sup>r</sup>.

recognising that this request would interfere with Baxter's 'Studyes, and precious Labours', Garington insisted that 'great Necessity doth ... Almost enforce mee to it'. His appeal for 'Soule Humbling Considerations, and Piercing, and Patheticall Expressions' to melt his 'Stony Heart' was likely inspired by Baxter's own printed recommendation to perform the duty of meditation using a 'soliliquy, or self-conference' to 'pierce and affect the heart'.<sup>576</sup> Nevertheless, it was a significant expectation to place upon an unknown minister. Although it is impossible to determine whether Baxter actually fulfilled Garington's request, it is interesting to observe that his *Right Method* originated as a personalised response to the salvation anxieties of one 'Mrs. Bridgis'. The counsels which he initially compiled for this prominent parishioner subsequently morphed into a lengthy treatise 'fit for common use'.<sup>577</sup> Furthermore, the numerous 'heart-tearing Confessions, and sad Letters' which Baxter received during this period 'from many young Apprentices' so deeply affected him that, in 1681, he produced a devotional treatise tailored to their most pressing concerns and enquiries.<sup>578</sup> Baxter's extant correspondence evidently contains only a select proportion of these letters; his *Compassionate Counsel To All Young-Men* refers to the regular occurrence of receiving penitent admissions of guilt and requests for guidance from apprentices who had stolen from their masters, but no such examples survive in manuscript.

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid. Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 749-50. In 1668, one John Hollingworth who sought Baxter's assistance, 'beeing as it were dead in trespasses and sines', also requested personalised prayers: DWL MS 59, v. fo. 19<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>577</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, sigs a11<sup>r</sup>-a12<sup>v</sup>. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I, 109. On a couple of other occasions, Baxter referred to composing personalised prayers, suited to the needs of individual laypeople: Richard Baxter, *A Breviate Of The Life Of Margaret, The Daughter of Francis Charlton ... And Wife of Richard Baxter* (London, 1681), 45-6; DWL MS 59, v. fo. 9<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>578</sup> Richard Baxter, *Compassionate Counsel To All Young-Men. Especially I. London-Apprentices...* (London, 1681), 32-3, also 36, 108-9.

## Status, Controversy and Gender

Several of the above examples have illustrated both Baxter's concern for the spiritual welfare of individuals towards the lower end of the social scale and their eagerness to submit to his authoritative oversight. Baxter's pastoral expertise was also sought out by prominent and educated members of seventeenth-century society. That his religio-political counsel was esteemed by individuals of both local and national distinction underscores the potential which existed for clerics to assume a prestigious public voice.<sup>579</sup> It is also possible to compare several admonitory letters which Baxter penned during the 1650s to demonstrate the remarkable lack of deference which could characterise his interactions with local gentry. Aside from responding to requests for personal counsel, Baxter embraced the epistolary form as an effective tool of parochial discipline – a means of privately admonishing sinners prior to public reproof and ultimate ejection from a congregation.<sup>580</sup> In August 1657, Baxter upbraided the Kidderminster resident, John Pearsall, for apparently supplying false testimony of sexual impropriety between two fellow parishioners. Baxter's letter contained frank admonition and a plea for Pearsall's repentance, as a final attempt to avert his excommunication.<sup>581</sup> In November 1656, Baxter addressed similarly candid rebukes to a local feoffee, Simon Harrington, and his wife, for encouraging their son to enter into a law suit against another Kidderminster inhabitant. Charging them with 'cruelty' to his soul and 'hinder[ing] the reformation of the place', Baxter framed this letter as a necessary clerical intervention to ensure that their wrongdoing did not lie upon his own conscience.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> See letters from Edward Harley and Thomas Bampfield: DWL MS 59, *ii*. fo. 18<sup>r</sup> and *iv*. fo. 71<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>580</sup> Glen James Segger noted this in a footnote to his 'Petition for Peace: A Theological Analysis of Richard Baxter's *Reformed Liturgy* in its Ecclesiological Context', Ph.D. thesis (Drew University, 2008), 213 n. 101. For further discussion of Baxter's disciplining of errant parishioners, see Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 129-32.

<sup>581</sup> DWL MS 59, *iv*. fo. 136<sup>r-v</sup>. See also Baxter's letter to George Nichols, communicating his ejection from the parish after lengthy 'admonitions', reproduced in Powicke, *A Life*, *i*. 112.

<sup>582</sup> DWL MS 59, *iv*. fo. 133<sup>r-v</sup>.

Interestingly, in September 1657, Baxter adopted the same forthright approach when addressing Edward Rous, the profligate son of his friends, Sir Thomas and Lady Rous, of Rous Lench, Worcestershire. This particularly bold letter, extended at the deathbed request of Lady Rous ('her that charged you by her last words to you, to be ruled by me') contains reminders of the 'Everlasting Torments' awaiting Edward's soul. Claiming to speak with 'the true words of God', Baxter exhorted Edward: 'remember who you are & where you stand. Though you are a Gentleman, you are but a lumpe of walkinge dirt, as to that bodily part which you pamper!' By way of conclusion, Baxter urged his correspondent to repentance, wielding the threat of making public 'the admonition which I haue giuen you, that your name may rott to all posterity'.<sup>583</sup> That Baxter chose to reprove Edward in epistolary form is not surprising; later in the century, the bishop and historian, Gilbert Burnet, advocated the pragmatic use of 'a Letter' when 'Admonishing Men of Rank'. However, Burnet's suggestion that ministers should temper their words with a generous measure of 'Respect for their Persons', contrasts sharply with Baxter's inflammatory language.<sup>584</sup> Such rhetoric was not uncharacteristic of the Kidderminster pastor and is consistent with comments on the gentry which he made in printed works. In 1658, he penned a lengthy tirade against the 'worldliness and sensuality' of 'the Nobility and Gentry, and all that have the Riches of this world'. This printed epistolary dedication, which was signed 'Your faithful Monitor', includes lengthy directions promoting godly living, proper use of wealth and respect for the clerical office.<sup>585</sup> Against this interpretive background, it seems possible to corroborate Baxter's own claim, in a further letter of 1655, 'to write according to the matter before me, without respect to the man'.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>583</sup> Ibid., iv. fos. 128<sup>r</sup>-9<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>584</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *A Discourse Of The Pastoral Care* (London, 1692), 193-4.

<sup>585</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Crucifying of the world, By The Cross of Christ* (London, 1658), esp. sigs b2<sup>r</sup>, a1<sup>r</sup>, g1<sup>v</sup>. Also Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I, 94, 134.

<sup>586</sup> DWL MS 59, vii. fo. 326<sup>v</sup>.

Although Baxter apparently did not feel impelled to address high status correspondents in more deferential terms than laypeople of lesser social standing, it may be noted that educational distinctions do appear to have had some impact on his epistolary counselling. In 1660, Thomas Seale wrote to Baxter after reading in his *Call To The Unconverted* that ‘the will is a self determining Faculty but naturally it is viciously inclined to Evill’. Seale sought authoritative resolutions for several queries, chiefly concerning the apparent inconsistency between strict predestinarianism and the belief that all had ‘free-will to good’ and could will to be converted – a point of theological debate about which he had read and heard preached several seemingly differing views.<sup>587</sup> Interestingly, a later correspondent, the eighteen-year-old Oxford student, John Perkes, similarly appealed to Baxter as a definitive doctrinal authority, highlighting several apparent contradictions in printed devotional works and seeking Baxter’s judgement as to their soundness.<sup>588</sup> Such evidence of the difficulties which laypeople could encounter in reading and comprehending pastoral literature casts further doubt on Jason Yiannikou’s claim that the growing production of increasingly sophisticated works of practical divinity stifled the need for personalised epistolary counselling.<sup>589</sup> Yet Baxter’s response to Seale was brief and irritable. Neglecting even an opening salutation, he penned only a few curt responses, including an exasperated reference to the absurdity of Seale’s first enquiry into the truth of predestination: ‘why ... [ask] me such a question that no man doubts of’. The letter concludes abruptly: ‘if you can understand it in a few words [you] haue here the true resolution of your questions’. Evidently, Baxter was eager to avoid engaging in thorny theological discussion with the perplexed and uninformed. This much is confirmed by the printed passage to which Seale’s letter had referred, wherein Baxter declined to enter into

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid., i. fo. 243<sup>r</sup>. Seale was seemingly referring to the following passage: Baxter, *Call To The Unconverted*, 230-3. Baxter’s assertion that the will has some agency but is naturally orientated towards evil without cooperating grace seems fairly standard Calvinist orthodoxy.

<sup>588</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 134<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>589</sup> Yiannikou, ‘Protestantism, Puritanism’, 123, 142, 155, 158-9, 163.

‘dispute about free-will’ with a hypothetical objector for whom it was ‘beyond your capacity’.<sup>590</sup>

However, as a prominent divine who seemingly could never resist being drawn into religious debate, Baxter received various letters from laypeople who sought to engage him in discourse of a controversial nature. Three non-chronological examples survive from what was evidently an extensive correspondence with John Ford, a Mercer of Repton, Derbyshire, whom Powicke labelled ‘a layman of exceptional intelligence and moral courage’.<sup>591</sup> Ford first wrote to Baxter in late October 1653, relating the ‘great distresse of mynd’ he had suffered for ‘about 30. years’ on account of his inability to reconcile the doctrine of predestination with a just, loving God. Despite having found temporary resolution from studying the Synod of Dort, Ford had been thrown once again into uncertainty by encountering Baxter’s hesitancy about the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.<sup>592</sup> Initially, Ford presented himself as a pupil seeking ‘full and cleare resolution’ in these ‘poynts’, but in 1654 he penned various ‘Animadversions’ on Baxter’s doctrine.<sup>593</sup> Although the two men were still in correspondence by 1656, Baxter was evidently keen to steer clear of what he called ‘dispute of an unslated Controversy’.<sup>594</sup> Baxter’s wariness of being drawn into contentious dialogue is most clearly demonstrated by his correspondence with one Samuel Whittell during 1655. Although Keeble and Nuttall have not uncovered any biographical details concerning this correspondent, the fact that his letters were sent from the London customs house suggests an identification with the Samuel Whittell who

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<sup>590</sup> DWL MS 59, i. fo. 245<sup>r</sup>. Baxter, *Call To The Unconverted*, 232.

<sup>591</sup> Powicke, *A Life*, i. 147.

<sup>592</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 63<sup>r-v</sup>. Baxter, *Right Method*, 160-9. Many contemporary divines were concerned by the pastoral implications of Baxter’s reservations about this doctrine. See Orme, *Life and Times*, ii. 57-8; Nuttall, *Richard Baxter*, 120; Keeble, *Richard Baxter*, 16.

<sup>593</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 63<sup>v</sup> and vi. fo. 149<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. fo. 103<sup>r-v</sup>.

was employed there as a cashier in 1657.<sup>595</sup> Recently recovered from the snare of Antinomianism through reading Baxter's works, and aware of the latter's 'readines and willingenes to comply with any iust and serious desire of those who stand in need of your Advice and helpe', Whittell sought a 'candid solucion' to several doubts concerning predestination. These included his conviction of the injustice of a man being 'said to perish for not Beleueinge when hee was not Elected without *which* hee could not beleieue'.<sup>596</sup> Baxter responded extensively but tersely, upholding his doctrine with reference to the distinction between man's ability and inclination to believe and the consistency of God displaying both 'a generall loue to mankind & a speciall loue to some aboue the rest'. Importantly, Baxter mistrusted Whittell's professed motivations, suspecting that he had been encouraged to propose such doubts by a controversialist.<sup>597</sup> Despite Whittell's firm protestations and insistence that he had been 'truely convinced ... (who professe my self noe Scholar)', he was unable to deflect Baxter's anger at the suggestion that the doctrine of predestination besmirched God's character.<sup>598</sup> These examples from Baxter's correspondence provide an instructive contrast with the type of written guidance so far discussed in this thesis, underscoring the remarkable fluidity of the boundary between controversy and counsel and the way in which pastoral and polemical concerns could coincide in the uniquely turbulent religious climate of the Interregnum.

The permeability of these categories is further exemplified in the case of another 'thirsty troubled soul', one Thomas Smith, a convert to Catholicism, who in 1657 implored Baxter, as 'a great lover of souls', for impartial instruction concerning the status of the

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<sup>595</sup> References to Samuel Whittell can be found in *The Letter-Book of John Byrd, Customs Collector in South-East Wales, 1648-80*, ed. Stephen K. Roberts (Cardiff, 1999), 241, 129.

<sup>596</sup> DWL MS 59, vii. fo. 317<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, vii. fos. 321<sup>r-4<sup>r</sup></sup>, at 321<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, vii. fos. 319<sup>r</sup>, 325<sup>r-6<sup>v</sup></sup>. Baxter apparently remained suspicious about Whittell's motives, for he wrote on the reverse of his copy of their final letter: 'to Sam: Whittell & another'.

Church of Rome.<sup>599</sup> Adopting a favoured pastoral strategy of presenting himself as amenable to instruction and correction,<sup>600</sup> Baxter attempted to engage Smith in debate regarding the apostolic precedent for one church ruling pre-eminently. However, he found his lay correspondent to be quickly ‘satisfied’ by his arguments and eager for further guidance to ease his return to Protestantism.<sup>601</sup> Whilst Baxter’s original correspondence with Smith acted as an instrument of his reconversion, their exchange was published in 1660 and thereafter functioned secondarily as a tool of religious controversy and propaganda for Reformed Protestantism. It is interesting to note, by way of comparison, that Baxter also published epistolary counsel which he sent in the same year to Lady Anne Lindsey, a young gentlewoman ‘who was suddenly turned Papist’ by the Jesuit, William Johnson.<sup>602</sup> On being denied the opportunity to dispute with Johnson for the intended satisfaction of Lady Anne’s conscience, Baxter sent two doctrinally laden letters to his unwilling subject, begging ‘leave to be free and plain with you in the Matters of God and of Salvation’.<sup>603</sup>

These letters highlight a further motivation underlying Baxter’s commitment to personal spiritual counselling. In print, he repeatedly reflected on the superiority of both separatists and, especially, papists at the work of individual pastoral care, lamenting ‘the extreme diligence that they use in ... soliciting all men to their Church’. In response, Baxter advised Protestant pastors ‘to be as familiar and as much with their People as they can. Papists and other Seducers will insinuate themselves into their familiarity, if we be

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<sup>599</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Successive Visibility Of The Church Of Which the Protestants are the soundest Members* (London, 1660), 365-6, 384-6.

<sup>600</sup> See Margaret L. Wiley, *The Subtle Knot: Creative Scepticism in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1952), 162-4. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I, 137. This is a technique which Baxter especially advocated for dealing with ‘Opinionative Questionists’: *Gildas Salvianus*, 457-61.

<sup>601</sup> Baxter, *Successive Visibility*, 367-8, 378-83.

<sup>602</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part II, 219.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, Part II, 219-28, at 224.

strange'.<sup>604</sup> It is this language of spiritual seduction which informs Baxter's discussion of the case of Anne Lindsey.<sup>605</sup> Interestingly, earlier in the century, the episcopalian divine, Daniel Featley, filled with the same awareness of the threat of Catholic evangelisers and denied a similar opportunity to debate before the Countess of Buckingham for her personal resolution, also turned to letter-writing in an attempt to avert her conversion to Catholicism.<sup>606</sup> An incomplete letter compiled within his manuscript commonplace book commences with a request that Mary Villiers 'not account it presumption in me though scarce knowne to your *Ladiship* to tender you a free will offering of my Christian loue to ... establish you in your most holy faith'.<sup>607</sup> Although, if she read them at all, Baxter's letters to Anne Lindsey ultimately fell on deaf ears, his decision to publish them betrays a conviction that they display an exemplary ministerial response, over and above their secondary value as controversial literature. A final contemporary comparison might be adduced in several printed letters of the 1650s, penned by the Laudian divine, Jeremy Taylor. These include a lengthy instructive epistle '*to a Gentlewoman newly seduced to the Church of Rome*', which was evidently also published on account of its didactic value.<sup>608</sup>

The case of Anne Lindsey raises the issue of the significance of gender in relation to Baxter's written counsel of the laity. As can be seen from the examples cited above, the majority of Baxter's addressees were male. However, several of his most extensive and spiritually intimate correspondences were with women, including one Mary Rogers, a

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<sup>604</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 508-9, 522, also 391. Also Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, 320, 322-3, 87; Richard Baxter, *The Agreement of divers Ministers of Christ In the County of Worcester* (London, 1656), 12.

<sup>605</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part II, 220.

<sup>606</sup> Timothy H. Wadkins, 'The Percy-"Fisher" Controversies and the Ecclesiastical Politics of Jacobean Anti-Catholicism, 1622-1625', *ChH*, 57/2 (1988), 155, 162-4. With reference to this case, Joshua Rodda has reflected on the interrelationship between disputation and personal counsel: *Public Religious Disputation in England, 1558-1626* (Farnham, 2014), 160-1, 9, 23-4.

<sup>607</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.47, fo. 15<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>608</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *The Measures And Offices Of Friendship ... To which are added, Two Letters written to persons newly changed in their Religion* (London, 1657), 119-85. Three brief letters of 1658 'To A Gentleman That was tempted to the Communion of the Romish Church' were also posthumously published: Jeremy Taylor, *A Discourse Of Confirmation* (London, 1673), 67-70.

former parishioner and the wife of Colonel Wroth Rogers, originally a Welsh tailor, but by the 1650s, Governor of Hereford.<sup>609</sup> Whilst David Sceats has criticised Baxter for his ‘paternalistic and slightly patronising relationship’ with the laity, observing a lack ‘of any sort of collegiality between pastor and people’ in his *Gildas Salvianus*, Baxter’s correspondence with Rogers reveals a sincere and genuine friendship.<sup>610</sup> Following her marriage and subsequent departure from Kidderminster, Rogers wrote thanking Baxter for both his temporal and spiritual assistance. She remarked on the many times he had ‘resolved my doubts, and quieted my troubled spirit’, promising her own and her husband’s obedient acceptance of any ‘councell’ which Baxter might henceforth supply.<sup>611</sup> Later, in September 1658, she unburdened herself to her former pastor, confessing her desire to set her ‘affections more on heauenly things’ in her ‘aproocheing hasardas time’. Reflecting frankly and honestly on her forthcoming childbirth, Rogers acknowledged her terror at having to ‘look Death in the fase’ once more, following an experience during a previous pregnancy when she ‘thought sathan told mee[,] as once to saule[,] this day thou shalt bee with mee’. Rogers’s fear of having failed to live up to promises of spiritual improvement made during this perilous time was a concern which was also shared by a troubled gentlewoman who appealed for Baxter’s guidance during the 1670s.<sup>612</sup> Immediately on receipt of Rogers’s letter, Baxter returned a lengthy, sympathetic response calculated to counteract her fear of death. He sought to correct her ‘misapprehensions of God & jealousyes & causeles doubtings of his Loue’, exhorting her to ‘fixe one eye upon a Crucified Christ ... & the other eye on a Glorified Christ’.<sup>613</sup> Baxter reemployed this exact formulation in a funeral sermon for another female devotee, Elizabeth Baker, whose

<sup>609</sup> Keeble and Nuttall, *Calendar*, i. 219, 334.

<sup>610</sup> Sceats, ‘Gildas Salvianus’, 142-3.

<sup>611</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 228<sup>f</sup>. Keeble and Nuttall date this letter to August 1658: *Calendar*, i. 334, but Don Gilbert suggests it was written just after Mary Rogers’s departure from Kidderminster in 1656: ‘Col. Wroth Rogers and His Wife Mary’, *Baxter Notes and Studies*, 3/2 (1995), 16.

<sup>612</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fos. 121<sup>f</sup>, 120<sup>v</sup>, 116<sup>f-v</sup>. The reference is presumably to 1 Samuel 16:14, although Rogers also seems to incorporate the language of Luke 23:43.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid*, iv. fo. 122<sup>f</sup>.

constant recourse to ministerial counsellors he sincerely praised.<sup>614</sup> Yet he felt it necessary to reproach Rogers for what he perceived as her greater readiness to lean on earthly patriarchal authorities than on Christ:

if you were wholly at the will of *your* husband, or but of me that am *your* more distant freind, I am confident you would not feare ... Its hard that X<sup>t</sup> [i.e. Christ] canst haue better thoughts from us, then a fraile imperfect insufficient freind.<sup>615</sup>

Amongst Baxter's letters, these which reveal his friendship with Mary Rogers are conspicuous for their emotional depth. Further evidence also attests to Baxter's wider associations with pious women who leaned on him for spiritual sustenance. After the Restoration, Baxter cultivated a close relationship with Lady Mary Rich, with whom he frequently engaged in private conference. A rather patronising reference in his *Reliquiae Baxterianae* to the preference of women for 'a few comfortable, warm and pretty Sentences' rather than the 'clear Reason' of his lengthy devotional treatises, may also indicate their prominence amongst those who implored Baxter for personalised counsel.<sup>616</sup> Strikingly, Baxter's most extensive letter-writing relationship was with a woman and it is to her remarkable case that this chapter will now turn.

### **'Paper Uisits': Katherine Gell and Her Spiritual Directors**

Katherine Gell (1624-1671) was the daughter of the wealthy Berkshire politician and landowner, John Packer, and wife of the Derbyshire gentleman, Sir John Gell II, whose father was a famous Civil War parliamentarian commander. Sir John was a staunch Presbyterian, known for his patronage of nonconformist clergy. Throughout their married life, the Gells resided at their country house, Hopton Hall, near Carsington, Derbyshire.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>614</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Treatise of Death; The last Enemy to be Destroyed* (London, 1660), 120, 235-6, 243-4.

<sup>615</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 122<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>616</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I, 109.

<sup>617</sup> William Lamont, 'Gell, Katherine (*bap.* 1624, *d.* 1671)', *ODNB*. Stephen Orchard, *Nonconformity in Derbyshire: A Study in Dissent, 1600-1800* (Milton Keynes, 2009), 17-19.

Katherine Gell was plagued by spiritual anxieties, for which she sought comfort and assurance from various ministers, of local and national standing. In recent years, Gell's case has received attention from a handful of scholars, chiefly Alison Searle, Keith Condie, William Lamont and John Brouwer. However, this chapter contains the first comprehensive study of all of Gell's extant spiritual correspondence. Eleven letters dating from between 1655 and 1658 are preserved within Baxter's archive in Dr Williams's Library, London, but others exist only in Gell's manuscript duodecimo letter-book. This fascinating document contains copies of approximately twenty-four additional letters which Gell received from the Derbyshire Presbyterian minister, Robert Porter (1624-1690), between 1654 and 1658. Although Gell's correspondence with Baxter has been analysed as an exemplary case study of his normative dealings with spiritual patients,<sup>618</sup> when viewed against the backdrop of his broader epistolary activity, several idiosyncrasies are revealed. Through a close analysis of Gell's manuscripts, this subsection will present an original reflection on the significance of networks of pastoral counselling in early modern Protestantism and the implications which this held for ministerial exercise of religious authority.

The religious landscape of 1650s Derbyshire was highly distinctive. In line with London and Lancashire, the county had a fairly comprehensive system of Presbyterian governance in place during the Interregnum.<sup>619</sup> It was from amongst this pool of ministers that Gell sought out spiritual counselling at a local level.<sup>620</sup> Although Keith Condie has cited Gell's own claim to have imparted her intimate spiritual experiences 'but to you [Baxter] & Mr. Porter' as straightforward evidence that 'very few had access to the honest

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<sup>618</sup> Brouwer, 'Richard Baxter's Christian Directory', 38-9.

<sup>619</sup> J. Charles Cox, *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals*, 2 vols. (London, 1890), i. 324-6, 331-7. Orchard, *Nonconformity*, 27-33.

<sup>620</sup> See DWL MS 59, v. fo. 3<sup>r</sup>.

workings of her soul', her wider correspondence betrays her reliance on a significant number of clerical contacts.<sup>621</sup> The first counsellor that Gell actually obtained was the celebrated divine, Stephen Marshall (c.1594-1655). At around the age of twenty she was 'conuicted' by his preaching, but four years passed before she was bold enough to instigate a correspondence with him, which ultimately brought her 'much comfort'.<sup>622</sup> That Gell first approached Stephen Marshall with requests for guidance is understandable; Tom Webster has highlighted his significant 'reputation as a spiritual physician'.<sup>623</sup> His local standing can also be discerned from the critical account of his ministry which an anonymous conformist biographer published in 1680. Interestingly, and doubtless with the intention of inviting scandal, this hostile author underscored Marshall's particular popularity with women, many of whom revered him as 'their *Ghostly Father*'.<sup>624</sup> Further evidence of Marshall's engagement in epistolary counselling can be found in a 1619 letter which he sent to the young Essex gentleman, Carew Mildmay, containing 'many effectuall motiues' to disengage 'our affections from this present euill world, and to walk worthy of him who hath called vs to his kingdome'.<sup>625</sup>

Contrary to recent scholarly accounts of the unique exclusivity of Gell's spiritual relationship with Richard Baxter, by the mid-1650s, it was the local vicar of Pentrich, Robert Porter, who had evidently assumed the role of her habitual religious adviser. Porter was not Gell's parish minister, but he was an obvious choice of counsellor. Calamy's account of his life depicts him regularly 'visiting his Parishioners from House to House' and recounts his ability to provide any troubled individual with 'a Sermon suited to their

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<sup>621</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 7<sup>r</sup>. Keith Condie, 'Some Further Correspondence Between Richard Baxter and Katherine Gell', *The Historical Journal*, 53/1 (2010), 176.

<sup>622</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 216<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>623</sup> Tom Webster, *Stephen Marshall and Finchingfield* (Chelmsford, 1994), 2-4.

<sup>624</sup> *The Life & Death Of Stephen Marshall, sometime Minister of the Gospel at Finchingfield in Essex* (London, 1680), 5-8, 19. The biographer was also keen to emphasise Marshall's lack of deference towards the gentlewomen he counselled: *ibid.*, 24, 27-8.

<sup>625</sup> ERO D/DMs C2.

Exigencies, in which he had a marvellous Faculty, as to which very few exceeded him'.<sup>626</sup> Further insights into Porter's pastoral priorities can be deduced from *The Life Of Mr. John Hieron*, his sole printed work, which was published posthumously in 1691. It praises a clerical associate for his dedication to personal counselling, 'compassionate' dealings 'with tender consciences' and use of letter-writing to provide 'Spiritual Advice and Direction'.<sup>627</sup> Gell's parish minister, the rector of Carsington, John Oldfield (c.1626-1682), was similarly committed to providing individual spiritual direction and he certainly furnished Gell with guidance. He was, however, a 'reserv'd' man, 'of a very quiet Spirit', who seems to have deemed his own talents in this area to be limited. A letter of his containing extensive spiritual 'counsell', which was likely addressed to Katherine, begs forgiveness for having neglected to supply 'Christian Exhortation or Admonition ... because I know you have those about you that are more able & dexterous this way, & truly, so backward is my heart to this duty'.<sup>628</sup> Whilst, on account of his national standing, Baxter cannot be regarded as a typical seventeenth-century pastor, the existence of a substantial body of contemporary counsel penned by Porter allows a unique comparison to be drawn with the pastoral activities of a local cleric who lacked an equivalent literary reputation.

Porter was certainly dedicated to counselling Gell through all her scruples of conscience. On one occasion, he even requested 'more time' to compose a reply, 'soe *what* I write may be the fruit of prayer & most serious consideration'. He endorsed his signature with the tender phrase: '*yours* wholly but especially in soule affaires *wheneuer* you please

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<sup>626</sup> Calamy, *An Abridgement*, ii. 181.

<sup>627</sup> Robert Porter, *The Life Of Mr. John Hieron* (London, 1691), 18, 93, also 28, 11-12. Porter printed many of the post-Restoration letters of spiritual counsel which Hieron wrote: *ibid.*, 58-95.

<sup>628</sup> See Oldfield's comments in *England's Remembrancer: Being A Collection Of Farewel-Sermons, Preached by divers Non-Conformists In The Country* (London, 1663), 255. Gell had already imparted 'many other doubts ... [t]o our owne minister': DWL MS 59, v. fo. 216<sup>r</sup>. Calamy, *An Abridgement*, ii. 172. DRO D258/38/11/2, although unaddressed, this letter from the Gell family papers is inscribed in a shorthand akin to Katherine's and refers to spiritual anxieties for which she received counsel from both Porter and Baxter.

to call'.<sup>629</sup> From at least August 1654, the two exchanged regular spiritual correspondence. Above all, Porter's letters contain reassurances of the soundness of Gell's estate, which she was, in general, unable to internalise. He frequently exhorted her not to spurn her many comforts, nor be 'beate[n] from them by Satan ... [who] tells lies of god & slanders the worke of grace'.<sup>630</sup> In an interesting clerical mediation of the prevailing lay practice of self-examination, Gell apparently sent Porter a devotional book, requesting that he peruse it and then supply his opinion on whether she could rest soundly in the assurance of future salvation. In reply, Porter reassured his troubled correspondent that, even without this text, he 'could *haue* gathered clear *evidences* of the hopefullnes of *your* estate towards god out of *your* *lettre*'.<sup>631</sup> Porter was greatly troubled by Gell's tendency to focus more closely on her infirmities than on Christ's mercy and grace, but fostering an alternative attitude did not come easily to her. He later admonished her frustrating propensity to 'shut *your* eyes *against* the plainest evidences of your owne sincerity' and always draw 'such uncomfortable conclusions'.<sup>632</sup>

Katherine Gell first petitioned Baxter for guidance in July 1655 after reading in his *Saints Everlasting Rest* of the duty of engaging in mutual discourse and admonition with relations and godly brethren. Despite admitting that she could 'hardly instance in any that performe this duty', on account of her ineptitude in, and disinclination towards, the task, Gell concluded that she was 'not in a state of grace'.<sup>633</sup> Her response to this printed treatise is not especially surprising; Baxter's *Saints Rest* contains a ferocious warning that those who overlook the duty of godly conference 'art guilty of the murder, and damnation of all

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<sup>629</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 8.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 13.

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-12.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, 61, 132-3.

<sup>633</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 216<sup>r</sup>.

those souls whom thou dost thus neglect'.<sup>634</sup> In the early twentieth century, Powicke 'wondered if the effect of its perpetual urgency upon simple Christian souls was not inevitably to encourage a feeling of despair'. The 'ethical stringency' of this and other texts certainly fed the anxieties of John Brodnax, who similarly worried about neglecting this vital duty.<sup>635</sup> In response to Gell's concerns, Baxter offered heartening reassurances that to perform a duty 'too seldom & sleightly' was of quite a different magnitude of sin than 'to omitt it wholly'. He encouraged her, rather than 'questioning whether you haue grace *because* you neglect it', to 'presently use the grace *you haue* in it'.<sup>636</sup> Yet it is especially interesting to observe that, a year earlier, Porter had thoroughly counselled Gell on this same issue. In answer to her complaint of 'unaptnes to *spirituall* discourse', Porter insisted that the elect could 'both commit & continue in sins for a time & yet be deare to god', since only 'willfull neglect', and not 'naturall infirmity', could constitute evidence of reprobation. Porter dismissed Gell's suggestion that her laxity in this regard might indicate that she was 'ashamed of X [i.e. Christ]' – a notion which she had almost certainly acquired from Baxter's *Saints Rest*.<sup>637</sup> Even more intriguingly, Gell's letter-book appears to contain further counsel on this issue from Porter which post-dates her enquiry to Baxter. Despite having obtained a second opinion, she evidently still found herself unable to gain satisfaction from the assurances of these dedicated pastors.<sup>638</sup>

The triangular nature of Gell's relationship with Baxter and Porter hints at something almost subversive lying beneath the deferential exterior of her unremitting pleas

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<sup>634</sup> Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 458-60, 466, 488-501, at 494.

<sup>635</sup> Frederick J. Powicke, 'Story and Significance of the Rev. Richard Baxter's "Saints' Everlasting Rest"', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 5/5 (1919-1920), 457-8, 460. DWL MS 59, *iv. fo. 72<sup>r</sup>*.

<sup>636</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 157-60.

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*, 19, 21-3, 27, 29, 25. Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 486. Gell admitted to Baxter that she had already received Porter's advice: DWL MS 59, *v. fo. 216<sup>r-v</sup>*.

<sup>638</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 122-6. Porter had earlier encouraged her to persist even though 'you doe *not* yet come up to Mr Baxters height': *ibid.*, 63-6, at 64. A similar sense of Gell moving back and forth between her two spiritual guides can be gleaned from their counsel concerning over-loving earthly creatures. Porter's letters are not all precisely dated, but Gell apparently compiled them in near chronological order.

for counsel. That Gell initially assured Baxter that she ‘would not by any meanes soe far indulge’ her anxieties ‘as to wrong god in robbing my selfe of my comfort’, seemingly indicates her respect for Porter’s prior efforts to convince her of the error of this attitude. Yet one cannot escape the impression that she sought out Baxter’s expertise as a means of scrutinising the soundness of her local spiritual director’s advice, at times trusting her own judgement more than Porter’s.<sup>639</sup> Gell forwarded on to Baxter three letters of counsel which she had received, desiring his ‘thoughts’ on them and ‘further helps in any thing you see needfull’. Prompted by a reference which she also made to having obtained great satisfaction from the preaching of the Derbyshire Presbyterian minister, John Billingsley, Keeble and Nuttall drew the conclusion that these were Billingsley’s letters.<sup>640</sup> However, a close examination of Gell’s letter-book does, I believe, suggest that they were actually composed by Porter. Gell wrote of one: it ‘was to chide me’, but ‘I am not clearly satisfied that it was a fault in me to desire strong grace’. This likely refers to a particularly reproachful letter which Porter penned in June 1655 in response to Gell’s claims to possess only a weak measure of grace. Frustrated by her sudden shift from being concerned that she was devoid of grace to merely worrying ‘about the degrees’, Porter reacted brusquely: ‘weake grace will bring you to heauen, weake grace is too strong for the powers of hell’.<sup>641</sup> Although Baxter confirmed ‘that the author of the inclosed *lettres* is a uery iudicious man’ who ‘hath giuen you uery good aduice as you can receiue from any’, he was later compelled to reassert that ‘God hath not absolutely *promised*’ any ‘measure of Grace’ and that perfection cannot be expected in this life.<sup>642</sup> Finally, in November 1657, Gell again sought Baxter’s confirmation of earlier counsel supplied by Porter, this time concerning

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<sup>639</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 216<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 215<sup>r</sup>. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, 53-4. Keeble and Nuttall, *Calendar*, i. 190-1.

<sup>641</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 215<sup>r</sup>. DRO D3287/47/7, 47-9. I, therefore, similarly question Keith Condie’s alternative proposal that the Derbyshire minister, Samuel Charles, authored these letters: ‘Some Further Correspondence’, 171-3. See further, p. 183.

<sup>642</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 166, 169. DWL MS 59, *iv*. fo. 142<sup>r</sup> and *v*. fo. 11<sup>r</sup>.

her debilitating fear of the dark. Baxter's response closely echoed the Derbyshire pastor's prior reassurances that Gell's many 'frights & feares' were principally a product of her natural 'constitution' and 'the weaknes of *your* sex'.<sup>643</sup>

Viewed from this overarching perspective, Gell's correspondence reveals a fascinating pastoral dynamic. Conscious of his formidable reputation and 'the great care you haue shewed to poore soules', Gell sought out Baxter's guaranteed expertise when anxieties fuelled by his writings could not be soothed by her local clerical contacts. As was his custom, Baxter initially attempted to redirect Gell's queries to the 'many able ministers of X [i.e. Christ] *about you*', qualifying his advice with repeated allusions to the limitations of diagnosing at a distance. But, despite insisting that Gell need look no 'further for aduice' than Porter, who '*hath* the aduantage of *personall* acquaintance with you', Baxter seemed unable to refuse her earnest requests for assistance.<sup>644</sup> Gell initially promised to 'not make a common practise of' troubling him, but she later insisted that his distance enabled him to 'deale more faithfully' than her local clergy who, despite not intending to 'flatter', held 'too good an opinion of' her.<sup>645</sup> Consequently, Baxter was drawn into a spiritual correspondence of seemingly greater length and intimacy than he would ever have intended.

Concerned that local ministers dealt too softly with her, Gell appreciated the moral rigor of Baxter's devotional publications and letters. He presented her with a copy of his *Right Method*, which he composed in 1653 against the backdrop of the looming Antinomian threat. For Baxter, the Antinomian repudiation of the moral law constituted a singularly grave menace to individual pastoral welfare. He detested these 'Mountebanks',

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<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, v. fo. 28<sup>r</sup> also *iv.* fo. 183<sup>r</sup>. DRO D3287/47/7, 79-84.

<sup>644</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 216<sup>v</sup>. DRO D3287/47/7, 155, 166.

<sup>645</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fos. 215<sup>v</sup>, 3<sup>v</sup> and 7<sup>r</sup>. See Searle, "'My Souls Anatomiste'", 7.16, 7.20.

with their claims of pre-eminent skill in ‘the cure of wounded consciences, and the settling of peace’ and countered their emphasis on Christ’s free, passively imputed grace with his own brand of moralistic puritan piety.<sup>646</sup> Gell evidently sympathised with this perspective; she commented that Baxter’s *Right Method* was intended ‘to driue to holiness as well as comfort[,] that non might[,] when they haue found comfort[,] take liberty to sin & that I like uery well’.<sup>647</sup> The charge of moralism and a distorting emphasis on the salvific significance of ‘holy living’ has long been levelled against Baxter’s practical writings and his printed counselling has been judged problematically ‘legalistic’.<sup>648</sup> Yet a fixation with religious duties was equally characteristic of Porter’s counselling. On occasion, both ministers had to warn against the perilous possibility that this might drift into some form of works righteousness. In 1655, Porter reminded Gell that ‘we are kept by the power of god *not* by our power to resist *corruption* or *temptation*’ and Baxter accompanied an extensive list of recommended ‘good workes’ with a reminder not to ‘trust in them or suppose them meritorious’.<sup>649</sup>

It is important to note that Gell also made comments which run counter to her complaints about the leniency of her local clergy. In her first letter to Baxter, she bewailed her ‘naughty base heart’, remarking that ‘our ministers tell me I must submissiuely striue agaynst corruptions[,] which I thinke a uery hard lesson’.<sup>650</sup> In August 1655, she informed Porter of her temptation ‘to neglect the duty of set meditation’, to which he remarked that falling short in performance was no grounds for abandoning an acknowledged

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<sup>646</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 218-19, 74, 85. See Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Aldershot, 2001), 27, 31, 51-5, 62-3, 68-71.

<sup>647</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 215<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>648</sup> C. F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (London, 1966), 154-64, 179-80. Mair, ‘Christian Sanctification’, 232, 261.

<sup>649</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 99-100, 163.

<sup>650</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 216<sup>v</sup>.

obligation.<sup>651</sup> This response presumably disappointed Gell, for when Baxter later advised her to limit ‘secrett meditation’, because ‘melancholy people’ often ‘cannot beare the duty’, she was keen to confirm that she had always ‘found it uery hard’ and had gained ‘noe great benefit by it’.<sup>652</sup> Gell remarked that, alongside Porter, one ‘Mr Ch:’ had ‘pressed me much to it’, although she had ‘bid him aske you about it *when he was last with you*’.<sup>653</sup> This was presumably the Derbyshire cleric, Samuel Charles, who, Calamy notes, spent the later 1650s ‘in Sir *John Gell*’s Family at *Hopton*’.<sup>654</sup> Gell’s second letter to Baxter was delivered by ‘that minister from whome you receiued that *lettre* I sent’ and Baxter’s reply included a reference to ‘Mr Ch:’ who ‘addeth another of *your* doubts’.<sup>655</sup> Charles certainly appears to have engaged in face-to-face conference with Gell, for Porter wrote of having conversed with him about her religious state. (Interestingly, this was also true of Porter, who alluded to a discussion between himself and Katherine one Saturday ‘in *your* Parlor’).<sup>656</sup> Overall, Gell’s desire to acquire a second opinion concerning meditation certainly suggests some degree of resistance to her local counsellors’ guidance. Yet this further evidence of her recourse to a host of ministerial advisers compounds the overarching impression of her insatiable appetite for authoritative pastoral oversight.

Porter may not have concurred with absolutely all of Baxter’s pastoral advice and methods. For example, he made a conscious effort to convince Gell of the ‘grounds’ of the ‘perseuerance of the *saints*’, a comforting doctrine which Baxter had questioned to significant public outcry.<sup>657</sup> Yet by and large their epistolary advice displays a striking degree of congruence. There is even evidence that Baxter’s counselling directly influenced

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<sup>651</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 85-9.

<sup>652</sup> DWL MS 59, *iv.* fo. 142<sup>v</sup> and *v.* fo. 3<sup>f</sup>. In 1658, Gell also wrote rather pointedly about her desire to dispense with other religious duties which she found futile and laborious: *ibid.*, *v.* fo. 6<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, *v.* fo. 3<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>654</sup> Calamy, *An Abridgement*, *ii.* 182.

<sup>655</sup> DWL MS 59, *v.* fo. 215<sup>v</sup>. DRO D3287/47/7, 172.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, 143, 149.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, 127-30.

Porter's. The Derbyshire cleric's correspondence contains scattered recommendations that Gell read certain passages from Baxter's published works and a reference in one of his 1655 letters to faults and infirmities which provide 'sufficient grounds for humiliation but not for doubting' of one's election is strikingly reminiscent of a formula which Baxter had earlier used in print.<sup>658</sup> Seemingly, Baxter was highly esteemed amongst the Presbyterian ministers and laity of the county. So much is suggested by the fact that two other Derbyshire laypeople sought him out for religious guidance during the 1650s.<sup>659</sup> Porter's written counsel thus constitutes concrete evidence of the extent to which Baxter's pastoral priorities had been disseminated amongst the localities. Furthermore, it seems that Gell utilised Porter's ministerial expertise to assist her in applying Baxter's printed directives to her own condition. Several of the grievances which she raised in correspondence with Porter appear to have been prompted by passages from the *Saints Rest*. For example, Gell's fear that her good deeds were 'done all out of slavish feare or mercinarynesse of spirit' is reminiscent of Baxter's response to the question: 'whether to make Salvation our end be not mercenary?'<sup>660</sup> Consequently, her letters provide striking evidence of sustained clericalism within Protestant piety, a tendency which acted in tension with concurrent trends of spiritual individualism.

It has been suggested that Gell's correspondence with Baxter was primarily occasioned by the death of her infant son, Thomas, in 1654.<sup>661</sup> The loss of her child was something which Gell only raised in her second letter to Baxter, although, in an unambiguous demonstration of the continuity between textuality and aurality in this period,

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<sup>658</sup> Ibid., 61, 64, 85, 104, 246 and 50. See Baxter, *Right Method*, 403-5.

<sup>659</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fos. 63<sup>r-v</sup>, 76<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>660</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 110-11. Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 8-9.

<sup>661</sup> Brouwer, 'Richard Baxter's Christian Directory', 37-8.

she had expected the female bearer of her first letter to inform him of the fact.<sup>662</sup> Yet there is sparse evidence of any ‘lingering grief’ across the years of their epistolary relationship. John Brouwer claimed that a letter sent to Gell by her husband in March 1658 contains consolations to relieve prolonged grief, but it is difficult to see how Sir John’s statement that ‘the losse of [...] was that *which* was *your* great trouble, hee hath restored him, blessed be his name for it’, could refer to the permanent loss occasioned by a child’s death.<sup>663</sup> Gell chiefly communicated her bereavement to Baxter out of fear that it might stand as evidence that she lacked divine favour, although she also sought his opinion on whether her child might be saved – a query of such controversial magnitude that he refused to determine either way.<sup>664</sup> Her concern in this regard was understandable; she owned one devotional book, Christopher Love’s *Heavens Glory, Hells Terror* (1653), which warned against the naive assumption that infants were innocent and, consequently, likely to escape eternal punishment.<sup>665</sup> Again, it is interesting, although not unsurprising, to note that Porter had already offered Gell hopeful consolations concerning her infant’s ‘euerlasting condition’ and assurances that such afflictions frequently befell ‘the dearest of gods children’.<sup>666</sup>

Indeed, Gell’s correspondences with Porter and Baxter progressed along closely parallel lines. Baxter assumed an identical role as comforter, reassuring his troubled correspondent of her many evidences of election, in response to the grievances which she repeatedly raised. Having received an initial positive appraisal of her religious estate from Baxter, Gell was immediately inclined to ‘retract’ the confident assessments she had

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<sup>662</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fos. 215<sup>v</sup>, 216<sup>v</sup>. This bearer, Katherine’s cousin, also sought verbal counsel from the celebrated pastor.

<sup>663</sup> Brouwer, ‘Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory’, 37-8, 58. The name of the male subject of this letter has been deliberately excised from the manuscript: DRO D258/8/51.

<sup>664</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 170-2. In contrast with Brouwer’s speculation that Baxter would have concluded positively on this issue: ‘Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory’, 37.

<sup>665</sup> Christopher Love, *Heavens Glory, Hells Terror. Or, Two Treatises* (London, 1653), ii. 63-4. A copy in the DRO was inscribed by Gell’s daughter, Elizabeth, in 1679: ‘Des livres de ma mere c’est á moy’. D3287/48/1.

<sup>666</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 1-4.

provided of her own ‘earnest desires ... after universal obedience’ and greater ‘holiness’. Terrified by the possibility of false assurance, Gell acknowledged how challenging she found it to ‘consent’ to Baxter’s optimistic conclusions.<sup>667</sup> Her unresponsiveness to proffered comforts drew him, like Porter, to supply increasingly extravagant guarantees of election. In June 1657, Baxter declared: ‘I am as sure as that the word of God is true, that the soule that hath those qualifications which your lines express, is truly sanctified & an heir of Life’.<sup>668</sup> Yet this was all to no avail. Their relationship reached crisis point in late summer 1658 when, prompted by her recent ‘dullnes & distraction’ in prayer, Gell concluded that she was ‘quite forsaken’ by God.<sup>669</sup> Once again, these complaints suggest a lack of receptiveness to Porter’s earlier assurance that a ‘truantly’ heart did not expose her as ‘unregenerate’ – although a reference which she also made to a devotional work which Porter had previously commended may indicate a degree of responsiveness to his counselling.<sup>670</sup> In response, Baxter remonstrated with Gell concerning her propensity to be ‘soe forgetfull (I will not say unthankfull) after soe many satisfying benefitts & evidences of his [i.e. God’s] loue’. Her unrelenting self-reproaches did, he bluntly asserted, ‘provoaketh mee to bee offended with you’.<sup>671</sup> Several of Porter’s letters betray his equal irritation with Gell’s inexorable tendency to ‘trample upon all the arguments of comfort & grounds of satisfaction that haue bin laid before you’.<sup>672</sup> Yet that both ministers were quite willing to restate their counsels demonstrates the weighty significance which each attached to directing the individual conscience. Baxter fully accepted the necessity of repetition, appreciating that melancholy believers were prone to ‘forgett in a few dayes, all the

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<sup>667</sup> Ibid., 167. DWL MS 59, v. fo. 215<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 11<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>670</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 33-46, at 34-5, also 149-53, 237.

<sup>671</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 9<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>672</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 143-4.

satisfaction & comfort that they received'.<sup>673</sup> Thus, whilst their frustrations certainly imply an uncommon obduracy on Gell's part, both ministers did ultimately perceive her behaviour to be an understandable response of such a scrupulous and tender conscience to the rigours of Calvinist theology and not an indicator of her lack of regard for their instruction.

Indeed, it was Baxter's renowned expertise in handling melancholic individuals which ensured that his pastoral skills were constantly in demand. Just after the Restoration, one Hannah Allen, who was attended in her troubles by many skilled pastors, professed 'a secret desire to see him, rather than any one else'.<sup>674</sup> However, Jeremy Schmidt has recently contended that Baxter's approach to the care of religious melancholia was uniquely unsympathetic. Drawing on his 1682 sermon on this theme, Schmidt claimed that Baxter offered only 'judgment' to those who 'needed consolation' by coldly attributing their symptoms to a sinful tendency to overvalue earthly and spiritual comforts.<sup>675</sup> Whilst Baxter's sermon does refer to melancholy as 'a Conjunction of many Sins', he clearly did not consider this to be a comprehensive explanation of all forms of this complex, multi-causal distemper.<sup>676</sup> He emphasised that, 'among people fearing God, there is yet another cause of Melancholly', namely a failure to appreciate 'that the Gospel is tidings of unspeakable joy to all that will believe it; and that Christ and Life are offered freely ... and that no sins ... are excepted from pardon'.<sup>677</sup> Baxter further clarified, in a direct address to

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 91-2. DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 142<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>674</sup> Hannah Allen, *A Narrative Of God's Gracious Dealings With that Choice Christian Mrs. Hannah Allen* (London, 1683), 55.

<sup>675</sup> Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul*, 123, 103, 111-18.

<sup>676</sup> Richard Baxter, 'The Cure of Melancholy And Overmuch-Sorrow By Faith and Physick', in Samuel Annesley (ed.), *A Continuation Of Morning-Exercise Questions And Cases of Conscience* (London, 1682), 274.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., 276-7.

the doubt-ridden and those struggling to gain assurance of election: ‘these foregoing Reprofs are not meant to such as you’.<sup>678</sup>

Schmidt’s failure to appreciate fully Baxter’s attempt to address the condition of all types of sufferers through a single sermon (in an admittedly disorganised manner) seems to account for his unduly harsh critique. The earlier case of Katherine Gell exemplifies how sympathetically Baxter could deal with godly, scrupulous melancholics. He was generally inclined to present the disorder in predominantly physiological terms. Whilst Schmidt has correctly noted this tendency, his disproportionate emphasis on sin and culpability has served to obfuscate the comfort and consolation which Baxter also endeavoured to convey. When he informed Gell of her natural ‘melancholy disposition’, labelling her fears and terrors ‘meerly the effect of that distemper conjunct with *your* naturall imbecillity’, he hoped to assuage the guilt and shame which gripped her. In an effort to reassure, Baxter recounted how his own youthful fears had now largely dissipated, ‘more from some change in my *temperature* by age, than by any reasons or faith it selfe’.<sup>679</sup> Elsewhere, he remarked that women, children, the elderly and the weak were all particularly prone to melancholy and that even ‘the most gracious soule can hardly expect to *prevaile against* such a *temperature of body*’.<sup>680</sup>

Similarities can be drawn with another interesting epistolary case. Early in the seventeenth century, the gentlewoman, Dionys Fitzherbert (c.1580-c.1640), experienced a profound spiritual crisis which she later documented. Troubled by the possibility that her

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid., 283. Baxter also noted that his insistence that melancholic individuals must ‘overcome the inordinate love of *the world*’ did not apply ‘to those that are troubled only for want of more faith and holiness and communion with God, and assurance of Salvation’: *ibid.*, 279-80.

<sup>679</sup> DWL MS 59, fo. *iv*. 183<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 11<sup>r</sup>. See *ibid.*, *iv*. fos. 118<sup>r</sup>-19<sup>f</sup> for a jointly spiritual and medical response to the melancholy of another gentlewoman.

afflictions might be interpreted as evidence of either madness or reprobation, Fitzherbert sought expert confirmation of the soundness of her religious estate from the episcopalian cleric and future Dean of Bristol, Edward Chetwynd. The pastoral letter which he penned in response is attached to Fitzherbert's autobiographical account. Like Gell, she shied away from a diagnosis of melancholy, believing that it underestimated the spiritual significance of her turmoil.<sup>681</sup> Yet Chetwynd endorsed a multi-causal explanation, acknowledging Fitzherbert's sin of pride in 'spiritual ... and in worldly things', which she had over-loved, whilst firmly underscoring the pivotal role of 'your body and humours much distempered'. His aim, like Baxter's, was to comfort and reassure. He explicitly attributed greater responsibility to 'Satan and the humours that oppressed you' than to Fitzherbert herself, professing to see 'herein your weakness to be more than your wickedness'.<sup>682</sup>

As has been noted, Baxter believed that melancholy individuals should avoid spending long hours in solitary religious exercises.<sup>683</sup> Although Searle remarked that this 'appreciation of the physical and mental inability of certain individuals to endure the Puritan regime of secret duties is unique', Porter also acknowledged that 'under bodily indispositions' Gell ought to 'abate of the length of *your* secret duties'.<sup>684</sup> Nonetheless, she later sought double confirmation from Baxter that she could lawfully 'shorten secret duties' during times of fatigue and bodily distemper.<sup>685</sup> Both ministers were quick to tailor their counsels to Gell's personal condition. Baxter clarified that he did not modify his guidance in order to discourage her 'from any holy endeavours ... God forbid', and that he would never dream of writing 'this much to carnall stupid dispisers of holy seriousnes,

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<sup>681</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 7<sup>r</sup>. *Women, Madness and Sin in Early Modern England: The Autobiographical Writings of Dionys Fitzherbert*, ed. Katharine Hodgkin (Farnham, 2010), 129-47, 149-53.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid., 133-9, 129-31.

<sup>683</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 142<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>684</sup> Searle, "'My Souls Anatomiste'", 7.12. DRO D3287/47/7, 146-7. Another ministerial counsellor made similar allowances for Richard Norwood: *Journal of Richard Norwood*, 101.

<sup>685</sup> DWL, MS 59, iv. fo. 208<sup>r</sup>.

who would misunderstand it & misapply it to harden them in their dead estate'.<sup>686</sup> Brouwer has presented this as another unique feature of Baxter's counselling, noting his 'willingness to by-pass "standard godly practice" and instead to follow his own pastoral instincts'.<sup>687</sup> However, the adaptation of religious guidance to the specific needs of individuals can be evinced more widely. A copy of a lengthy 1631 letter sent by the moderate Calvinist divine, Thomas Gataker, to a 'Cosen' plagued by fears of his own hypocrisy provides a particularly revealing comparison. Gataker, like Baxter, was known for his public opposition to Antinomianism and strongly moralistic piety.<sup>688</sup> This pastoral letter bears striking resemblance to Gataker's printed treatise, *The Ioy Of The Ivst* (1623), the reading of which may well have prompted his correspondent to seek out his advice. Gataker's printed text contains an extensive list of 'Signes' for discerning one's sincerity, but his scrupulous addressee desired a personalised, expert verdict on whether he possessed the marks of election.<sup>689</sup> Whilst Gataker's letter reproduces many of these printed 'Signes', he tailored others to the devotional experiences of his anxious devotee. Moreover, whilst *The Ioy Of The Ivst* reflects extensively on the importance of obediently fulfilling all religious duties, Gataker reassured his pious correspondent that 'God judgeth men, not according to some few particular actions but according to the maine bent of their heart & minde, & the constant tenor of their lives'. So convinced was he of his correspondent's sincerity that he avowed: 'I conceive your estate & condition to be such as no doubt neede be made, but that God hath begun that good work of his in you'. Thus, Gataker readily asserted that God 'regardeth not so much what you do as what you would

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<sup>686</sup> Ibid., v. fo. 218<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>687</sup> Brouwer, 'Richard Baxter's Christian Directory', 64, 57, 59, 69. What 'standard godly practice' constituted is never clarified.

<sup>688</sup> CUL MS Dd.3.83 (19), 3. Dewey D. Wallace Jr., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525-1695* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 134-6.

<sup>689</sup> Thomas Gataker, *The Ioy Of The Ivst; With The Signes of Such* (London, 1623), 90-163.

doe', a claim which he, presumably, would not have deemed suitable for inclusion in his generally addressed treatise.<sup>690</sup>

Another feature of Baxter's counselling which Brouwer has highlighted as evidence of the uniqueness of his pastoral approach is the frequency with which he cited personal experience, rather than Scripture, as the authoritative basis for his advice.<sup>691</sup> By 1656, Gell was chiefly concerned with petitioning Baxter regarding her lack of 'Livelynes' in performing religious duties. In response to her dissatisfaction with the emotional temper of her devotional life, Baxter articulated 'a precise theology of the emotions and sensibility' which formed the chief focus of Alison Searle's valuable research on their correspondence. To bolster his reassurances that 'lively affections & sensibility', though pleasing and enviable, are 'not the evidences by which the truth of Grace may so well be tryed', Baxter referred to 'converse' which he had had 'with very many' godly believers who similarly lacked such comfortable assurances.<sup>692</sup> Yet whilst Porter did use biblical citations and exemplars far more regularly than Baxter, he was similarly quick to draw on his own pastoral experience to add weight to his counsels. In 1655, he wrote of having 'spoken to many both able & uery sincere Xians [i.e. Christians]' who, despite being unable to reach great heights in meditation, saw no reason 'to question ther title to heauen'.<sup>693</sup> Furthermore, he underscored the expertise of other pastors whose written directives he

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<sup>690</sup> CUL MS Dd.3.83 (19), 3-13, at 6, 3, 7, 13. Gataker also promised to continue writing to his addressee, if further assurances were required.

<sup>691</sup> Brouwer, 'Richard Baxter's Christian Directory', 51-3, 59, 67.

<sup>692</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 217<sup>r-v</sup>. Searle, "'My Souls Anatomiste'", 7.3, 7.8-15. Searle argued that Baxter's understanding of the role of the passions was distinctively puritan. However, the Laudian cleric, John Duncon, addressed closely comparable counsel to Lettice Cary, criticising her expectation of constantly possessing sensible consolations when such perfection could only be expected in the afterlife: *Retvrnes*, sigs B3<sup>r</sup>-E9<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>693</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 85.

made use of; he once justified including a specific ‘*incouragement ... seeing its writ by a uery experienced minister*’.<sup>694</sup>

Alternatively, both clergymen also evoked their own experiences to forge a degree of mutuality with their correspondent. In June 1657, Baxter disclosed his youthful anxieties and fear of the dark.<sup>695</sup> In Porter’s case, this reciprocity extended further; like Baxter, he divulged his own ‘distempers’ and ‘*melancholy*’, but he also reflected on the mutual benefits of his correspondence with Gell, noting that ‘the hope of some admonition *from soe watchfull a friend made me importune your last lettre*’.<sup>696</sup> Porter’s conception of the epistolary medium as a forum for free, uninhibited ‘fellowship’ underscores this sense of mutuality. On one occasion, he remarked: ‘I had neuer beene soe profitable to you[,] you had neuer bin soe profitable to me by all uisits as by thes paper uisits’. Yet this language of fellow feeling should not be disproportionately emphasised. Porter went on to situate letter-writing within the established boundaries of ministerial oversight, noting that his letters ‘must & may stand for sermons, is *nothing* preaching but pulpit worke, is *nothing* seeing but iourneys for uisits’.<sup>697</sup> Indeed, for the most part, their written discourse conformed to a standard model of authoritative pastoral relations. Porter initially appears to have been very aware of their difference in status, offering his counsels through polite, cautious ‘hint[s]’. But he also felt able to chide Gell and he claimed direct divine inspiration for his directions, appealing to the authoritative epistolary model of St Paul,

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<sup>694</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>695</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fo. 11<sup>r</sup>. This tendency was carried over into print. In his autobiography, Baxter confessed to having experienced doubts and struggles both early in life and throughout his ministry: *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I, 6, 21, 127-8.

<sup>696</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 15, 154.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid., 137-8. Arnold Hunt has argued that puritans privileged hearing the Word preached over reading Scripture and other pious texts, the former being a more efficacious means of grace. Porter’s striking equation of preaching with letter-writing may support Hunt’s suggestion of a post-1640 reconfiguration of the relationship between spoken and written discourse: *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge, 2010), 22-30, 37-42, 54-5.

who urged the Corinthians to repentance with a stern letter.<sup>698</sup> Interestingly, in later life, Porter actually commended the Derbyshire cleric, John Hieron, for counselling and reprimanding gentry with great ‘Ministerial freedom’.<sup>699</sup> For her part, Gell so relentlessly entreated Porter for guidance that he was once forced to assert that it was ‘uery uncharitable ... [to] conclude *your* estate neglected & disregarded by me *when you haue not a lettre* iust at *your* expected time’.<sup>700</sup>

Keith Condie has cited Baxter’s claim ‘to get some good to my owne soule’ through his interaction with Gell as evidence that he obtained comparable ‘consolation and encouragement’ from their spiritual relationship. This comment could, however, be interpreted in line with Baxter’s subsequent ‘hope [that] *you haue somewhat* awakened me to a more accurate watch’, as a mere reference to his enhanced awareness of his pastoral obligations.<sup>701</sup> Indeed, despite the suggestions of Brouwer and Searle, Gell’s requests that Baxter publish an account of his spiritual ‘experiences’ and dedicate more time to writing devotional, rather than controversial, works, do not actually demonstrate her ability to direct her own spiritual advisor.<sup>702</sup> Baxter firmly quashed both recommendations, assuring Gell that he was fully aware of the needs to which his printed works must respond.<sup>703</sup> Throughout their correspondence, Baxter performed the role of authoritative, proficient counsellor. In June 1656, in a display of professional expertise, he employed the language of a medical consultation, remarking: ‘so much for the Causes & Diagnosticks of *your* disease. I shall next *proceed* to the Prognosticks & then to the Cure’.<sup>704</sup> Like Porter, Baxter also sent firm, reproving letters which Gell evidently appreciated. She remarked in April

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<sup>698</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 6-7, 36. See 2 Corinthians 7:8-9.

<sup>699</sup> Porter, *Life Of Mr. John Hieron*, 5-6.

<sup>700</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 47.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*, 255. Condie, ‘Some Further Correspondence’, 174.

<sup>702</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fos. 215<sup>v</sup>, 7<sup>v</sup>. Brouwer, ‘Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory’, 72. Searle, “‘My Soules Anatomiste’”, 7.23, 7.25-6.

<sup>703</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 175. DWL, MS 59, v. fo. 10<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, v. fo. 217<sup>v</sup>.

1657: 'I take *your* chiding soe well ... I will endeauour to mend' and again in December 1658: 'I thanke *you* for *your* chiding I wish it would mend me'.<sup>705</sup> Gell frequently addressed Baxter with notable deference, making repeated apologies for disrupting his more important labours. She was also willing to open herself up to intense clerical scrutiny, once declaring that she had conveyed 'the worst that I know by my selfe, & I am ashamed that I *haue* soe oft troubled *you*'.<sup>706</sup> She frequently appeared unwilling to effect the slightest change to her devotional life without Baxter's explicit approval. By 1658, Gell had evidently become so dependent upon his counsel that he felt the need to warn against overreliance on frail, inconstant men, exhorting her to 'keepe close to god & trust him, who will neuer faile *you*'.<sup>707</sup> This admonition corresponds with Baxter's printed advice that believers should not 'expect more from man then belongs to man', nor consider their pastor's words 'Infallible'.<sup>708</sup>

In Gell's opinion, her attitude was uncharacteristic of seventeenth-century gentry. In 1658, she wrote of her family in Berkshire who considered it 'uery rediculous ... to speake with a *minister*', believing 'priuat conferrence' to be entirely unnecessary when 'the scripture was full to satisfy euery one that searched into it'. Evoking a common defence of clerical professionalism (which she may have acquired from Baxter's own works) Gell lamented that 'the same persons would consult with *Physicians & Lawyer* [*sic*] ... but they looke on *ministers* as those that are below them'. Her suggestion that 'were it a Bishop I suppose such might be confer'd with & no question made of it' was eagerly adopted by Baxter, who expressed similar frustrations with the ungodliness of the

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<sup>705</sup> Ibid., *iv*. fos. 142<sup>r</sup>, 208<sup>r</sup> and *v*. fo. 3<sup>r</sup>. DRO D3287/47/7, 254-5.

<sup>706</sup> DWL MS 59, *v*. fos. 6<sup>v</sup>-7<sup>f</sup>, 3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>707</sup> See *ibid.*, *v*. fo. 7<sup>r</sup>. DRO D3287/47/7, 256.

<sup>708</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 502.

times.<sup>709</sup> Whilst Gell's comments may allude to contemporary anti-clerical feeling, a later reference to her distress that,

priuat conference with ministers ... should be of such ill report that now its counted a scandall not only among *Prophane* but ciuell & many that doubtles are godly which *haue* not such pressing necessity to make knowne their condition to ministers as sum *haue* & so censure all,

conveys more than a hint of defensiveness. One might speculate that Gell had encountered criticism from relations or friends who considered her persistent recourse to ministerial guidance to be excessively scrupulous.<sup>710</sup> Moreover, it seems safe to assume that if Baxter had been aware of the true dynamic of her correspondence with himself and Porter, he would also have had reservations. In print, he remonstrated against 'silly People [who] run from one Physician to another ... desirous to know what every man thinks of them', yet who 'seldom thoroughly follow the advice of any'.<sup>711</sup> Baxter would doubtless have been irritated by Gell's seeming inability to internalise comforts and counsel, had he known quite how frequently these were proffered. His stern opposition to what might be termed 'counsel-gadding' was underpinned by his belief that spiritual direction should occur within a stable parochial framework. The tendency of some individuals hastily to dismiss their pastor's counsel as ineffective and turn to alternative spiritual physicians appeared to him a distasteful practice which undermined established ministerial authority. However, this trend for seeking out numerous clerical opinions on issues of spiritual significance can be evinced more widely. By way of example, Richard Greenham was once called on to counsel an individual who had already failed to find satisfaction from numerous clerical counsellors. Such evidence offers enticing hints of the sort of networks of pastoral letter-writing which existed during this period.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>709</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fos. 5<sup>r</sup>, 9<sup>r</sup>. See above, p. 147.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. fo. 208<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>711</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 513-14. There is nothing to suggest that either Baxter or Porter was aware that Gell was simultaneously corresponding with the other.

<sup>712</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 876-7. See above, pp. 50-1.

## The Significance of Pastoral Networks

Two later letters, which can be convincingly linked to Katherine Gell, provide further confirmation of the activities of such networks of pastoral support. In 1658, Gell informed Baxter of her recent stay in Berkshire, where the ‘common-prayer booke was cryed up & forms of prayer in family & congregation much pleaded for’. Having witnessed her relations’ spiritual dullness, Gell declared herself ‘more out of conceite with formes than euer’, but Baxter maintained that ‘a wise & holy person can make better use of formes ... & in some cases they are most fitt’.<sup>713</sup> This response harmonises with recommendations in his later printed works; in 1673, Baxter depicted both set forms and extempore prayer as equally lawful and beneficial for believers of different varieties. Whilst the former did pose threats of ‘carelesness, deadness, formality, and heartless lip-labour’, Christians should ‘humbly submit’ to the customs of their own church in such permissible things.<sup>714</sup> That Baxter’s opinion on this issue was fully formed during the Interregnum is confirmed by a surviving 1653 manuscript which defended set forms in identical terms.<sup>715</sup> Yet despite having received this early counsel, in January 1663 Gell appears to have raised further concerns about the Prayer Book and other set forms with her local pastor, John Oldfield, following its reintroduction. Evidence of this can be found in the *Life* of the nonconformist Lancashire minister, John Angier (1605-1677). Angier was another cleric who was renowned for his great ‘faculty in resolving weighty cases of Conscience’. According to his biographer, his abilities were so illustrious that he was

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<sup>713</sup> DWL MS 59, v. fos. 5<sup>r</sup>, 9<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>714</sup> Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 847-53, at 852. Although Baxter certainly found fault with the Prayer Book, in 1661 he produced a *Reformed Liturgy*, composed entirely of set forms, around which he hoped all Protestant parties could unite. For a comprehensive discussion of this liturgy see Segger, ‘Petition for Peace’, *passim*.

<sup>715</sup> DWL MS 59, ix. fos. 1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>. This manuscript appears to provide support for Brouwer’s thesis that the vast majority of Baxter’s *Directory* was formulated during the 1650s. However, Brouwer claimed that Baxter’s one hundred and seventy-four ecclesiastical cases, of which this discussion is a part, are later exceptions: ‘Richard Baxter’s Christian Directory’, esp. 3, 79-84.

revered as ‘the living Oracle of his time’ and distressed and melancholy individuals travelled great distances to present their ‘Soul-cases’ to him. As well as verbal ‘grave counsels’ and ‘faithful admonition[s]’, Angier ‘Writ many choice and excellent Letters; pithy, pertinent, profitable’ which, ‘were they collected into one intire piece[,] they would be of excellent use’.<sup>716</sup> One of these printed letters addresses the case of an unidentified woman who, on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1663, sought advice concerning whether she could lawfully hear ‘Common-Prayer’.<sup>717</sup> It details four grounds for ‘dissatisfaction’ with the Prayer Book, including ‘the ineffectualness of forms upon my heart’ and the claim to be unable to ‘hear it without sin’ because it aroused her to ‘Passion, and such Anger’. Her letter also recounts a peculiar experience of having once been prevented from attending Common Prayer by an unnerving conviction that it equated to ‘nothing but sin, and sinful compliance’. Despite professing to accept ‘the lawfulness of forms’, this female correspondent was evidently tormented by the belief that conforming might hinder her from ever possessing ‘peace in my Conscience’.<sup>718</sup>

With reference to several passages from the diary of another Lancashire nonconformist pastor, Henry Newcome (1627-1695), the modern editor of Angier’s *Life* identified this case with one ‘Mrs Gell’ of Hopton Hall. Newcome’s diary records his receipt of her request for resolution in January 1663, conveyed through John Oldfield. He forwarded it to Angier and another cleric, John Harrison of Ashton-under-Lyne, for consideration. After reflecting on their responses, Newcome composed a considered reply, which he returned to Oldfield.<sup>719</sup> The letter which survives in Angier’s *Life* appears to be

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<sup>716</sup> *Oliver Heywood's Life of John Angier of Denton...*, ed. Ernest Axon (Manchester, 1937), 68-9, 80-1, 89-90, also 74, 94-5, 111.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-9.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, 107. *The Diary of the Rev. Henry Newcome, From September 30, 1661, to September 29, 1663*, ed. Thomas Heywood (Manchester, 1849), 153, 155-6, 198-9.

his conclusions on the case, which he presented to Newcome for secondary assessment. This sort of circulation of cases of conscience was seemingly a regular practice for Newcome. His diary refers to other occasions on which he sought the opinions of these two ministers and it also records his more general engagement in both verbal and epistolary counselling.<sup>720</sup> In weighty cases, it was doubtless natural for clerics to seek out ministerial brethren of particular casuistical expertise to contribute towards a broader collaborative exercise of spiritual counselling. This example supports Tom Webster's suggestion that 'pastoral efforts ... tended to take on an aggregative function among the godly ministry'.<sup>721</sup> Presumably, Oldfield had already offered Gell what resolution he could, for he later reflected in print on the value of set forms for some, whilst acknowledging an ultimate desire to wean believers off such spiritual 'Crutches'.<sup>722</sup> In response to the 'sad Case' of 'Mrs Gell', Angier insisted that there was no 'solid Argument to convince the Conscience in the grounds of dissatisfaction, concerning hearing Common-Prayer'. He suggested, instead, that her reaction was evidence of 'strong temptation' and 'the old grown disease of Prejudice' and cautioned her against absenting herself from 'the publick Prayers of the Church'.<sup>723</sup>

Although Ernest Axon did not identify the specific 'Mrs Gell' referred to in Newcome's diary, it was almost certainly Katherine. The claim to have grown cold with the Prayer Book, 'having been bred up under its plenty', could not apply to any of her young daughters.<sup>724</sup> Furthermore, the Derbyshire cleric, William Bagshaw, later recounted that, after the Restoration, Katherine suffered 'some Scruples about the Liturgy', but

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<sup>720</sup> Ibid., 22, 110, 7, 13, 21, 54-7, 110, 136.

<sup>721</sup> Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 53.

<sup>722</sup> John Oldfield, *The Generation Of Seekers: Or The right manner of the Saints Addresses to the Throne of Grace* (London, 1671), 112-29, at 116.

<sup>723</sup> *Oliver Heywood's Life*, 109-11.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid., 107.

‘managed ‘em modestly, and consulted with the best Ministers’.<sup>725</sup> Remarkably, an unexplored letter survives amongst the Gell papers in the Derbyshire Record office which appears to have been drafted in response to the exact queries which Katherine posed to Newcome. This letter is both unsigned and unaddressed, but was seemingly written by a minister on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1663. As a discerning layperson, Gell was evidently unwilling to follow blindly whatever counsel she received and, instead, sought out various opinions until she found satisfaction in each thorny case. This ministerial letter-writer also maintained that hearing Common Prayer was not unlawful. Highlighting the benefits it offered some parishioners, he chided her for indulging her anger against set forms and warned that the erroneous ‘principle ... that a man must not waite on god in a way that hath proved Ineffectuall to him’ might ultimately result in total ‘seperation’. Yet his alarm at her ‘sad Conflicts’ prompted him to advise abstention until she could properly discern, through God’s assistance, whether it was a duty or not. Since this first correspondent avoided offering definitive conclusions on such a ‘Trembling subject’, entreating Gell to accept ‘The stammrings of a novice in such Questions’, it seems likely that her desire for a more authoritative pronouncement promptly drove her to approach Newcome.<sup>726</sup> Overall, this previously unexplored evidence provides an instructive comparison, which underscores the recourse which Gell had to extended networks of religious counselling.

The Gell family of Hopton Hall evidently constituted part of a godly elite within their locality. Eamon Duffy has argued that, in contrast with the sort of ‘two-tier system’ advocated by earlier proponents of godly discipline, Baxter’s ecclesiology is distinguished by a commitment to ministering to the whole parish. Duffy notes that Baxter refused to direct his attentions towards a gathered minority at the expense of the spiritual needs of the

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<sup>725</sup> William Bagshaw, *De Spiritualibus Peccis. Notes, (or Notices). Concerning the Work of God...* (Sheffield, 1702), 59.

<sup>726</sup> DRO D258/38/11/5. It is suggested in the DRO catalogue that Robert Porter was the author of this letter.

ostensibly ignorant and ungodly.<sup>727</sup> This commitment undoubtedly shaped Baxter's pastoral theology, but it is also important to recognise that, in practice, he did dedicate particular efforts to assisting scrupulous, godly individuals who leant on his verbal and epistolary counsel. In his *Right Method*, Baxter highlighted the conflict facing ministers who must preach fearsome sermons on repentance aimed at the unregenerate masses, despite their awareness that these might constitute a source of anxiety for the minority of pious, sincere Christians amongst their parishioners. His solution was to recommend that fearful, scrupulous believers open their cases 'to the Minister privately', to receive the satisfaction which they might struggle to acquire from public preaching.<sup>728</sup> The implication underpinning this suggestion is that, contrary to his professed ideals, ministers would inevitably find themselves engaging with particular frequency in individualised counselling of the godly elite. This was doubtless true of the local Derbyshire clergy who ministered to the Gell family. Porter certainly put great energy into counselling Katherine and her godly family apparently stood out amongst the rest of John Oldfield's intractable parishioners. It seems that during the later 1650s, Oldfield was tempted to accept an alternative living, partly because his people were 'uery sottish, froward[,] unprofitable'. In a letter sent to comfort Katherine after she had learned of this news, Porter defended his 'brother[']s' possible departure with reference to Baxter's opinion that '*where a minister labours long & sees no fruit he should remoue & try another place*'.<sup>729</sup>

Moving briefly beyond the chronological range of this thesis, it is important to note that during the post-Restoration period the Gell family continued to maintain close links

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<sup>727</sup> Eamon Duffy, 'The Reformed Pastor in English Puritanism', in Theo Clemens and Wim Janse (eds.), *The Pastor Bonus: Papers Read at the British-Dutch Colloquium at Utrecht, 18-21 September 2002* (Leiden, 2004), 223-33, at 224. Also Cooke, 'Richard Baxter', 93-6.

<sup>728</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 394-403, at 403. Baxter's belief that sermons should principally address the condition of the majority of their hearers further explains why his 1682 sermon on melancholy particularly emphasised the potential roots of this condition in sinful passion.

<sup>729</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 240-6, at 246. Also Calamy, *An Abridgement*, ii. 172.

with a wide network of local nonconformist clerics who, in return for patronage and support, provided much valued religious services. In particular, the female inhabitants of Hopton Hall were furnished with a steady stream of verbal and epistolary counselling. Many revealing manuscript examples addressed to Gell's two unmarried daughters, Elizabeth and Temperance, between the early 1660s and the turn of the eighteenth century, survive in the Derbyshire Record Office.<sup>730</sup> Robert Porter, who evidently retained a close friendship with the family, repeatedly corresponded with Elizabeth Gell during the 1670s and 1680s. Possibly inspired by her mother, Elizabeth directly implored Porter's advice, having inherited the same melancholic disposition which necessitated soothing reassurances of God's mercy.<sup>731</sup> John Oldfield also responded to Elizabeth's requests for resolutions of cases of conscience and provided consolations in the wake of family bereavements.<sup>732</sup> In 1665, Ellis Farnworth, a licensed preacher at Wirksworth, wrote to Elizabeth after 'serious consideration of your conditon', to warn against despair and reassure her of the 'undoubted prints of *Graces* finger' in her life. Later, following her father's death, Farnworth dedicated particular efforts to consoling her, recognising that she was more likely than her sister to crumple under the weight of despondency. Interestingly, the ejected curate of Sandiacre, Joseph Moore, also responded to an account of Elizabeth's 'present discomposures' by firmly recommending that she consult with some 'skilful physitian' in addition to her clerical counsellors.<sup>733</sup> Comparable letters were also sent to both women by Francis Tallents, who preached at Hopton in 1669, and by the celebrated 'Apostle of the Peak', William Bagshaw. Bagshaw, who was renowned for his commitment to pastoral care and counselling, had also been highly esteemed by their

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<sup>730</sup> Some are cited in Cliffe, *Puritan Gentry Besieged*, 71-4.

<sup>731</sup> For example, DRO D258/38/11/16; D258/38/11/13; D258/38/11/14. Porter was remembered in Sir John Gell's will in 1687: D3287/60/9/2.

<sup>732</sup> DRO D258/38/11/12; D258/38/11/8; D258/38/11/10.

<sup>733</sup> 'Farnworth, Ellis' (44005), *CCEd*. DRO D258/38/11/6; D258/38/11/25; D258/38/11/9. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, 353.

mother, Katherine.<sup>734</sup> Evidently, in the aftermath of 1662, the epistolary medium offered particular possibilities for maintaining networks of pastoral relations within nonconformist circles.

Richard Baxter's wider correspondence also provides confirmation of the existence of fluid networks of pastoral counselling in mid seventeenth-century England. Whilst Baxter did not present himself as a pre-eminent director, this did not prevent other ministers and laypeople from viewing him in this light. Requests for Baxter's advice were, at times, mediated through local pastors who, presumably, felt unable to provide their parishioners with as weighty or effective counsel. In 1658, the Devon rector, Francis Fullwood, wrote to Baxter on 'the importunity of a Melancholly Neighbour', who requested 'one word or two of Advice either as a Divine or Physition'. The motivation for this request is clear; in his *Right Method*, Baxter had remarked on, but afforded little attention to, the treatment of melancholy, which he often presented in predominantly physiological terms, focusing purely on 'those Troubles that arise immediately from more Spiritual Causes'. In response, Baxter returned a purely medical resolution, communicated through Fullwood, which met with gratitude and a promise 'perfekly to follow any further direction you will send'.<sup>735</sup> Earlier, in 1653, Baxter's advice was also solicited by two clerics who both deferred to his superior skill. The Hampshire vicar, Henry Bartlett, wrote that he had been 'desired to request your willingnes for a cure on the soule & Body of the wife of Mr Short; who is minister of Lyme in Dorset'. Short had 'by letter importuned me

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<sup>734</sup> Ibid., 474-5. DRO D258/38/11/22; D258/38/11/33. John M. Brentnall, *William Bagshawe: The Apostle of the Peak* (London, 1970), 26, 29-30, 73-4.

<sup>735</sup> Baxter, *Right Method*, 7-17. Baxter did, however, believe that spiritual afflictions were frequently bound up with the bodily distemper: DWL MS 59, ii. fos. 258<sup>r</sup>-60<sup>r</sup> and iii. fo. 167<sup>r</sup>.

to importune you to attempt the cure'.<sup>736</sup> In this case, one minister exploited the contacts of another to secure Baxter's celebrated guidance.

Ministers also appealed directly to Baxter for assistance in their dealings with their own parishioners.<sup>737</sup> In response to the activities of a group of laypeople within his parish, the Shropshire pastor, Thomas Good, sought Baxter's opinion on 'whether it be lawful for private Christians ... to pray[,] read & ioyne together in the expounding of Scriptures'. Baxter addressed his reply to the laypeople in question, writing as if in direct response to a case of conscience proposed by them.<sup>738</sup> Similarly, in 1655, the Wiltshire rector, Peter Ince, sought the advice of Baxter and other clerics on how to deal with a 'poore woman' whose husband refused to allow her to partake of the Eucharist. In each case, Baxter framed his guidance with reflections on the limitations of counselling at a distance.<sup>739</sup> Yet these letters provide further evidence of a model of contemporary Protestant counselling which presupposed the desirability of acquiring multiple opinions and took for granted that ministers might possess particular specialisations and areas of expertise.

### **Pastoral Correspondence as a Devotional Resource**

In 2006, Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright contrasted the portrait of female piety which emerges from 'introspective' autobiographies and meditations, with an alternative image of 'sociable', 'interactive', outward-looking religion, which they argued is conveyed

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<sup>736</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. fo. 163<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>737</sup> Baxter's role as a counsellor of other ministers has already received some attention. See Alison Searle, "'Though I am a Stranger to You by Face, yet in Neere Bonds by Faith": A Transatlantic Puritan Republic of Letters', *Early American Literature*, 43/2 (2008), 283, 297-301; Searle, 'Writing Authority', 56-65; Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 233-6, 241-54. For a comparable case study, see Sargent Bush Jr., 'Epistolary Counseling in the Puritan Movement: The Example of John Cotton', in Francis J. Bremer (ed.), *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, 1993), 127-46.

<sup>738</sup> DWL MS 59, ii. fos. 231<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>739</sup> *Ibid.*, v. fos. 72<sup>r-v</sup>, 77<sup>r</sup>. For example, *ibid.*, ii. fo. 260<sup>r</sup>.

by women's spiritual letters.<sup>740</sup> However, interesting evidence of the devotional afterlife of pastoral correspondence does offer a notably individualistic and introspective illustration of lay piety. Another unconsidered aspect of Katherine Gell's correspondence is the evidence it provides of the use of letters as a resource for self-examination and meditation. Gell kept a letter-book into which she transcribed the correspondence which she received from Porter and Baxter. More specifically, she transcribed only those letters which address spiritual themes, for a reference which Porter made to further correspondence unrelated to 'soule-concernments' alludes to the broader parameters of their written dialogue.<sup>741</sup> It seems that Gell made a practice of rereading and reflecting on these letters with the intention of garnering support and comfort. This was certainly what Porter encouraged; on several occasions, he wrote in the apparent knowledge that Gell had preserved his correspondence and would be able to revisit it to refresh herself with prior counsels. Once, he explicitly observed that it would be 'les paines to you to pick them out then for me to write them ouer again'.<sup>742</sup> Certain parallels have already been seen with Nehemiah Wallington's letter-book and other predominantly religious commonplace books and miscellanies containing copies of printed devotional epistles. However, unlike Wallington, Gell appears to have compiled her epistolary manuscript for purely personal devotional purposes. The textual remains of another gentlewoman, Margaret Charlton (1636-1681), who utilised the letters of spiritual counsel which she received in her own private devotions, provides an illuminating contemporary comparison.

Charlton, who was born into an established Shropshire gentry family, became Baxter's wife in 1662, after having enjoyed a spiritually intimate relationship with the

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<sup>740</sup> Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright, 'Piety and Sociability in Early Modern Women's Letters', *Women's Writing*, 13/1 (2006), 44-5, 56.

<sup>741</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 154.

<sup>742</sup> *Ibid.*, 135, 50, 62, 123. Baxter explicitly recommended this practice to another correspondent: DWL MS 59, *iv. fo.* 129<sup>f-v</sup>.

celebrated minister during the final years of his Kidderminster pastorate. Her mother was devoted to Baxter and had relocated to the parish in the hope of acquiring great spiritual benefits from his ministry.<sup>743</sup> Although Baxter and Charlton resided in the same town, he communicated with her through the medium of letter-writing, seemingly on account of her unwillingness to approach him personally with her spiritual anxieties. In this regard, Charlton is reminiscent of the self-conscious and diffident Wallington, who repeatedly resorted to the epistolary genre to obtain counsel from his pastor (see above, p. 74).<sup>744</sup> The personal pastoral instruction which Charlton received survives only in the form of fragmented passages, which were transcribed and published by Baxter in his 1681 *Breviate* of her life. Most of the existing, rather romanticised, literature on Margaret Charlton dates from the early twentieth century and was motivated by a desire to present a more human portrait of her husband, the great controversialist.<sup>745</sup> Powicke and John T. Wilkinson attempted to trace the origin of Baxter's and Charlton's romantic attachment, scrutinising the *Breviate* for evidence of growing tenderness prior to their marriage in September 1662. Both historians interpreted Margaret's own 1660 declaration: 'I have now cause of sorrow for parting with my dear friend, my Father, my Pastor. He is by providence called away, and going a long journey', in line with a letter which advised on the unlawfulness of making 'an idle journey', as evidence that Margaret's decision to follow Baxter to London that year was motivated by her burgeoning affection for him.<sup>746</sup> Wilkinson also considered

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<sup>743</sup> Frederick J. Powicke, *A Puritan Idyll, or The Rev. Richard Baxter's Love Story* (Manchester, 1917-1918), 8-11; John T. Wilkinson, *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton: A Puritan Love-Story...* (London, 1928), 20-7.

<sup>744</sup> Baxter, *Breviate*, 22-3. Another of Baxter's parishioners, Henry Pearsall, commenced a letter to him, 'I make bould to right to you because I cannot so well speake too you': DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 225<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>745</sup> Powicke, *Puritan Idyll*, 6-7. Wilkinson, *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 19-20, 43-4, 54-7. More recently, J. I. Packer introduced Charlton to a more popular audience: *A Grief Sanctified: Passing Through Grief to Peace and Joy* (Leicester, 1998). See Alison Searle, 'Women, Marriage and Agency in Restoration Dissent', in Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (eds.), *Religion and Women in Britain, c. 1660-1760* (Farnham, 2014), 23-40 for an updated, critical assessment of their marriage.

<sup>746</sup> Baxter, *Breviate*, 19, 42. The text reads 'friends' but, as Wilkinson and Packer have both argued, this is probably a misprint for 'friend'. Charlton had no surviving father and this whole phrase is best interpreted as a paternalistic reference to Baxter, the pastor upon whom she depended: Wilkinson, *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 32-9; Packer, *Grief Sanctified*, 36; Powicke, *Puritan Idyll*, 13-14.

it particularly revealing that Baxter counselled her against ‘going too far even in honest affections toward the creature’, since devotion to ‘the beloved creature’ necessarily entailed a diminishing commitment to God. However, as noted above, this was a fault which he frequently associated with melancholics like Charlton; Baxter repeatedly chided her for having ‘over-loved, over-feared, over-trusted’ other ‘creature[s]’, including, in one instance, ‘a Relation’.<sup>747</sup> As has already been observed in chapter three, epistolary relationships between Protestant clerics and their lay female devotees could reach remarkable heights of spiritual intimacy. During the 1630s or early 1640s, the puritan divine, Calybutte Downing, addressed a letter of religious counsel inscribed with the tender phrase: ‘my heart, under my hand’, to his ‘deer freind and faythfull sister in Christ’, Mrs Barkley, who, he noted, possessed ‘moor hold of me in a *spirituall* way then euer anie hath had’.<sup>748</sup> Alternatively, the fluidity of the boundary between spiritual and romantic attachment can be seen in the correspondence of the Church of England clergyman, Isaac Basire. During 1635-6, he sent various letters of predominantly spiritual content (inscribed with the Christogram IHS) to his future wife, the young gentlewoman, Frances Corbett. Whilst these allude to their desire to obtain consent to marry, Basire also assumed the role of Frances’s spiritual guide. His correspondence contains suggestions for pious reading and directions ‘to abound in the acts of devotion and true repentance’, alongside an exhortation to preserve the purity of their love by keeping it ‘perfumed’ with ‘religious respects, and *spirituall* considerations’.<sup>749</sup>

Many of Baxter’s letters to Charlton are reminiscent of those which he sent only a few years earlier to Katherine Gell. He charged her with a comparably self-destructive

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<sup>747</sup> Wilkinson, *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 34, 37. Baxter, *Breviate*, 34-5, 41.

<sup>748</sup> BL Add. MS 28558, fo. 63<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>749</sup> *The Correspondence of Isaac Basire ... with a Memoir of his Life*, ed. W. N. Darnell (London, 1831), 13-22, at 15, 17. See also Paul G. Stanwood, ‘Lives of Devotion: The Correspondence of Isaac Basire and Frances Corbett: 1635-1660’, *EMLS*, 5/1 (May 1999), 1.1-19.

refusal to take comfort in God's mercies, noting her susceptibility to Satan's temptations to sorrow and despair.<sup>750</sup> Baxter similarly strove to counteract the negative impact which the moral rigor of his own theology appears to have had upon Charlton, confronting her tendency to consider 'the imperfections of your duties and obedience, to be greater reasons for discomfort, than the performance and sincerity are reasons for comfort'.<sup>751</sup> As often with Gell, Baxter assumed a scolding tone to 'chide' Charlton. He once admonished her fixation on 'childish troubles' – a condescending remark which betrays a lack of deference towards her superior rank. He wrote with candour, commencing a further section of counsel by considering 'two things I must blame you for'. Another interesting letter, framed as a response to Margaret's desire to be prayed for, provided Baxter with an opportunity to reflect at length on her weaknesses. He counselled Charlton to be 'more sensible of his mercy, than of your own unworthiness', 'less *self-willed*' and 'much less tender, and liable to commotion, and disquiet of mind', concluding with the rather bold pronouncement: 'by this you may know wherein I think you faulty'.<sup>752</sup>

Importantly, Charlton extracted these passages of spiritual counsel from Baxter's letters, copying them out for future application; they were, in his words, 'reserved by her for her use'. She then wrote out her own responses and self-analytical reflections alongside these transcriptions. As such, the *Breviate* provides concrete evidence of the pious practices of rereading and re-employing letters of spiritual counsel for further devotional ends, activities which fostered introspection.<sup>753</sup> The result was a mass of papers, something of the nature of a spiritual journal, which combined self-examination with ministerial directives. Following one letter in which Baxter counselled Charlton on her 'duty to

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<sup>750</sup> Baxter, *Breviate*, 23-5, 37-9.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*, 38, also 24.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 35, 38, 40-2.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

oppose sinful fear' which displayed 'distrust of God, and denying his love', she recorded 'some strivings against her fears and sorrows', including personal reminders that 'the greatest afflictions are nothing to hell-torments' and that, given time, she might yet receive the grace of election. At the end of her papers, Charlton included a final reflection on the sorrows and sufferings of this 'miserable world' and her need to recognise 'the best creature to be but a creature'.<sup>754</sup>

However, what is most interesting to observe about these letters is that Baxter never actually claimed to have written them. His authorship has long been assumed: Wilkinson, Nuttall, Keeble, Packer and Searle have all surmised it – the latter two without actually acknowledging that Baxter did not claim responsibility for them.<sup>755</sup> That Baxter was indeed their author must, it seems, be inferred. The themes evoked in these letters recur frequently throughout his printed works and wider correspondence. In one particularly distinctive passage, Baxter accused Charlton of having cast aside all comforts despite having 'been taught to difference between cause of Doubting, and cause of *filial humiliation*'. This is a characteristic formula employed in several of his printed devotional texts.<sup>756</sup> However, that Baxter authored these letters would not have been an obvious conclusion for readers of the *Breviate* to have drawn. His good friend, Samuel Clarke, did not make this connection when he incorporated a summary of the text into one of his collections of godly *Lives*.<sup>757</sup> Baxter may even have been attempting to conceal his authorship under the guise of having first encountered the correspondence amongst his

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<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-7, 42-3.

<sup>755</sup> Wilkinson, *Richard Baxter and Margaret Charlton*, 36-7; Keeble and Nuttall, *Calendar*, i. 387-8; Packer, *Grief Sanctified*, 35-8, 42, 66, 87; Searle, *Writing Authority*, 55. Powicke's conclusion is rather muddled. In one place he explicitly attributes this counsel to Baxter, but he also describes another letter which Richard wrote to Margaret after their marriage as the only printed correspondence which passed between the two: *Puritan Idyll*, 14, 28.

<sup>756</sup> Baxter, *Christian Directory*, 357-8; Baxter, *Right Method*, 403; Richard Baxter, *The Mischiefs Of Self-Ignorance, And The Benefits Of Self-Acquaintance* (London, 1662), 346-7.

<sup>757</sup> Clarke, *Lives Of sundry Eminent Persons*, ii. 183.

deceased wife's possessions. He claimed, rather ambiguously, not to have seen her papers 'till she was dead'. Moreover, he prefaced passages of written counsel with curiously opaque preambles, noting in one place: 'when she desired to be prayed for, she wrote down this Answer *which I find now in her Papers*' and, in another: '*the next I find*, is this advice against her resolution to go to London'. This contrasts sharply with Baxter's open acknowledgement of the role he played in directing his wife's conscience after their marriage. He explicitly identified a further devotional letter which Margaret received around 1665 or 1666 as his own composition.<sup>758</sup>

This observation naturally raises the question: why would Baxter not have declared his authorship of the earlier letters? Whilst one can only speculate, it seems likely that doing so could have provided fodder for gossip. That Baxter went on to marry the young woman over whom he had wielded significant authority as her sole spiritual director might have raised eyebrows amongst contemporaries. Their marriage already aroused rumour and gossip on account of their more than twenty-year age difference, Margaret's wealth and gentility and Baxter's prior and continued insistence that celibacy was the most fitting state for a minister.<sup>759</sup> As early as 1917, Powicke remarked that, to some, their romantic attachment may have suggested 'misused pastoral influence over a guileless girl'.<sup>760</sup> Baxter was certainly attuned to the complexities surrounding the provision of individual pastoral care to female parishioners. In *Gildas Salvianus*, he noted that, 'for the necessary avoiding of scandal, we must speak to the women, only in the presence of some others, and if we do lose some advantage by it of the success of our instructions, there is no remedy'. For privacy's sake, sensitive issues could be discussed '*submissa voce*', but that must

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<sup>758</sup> Baxter, *Breviate*, 22, 40, 42, 85-9. (My emphasis).

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*, 46, 101.

<sup>760</sup> Powicke, *Puritan Idyll*, 15.

suffice.<sup>761</sup> Baxter's sensitivity towards this issue can perhaps be traced back to the early days of his Kidderminster ministry; in his *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, he recounted how false, but damaging, accusations were brought against himself and a fellow minister concerning their conduct with female parishioners.<sup>762</sup> Interestingly, Baxter's concerns about the potential which individual spiritual counselling presented for sexual impropriety, or for rumours of the same, appear to be unique amongst contemporaries. Once, being confronted by a distraught female petitioner, who 'through extream affliction of mind, forgetting al womanhood fel down before him', Richard Greenham apparently turned his back in order to avoid scandal but continue dealing with her case.<sup>763</sup> However, Greenham penned no practical guidelines concerning how ministers could attend to the pastoral needs of women without occasioning gossip or slander. In contrast, sexual solicitation in the confessional was a live issue within contemporary Catholicism, both in England and in Europe more widely. Post-Tridentine endorsements of regular confession and the sixteenth-century emergence of the confessional screen served to heighten the existing potential for scandalous clerical behaviour.<sup>764</sup> As Arthur Marotti has demonstrated, the trope of the lecherous priest or Jesuit confessor, who abused the secrecy of the confessional to satisfy his lust, held particular power over the English Protestant imagination.<sup>765</sup>

Comparison with the sort of scandal which surrounded the practice of regular confession and spiritual direction within contemporary Catholicism helps to underscore the similar degree of authority with which some Protestant ministers were able to counsel lay

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<sup>761</sup> Baxter, *Gildas Salvianus*, 426-7. Baxter's use of the letter form to communicate with Charlton may even have been a further pragmatic attempt to avoid scandal.

<sup>762</sup> Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I, 24.

<sup>763</sup> Parker and Carlson, *Practical Divinity*, 166.

<sup>764</sup> Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice* (London, 2000), 117-19; John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 147-9; Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and Their Female Penitents, 1450-1750* (New York, 2005), 20-7.

<sup>765</sup> Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, 2005), 53-65.

devotees. The *Breviate* repeatedly emphasises that Charlton formed an intimate spiritual relationship with one sole religious guide, although this was actually contrary to Baxter's advice that she disclose her case to her mother and friends and confer about spiritual matters with godly brethren. On being chided by Baxter, she resolved to 'freely discourse my thoughts, so far as is requisite to my just advice'.<sup>766</sup> During the 1650s, Charlton did receive letters from her mother containing spiritual counsel and encouragement. These delighted Baxter, who printed several alongside a fascinating appeal to '*Mr. Fox in his Book of Martyrs*' who '*publisheth a great number of as mean Letters as any of these, even some of women, and some written to the Martyrs, as well as those written by them*'.<sup>767</sup> Elsewhere in print, Baxter explicitly remarked that the duty of mutual spiritual edification could be fulfilled through letter-writing. Reflecting on the value of epistolary fellowship amongst believers, he noted that 'men that are separated by sea and land, can yet by the meer intercourse of Letters, carry on both great and gainful trades, even to the value of their whole estate'.<sup>768</sup> Interestingly, however, although Charlton retained her mother's letters, the *Breviate* does not make any reference to her utilising the counsel which they contained for self-analysis or meditation, as she did with Baxter's. The same might be observed of Katherine Gell, who preserved a letter of spiritual counsel penned by her husband, but did not copy it into her devotional letter-book.

### **'Ghostly Direction': The 'Seuerall Deuotions' of Anna Williams**

As a towering clerical figure with a vast printed and manuscript corpus, Baxter and his thought and ministry are seldom viewed in comparative focus with lesser-known individuals from across the Protestant spectrum. As a result, it seems profitable to conclude

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<sup>766</sup> Baxter, *Breviate*, 22, 24, 28, 34.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-5.

<sup>768</sup> Baxter, *Saints Everlasting Rest*, 676-7. In his youth, Baxter profited from receiving 'Consolatory Letters' from a friend: Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Part I, 11.

by briefly considering the epistolary entries contained within the pious miscellany of another seventeenth-century gentlewoman, the Prayer Book devotee and committed royalist, Anna Williams (alias Cromwell) (1623-1688), wife of Henry Cromwell, MP for Huntingdonshire. These offer a profitable comparison with Baxter's recommendations for private counselling and confession, effectively exemplifying an important thread of continuity across churchmanship and helping to illuminate the broader contemporary significance of his pastoral activity. Like the epistolary remains of Gell and Charlton, Williams's miscellany illustrates the use to which letters of spiritual counsel were put as resources for personal devotion.

Anna's branch of the Cromwell family had close links to the Protector, but remained staunch supporters of the monarchy. She and her husband reverted to the surname, Williams, at the Restoration.<sup>769</sup> Despite spanning almost two hundred folios, her remarkable 'Booke of seuerall deuotions' has attracted little scholarly attention. In 2012, Margaret Ezell published a valuable, broad-ranging essay, which reflected shrewdly on the possible uses of this British Library manuscript and expanded current biographical knowledge of its compiler. Aside from this piece, Williams's volume has received only brief scholarly comments, chiefly focused on the several original female-authored poems which it contains.<sup>770</sup> Yet amongst her religious prose and poetry Williams also compiled two unexplored entries which take the form of letters of spiritual counsel.

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<sup>769</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, 'The Exemplary Wife: Anna Cromwell Williams's *Book of Secrets*', in S. P. Cerasano and Steven W. May (eds.), *In the Prayse of Writing: Early Modern Manuscript Studies: Essays in Honour of Peter Beal* (London, 2012), 281-2. Williams transcribed printed devotional verses on the Book of Common Prayer by Francis Quarles and included prayers for the royal family: BL Harley MS 2311, fos. 17<sup>v</sup>, 8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid., fo. 3<sup>r</sup>. Ezell, 'The Exemplary Wife', 281-99. For example, Pamela S. Hammons, *Gender, Sexuality, and Material Objects in English Renaissance Verse* (Farnham, 2010), 98-101. A valuable manuscript description and biography have been produced by *The Perdita Project*, <[http://web.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/html/ms\\_BLH2311.htm](http://web.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/html/ms_BLH2311.htm)> accessed 28 October 2014.

The title page of Williams's manuscript is dated 1656, 1660 and, above a small passage of shorthand, 1668. Ezell has convincingly argued that Williams transcribed the majority of the collection during the 1650s, although she evidently continued to return to the text both throughout and beyond the chronological period of this thesis. Some later sections display obvious additions and emendations.<sup>771</sup> The letters which she transcribed are both unattributed and undated, prefaced only by the titles: 'Pious meditations or a priuate lookeing glass for the closset, sent to one newly recouered out of a great fitt of sicknesse' and 'Comfortable Councells & aduise with stronge hopes for a disconsolate afflicted soule'. The former encompasses two short devotional verses. Although it is not certain that both letters were penned by the same author, several features point towards this conclusion. The first closes with a declaration that 'this is the Aduice & wholesome Counsell of him, who (without Arrogancy or uaine glory) in this priuate paper, styles himselfe, your Ghostly Father ... [and] your faithfull and most humble seruant for Jesus sake', whilst the second is also labelled 'Ghostly direction' and similarly signed: '*your* trusty Freind & most faithful seruant in Christ'.<sup>772</sup> Nor is it certain that Williams herself was the recipient, although again this is the most likely conclusion. The themes of the letters certainly correspond with the wider devotional interests of her collection and repeated references to their privacy suggest that the counsel which they contain was never intended for distribution. Furthermore, the letter-writer's expressed hope that his addressee might prove 'an Exemplar of piety & vertue for others in *your* ranke and quality to write after', confirms that this correspondence was addressed to someone of status.<sup>773</sup> The second epistle was evidently composed in response to a letter which had detailed various

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<sup>771</sup> Ezell, 'The Exemplary Wife', 282-7. Only one item in the collection, a sermon by the Laudian curate of Ramsey, John Robins, can be definitively dated to after the 1650s. This sermon was most likely delivered around the time of his reinstatement in 1660. The reference it contains to the 1604 Prayer Book certainly suggests a pre-1662 dating: BL Harley MS 2311, fos. 74<sup>v</sup>-101<sup>f</sup>. Many of the entries in the volume can be dated to much earlier than 1656.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid., fos. 41<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid., fo. 43<sup>f</sup>.

spiritual grievances and importuned personalised counsel; it commences: 'I receiued your letter and do truly sympathize with you'. The proffered guidance was certainly penned later than 1650, for the letter-writer advised his addressee to consult a devotional text which was published in that year, namely the 'uery excellent Remedies prescribed by that most reuerend & incomperable Dr of the church, Dr . Taylor' in 'his rule of holy liuing'.<sup>774</sup>

Aside from the author's self-designation, 'Ghostly Father', further indication of his clerical status can be found in the first epistle, which was apparently composed in the wake of its recipient's recovery from a serious illness. In an endorsement of the practice of making confession to a clergyman, the letter-writer noted that the afflicted had done

well therefore, in desiring the assistance of a priest and minister Ecclesiasticall, for in so doing, you did directly follow the aduice & counsell of the holy apostle St. James 5.14: who sayth, that if they pray ouer us, & wee confess our sinnes, they shall be forgiuen.

He further defended this practice by citing the scriptural command of John 20:23 ('whose sinnes ye Remitt, they are remitted') and the controversial sermon on confession and absolution which the ceremonialist divine, Lancelot Andrewes, preached at Whitehall in 1600.<sup>775</sup> Whilst his emphasis on the priestly power of absolution betrays a theological contrast with Baxter's reflections, when viewed in comparative perspective, this epistle demonstrates some interesting continuity between the practical recommendations for individual pastoral care of Protestants of very differing confessional hues. The remainder of the letter contains a firm warning against returning to former sins and a comforting encouragement to 'Go on chearfully, Perseuere in goodness, Endure unto the end & you shall be saued'.<sup>776</sup>

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<sup>774</sup> Ibid., fos. 43<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid., fo. 42<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>. See Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 19, 35, 472-3, 72-5.

<sup>776</sup> BL Harley MS 2311, fo. 43<sup>r</sup>.

The second letter also contains interesting evidence of continuity between contemporary puritan and conformist Protestant devotion. As Alec Ryrie has recently suggested, the unifying features of early modern Protestant piety are frequently more apparent than those disparities which denote the specifics of confessional colouring.<sup>777</sup> Many of the concerns which the letter-writer sought to address are strikingly reminiscent of those raised by Katherine Gell. In response to his troubled correspondent's 'complaint of being ... distracted at *your* prayers & deuotions', he offered reassurance that this 'partial priuation of grace, the abatement of *your* feruour in prayer *which you* complaine of', was only to be expected. Although imperfection in religious duties might be grounds for lamentation, these 'naturall infirmityes of *your* condition in the flesh' ought not to occasion despair.<sup>778</sup> All the same, the letter-writer clarified that if the 'complaint be of some notorious wandrings', then 'I neede not say how seuerer *you* should be in judging *your* selfe'. Although he sought to suppress despondency, he was also eager to see progress in his spiritual charge and remarked: 'I hope better things of *you*'.<sup>779</sup> The remainder of the epistle contains instruction on enduring the assaults and temptations of the devil in conformity with Christ's example. The letter-writer concluded in terms reminiscent of the Cambridgeshire pastor, Richard Greenham, reassuring his addressee that 'the sinne *which* is detested and abhorred assuredly shall neuer proue our damnation'.<sup>780</sup>

That Williams valued and preserved this epistolary counsel is unsurprising. A sermon of the Laudian curate, John Robins, which she also transcribed, reflected extensively on the dignity of the ministerial office and instructed laypeople to 'trust not to *your* owne braine[,] to *your* owne knowledg' but, on encountering doubts and queries, to

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<sup>777</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 6-8.

<sup>778</sup> BL Harley MS 2311, fos. 44<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 45<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 46<sup>v</sup>-7<sup>r</sup>. See above, p. 48.

‘repaire to gods ushers, to his Priests whose lippes preserue knowledg’. Robins went on to lament the disinclination of the laity to ‘goe for Counsell in religion & case of Conscience’ whereas, if a pastor were ‘learned in the lawes of the land, & well acquainted with the busynesse of the world’, many would eagerly seek out his temporal advice.<sup>781</sup> Moreover, the author of Williams’s letters actually underscored the importance of preserving and reflecting on epistolary counsel. Towards the end of the second letter, he remarked:

I haue thus much now to adde towards the alleuiating *your* troubled condition, & then I shall leaue *you* to the ruminating & meditating of this *which* it hath pleased god should be returned to *you* by his unworthy seruant.<sup>782</sup>

Interestingly, though, Williams may also have believed that the devotional value of such passages of ministerial instruction transcended their original personal context. It is notable that, sometime after 1656, she expunged the word ‘priuate’ from the original title of her composition, ‘A Booke of seuerall priuate deuotions’ – an action which Ezell believes may indicate an alteration of ‘her original vision of the function and audience for her writing’.<sup>783</sup> Overall, her manuscript provides valuable confirmation, from a non-puritan source, of the significance which many laypeople attached to clerical counsel and of the enduring function which it could serve as a resource for pious activity.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated, chiefly through illustrations from the rich pastoral correspondence of Richard Baxter, the frequency with which troubled laypeople sought out such celebrated ministerial advisers for the health of their souls. Baxter’s lay

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<sup>781</sup> Ibid., fos. 89<sup>f</sup>, 92<sup>v</sup>. A further passage, which may be Williams’s own composition, attributes a distinctive intercessory function to the ‘ArchBishops, Bishops, & priests of this Kingdome’: *ibid.*, fo. 139<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid., fo. 46<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid., fo. 3<sup>f</sup>. Ezell, ‘The Exemplary Wife’, 284-5, 287. Yet, Williams also used shorthand in places, a technique which was frequently employed to maintain secrecy. Gell similarly included two very brief shorthand passages in her letter-book, possibly with the intention of concealing personal information from curious eyes: DRO D3287/47/7, 138, 235. Despite taking advice from the early modern shorthand specialist, Frances Henderson, I have been unable to identify the system which Gell employed.

correspondents appealed to him for his dependable counsel, declaring their willingness to submit wholeheartedly to his authority and be subject to intense clerical scrutiny. In turn, he wrote openly and candidly to individuals from across the social spectrum. Baxter's conception of the limits of the epistolary medium rendered him unwilling to prescribe simple cures or conclude decisively in cases of conscience. Instead, many of his letters display a complex application of casuistry, which reflects the increasing sophistication of printed practical divinity.

This chapter has offered a fresh perspective on the case of Katherine Gell, demonstrating the recourse which she had to extensive networks of ministerial direction. Against the backdrop of Gell's unremitting desire for expert clerical counselling, a subtly subversive degree of lay agency has been illuminated. Whilst Baxter was concerned to ensure that ministerial authority, in general, was maintained, Gell's efforts to obtain the most proficient pastoral assistance demonstrate the important dimension of choice, on the part of the laity, in the practice of spiritual counselling. Indeed, this chapter has presented further evidence which suggests that steadily growing claims of clerical professionalism went hand in hand with an increasing recognition that ministers might possess specific specialisations. I have also shown that, although women were not dominant amongst Baxter's correspondents, several did enter into particularly intimate and spiritually dependent relationships with this celebrated pastor. Furthermore, the examples of several gentlewomen, from both ends of the Protestant spectrum, have been employed to demonstrate the function which religious epistles could serve as a resource for personal devotion. This provides an interesting counterpoint to Mary Morrissey's and Gillian Wright's depiction of devotional letters as a non-introspective genre. This comparative dimension, which is so often missing from investigations of Richard Baxter's ministry,

helps to illustrate, not merely the unique contribution of his pastoral thought, but the broader trends within contemporary Protestant devotion which it so effectively illuminates.

## **5. Godly Conference, Lay Counsellors and the Epistolary Communion of Saints**

### **Introduction**

Whilst the preceding chapters of this thesis have largely centred on clerical counselling, lay practices of spiritually instructive letter-writing provide the focus of this next section. This type of lay activity has already received some attention, particularly in chapter two. Here, I will draw on a significant number of previously unexplored printed and manuscript letters, in combination with some more familiar sources, to present a critical response to the secondary literature on this subject. In order to draw comparisons and contrasts with clerical pastoral counselling, a more thorough and focused exploration than scholars have previously provided of the scope and nature of lay involvement in didactic epistolary activity is required. Consequently, this chapter will distinguish between two types of letter-writing: a reciprocal practice of conference whereby spiritual equals reflected on their religious experiences and offered mutually edifying counsel, and a genuinely hierarchical model of epistolary relations whereby one individual functioned as the dominant advisor of another. These categories will be explored through a number of complementary case studies which provide insights into the relationship between the individual and communal dimensions of puritan piety and shed fresh light on the nature of interactions between the godly and ungodly. The role of fraternal admonition within puritan religious culture will be examined and broader reflections will be offered on the subversive potential of lay counselling and reproof. Finally, gender will once more be employed as a category of analysis: I will investigate female involvement in edificatory letter-writing and explore extant records of paternal religious advice-giving.

Little scholarly attention has been afforded to assessing the powerful sense of religious obligation to counsel and admonish which constituted an important motivation for the remarkable degree of edifying epistolary activity in which lay Protestants engaged. Scholars such as Diane Willen have observed the godly desire for mutual fellowship amongst the communion of saints, noting that puritan theological emphases generated ‘a strong need among individual believers for spiritual support and sustenance from one another’. For Willen, these practices enabled puritans ‘to cope with the great burdens imposed by the obligation of godliness and the desire for assurance’, providing vital ‘emotional support’.<sup>784</sup> This much is undoubtedly true, but, in addition, the performance of epistolary counselling was itself a means by which godly laity could fulfil an essential pious duty and garner assurances of their place amongst the elect.

In accordance with 1 John 3:14,<sup>785</sup> the essential imperative to display sincere and hearty love for one’s faithful brethren was a constant feature of the lists of signs of salvation which proliferated in print from the late sixteenth century and fed the pervasive practice of discerning evidence of election.<sup>786</sup> For many godly authors, this pious duty of love was closely linked to the provision of counselling and charitable reproof. Richard Greenham identified the fulfilment of the obligation to ‘loue our inferiours, to instruct them, and draw them forward’ as one of the ‘markes of a Righteous man’.<sup>787</sup> During the 1650s, the lay religious writer, Richard Younge, declared that a godly man must be

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<sup>784</sup> Willen, “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 40, 19, 24-5. Similarly, Joanne J. Jung has placed very little emphasis on conference and counselling as a religious obligation: *Godly Conversation: Rediscovering the Puritan Practice of Conference* (Grand Rapids, 2011). Jung’s book represents a recent and relevant contribution, but her approach is only partly historical. She also explores this subject through the lens of practical pastoral theology.

<sup>785</sup> ‘We know that we are translated from death unto life, because we love the brethren’.

<sup>786</sup> See Timothy Rogers, *The Righteous Mans Euidences for Heaven* (London, 1619), 13-14. John Downname, *The Christian Warfare* (London, 1608), 243.

<sup>787</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 121, 629-30. Elsewhere, Greenham outlined the obligation ‘Of Christian Admonition’, noting that we ‘must be busie with our brother ... And if neede be, we wil sharply deale with him’. For Greenham, this might involve ‘admonish[ing] an vnruely partie by writing’.

‘zealous to admonish, reclaim and reduce such as go astray; and to save those among whom he lives’; Younge’s insistence that this be both ‘out of duty ... and out of love to them’ softens the hard note of obligation with a relational dynamic.<sup>788</sup> Reflecting in his 1615 ‘signs’ text on the duty ‘of Loue and Charity towards Man’, the Essex preacher, Nathaniel Cole, described the contrary behaviour of the ungodly who ‘suffer’ others ‘to commit sinne vpon sinne, neuer reproofing them, nor correcting them, nor admonishing them’.<sup>789</sup> The corresponding duty to embrace and profit from the counsel of others, to ‘not only with patience endure, but with earnestnesse entertaine ... admonitions, and reproofes’, similarly pervades the genre.<sup>790</sup> Many laypeople, including Nehemiah Wallington, derived comforting assurances from their own use of conference, counselling and reproof. In one notebook, Wallington identified his ‘love and delight in the fellowship and socity of the saints ... their brotherhood their company, their conference’ as a characteristic mark of being ‘Gods childe’. The self-focused aspect of his motivation is apparent in a remark of Christmas 1654 that, whilst the ungodly would be enjoying the festivities of the season, he would rather ‘doe for my soul as men doe for their bodys ... [and] be instructing, admonishing, conversing and speaking of God’.<sup>791</sup>

In 1976, J. Sears McGee argued for the significance of this duty of ‘spiritual charity’ from a range of predominantly prescriptive seventeenth-century sources.<sup>792</sup> In this chapter, I will build upon and develop this key insight with reference to concrete case studies, interpreting a significant body of printed and manuscript lay correspondence in light of contemporary recommendations that believers advise and edify friends, neighbours

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<sup>788</sup> Richard Younge, *The Whole Duty Of A Christian: Or, The Character of a true Beleever* (London, 1653), 10.

<sup>789</sup> Nathaniel Cole, *The Godly Mans Assurance: Or A Christians Certaine Resolution of his owne Salvation* (London, 1615), 279, 290.

<sup>790</sup> For example, Thomas Howes, *Markes Of Salvation* (London, 1637), 133.

<sup>791</sup> *Notebooks*, 287, 338-9, also 48, 51, 165, 211.

<sup>792</sup> J. Sears McGee, *The Godly Man in Stuart England: Anglicans, Puritans, and the Two Tables, 1620-1670* (New Haven, 1976), 182-3, 193-7. See also, more briefly, Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 129-34.

and relations. An examination of these rich, varied sources reveals that many laypeople consciously sought to fulfil their spiritual obligations to one another through the epistolary medium. As might be expected from the occurrence of these practices in lists of ‘signs’ of salvation, this didactic letter-writing was a characteristically godly activity, chiefly engaged in by individuals who were committed to documenting evidence of their election.<sup>793</sup>

### **‘According to That Duty That I Owe unto God’**

Between around 1631 and 1665, Walter Boothby compiled a vast manuscript commonplace book entitled, ‘A Nosegay of Euerlasting Orifficall Flowers, gathered out of Heauens paradise’. Boothby, a substantially wealthy merchant, appears to have lived both in Tottenham and in the City of London, where he was a lay ruling elder to the affluent Presbyterian parish of St Mary’s Aldermanbury during the Presbyterian ascendancy. A prominent civic leader, Boothby became a common councillor in 1642 and then an alderman in 1652.<sup>794</sup> His commonplace book primarily consists of notes from the sermons of over forty puritan preachers, whom he apparently heard in the pulpits of St Mary’s Aldermanbury and the parish church of Tottenham. Sermons of the eminent London clergyman, Edmund Calamy, are the most numerous. Also conspicuous are those preached by Calamy’s fellow Smectymnuans: Matthew Newcomen, Stephen Marshall and William Spurstowe, as well as other notable puritans including William Seaman, Simeon Ashe and

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<sup>793</sup> Patrick Collinson’s characterisation of puritanism as a voluntary religion of fellowship and conference is particularly relevant: *Religion of Protestants*, 242-83. Idem, ‘The English Conventicle’, in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *Voluntary Religion* (Oxford, 1986), 223-59.

<sup>794</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, i. Tai Liu, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society in the City Parishes* (Newark, 1986), 29, 74-6, 173. Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), 197, 229-30, 375-6. His deathbed bequests included multiple properties as well as plate and jewels: TNA PROB 11/330/331.

John Stoughton.<sup>795</sup> In addition, Boothby's manuscript contains some thirty unexplored letters of spiritual counsel, chiefly addressed to relations and friends between 1640 and 1663. Some appear to be drafts of letters, complete with insertions and deletions, whereas others were apparently copied into the commonplace book after having been composed and sent.<sup>796</sup>

The inherent spiritual danger which Boothby perceived in his family's considerable wealth underlies much of his written counsel to his children and several admonitions addressed to his siblings.<sup>797</sup> One letter of reproof sent to his 'Sister Bland', who had 'secretly' encouraged their father to transfer her elder sister's 'birthright' and 'portion' to herself, effectively underscores Boothby's sense of spiritual obligation to instruct and admonish. Boothby drew on the scriptural command of Leviticus 19:17, which bound 'euery Christian to a carefull respect unto there brethren for there spirituall ... good'. Desiring not to 'be a trangressor thereof', he penned a frank letter of seasonable 'aduice & counsell', urging his sister to interrogate her conscience.<sup>798</sup> In a letter of March 1656, Boothby further defended his admonitions with reference to the obligation imposed upon believers in Matthew 18:15.<sup>799</sup> More surprising are his repeated applications of Exodus 23:4-5 to the issue of lay counselling and reproof. In July 1642, Boothby entreated his brother, Richard: 'is it any signe of loue? to see a freinde walking astraye & keepe silence, doth not God forbidd this to bee done to a beast, an Asse, nay the asse of our Enimie'. A month earlier, he cited the same passage to justify sending lengthy exhortations to his young brother-in-law, Henry Witham, who had run away from home. Boothby remarked:

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<sup>795</sup> Sharon Achinstein, 'Calamy, Edmund (1600-1666)', *ODNB*. Between 1640 and 1642, under the acronym 'Smectymnus', these clergymen promoted Presbyterian ecclesiology in a fierce pamphlet war with Joseph Hall.

<sup>796</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 834-6, 837-42, 844.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*, 770, 796-7.

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.*, 837-8. 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, but thou shalt plainly rebuke thy neighbour, and suffer him not to sin.'

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*, 832. 'If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone'.

I finde it as a commande ... to be pratished, & performed by the sonnes of men, by all, to all, of all rancks and conditions whatsoever, yea so far doth this iniunction reach that not only men but beast are herein to bee respected.<sup>800</sup>

This unusual scriptural application is echoed in Boothby's notes from a 1649 sermon by the nonconformist minister of Tottenham, William Bates. Taking Leviticus 19:17 as his starting point, Bates reflected on 'the obligation of mearcy, & charytie which wee owe unto the Soule of our brother'. For this puritan pastor, the motivation of duty went hand in hand with an emphasis on the importance of spiritual community: reproof and instruction was also 'the best improuement of fellowshippe & societie'.<sup>801</sup> Interestingly, Boothby's manuscript provides further confirmation of the considerable endorsement of lay counselling by contemporary puritan clerics.<sup>802</sup> In one collection of sermon notes on the 'Signes of Saueing grace & of Salluation', Boothby recorded the vital duties of 'reproeing and admonishing, such as are out of the way; and seekeing there reformation' and of 'labour[ing] to instruct them', for 'what greater charytie [is there] then to saue a soule'.<sup>803</sup>

Other laypeople were also alerted to the need to fulfil this vital obligation of spiritual charity through reading Scripture. The Cheshire gentleman, John Bruen (1560-1625), reportedly found similar inspiration in Leviticus 19:17. Possessing 'an holy indignation against the profane customes and corruptions' which he considered to be rife amongst the gentry, Bruen 'would not spare (where he had any hope to speed) to admonish his friends by word or writing, for the reformation of the same'. The puritan preacher, William Hinde, printed one 'godly *Letter*' in his biography of Bruen, in which this pious gentleman upbraided a cousin for disregarding the Sabbath and declining to seek out

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<sup>800</sup> Ibid., 871, 866, also 894.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid., 462-4, at 464.

<sup>802</sup> Ibid., 64, 68, 422-5.

<sup>803</sup> Ibid., 571.

fellowship with God's saints and engage in various godly ordinances.<sup>804</sup> That Hinde accurately attributed this sense of religious obligation to Bruen is confirmed in the godly activist's own manuscript commonplace book. Sometime during the later sixteenth or early seventeenth century, Bruen remarked of this universal Christian duty ('to be performed of all particuler callings') that 'in doing good & communicating to others that need our helpe wee make our loue to god and faith in Gods promises more certaine to our selues'.<sup>805</sup>

Further revealing evidence can be found in the manuscript letter-book of a young puritan by the name of Dodsworth, a native of the parish of Romalldkirk in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Despite offering valuable insights into the religious letter-writing practices of mid seventeenth-century puritans, the contents of this Bodleian Library volume have not received scholarly attention. The manuscript contains copies or drafts of more than twenty-five letters addressed to family, friends and neighbours between 1656 and 1659, a number of which contain spiritual exhortations and admonitions.<sup>806</sup> It is clear that the letter-writer was a young man who had settled in London, far from his childhood home.<sup>807</sup> In the Rawlinson catalogue, Dodsworth is variously termed a 'puritan preacher' and 'apparently an Anabaptist preacher'. Of the latter suggestion of Anabaptism, the manuscript contains no evidence, although, despite his conformist upbringing in the local parish, a later shift into separatism seems possible. The identification of the letter-writer as a 'preacher' comes from his inclusion of an incomplete reflection on Joshua 4:7. Despite bearing some external characteristics of a sermon, this is actually part of a 'small booke' composed during Dodsworth's 'leasure time', which he hoped would prove edifying

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<sup>804</sup> William Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance Of The Holy Life and Happy Death, of Iohn Bruen of Bruen-Stapleford* (London, 1641), 194-6.

<sup>805</sup> BL Harley MS 6607, fo. 5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>806</sup> At a later date, these were bound together with copies of some late seventeenth-century Quaker letters in three subsequent hands.

<sup>807</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fos. 35<sup>v</sup>, 22<sup>f</sup>.

reading for any who ‘looke upon it with *your* ey’. Dodsworth certainly appears to have been a layman. He prioritised keeping his ‘conscience cleare’ over worldly advancement, acquiring ‘an estate’ and accumulating wealth. Although he accepted that ‘god requires me to laboure honestly in my calling’, having ‘discovered the vanity of it’, Dodsworth was resolved to ‘never hunt after it with delight’.<sup>808</sup> He addressed two of his letters from Clement’s Inn and, in one of August 1659, referred to himself as ‘servant to Mr Gregge’ and as the ‘weekely auditor’ of a London minister of whose ‘flocke’ he hoped soon to become ‘a sheepe’.<sup>809</sup>

Whilst the Rawlinson catalogue lists Dodsworth’s first name as ‘Alatheus’, I want to propose an identification with the young gentleman, Matthew Dodsworth, who was admitted to membership of Clement’s Inn in 1664 (at the age of approximately twenty-six) and who might well have been employed there previously by one Ralph Gregge who was a member of the Inn throughout the period covered by the correspondence.<sup>810</sup> Matthew’s will of 1682 and his father’s of 1664 include references to their family home and lands in Romalldkirk parish, Baldersdale and West Briscoe, Yorkshire – highly distinctive geographical locations which all feature in the letter-book. Like the letter-writer, Matthew Dodsworth had an infant sister named Judith and an ‘Uncle Daile’ and his family also had an acquaintance with the godly politician, Sir Henry Vane the younger.<sup>811</sup> An account of Matthew Dodsworth by a relation, the North Yorkshire puritan politician, Ambrose Barnes, praised his ‘eminent example of holiness’, recording an exemplary incident when he

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<sup>808</sup> *Rawlinson Index*, 589; *Rawlinson*, 164. Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fos. 9<sup>r</sup>-10<sup>v</sup>, 24<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>809</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 11<sup>v</sup>, 15<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>810</sup> *Rawlinson*, 164. *Pension Book of Clement’s Inn*, ed. Sir Cecil Carr (London, 1960), 254, 250, 252, 257. *London Marriage Licenses, 1521-1869*, ed. Joseph Foster (London, 1887), 410. This transcription could be an understandable misreading of the letter-writer’s signature. At fo. 13<sup>r</sup> ‘Matheus Dodsworth’ appears to be the author’s latinisation of his name in a formal address to his old schoolmaster ‘Ambrosio’, or Ambrose, Appleby. At fos. 11<sup>v</sup> and 36<sup>v</sup> ‘Mat: Dodsworth’ seems certain.

<sup>811</sup> TNA PROB 11/371/217. Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fos. 40<sup>v</sup>, 21<sup>v</sup>, 39<sup>f</sup>, 24<sup>r</sup>, 38<sup>r-v</sup>, 25<sup>v</sup>. *Memoirs of the Life of Mr Ambrose Barnes, Late Merchant and Sometime Alderman of Newcastle upon Tyne*, ed. William Hylton Dyer Longstaffe (Durham, 1867), 31-6.

slighted the directions of his physician during a period of ill health. This harmonises with the letter-writer's report of having snubbed the cures and comforts of any 'mountibancke' or 'Apothecary' in favour of humbling himself 'before the Lord'.<sup>812</sup>

Dodsworth evidently considered epistolary counselling to be a way of fulfilling his obligations of spiritual charity. He reflected on the mutual nature of this duty in correspondence with his father, asking to be excused 'if I bee ... something tedious and plaine in my dealeing with you' for 'I know you will not deny but it lyeth me upon, and you likewise to stire me up by soule quickning letters to set the lord alwayes before my eyes'.<sup>813</sup> Elsewhere, he urged the same obligation upon others. In July 1657, Dodsworth addressed an edifying discourse to all his former neighbours in West Briscoe, imploring them to 'exhorte one an other and reprove one another in loue'. The consequence of successfully discharging this duty was twofold; a faithful lay counsellor would be 'freed from the guilt of sine *against your Neighbours soules*' and would enjoy delightful fellowship, being 'joined in a sweete harmony one with another'. This duty lay especially heavily on 'parents of children, masters of families, officers in the church, or whosoever that haue care of soules'. Such individuals possessed particular spiritual responsibilities to their dependents and must 'laboure to *performe your charge*' or else discover that 'theire blood will bee required at *your hands*'.<sup>814</sup>

Alongside his letters of spiritual counsel, Dodsworth dispatched home to Romalldkirk various devotional books, both printed tracts and personal compositions. He included references to a paper book intended for his father and old friends, Christopher Dent and Henry Temple, in a letter of September 1657. In another, he sought 'favoureaible

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<sup>812</sup> Ibid., 32-3. Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 24<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>813</sup> Ibid., fo. 24<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>814</sup> Ibid., fo. 5<sup>r-v</sup>.

exceptance' from a 'louing freind' of a pious manuscript composition – a 'small peece of Laboure'.<sup>815</sup> A number of these printed books can be identified, including a series of three published by the puritan layman, Richard Younge, in 1658. Dodsworth evidently acquired Younge's texts soon after their publication and sent them to a friend in June of that year. These were short, cheap, didactic works through which Younge himself sought to fulfil his evangelistic responsibilities to his readers. He concluded his *Short And Sure Way to Grace and Salvation* by declaring:

I have shewn ... what are the *conditions of the new Covenant, and to whom the promises belong* ... if men will yet go on, and perish in their impenitencie; their blood be on their own heads. ... I have discharged my duty.<sup>816</sup>

Such books provided a means through which laypeople who lacked the biblical knowledge, pastoral ability or confidence to counsel and instruct could fulfill their spiritual obligations to friends and acquaintances. Younge's third text, subtitled 'A *Choice and Cheap Gift for a Friend*', was clearly marketed in this manner.<sup>817</sup> Interestingly, Younge also provided a printed model for lay epistolary counselling, which may even have influenced Dodsworth. Several of his published works claimed to disseminate religious guidance which had originated as personal correspondence. One such example, *Cordiall Covncell, In A Patheticall Epistle* (1645), constitutes an extended reproof of a supposedly godly friend who continued to frequent alehouses for the sake of good neighbourliness and networking. The letter is bolstered by the scriptural injunctions of Leviticus 19:17 and Hebrews 3:13, from which the author asserts that 'to omit this duty, is an argument we neither love God, nor our Neighbour'.<sup>818</sup> The same texts are cited in another epistle of 1657, entitled

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<sup>815</sup> Ibid., fos. 39<sup>v</sup>-40<sup>r</sup>, 18<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid., fos. 14<sup>v</sup>-15<sup>r</sup>. Richard Younge, *A Short And Sure Way to Grace and Salvation* (London, 1658), 22. Younge often sold his works at a loss, as well as lending and giving away copies: Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), 22 n. 121, 499-500.

<sup>817</sup> Richard Younge, *The Tryall Of True Wisdom; With How to become Wise indeed* (London, 1658), 1-3.

<sup>818</sup> Green referred to these texts as 'open letters': Ian Green, 'Younge, Richard (fl. 1636-1673)', *ODNB*. Richard Younge, *Cordiall Covncell, In A Patheticall Epistle: First written to an Eminent Professor of Religion* (London, 1645), 9-10. The key pages of this text are missing from *EEBO*, but are present in the BL copy.

*Preparation to Conversion*, through which Younge aimed to ‘supply with my pen, what I was bound to perform with my tongue’.<sup>819</sup>

Further evidence of the powerful sense of religious obligation which frequently underpinned lay counselling is found in the manuscript letter-book of the puritan lawyer and town clerk, Samuel Jeake the elder (1623-1690) of Rye. Whilst still a young man, Jeake began to operate as a nonconformist lay preacher and he eventually assumed leadership of an independent group of dissenters.<sup>820</sup> Jeake’s composite family collection contains examples of epistolary counselling dating back to the late sixteenth century. Many of these letters have received scholarly attention, chiefly in Anthony Fletcher’s and Michael Allison’s studies of Sussex puritanism of the 1970s and 1980s, but also more recently in the work of Diane Willen.<sup>821</sup> In 1999, the editors of Jeake’s surviving library catalogue drew particular attention to his remarkable collection of radical religious and political books.<sup>822</sup> Yet Jeake’s library also contained substantial quantities of ‘orthodox’ practical divinity and this mainstream puritan tradition evidently exerted a significant influence over much of his extensive epistolary collection. Included in the volume are several letters penned by Jeake’s maternal grandfather, John Peerson. Although, in September 1589, the inhabitants of Winchelsea, East Sussex, requested Peerson’s

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<sup>819</sup> Richard Younge, *Preparation to Conversion; Or, Faith’s Harbinger* (London, 1658), 1. This text was apparently circulated and transcribed by many individuals ‘at no small charge’ before being ‘committed to the Press’. It was reputedly ‘writ by a Person of Quality before his death, to his surviving Friends’, but striking similarities with *Cordiall Covncell* suggest either that Younge was the author or that he had a hand in the composition. It is impossible to determine whether the epistolary form is genuine or a fiction of the press. However, the BL copy does bears a handwritten annotation which provides a precise date of ‘March 20. 1657’.

<sup>820</sup> T. W. W. Smart claimed that Jeake headed a separatist conventicle from sometime around 1646, but direct evidence is lacking before 1669: ‘A Biographical Sketch of Samuel Jeake, Senr., of Rye’, *SAC*, 13 (1861), 60. Michael Allison has argued for a form of semi-separatism from 1641 onwards, whereby Jeake’s level of involvement with the parish church varied depending on his opinion of the current incumbent: ‘Puritanism in Mid 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Sussex: Samuel Jeake the Elder of Rye’, *SAC*, 125 (1987), 126-30.

<sup>821</sup> Anthony Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (London, 1975). Allison, ‘Puritanism’, 125-38. Willen, “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 35-8.

<sup>822</sup> Michael Hunter et al., ‘Introduction’, in *A Radical’s Books: The Library Catalogue of Samuel Jeake of Rye, 1623-90*, eds. idem (Woodbridge, 1999), xli-lx.

‘admyssion into the mynistrie’ and appointment as their ‘Teacher’, he was refused ordination by the Bishop of Chichester on account of his refusal to subscribe.<sup>823</sup> He did, however, play a key role in organising a 1603 county petition for the reformation of the ministry – a display of puritan activism which appears to have resulted in serious legal penalties.<sup>824</sup> Yet despite ‘caryeing about mee a violent suspition of endangereinge those with whom I shall conuerse by worde or writinge’, Peereson continued to perform ‘the duetye of loue’ which he owed to friends and family, penning edificatory letters to his mother and his ‘most deere’ friend, Mrs Ursula Shepherd. To the latter, suffering from a serious illness, Peereson wrote reassuringly that ‘the Lord can preserue in the greatest perills that are. Onely it is required of you, with patience to beare the burden that is layd vpon you’.<sup>825</sup> In another letter, Peereson sought to discover the causes of Shepherd’s recent ‘melancholye passions’, so that he might, through letter-writing, ‘discharge the duetye of a frend to my vttermost habilitye’. He advised her to discern closely between ‘worldly sorrowe’ and ‘godly sorrowe, and to ‘purge’ herself of any hint of the former’.<sup>826</sup>

Interestingly, on occasion, Samuel Jeake appears to have acted as a sort of ghost-writer for some of his puritan neighbours in the town of Rye.<sup>827</sup> His letter-book includes one epistle ‘which I wrot for *mistress* Anne Marshall to send to Dorothy Hodgkins at Lamberhurst’ and another penned ‘for Lieutenant Thomas Davis to send to Dr Westward at Arundel in answer to one of his’. The former is in the mode of reciprocal conference; couched in apocalyptic language, this letter sets out Marshall’s ‘present distempere [*sic*]’ and her sense of being spiritually bereft – ‘the Bridegroome is removed from the Bride-

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<sup>823</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fo. 1<sup>r</sup>. Jeremy Goring, ‘The Reformation of the Ministry in Elizabethan Sussex’, *JEH*, 34/3 (1983), 363.

<sup>824</sup> *Ibid.* Some of the petitioners were ‘attached & committed’, but Peereson seems to have ‘escaped’: ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fo. 31<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 19<sup>r</sup>, 16<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>826</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 20<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>827</sup> See Willen, “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 38.

chamber'. It concludes with an exhortation against emphasising the letter of Scripture over its spiritual substance (a hermeneutical principle with which Jeake was particularly concerned). The latter, however, was a response to a controversial letter on church ceremonies and government, which addressed 'acquaticall or spiritual Baptisme', 'imposition of hands' and 'dealing with sinners'.<sup>828</sup> Like Younge's printed gift books, Jeake's ghost-written letters seemingly provided a vehicle through which laypeople who lacked his theological competency could fulfil their duties of engaging in edifying rhetoric, when solicited by godly acquaintances. Writing as Davis, Jeake commenced the second letter by acknowledging the obligation to 'write something[,] because to a friend'. An informative clerical comparison survives in the commonplace book of John Rogers, vicar of Chacombe, Northamptonshire. Amongst other letters of spiritual counsel and admonition, Rogers included one, dated 31<sup>st</sup> July 1600, 'To my louinge Sister Elizabeth Wallison', which was signed by 'Mary Blencow' but 'indited by John Rogers[,] to exhort her beinge but of late conuerted from popery to persiste in the faith' despite the dissuasions of Catholic friends and parents.<sup>829</sup> Rogers apparently composed, or at the least dictated, this epistle on Blencow's behalf – an interesting example of the mediation of lay advice-giving, which may indicate that Blencow considered her minister to be better qualified than herself to supply spiritual counselling.

A final case in point is the chiefly unexplored epistolary activity of the London layman and haberdasher of St Martin, Ludgate, Henry Church, during the 1630s. In 1636, a collection of Church's extensive counselling was printed posthumously under the title, *Divine and Christian Letters*. Church was related to Nehemiah Wallington through his marriage to his half-sister, Patience, and, in 1635, was referred to by Nehemiah's father as

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<sup>828</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fos. 98<sup>r-v</sup>, 101<sup>f-2f</sup>.

<sup>829</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.273, 400-2.

‘a very honest Christian man’.<sup>830</sup> It is interesting to observe that, despite the family connection, Wallington did not include any of Church’s letters in his own collection of exemplary religious correspondence. A brief, anonymous biographical portrait, annexed to another of Church’s published works, depicts him in the distinctive mould of a physician of the soul. His ‘singular dexteritie’ in ‘comfort[ing] afflicted Consciences’ is noted alongside his ‘sedulous’ commitment ‘to Instruct the Ignorant, to reclaime the wandring ... to settle the unstable soule’.<sup>831</sup> The preface to Church’s printed correspondence compares his ‘Manuell of Letters’ to those which the ‘godly Martyrs were wont, in time of their imprisonment, to write unto their dearest friends’. Their ‘serious instructions and consolations’ are presented as both broadly edificatory and an exemplary ‘paterne’ for lay readers to utilise in counselling others ‘upon like occasions’.<sup>832</sup> Church’s letters are construed as a fulfilment of his spiritual obligations to other laypeople; they are characterised as ‘Love-letters’, a testament to his ‘abundance of sweet *spirituall affection*’ for his correspondents. Citing 1 Thessalonians 5:14 concerning duties of reproof, comforting and supporting the weak, the author of the preface notes that ‘these Letters witness for the Pen-man of them, that hee was carefull to do accordingly’.<sup>833</sup> Evidently, Church also viewed his own epistolary activities in this manner; writing ‘to one troubled in Minde’, he disclosed his sense of responsibility for the spiritual welfare of others:

I owe a duty to Gods children; those I cannot come to by Visitation ... to powre out my heart for them ... to comfort them with a relenting soule, to wrest them from Sathan, to force consolation on them.

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<sup>830</sup> Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 70, 73, 78. TNA PROB 11/170/260. BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 108<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>831</sup> Henry Church, *Miscellanea Philo-Theologica. Or, God, & Man* (London, 1637), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>832</sup> Henry Church, *Divine and Christian Letters: To Relieve the Oppressed, Comfort the Mourners, Direct the Wandring* (London, 1636), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>. Samuel Jeake explicitly appealed to the epistolary model of the Marian martyrs in a post-Restoration letter: ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fo. 152<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>833</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sig. A2<sup>v</sup>.

Elsewhere in his printed works, Church affirmed this enduring commitment ‘to Counsell the Ignorant, to Comfort the dejected, to Informe the weake, and encourage the strong in well-doing’.<sup>834</sup>

Individuals such as Church, Boothby and Dodsworth may perhaps have preserved their exemplary correspondence with the edification of future readers in mind. In addition, their spiritual letter collections functioned as concrete testaments to their fulfilment of religious obligations to others, providing tangible evidence of their elect status for themselves and for posterity. In February 1656, Boothby wrote a letter of spiritual counsel to his son, Thomas, of whose religious estate he had almost begun to despair. Although Thomas had apparently disregarded all previous written advice, Boothby noted that ‘this I can say, (*which is my comfort in my sadnesse*) that according to my poore abillytie it hath bin ... my care to bring you up in the feare of God’. To this declaration of a duty discharged, Boothby later added the brief but telling insertion: ‘a truste thereof this booke *which hath some of my exhortations & counsell recorded[,] though you may haue cast them into corners*’.<sup>835</sup> Earlier, in January 1645, Boothby had articulated his continued commitment to the spiritual welfare of his errant young brother-in-law, noting:

to the uttmost of my poore abillitie I communicated my thoughts unto yo[u] to the reclaimeing of you from those vaine courses ... if they are forgotten by you yet by mee they stand recorded & dated the 18 june 1642.<sup>836</sup>

Evidently, the very act of preserving a physical record of his counselling provided Boothby with a reassuring sense of having dispensed with vital duties. The same seems to have been true of Nehemiah Wallington. He summed up one admonitory letter to his wife’s sister-in-law: ‘I haue in part discharged my conscience of Gods command, which lay vpon mee to performe to you’, concluding with a warning that if she did not ‘harken’ to his counsel his

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<sup>834</sup> Ibid., sigs B1<sup>r</sup>, B8<sup>v</sup>-B9<sup>f</sup>. Church, *Miscellanea Philo-Theologica*, ii. 48.

<sup>835</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 823.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid., 880.

letter would rise up to witness against her on the day of judgement, regardless of whether she might ‘teare it [or] burne it’ (see above, p. 68). This powerful imagery is to some degree paralleled by Boothby, who envisioned his counsels, amongst other ‘meanes of doeing, & beeing good’, ultimately proving ‘fyry scorpions to torment you & presse you lower into hell’.<sup>837</sup>

J. Sears McGee has drawn a contrast between a primary puritan emphasis on the duty of spiritual charity and a broader ‘Anglican’ commitment to providing for both the religious and material needs of others.<sup>838</sup> Interestingly, Boothby was similarly keen to witness to his provision of practical charity. Amongst his letters of spiritual counsel, he compiled two pieces of correspondence which testify to his financial support of several ‘poore Schollers’, whom he hoped would become future ministers of the Gospel.<sup>839</sup> Furthermore, in March 1663, Boothby sent extensive spiritual exhortations to an incarcerated correspondent, one ‘Mr Farginson’; these profitable lines were to stand in place of material charity – ‘a duty incumbent upon all Christians’ – which Boothby had been unable to fulfil on account of his inability to gain admission to Farginson’s prison.<sup>840</sup> To the modern reader, the stress which Boothby laid on fulfilling religious duties would appear to possess a theologically problematic potential for works righteousness. Doubtless, this would also have been a concern for contemporaries. I have already noted that, despite vehemently urging the duty of admonition and exhortation upon Katherine Gell, Richard Baxter was quick to warn her against embarking upon ‘thes good workes with a popish intent ... suppose[ing] them meritorious’.<sup>841</sup>

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<sup>837</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 158<sup>v</sup>, also 137<sup>r</sup>, 138<sup>r-v</sup>, 151<sup>v</sup>, 162<sup>v</sup>. Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 810.

<sup>838</sup> McGee, *Godly Man*, 189, 193, 208-9, 221.

<sup>839</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 852, 850.

<sup>840</sup> *Ibid.*, 887.

<sup>841</sup> Boothby placed a striking emphasis on God’s ‘reward [of] euery man according unto his deportment, & carrage to this his lawe’: *ibid.*, 778. DRO D3287/47/7, 163. See above, p. 182.

For Church, communicating one's spiritual knowledge and experience for the benefit of others was a universal duty pertaining to 'every godly Christian' in accordance with their given talents.<sup>842</sup> However, it is important to observe that this obligation evidently proved burdensome for some contemporaries. From an examination of principally prescriptive source material, Joanne Jung has asserted that puritan practices of verbal and written conference were 'common', 'widely used' and 'enjoyed'.<sup>843</sup> Yet the fact that so many ministers felt compelled to urge this duty on the laity does seem to suggest a somewhat more complex reality. Joan Barrington's clerical contacts chided her for not putting her 'selfe forward in conference with freedome' and both Baxter and Robert Porter noted Katherine Gell's disinclination to this duty on account of her 'naturall bashfulness'. Of course, the distinction between face-to-face and epistolary conference is an important one; Porter reassured Gell that, although she could not communicate in words with many, yet 'you can writ *your fathers language* which is one kind of speaking it' and '*your lettres* I may say are weighty'.<sup>844</sup>

Alec Ryrie has recently questioned the extent to which early modern laypeople were willing to be counselled. He remarked that 'those struggling with temptation often kept their troubles to themselves' for fear of encountering negative judgements of their spiritual estates.<sup>845</sup> Whilst a sense of inadequacy did plague some individuals, in many instances laypeople were actually hindered by an 'euill Modesty', being concerned about appearing 'Arrogant' in front of their neighbours or seeming to affect the air of a teacher when they were more 'desirous to be a Learner'. Related fears that one might 'deceive

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<sup>842</sup> Henry Church, *The good Mans Treasury. Or, A Treatise, wherein severall heads of Divinity are handled...* (London, 1636), 264.

<sup>843</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, 52, 88-9 and the preface.

<sup>844</sup> *BFL*, 130. DRO D3287/47/7, 19, 22, 157-62, 30.

<sup>845</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 397.

others and delude my own soul' by leading companions to an overly positive assessment of their religious estate were clearly underpinned by anxieties surrounding hypocrisy and the doctrine of temporary faith.<sup>846</sup> Nonetheless, despite such stated concerns, amongst those godly Protestants who constitute the principal subjects of Ryrie's recent monograph, spiritual counselling was a far more pervasive practice than has been hitherto acknowledged.

### **'Sweete Society': The Individual and Communal Dimensions of Godly Piety**

Diane Willen and Joanne Jung have both framed their examinations of godly counsel and conference in terms of the intensely communal nature of the puritan devotional experience. For Willen, surviving evidence of lay counselling, in both epistolary and non-epistolary form, offers an important counterpoint to a historical tradition which has characterised godly piety as overwhelmingly focused on the individual and their lone quest for salvation.<sup>847</sup> Mutual fellowship and communal sustenance were certainly central to the devotional letter-writing of many early modern Protestants. Henry Church corresponded with one 'Mistris G' who eagerly desired 'society with sound hearted Christians' and greatly appreciated Church's lengthy written exhortations. For 'Mistris G', their 'acquaintance by Letters' constituted 'sweete society' – it was something to be relished and delighted in.<sup>848</sup> Ryrie has recently observed that 'the more intimate and potentially powerful conference became, the more it ran up against a grave problem, that of opening yourself up to other sinners'.<sup>849</sup> Yet a desire to engage in correspondence of an intimate, expansive nature is just what characterises the bulk of the letters which Samuel

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<sup>846</sup> DWL MS 59, iv. fo. 72<sup>r</sup>. Anne Venn, *A Wise Virgins Lamp Burning; Or, Gods Sweet incomes of Love to a gracious soul waiting for him* (London, 1658), 16-17. Also Baxter, *Breviate*, 41-2 and *Notebooks*, 291-2.

<sup>847</sup> Willen, "'Communion of the Saints'", 20-2, 40. Jung, *Godly Conversation*, esp. the foreword by J. I. Packer.

<sup>848</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sigs F9<sup>r</sup>, F11<sup>v</sup>, F10<sup>r</sup>, G1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>849</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 397.

Jeake exchanged with godly male companions during the 1640s. Although Anthony Fletcher has asserted that Jeake ‘specialised in letters to friends and relations in need of spiritual consolation’ and Michael Hunter has written only of his many ‘letters offering spiritual advice to his co-religionists’, Jeake’s early correspondence actually displays far greater levels of mutuality and peer-support than these conclusions allow.<sup>850</sup>

During the early 1640s, Jeake sustained epistolary friendships with several godly acquaintances who had departed Rye to join the parliamentary forces. He composed spiritually intimate declarations of ‘my tenderest Affections ... toward you, whom I love as my owne soule’, acknowledging that their ‘Letters did not a little refresh my drooping Spirits’.<sup>851</sup> In June 1643, Jeake’s friend, John Coulton, recounted how he had acquired a greater measure of assurance than he had ever experienced in his thirty-two years, declaring: ‘duty compeles mee to discover my soule vnto you’. Whilst Coulton desired Jeake to ‘invent encouragements for me’ in these difficult and dangerous times, he also extended his own pious reflections, countering Jeake’s assertion that being ‘deprived’ of the ‘company’ of his friends was ‘a judgment of god’ with the observation: ‘tell me deare Samuell haue nott we found the lord more then euer because we loose you’.<sup>852</sup> In July 1644, Coulton wrote to inform Jeake that, during his recent sickness, Satan had been ‘bussie ... to up braid me with sinnes I had comitted’. He narrated his providential recovery, on having confessed those sins and having entered into a solemn covenant with God, and sought Jeake’s judgement as to whether he might take this ‘as a notte of assurranse’.<sup>853</sup> Yet during this same month, Jeake, who always appeared to be ‘a tall Cedar

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<sup>850</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, 64. Anthony Fletcher, ‘Puritanism in Seventeenth Century Sussex’, in M. J. Kitch (ed.), *Studies in Sussex Church History* (London, 1981), 152. Michael Hunter, ‘Jeake, Samuel (1623-1690)’, *ODNB*.

<sup>851</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fo. 69<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>852</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 70<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>853</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 78<sup>r</sup>.

and eminent in grace and Godlynes’, was cast into a state of extreme spiritual anxiety in which he sought counsel from Coulton and another friend, Thomas Carew. Shocked at Jeake’s distress, Coulton expressed fear that ‘satan hath gott you on the hipp’, but he quickly transitioned into the role of authoritative advisor, observing: ‘as for wonted enlargments neuer judge of your estate by this. ... Its a wrangling spiritt thatt counts his estat bad because weake[,] seing in our weaknes gods strength is mad perfect’. Coulton followed up this counsel with exhortations to ‘cast up: all thy former Comforts and experiences[,] Cast into the scale thy burth [*sic*] within the Couenant’. Although somewhat unsure about the quality of his advice (in better health he may ‘haue said more and to beter purpose’), Coulton could ultimately rest contented in the knowledge of a duty fulfilled (‘in much weariesomenes ... haue I strained my selfe to shew my loue’), being assured that Jeake would ‘accept of it’.<sup>854</sup>

During 1645-6, Jeake engaged in similarly reciprocal correspondence with one Charles Nichols with whom he fervently longed to ‘exchange some of the language of Christ’. With reference to their mutual ill health, Nichols counselled that ‘no passage of his all dispe[n]sing, and most wise prouidence should be suffered to slip without an aduantageous issue to *our* soules[,] whose rod hath A voyce and it is our duty to heare it’. Nichols concluded his letter with a reminder that the two men must both ‘resigne vp our wills to his’.<sup>855</sup> On another occasion, Jeake responded to a letter from one Nathaniel Mason, remarking in mutual terms: ‘your expression of loue by writing I could not but answer by the law of retaliation’. Jeake reflected piously on the challenge of attaining ‘a glorious vision of God’ in ‘this age’, but he apparently considered his exhortations to ‘waite on’ Christ’s coming to be somewhat substandard, for he concluded: ‘I cannot

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<sup>854</sup> Ibid., fos. 76<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>r</sup>, 79<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid., fos. 87<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>.

enlarge[,] my fresh springs are not in me'.<sup>856</sup> Another letter of 1646 also highlights the practices of reciprocal exhortation which were being embraced by a group of dissenting Rye laypeople, then 'met at Mr Millers house', who 'exercise[d] their gifts to mutuall edification'.<sup>857</sup> By the later 1650s, Jeake had acquired such a prominent position of religious authority in the town that his friend, Ralph Gibbon, could write: 'the lord hath made you Ann instrument where in hee hath conuaied the glad tidings of peace to maney soules'.<sup>858</sup> Yet theirs was seemingly a relationship of equals wherein both parties felt free to offer comfort and exhortation. Gibbon wrote confidently and rapturously to Jeake of 'how exedingly hath the lord honored his people whome hee hath Chosen. ... Sin shall haue noe more dominion ouer vs for wee ar not undar the law but undar grace'.<sup>859</sup> His letters do not invite specific counsel or instruction, but merely reflect a delight in engaging in mutually edificatory discourse, drenched in the language of Scripture.

Peter Lake has written of 'a process of collective growth in grace' whereby 'the personal gifts and spiritual graces' of individuals 'contributed to the germination and nourishment of that community of the godly'. For Lake, it was this 'which transformed the apparently highly individualist puritan style of piety into an intensely social experience'.<sup>860</sup> The godly letter-writers discussed in this chapter certainly took pleasure in promoting one another's spiritual wellbeing. Boothby's manuscript contains an incomplete letter to his brother, in which he declared that he was: 'enbouldned out of pure respecte to *your* Soules healthe, & eaternall wellfaire to *present* a few lines unto you, to stirr you up'.<sup>861</sup> Similarly, in 1631, Henry Church addressed a letter 'to a goodman fallen into *Poverty*', being

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<sup>856</sup> Ibid., fo. 98<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>857</sup> Ibid., fo. 95<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>858</sup> Ibid., fo. 131<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>859</sup> Ibid., fos. 132<sup>r</sup>, also 134<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>860</sup> Peter Lake, 'Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The "Emancipation" of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe', *SC*, 2 (1987), 144.

<sup>861</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 854.

desirous of his ‘eternall good from my heart’.<sup>862</sup> Yet individual concern for one’s own salvation could also provide the impetus for such pious communal activity.

At times, the rationale for counselling and admonishing is clearly presented in terms of the personal consequences of a letter-writer’s success or failure to discharge a religious duty, rather than their correspondent’s spiritual welfare. Richard Greenham informed his readers that

whose sinnes thou hast not acknowledged, thou art partaker of them; and if thou admonish not, and do [not] what thou canst with thy kinsfolkes and friends to recouer them, thou canst not cleere thy selfe of being guiltie of their iniquitie.<sup>863</sup>

Dodsworth clearly absorbed such contemporary rhetoric concerning the need to be ‘freed from the guilt of sine *against your Neighbours soules*’. On one occasion, having become aware of ‘an epodemical disease which hath beene scattered abroad about the citty’, he seized the opportunity to pen some pious lines to his father, knowing that at any ‘moment I may bee summoned before the tribunall of the Lord to give an account of my stuardshipp’.<sup>864</sup> The same is true of Church, who informed some Christian friends in July 1630 that ‘my desires are to edifie you the best I am able; *else I break Gods Commandement*’.<sup>865</sup> In a fascinating passage addressed to his brother-in-law, Henry Witham, Boothby noted:

I finde it in Sacred writt, *that* amongst the Carrecters of Saynts one earth (such as ... shall hereafter be mayd *partakers* of his glory, in the highest heauens,) this is one, & not the least, to haue a mearcyfull, tender, compationate harte, & yearneing bowells of affection, towards those *that* are in miserie.

Believing that such demonstrations of love and charity were a characteristic marker of election, Boothby explicitly penned his pious exhortations ‘to testifie my compassion, &

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<sup>862</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sig. D8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>863</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 361. See also Richard Younge, *Whole Duty*, 22.

<sup>864</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fos. 5<sup>r</sup>, 24<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>865</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sig. C8<sup>v</sup>. (My emphasis).

hartie affection to you, & to render my duty unto Gods commands'.<sup>866</sup> Two decades later, despite observing that his correspondent, 'Mr Farginson', had a remarkable ability 'to diue deep into the hidden misteries of Sacred writ', Boothby commented: 'yet that I may discharg my duty to God, and euidence a simpathiseing affection to your condition, I am moued to present these lines'. In this instance, despite believing that his epistolary counsels possessed only modest latent benefits for his correspondent (Boothby being in comparison but 'a child' in scriptural knowledge), he was, nonetheless, spurred on by his own need to render spiritual charity.<sup>867</sup> In a similar vein, Richard Younge concluded his *Cordiall Covncell* by informing his readers that, even 'if it reclaime not the party, yet' by providing timely admonition, 'your selfe is discharged: and he who requires it at your Hands will returne the same into your owne bosome'.<sup>868</sup>

All this is not intended to suggest that lay letter-writers did not eagerly desire and strive for the salvation of others, even when there seemed to be little hope of inspiring repentance or conversion. Instead, these were mutually reinforcing motivations. In correspondence with his disobedient son, Thomas, Boothby emphasised this double inducement to instruct and admonish; it was both 'according to that duty that I owe unto God & out of my tender loue I beare unto your poore soule' that he wrote with such dedication.<sup>869</sup> In 1633, Church informed a female correspondent of the earnest 'desire of your increase' which inspired his edifying lines. Yet he also interpreted this, alongside other displays of sincere love for God's children, in terms of his own religious estate, noting that it proved a comforting 'evidence in my soule ... it will euidence me Gold, not

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<sup>866</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 866.

<sup>867</sup> Ibid., 887-8.

<sup>868</sup> Younge, *Cordiall Covncell*, 9.

<sup>869</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 811. See McGee, *Godly Man*, 201 for a similar comment.

drosse; wheate, not chaffe; a beleever, not an Hypocrite'.<sup>870</sup> Elsewhere, Church combined a reflection on the salvific significance of mutual counselling (noting with reference to Malachi 3:16 that 'those that conferre together, doe well, and are accepted' by God), with a recognition of the spiritual benefits which one's neighbours would receive.<sup>871</sup> Boothby's instructive epistolary activities were apparently also a factor in his assurance of his election. In 1656, he remarked: 'truly it is more peace, & comfort to mee in doeing of my duty herein ... then if I were aduanced to the highest pinakell of worly [*sic*] honnour'.<sup>872</sup> Yet Boothby also articulated a pragmatic sense of the mutual spiritual benefits which each party could obtain. In July 1642, he informed his brother, Richard, of his hope that they would 'speake plainely, & ... reprove sharpely, and yet loueingly[,] whatsoever is founde in each other', for if 'the lord grante you so to walke to mee ward, & I so to you ... each of us may doe our duty, honour *our* profession, and saue one anothers soules'. This expediency is echoed in his notes from the Tottenham minister William Bates's 1649 sermon on reproof; Boothby recorded Bates's remark that 'this duty is of infinite aduantage unto the person reproveing' since fulfilling it would prompt 'the other person to doe the like office of loue to mee, when I shall fall into the like sinne'.<sup>873</sup>

### **The Godly and the Ungodly**

Drawing on a number of primarily clerical, prescriptive sources, historians such as J. Sears McGee and, more recently, Peter Lake, have explored the relationship between the self-professed godly minority and the greater majority of seventeenth-century people whom this faithful remnant considered ungodly and profane. Using puritan sermons and treatises, Lake has mapped out a stark 'binary opposition' between the faithful and

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<sup>870</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sigs F10<sup>r</sup>-F11<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>871</sup> Church, *Good Mans Treasury*, 270-1.

<sup>872</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 820.

<sup>873</sup> *Ibid.*, 871, 464.

unfaithful, rooted in ‘the objective fact of the immutable divine decree’.<sup>874</sup> Yet in 1991, Patrick Collinson underlined the challenge facing historians who seek to move beyond this idealised dichotomy to reconstruct the reality of ‘the social interaction of the godly and faithful with their allegedly ungodly and unfaithful neighbours’.<sup>875</sup> Whilst Lake has admitted that his uncompromisingly ‘exclusivist and aggressively self-righteous’ vision of the godly community may ‘have born little resemblance to reality’, he, nevertheless, insists on its crucial importance ‘to the self-image of the godly’ and, thus, to early modern scholars.<sup>876</sup> Here, I hope to demonstrate that records of lay epistolary counselling can contribute towards further investigation of this central historical puzzle in the study of puritanism.

McGee has argued that puritans considered their duty to display spiritual charity to be limited to those within the fellowship of the saints – an ‘essential approximation of men whom God had elected to participate in the “double covenant”’.<sup>877</sup> Alternatively, despite chiefly focusing on the godly obligation to ensure a strict separation from the profane, Lake has detected a clearer sense of duty to counsel and admonish the wicked, in the ultimate hope of converting them.<sup>878</sup> However, he has interpreted this obligation in highly antagonistic terms, remarking on the puritan responsibility to adopt a ‘negatively censorious attitude to the sins of the profane’. For Lake, ‘such concessions to Christian charity and social reality breached the walls of indifference’ but ‘scarcely conjure up a

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<sup>874</sup> Peter Lake, “‘A Charitable Christian Hatred’: The Godly and Their Enemies in the 1630s”, in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), 152-7.

<sup>875</sup> Patrick Collinson, ‘The Cohabitation of the Faithful with the Unfaithful’, in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), 52, 70-1. See also Alexandra Walsham, ‘The Godly and Popular Culture’, in Coffey and Lim (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, 289-90.

<sup>876</sup> Lake, “‘Charitable Christian Hatred’”, 182. Lake, *Boxmaker’s Revenge*, 46-7.

<sup>877</sup> McGee, *Godly Man*, 176-7, 174, 190. Although McGee also made a brief, slightly incongruous reference to the puritan ‘duty of proselytizing’: *ibid.*, 199-200.

<sup>878</sup> Lake, “‘Charitable Christian Hatred’”, 165-70.

picture of easy personal or social interaction'; such behaviour could only 'heighten and more fully internalise the godly's sense of difference and apartness'.<sup>879</sup>

Samuel Jeake and his zealous brethren at Rye, who shifted towards a position of full separatism from their parish church sometime during the course of the 1640s or 1650s, may have adhered to this radical binary vision of the world. Anthony Fletcher has observed the 'exclusivist streak' which characterised their religious thought, even in Jeake's earliest epistolary sources.<sup>880</sup> Yet for many contemporaries things were not so clear cut. McGee has asserted that, even if the godly did not claim absolute accuracy for their judgements concerning who was regenerate and who was reprobate: 'Puritans were certain that they could identify most of their godly brethren'. The occasional error aside, the crucial distinction could be drawn.<sup>881</sup> Conversely, my epistolary sources contain evidence which suggests that the godly were not always so eager to conclude in individual cases and that a generous reservation of judgement was sometimes favoured. Henry Church commenced his instructions to a gentlewoman who had fallen into extreme, blameworthy grief following her husband's death with reference to Acts 16:15: 'Mistresse *Martha*; as *Lydia* said, if yee judge mee faithfull, come in unto me: my charitable judgement of you, makes me to write to you; my few lines may comfort and direct you'.<sup>882</sup> Similarly, Dodsworth addressed religious instructions to several 'louing' friends whose spiritual estates he was disinclined to pass comment on. He frankly acknowledged their sins, but refused to despair of their condition, signing himself: 'me who hopes to meete you at the last in eternall happinesse'.<sup>883</sup> Dodsworth was emboldened to write to one companion 'because I see some desire after good in you, and the hope that I haue of *your* endeauour to render sinne odious

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<sup>879</sup> Ibid., 164. Lake, *Boxmaker's Revenge*, 47.

<sup>880</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, 117, 111-12.

<sup>881</sup> McGee, *Godly Man*, 177, 179.

<sup>882</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sig. H10<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>883</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fos. 14<sup>v</sup>-15<sup>r</sup>.

makes me bee incorrage[d]'. Despite these optimistic signs, he felt compelled to warn his friend that the Lord 'will not tarry to give everyman acording as hee hath done' and 'in his wrath will cut of evilldoers'.<sup>884</sup>

With respect to individuals' perceptions of their own religious estates, Alec Ryrie has rightly remarked that it was irrational for a person to conclude that they were damned, according to 'strict logic'. Even on their deathbeds, Protestants could not be sure that God did not still intend to call them.<sup>885</sup> Whilst such thoughts evidently presented little comfort to scrupulous individuals who were plagued by melancholy doubts, many letter-writers seem to have held out unfaltering hope for friends and relations who lacked their own zeal. Dodsworth did not fail to exhort old companions 'to laboure for a heauenly inheritance'.<sup>886</sup> From the evidence of both prescriptive and descriptive sources, Ryrie has downplayed lay engagement in evangelism (broadly defined as labouring for the conversion of sinners and unfaithful persons). Although this was formally advocated as a duty, Ryrie has suggested that spreading the faith was generally approached with 'a certain half-heartedness'; since most Protestants 'found it socially awkward and practically unsuccessful', they were broadly inclined to leave the task up to their minister. Ryrie has correctly observed that the printed genre of the godly dialogue provides an unreliable and implausible portrait of the saints enthusiastically engaging in exemplary conference with ungodly neighbours.<sup>887</sup> Yet examples from the frequently neglected genre of lay epistolary counsel are illustrative of a more engaged and optimistic approach to evangelism, if only where a relationship with the allegedly impious party already existed. The epistolary form evidently provided some

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<sup>884</sup> Ibid., fo. 18<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>885</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 28.

<sup>886</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 15<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>887</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 401-5.

zealous laity with a medium through which they could comfortably and confidently communicate the gospel.

Amongst several lists of signs of salvation which Boothby transcribed, can be found declarations to the effect that anyone possessing ‘true spirituall life’ would necessarily communicate it to their neighbours and strive to ‘gayne others unto the truth’.<sup>888</sup> Furthermore, Boothby’s notes from William Bates’s 1649 sermon on reproof make clear that duties of spiritual charity were owed both to those who ‘haue onely a name to bee’ pious and to the unquestionably ‘ungodly’.<sup>889</sup> Such prescriptions no doubt motivated and confirmed Boothby in his own epistolary activities. He sincerely longed for the conversion of his son, Thomas, who continued to run ‘headlong to ... distruction’, never evidencing true penitence, despite receiving many letters of counsel over a period of five or more years.<sup>890</sup> Boothby presented his written counsels as a ‘playster [*sic*]’, which must be applied before his son’s wound could ‘fester, & be incurable’. He hoped that, like St Paul’s ‘sharpe letters to the *Corinthians*’, his counsel might inspire true repentance and prompt Thomas’s return from ‘former euille wayes to the obedience of the Gospell’.<sup>891</sup> Boothby was confident that his directives could be effective in inspiring conversion. This belief, in conjunction with what seems to be a Calvinist conviction that the promises of the covenant were extended to the children of the elect, underlies his 1651 remark that Thomas was

not Ignorant that both by counsell[,] instructions & corections some dewes of grace myght bee distilled upon you, whereof although I see noe euident signes[,] yet am I not without hope, but shall comfortably expect the accomplishment of that promise of grace *which* the Lord hath giuen unto mee.<sup>892</sup>

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<sup>888</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 291, 342.

<sup>889</sup> Ibid., 462-3. Bates further asserted that fraternal admonitions ‘must extende ... to euery one that needes them, because brotherly reproofe is a spirituall Almes’.

<sup>890</sup> Ibid., 831. For part of this time, Thomas was apprenticed to a master in Barbados.

<sup>891</sup> Ibid., 831, 816.

<sup>892</sup> Ibid., 799.

Quite remarkably, Boothby drew an implicit comparison between the weight of his counsels and of God's commandments. Evoking Deuteronomy 11:18-19, he hoped his directives

might bee as a signett upon *your* finger, & as frontlees [*sic*] upon *your* forehead, oh that you would thinck upon them, at *your* sitting down & at *your* riseing up, at *your* goeing out, & at *your* comeing in.<sup>893</sup>

In a similarly authoritative vein, Church's editor remarked that the contents of his letters could '*minister grace*' to readers and Church himself affirmed that they could 'worke to' a correspondent's 'eternall welfare'.<sup>894</sup> In 1640, Nehemiah Wallington went so far as to suggest that his letters constituted a prophetic vehicle of divine communication; he admonished an errant neighbour to 'breake of your sins by timely Repentance and turne to the Lord euen now that God calleth you (euen by this letter)'. Dodsworth also believed that his written counsel could convert others. 'Thoe many pretious sermons and godly exortations' had been lost on his former ungodly neighbours,

yet ... this may bee the acceptable time of the conversion of their soules ... this may bee a lanthorne in *which* god will put his spiritt ... to lead them out of the grosse darkenes they are in into a mervellous light.<sup>895</sup>

Dodsworth expressed similar hopes for the 'conversion' of a friend in 1657, although to his brother he made the more qualified claim that, whilst his counsel 'could not haue established you in the truth, yet might it by the applicacion of it upon your soule (by the good speritt of the Almighty) detere you from many sines'.<sup>896</sup> Such assertions of the power of lay counselling certainly provide an interesting counterpoint to a recent historical focus

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<sup>893</sup> Ibid., 810.

<sup>894</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sigs A2<sup>v</sup>, D8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>895</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fo. 136<sup>v</sup>. Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>896</sup> Ibid., fos. 18<sup>r</sup>, 26<sup>r</sup>.

on the singular importance which puritans attributed to the sermon as a means of conveying grace.<sup>897</sup>

Diane Willen has described the community of saints ‘transcending the nuclear family’ to forge a ‘spiritual kinship’ which was privileged over biological ties.<sup>898</sup> Interestingly, however, a significant number of epistolary sources point to the potential for kinship ties to disrupt the godly versus ungodly binary. Boothby explicitly prioritised the duties of spiritual charity which he owed to near relations over those owed to godly associates. Although the behaviour of some of his siblings led him to doubt the sincerity of their formal professions of godliness, he felt obligated to strive for their conversions. In 1642, he wrote to his brother, Richard, who, despite having been ‘educated, & brought up in Goshen, a land of light’, was in danger of ultimately falling ‘shorte of that *which* God expects from you’.<sup>899</sup> Since their ‘neere relation & fraternitie of Brotherhoode, as neerer cannot bee, *proceedeing* from one father & lyeing in one wombe, and both brought into the world in one yeare’ must ‘challenge from each other a stronge loue, & unfained affection to the good, & wellfare, one of another’, Boothby sent many lengthy exhortations.<sup>900</sup> He similarly feared for his ‘Sister Bland’ who, despite having lived long ‘under a soul searching and a godly painfull ministry’, seemingly undermined her outward appearance of godliness by plotting to gain her sister’s birthright. Again, Boothby combined his counsels with appeals to their near relation, having ‘come from one woomb, [been] begotten by one father, bread up together under mr Callamy’.<sup>901</sup> Dodsworth employed very similar rhetoric in a letter in which he exhorted his sister to ‘sett you up a resolution to kill every

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<sup>897</sup> See Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, 22-30, 37-42, 54-5. Although Hunt suggests that this view was in decline from the 1630s. See above, p. 192.

<sup>898</sup> Willen, “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 23-4.

<sup>899</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 872.

<sup>900</sup> *Ibid.*, 871.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*, 837-9, 842.

sine, that is in you'. He beseeched her: 'take a word of exhortation from me *your* brother, haueing the same Father and conseived in the wome of the same mother'.<sup>902</sup>

Indeed, Dodsworth addressed the majority of his epistolary counsel to near relations. In one lengthy letter, he exhorted a younger brother to 'see the necescity that you haue to get a redeemer', it being his 'duty to repent and turne from sinne'. Apparently considering it futile to speculate on the eternal state of one who had lived such a short time in the world, he merely urged his brother 'to prepare for death when you are young for woe unto you if you be not prepared to meete the bride groome when you are called'. Dodsworth intended this letter to be circulated around his remaining brothers and sisters so that each might apply it to their own hearts.<sup>903</sup> This dissemination of religious advice amongst siblings is aptly paralleled in an illuminating series of letters which the future nonconformist minister, Thomas Wadsworth (1630-1676), sent to his sister, Elizabeth, whilst still a student at 'Christs-Colledg', Cambridge, sometime between 1647 and 1651. The young Wadsworth intentionally singled out Elizabeth on account of her 'good and pliable nature', exhorting her to 'communicatest' his words to 'all thy brethren' and so 'begin to lead the way to Heaven in that family'.<sup>904</sup> Wadsworth envisioned his sister neatly copying out his directives to '*be constant in prayer*' and '*readest the Scriptures diligently every day*', urging her to revisit them regularly and thereby know 'that thy brother loves *thy soul* as dearly as his own'. Wadsworth's foremost wish was for 'the *Sun of Righteousness* to rise among' his family and 'the day star of holiness and purity to break out of some of your souls'.<sup>905</sup>

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<sup>902</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 41<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid., fos. 26<sup>r</sup>, 29<sup>r</sup>, 31<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>904</sup> Thomas Wadsworth, *Wadsworth's Remains: Being A Collection Of some few Meditations...* (London, 1680), 50-7.

<sup>905</sup> Ibid.

Despite professing to see much ‘sine that is still remaineing’ in his aged grandmother, which did not inspire optimism about her future condition, Dodsworth also took pains to present her with ‘some Arguments to weane *your* effeccions from the world and indeauoure to wine them unto god’. Reminding the old woman ‘that though late repentance be seldome true[,] yet true repentance is never to late’, he expressed a particular wish that she would ‘indeavoure the reformeing of all under *your* power’ and ‘keepe them from profaineing of the Lords day’, which was ‘an abominable custome’.<sup>906</sup> This letter is comparable to that which Wallington addressed to an ungodly cousin, reproving his drunkenness and disorderly behaviour. The responsibility which Wallington felt for his relation’s spiritual welfare is evidenced in his self-critical remark that ‘I should haue tould you before of your profaining the Lords day’.<sup>907</sup> Diane Willen has argued that ‘just as the godly became spiritual kin to one another, kin who were not of the same religious persuasion were treated with reserve’.<sup>908</sup> Yet both Wallington and Dodsworth evidently continued to feel strong ties of obligation towards relations who apparently did not share their ascetic self-discipline or zealous Sabbatarianism.

For some, the duty of spiritual charity extended beyond the boundaries of both the family and the godly community. John Bruen apparently distinguished between the ‘blind, igneorant, popish, or prophane’, to whom he *would* offer ‘the fruits of Mercy’, and those ‘mockers, contemners of God, and despisers of good things’, who were irrecoverably sunk in sin.<sup>909</sup> Henry Church wrote to an incarcerated young man who, despite being the well-brought-up son of a godly Christian acquaintance, had been corrupted by his ‘keeping of ill Company’ with ‘ungodly foolish friends’. Church urged this correspondent to make his

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<sup>906</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 36<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>907</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 160<sup>r-2v</sup>, at 161<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>908</sup> Willen, “Communion of the Saints”, 24.

<sup>909</sup> Hinde, *Faithfull Remonstrance*, 183-4.

prison ‘a Schoole of *Christ*’, devoting his energy to striving for holiness.<sup>910</sup> Church’s wider works also affirm the importance of engaging in conference and counselling, not only with ‘truely tender conscienced’ Christians (who admittedly proved the most profitable dialogue partners) but also with ‘opposers of truth’, be they ‘Hereticks’, ‘Schismaticks’, ‘dissemblers’ or even ‘experienced Adversaries’. As Bruen stated, only ‘malicious scornors’ were to be exempted from the opportunity to profit by such means.<sup>911</sup> Richard Younge’s printed letter of 1658 was addressed to several companions who ‘think your selves *wise men*, and *Christians good enough*’ but were proved otherwise by their anticlerical belittling of ‘*Teachers and Instructors*, and more of their *godly instruction*’. Despite this apparent disinclination to godliness, Younge insisted that he was not ‘without hope to prevail with some of you’.<sup>912</sup> Similarly, Dodsworth’s manuscript does not indicate that he placed any priority on duties of spiritual charity owed to godly brethren. In July 1657, he aimed, ‘if possiable’, to draw all members of his former parish ‘from the loue of the creature to the loue of *your* Creator’, adopting the prophetic persona of ‘a messenger to tell you of *your* sinnes’. Although Dodsworth apparently considered all of the inhabitants of Romalldkirk parish to lack necessary zeal and discipline, a note of caution is required here. Judith Maltby has rightly warned against a tendency for social and religious historians to accept too readily and uncritically ‘the verdict of the self-validating “godly” on the quality of the religious experiences of those outside their fellowship’.<sup>913</sup>

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<sup>910</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sigs A4<sup>v</sup>-A5<sup>v</sup>, A7<sup>v</sup>-A8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>911</sup> Church, *Good Mans Treasury*, 268-70, 272-7.

<sup>912</sup> Younge, *Preparation to Conversion*, 2, 1.

<sup>913</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fos. 1<sup>r</sup>, 18<sup>r</sup>. Dodsworth wrote of ‘the sinfulness of that place[,] namely Baldersdaile’ and, he speculated, of the whole ‘parish’ of Romalldkirk. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, 11, 21-2.

Paul Seaver has remarked that ‘almost all of Wallington’s connections beyond the most superficial and casual seem to have taken place within the godly community’.<sup>914</sup> However, in his seminal monograph, Seaver made no reference to Nehemiah’s close relationship with one ‘Master Wade’, whom he identified as a ‘louing & Deare Freend’ in a 1646 letter of ‘wholsome instructions’. Although outwardly appearing to be a true professor, blessed with ‘fervency in prayr’ and ‘grate Knowledg ... in matter of Deuinitye’, Wade was actually ‘giuen vp to this Sin of Drunkennes and Hordum’ and ‘much vnkindnes’ to his wife. On learning of Wade’s covert wickedness, Wallington urged him to repentance with the encouragement that ‘heauen[s] gates are open’ yet. The depth of their friendship is evidenced in Wallington’s repeated exhortations that his ‘heart did bleed with in me to thinke of you’ and ‘of your sad and miserable condition’.<sup>915</sup> A comparable case is that of Thomas Lucke, to whom Samuel Jeake remained bound by ‘God, brotherly love & my Conscience’ to offer ‘the best directions I could’, when his choice of the company of disdainers of godliness (labelled ‘satanicall Satyrists’) and adoption of their ‘hellish alehouse practices’ gave ‘the lye to his former profession’. Unwilling to relinquish hope for his friend, around 1644 Jeake appealed for assistance from one ‘Mr Watkins’, whom he actually considered ‘more able then my selfe to wrestle with God for him & to reprove him & in Righteousness to instruct’ him.<sup>916</sup> When, on a further occasion, Wallington wrote to another ‘freend’ caught up in the ‘misrable sine of Drunkennes’, aiming ‘if it were possible’, ‘out of loue to your poore soule ... to pull you out as a firebrand from the bvrning’, he even chose to employ fraternal language, signing himself ‘your louing Brother

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<sup>914</sup> Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 104.

<sup>915</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 148<sup>r</sup>-51<sup>f</sup>. Wallington compiled two further letters in which the same Master Wade declared ‘his sorrow for his sinfull wayes’ and implored his wife to return to him: *ibid.*, fos. 177<sup>r</sup>-80<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>916</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fo. 86<sup>f</sup>.

in the best things'. All this would seem to imply that the boundary between the godly and ungodly remained rather more porous in Wallington's mind than Seaver has suggested.<sup>917</sup>

Finally, this broader commitment to evangelise is evident in the letter-writing of the Oxfordshire gentlewoman, Dionys Fitzherbert. Fitzherbert underwent a dramatic emotional experience during her late twenties, which she interpreted as a spiritual crisis, but which some around her regarded as evidence of madness (see above, pp. 188-9). Sometime subsequent, during the early seventeenth century, she addressed letters of counsel to her Catholic former mistress, Lady Holte, to a Protestant companion who had joined a separatist congregation at Leiden and 'to a special friend' whose impious living caused her great concern.<sup>918</sup> During her spiritual collapse, Fitzherbert had vocalised support for Catholicism and what she was then tempted to see as its more readily appealing doctrine of salvation. Consequently, she felt particularly bound to endeavour to convert Lady Holte and other acquaintances whom she suspected of crypto-Catholicism, aiming, contrary to her earlier distracted outbursts, to convince them of the truth of Calvinist orthodoxy. Writing out of a desire to 'redeem you from your errors', Fitzherbert emphasised her affection and 'compassion' for these individuals and her hope that her written counsels would 'rise not in judgment against' them.<sup>919</sup> She similarly prevailed with her 'most dear and loving' companion: a young man of whom she had been 'always willing to hope the best' since, despite having heard others denounce his ungodly lifestyle, she 'never saw no ill'. 'By that most affectionate love wherewith I love you', Fitzherbert passionately entreated her friend to put aside his former evil ways and 'let not Satan hold you any longer in the deceitful lusts' of 'this present evil world'.<sup>920</sup> This letter, in particular, like

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<sup>917</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 162<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>918</sup> *Women, Madness and Sin*, 229-79, at 267.

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-7, 253, 259.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid.*, 267-9.

that which Wallington addressed to Master Wade, reveals the concerted efforts to which some laypeople went to win over close companions whom they feared were sunk in ungodliness. They provide revealing insights into the practical realities of interactions between the faithful and unfaithful and the way in which genuine love and affection could inspire an evangelistic impulse that was far removed from both the contemptuous ‘negatively censorious attitude’ outlined by Peter Lake and the reluctant ‘half-heartedness’ observed by Alec Ryrie.<sup>921</sup> In pondering this discrepancy, it may be relevant to highlight the self-selecting nature of surviving epistolary sources, which were apparently preserved by some of the most assiduous amongst the godly.

### **‘My Admonition of Loue’**

The self-confessed godly minority certainly did not expend all of their admonitions on those whom they suspected were either reprobate or, at best, still unconverted. Epistolary sources also point towards the existence of a pervasive culture of reproof amongst the faithful. Diane Willen’s noteworthy article on spiritual fellowship within the communion of saints focused on the harmonious and mutually supportive dimensions of godly lay sociability, without reference to admonition. Significantly, a number of other scholars may have too readily accepted contemporary clerical assertions that the godly would ‘accept censure from kindred spirits with alacrity’. McGee observed that, although ‘the admonitions of the godly could be painful’, the zealous puritan ‘could no more resent their censures than the victim of kidney disease can regret the hours he must spend attached to the machine which removes deadly toxins from his blood’.<sup>922</sup> In a similar vein,

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<sup>921</sup> Lake, “‘Charitable Christian Hatred’”, 164; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 401.

<sup>922</sup> McGee, *Godly Man*, 198, 207.

Joanne Jung has claimed that lay conference fostered such ‘intimacy and confidentiality’, that ‘brotherly admonition and charitable reprehensions were more tenderly received’.<sup>923</sup>

There was certainly an expectation of good reception in prescriptive literature; Richard Greenham observed that ‘euery man must be content to be admonished ... euen by them that haue receiued lesser graces then wee, and with all modestie and loue: and thanksgiuing’.<sup>924</sup> Some lay writers seem particularly conscious of the need to act in accordance with this duty. John Bruen apparently made a point of patiently enduring reproofs and Henry Church preserved an exemplary ‘Letter of Gratulation for being *Reproved*’, wherein he applauded one ‘Mistris R’ for writing to inform him of some unspecified sin, out of a true care for his soul.<sup>925</sup> This particular piece seems characteristic of Church’s broader discernible attempt to construct his epistolary legacy in such a way as to minimise any potential indignation which he might arouse by assuming the authority to direct the consciences of other private Christians. But even some clerics were acutely aware of the potential which admonition held for ‘offence or provocation’. In his *Marrow Of The Oracles Of God*, Nicholas Byfield warned readers to ‘take heed of *judging thy brethren*’, to avoid ‘Evil words and complaining’, to ‘*render not reviling for reviling*’ and ‘condemne [not] thy brother ... till thou be sure of the fault’.<sup>926</sup>

It was certainly not always the case that the self-professed faithful would cheerfully swallow an allegedly godly reproof directed at them by their fellow brethren. A surviving fragment of a letter of July 1660, which was seemingly torn out of Boothby’s collection, both hints at further family financial quarrels and at the way in which reproaches (despite

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<sup>923</sup> Jung, *Godly Conversation*, 143.

<sup>924</sup> Greenham, *Workes*, 630. See also Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 343, 423, 543.

<sup>925</sup> See BL Harley MS 6607, fos. 6<sup>r</sup>, 101<sup>v</sup>. Church, *Divine and Christian*, sigs E7<sup>r</sup>-E12<sup>r</sup>. Church’s sin was apparently related to his ‘writing undiscreetely’.

<sup>926</sup> Byfield, *Marrow Of The Oracles*, 576, 616-7, also 570-1.

being couched in the language of brotherly love and duty) could inspire disharmony amongst the saints. Addressing his aged father-in-law, George Witham, Boothby wrote:

the last time I spak with you, you were pleased to exhort me to unity, peace, & concord ... this exhortation *which* you then pressed upon others ... I can but say is holy, Just, and good ... but giue me leaue to make *that* reply, *which* then was mayd, *that* the cause of our differences ariseth from *your* self, and we doubt not, but when Justice, & equity shall take place, it will appeare to be so.<sup>927</sup>

The surviving portion of the letter goes on to address the need for parents to bequeath their estates to their children in suitable portions, especially to their daughters, as Boothby's own father did. This telling allusion to a financial squabble, expressed through the language of mutual reproof, contrasts markedly with a letter which Boothby penned less than two years earlier to commend his father-in-law (and fellow Presbyterian civic leader of the parish of St Mary's Aldermanbury) for setting 'so pyous an exampell'.<sup>928</sup>

Further evidence comes from an interesting series of letters compiled within Samuel Jeake's exemplary collection, which have received little attention. In 1641, at only eighteen years of age, Jeake received a letter from the thirty-year-old John Coulton who felt 'compelled' out of duty, 'least guilt of selfe violence should ly upon my selfe', to reprove him for making several unjust 'Calumniations'. Coulton's chief concern was that Jeake had been 'whispering behind my backe' about his decision to live separately from his wife and about his support for their local minister, Mr Harrison, who had offended some puritans by using 'the words, Deare sister' when burying a 'Papist' and praying for a woman in labour with an illegitimate child.<sup>929</sup> Coulton lamented that, desiring only 'to haue prest my pen for silent seruice', he was forced to 'stepp forth in a vindicatiue defence'. Citing the model of fraternal reproof in Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15, Coulton informed his adolescent correspondent that he should have told him of his faults in

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<sup>927</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 734.

<sup>928</sup> Ibid., 905. Liu, *Puritan London*, 76, 233.

<sup>929</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fos. 60<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>.

private (for if ‘the righteouse smite me thatt shall be goode for me’) rather than falling to impious gossiping. It is interesting to observe that Jeake, taking offence in turn, attempted to employ the same scriptural injunctions concerning the proper performance of the duty of brotherly admonition. In a surprising show of godly one-upmanship, Jeake wrote:

whereas you reprove me for whispering behind your backe I may iustly retort it on *your* selfe; for I spake it to one of *your* sociable companions, but you noised it abroad before divers ... before you knewe the truth.<sup>930</sup>

Several years later, Jeake received another letter of admonition from one Joseph Nichols with whom he was unacquainted. Nichols reproved Jeake for having ‘despise[d] the ministers of God’ and, out of ‘pride’, assumed an unfitting degree of religious authority to ‘seduce the people’. Nichols’s letter concludes with an entreaty for Jeake to ‘accept of my Councel’ and cease from further disrespecting his minister and ‘the ordinances’.<sup>931</sup> Far from meekly accepting this rebuke, Jeake returned a fiery retort which is remarkably reminiscent of his earlier exchange with Coulton. He likewise regretted his inability to have ‘presst my pen only to silent seruice’, being instead drawn into ‘the fire of Contention’ and forced to ‘take vp this weapon to defend my selfe’. In accordance with Matthew 18:15, Jeake responded that he ‘could not but in loue shew’ Nichols how he had erred in misinterpreting his honest intentions and reproaching him in ‘the spirit of bitternesse’.<sup>932</sup>

In both sets of correspondence, the self-proclaimed godly parties each battled to frame their own ‘lines accordinge to the rule of loue’ and duty of spiritual charity, whilst stigmatising their correspondents’ reproofs as spiteful meddling and unwarranted scolding.<sup>933</sup> Despite their authors’ professed willingness to accept charitable rebuke with

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<sup>930</sup> Ibid., fos. 61<sup>r</sup>, 62<sup>f</sup>, 64<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>931</sup> Ibid., fo. 92<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>932</sup> Ibid., fo. 93<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>933</sup> Ibid.

humility, these letters demonstrate how divisive such practices could prove, even amongst the godly community. This evidence can be supplemented by a 1632 letter, included in Nehemiah Wallington's collection of exemplary advice-giving, which admonished 'Master I. W.' (most likely Nehemiah's father) and his wife for 'matching' their daughter with greater consideration for financial security than for the good of her soul. This letter is couched in the language of obligation and affection; the addressees are exhorted to 'receiue these speaking characters' as 'frendly counsell, as a word spoken in season, as a watch word to prevent an euill'. Yet despite these protestations of dutiful well-wishing, the letter-writer tellingly refused to disclose their identity:

it will not be fitt ... to subscribe my name least I be for my good will envyed, but when time shall serue I will not be ashamed of my Name neither of this worke, but shall be glad to be an instrument of good to any herein.<sup>934</sup>

Seaver has posited that Wallington was himself the letter-writer – an explanation which straightforwardly accounts for why he possessed a copy.<sup>935</sup> Either way, what is most important to observe is the striking demonstration which this letter provides of how little confidence the faithful might have that their admonitions would find a warm reception with fellow saints. Collectively, these examples shed important light on what was evidently a widespread epistolary culture of reproof amongst the godly laity.

### **The Subversive Potential of Lay Counselling**

In 1995, Diane Willen wrote that, whilst 'rank always mattered in Stuart England ... spiritual authority and edification could operate independently of the social hierarchy'.<sup>936</sup> Later, in 2001, Peter Lake presented a similar case that 'the bonds of mutual charity, love and support which were to pertain amongst the godly ... served both to undercut or modify

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<sup>934</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 87<sup>r</sup>, 89<sup>v</sup>. For further contemporary evidence of 'squabbling', infighting and disharmony amongst the godly community, see *The Diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641*, ed. John Fielding (Cambridge, 2012), 42-4.

<sup>935</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 92.

<sup>936</sup> Willen, "'Communion of the Saints'", 27.

the conventional solidarities and hierarchies of family and neighbourhood'.<sup>937</sup> Yet the extent to which edifying practices of godly sociability did upset or overturn established structures of rank and authority still appears open to debate. Alec Ryrie has recently maintained that, on account of the 'accepted – although not unlimited – right for superiors to correct their inferiors' sins ... a social norm of hierarchical moral discipline trumped a theological principle of universal brotherly reproach'.<sup>938</sup>

At least with respect to the recommendations which they made to laypeople, some clergy were certainly keen to minimise the potential for social disorder wherever this proved compatible with godly principles. Boothby recorded the Tottenham minister William Bates's assertion that if one was necessitated to admonish a 'shuperior ... let thy reproffe bee a submissiue exhortation' whereas, to 'inferiours ... it may bee with sharnes [*sic*], & if neede require[,] with correction'. According to Bates, individuals were 'not bounde to reprove when more fitting persons are present', unless the latter should 'neglect there duty'.<sup>939</sup> To some degree, Boothby's epistolary interactions with members of the local gentry suggest that he internalised this cautious conservatism. Despite being a substantially wealthy merchant who, by the 1640s, had acquired a prominent place within London civic society, Boothby corresponded with certain individuals whose social status clearly outstripped his own. He addressed several letters of spiritual exhortation to Sir Edward Barkham, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet, and his wife, Lady Frances Barkham, who apparently shared his puritan zeal, being patrons of several Presbyterian ministers including the ejected clergyman, Gaspar Hickeys.<sup>940</sup> Boothby proffered his counsels to these Tottenham

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<sup>937</sup> Lake, *Boxmaker's Revenge*, 41.

<sup>938</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 399-400.

<sup>939</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 462-3.

<sup>940</sup> Paula Watson and Simon Healy, 'BARKHAM, Sir Edward, 1st Bt. (1591-1667)', *History of Parliament Online*, <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/barkham-sir-edward-1591->

based upper gentry correspondents with cautious respect, ingratiating himself through praise and commendation. In September 1656, he addressed Lady Barkham, whose family had of late been ‘much vissited’, as an ‘honoured Lady’ to whom god had given both ‘that wisdome *which* is *from* aboue’ and ‘the mind of Christ[,] so as to discern the loue of a father though valed [*sic*] under a sharpe correction’. Boothby instructed her with hesitant deference:

sweete Lady let mee *allude* unto St paull exhortation to the *Ephesians* take vnto you the whole armour of God ... so I exhorte you for to take unto you, that furniture of grace therwith god hath clothed you, & up, & be doing.<sup>941</sup>

In 1641, Boothby had penned an extensive letter to the same gentlewoman when she was forced to leave her house ‘because a neighbour was visited of the plage’. On this occasion, he uncharacteristically cut short his counsels with the respectful note: ‘sweete Lady I should haue *proceeded* to the *second* thing I first mentioned, but feareing I should too much in trench upon *your* patience I forbear’.<sup>942</sup> And yet Boothby was even willing to instruct Sir Edward, to a rather more limited degree, exhorting him to ‘patiently abide’ God’s dispensations for ‘there is no more clearer demonstration of his fatherly loue vnto his then when he layes his fatherly correction upon them for there good’.<sup>943</sup>

All this implies that Boothby did make concerted efforts to moderate his counselling when addressing high status correspondents. However, a greater quantity of epistolary sources provide concrete support for the claim that godly laypeople were frequently willing to upset family, parish and community hierarchies in order to fulfil perceived obligations of spiritual charity. Interesting evidence of status reversal is found in Henry Church’s letters to the ‘Gentle-woman’, ‘*Mistris* G’. Seemingly a staunch devotee

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1667> accessed 29 May 2015. ‘Riveley, Benedict’ (126952), *CCEd*. Gaspar Hicke, *The Life and Death Of David. A Sermon Preached at the Funeralls of... William Strode Esquire* (London, 1645), sigs A2<sup>r</sup>-A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>941</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 856-7. (My emphasis).

<sup>942</sup> *Ibid.*, 862, 864-5.

<sup>943</sup> *Ibid.*, 860. See also his correspondence with a further gentlewoman: *ibid.*, 851, 855, 853.

of this pious haberdasher, she sought his resolutions concerning her various ‘infirmities of the Soule’ and, in July 1633, he provided authoritative ‘Remedies’ against spiritual drowsiness and deadness.<sup>944</sup> Unafraid to offer lengthy, effusive exhortations, Church warned his correspondent that ‘there is death, there is judgement, there is wrath to come: O awake, feare, tremble, that thou maist escape in the day of vengeance’. He encouraged her to have further recourse to his counsel, promising to ‘endeavour my selfe to answer your expectation in any thing [which] lies in the scantling of my power’.<sup>945</sup> Another letter counselled on displaying patience in affliction; Church penned a list of seven numbered directives for his addressee, declaring: ‘your condition calls aloud to you. ... [God] rebukes and chastens, hee calls for your zeale, and amendment’.<sup>946</sup> On a further occasion, Church addressed a wealthy widow, identified as ‘a Ladyes daughter’, with whom he was previously unacquainted, admonishing her for her excessive public grief and counselling against those ‘trickings and vices that Gentlewomen’ delight in (namely costly ornamentation and garish fashions). Church was very aware that his words might cause offence; he remarked that ‘if any thing dislike you I have written, yet my intent was to doe you good’. However, this did not prevent him from candidly prioritising the usefulness of his counsel over its acceptableness to his correspondent.<sup>947</sup>

Moreover, in relation to the gerontocratic structure of the early modern household, lay counselling possessed a subversive potential to cut across family hierarchies. Dodsworth was between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one when he penned his letters of spiritual counsel and only too aware that his youth was a hindrance to directing the

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<sup>944</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sigs F9<sup>r</sup>, G1<sup>v</sup>, G4<sup>r</sup>, G5<sup>v</sup>, G7<sup>r</sup>, G8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>945</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs G6<sup>v</sup>, F9<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>946</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs H6<sup>v</sup>-H7<sup>r</sup>, H4<sup>r</sup>-v.

<sup>947</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs H11<sup>v</sup>, H13<sup>r</sup>-H14<sup>r</sup>. Church did, however, recommend that ungodly ‘Superiors’ be ‘reason[ed] with ... submissively’: *Good Mans Treasury*, 274. Interestingly, John Bruen encouraged his servants to counsel him and Lady Barrington’s clerical associates advised that she confer openly with hers. Hinde, *Faithfull Remonstrance*, 180, 56-9, also 62-5; *BFL*, 130.

consciences of others. He implored his grandmother in an incomplete letter, ‘to note the words what I say, as much as if they were spooke to yo[u] by one of much gravity’, since Dodsworth’s lines (these ‘streames runninge from the fountaine of life’) would prove just ‘as good as if the were proffered vnto you by a grave seigneur’.<sup>948</sup> The audacious youth would later counsel his elderly relation in remarkably strident terms, composing an imagined dialogue between herself and her soul. Dodsworth encouraged his grandmother to declare:

thus my soule was I led away with the error of the wicked. ... If thou and I haue sined without repentance thou must be sent away into eternall misery ... until the greate day of Generall reconing when ... thou and I must ... both be sent into everlasting flames of scorching fire.

Evidently not one to mince his words, Dodsworth repeatedly evoked the future ‘superlative unhappinese’, which loomed like a threatening cloud above his aged relative’s head.<sup>949</sup>

The counsel which Dodsworth addressed to his ‘honoured Father’ was less brazen. In September 1657, he presented his epistolary intervention in somewhat more modest terms ‘as a Remembrancer to put you in minde of *your* charge’, namely the right ‘governeing of your family’. But, despite Dodsworth’s cautious restraint, this was still a bold, assuming message for a son to communicate. He acknowledged that his father had ‘hitherto ... exceeded others your neighbours in a holy walkeing in your family’, but he exhorted him to ‘ascend some degrees higher’ with the warning that ‘there is much of old Adam still in *your* family, it is not thorroughly purged’.<sup>950</sup> Boothby was similarly aware of the incongruity of advising and instructing a patriarchal authority. In October 1658, he informed his father-in-law that he could never recompense his ‘labour of loue, nor is it (I know) required, for sayth the *apostle* the children layeth not up for there fathers but there

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<sup>948</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 14<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>949</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 36<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>950</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 39<sup>v</sup>.

fathers for the children' (2 Corinthians 12:14). Yet Boothby, unyielding in his desire 'to bee a helper in heauens way, soule friendshipp beeing the more excelent', composed some particularly lengthy and authoritative exhortations concerning George Witham's need to make constant preparation for death and, thus, confirm his possession of a 'true interest in Christ'.<sup>951</sup> In a similar way, letter-writers might also proffer advice which they anticipated could lead their correspondents to act in ways which transgressed family hierarchies. John Peerson counselled his mother, following her recovery from a serious illness, not to forget to uphold the covenant which she had made with God during her infirmity. He urged this duty despite an apparent awareness that it might be a cause of marital tension, warning her to 'lett not any conceit of vnkindenes one my fathers parte make you forgett that promise you made vnto god'.<sup>952</sup>

### **'Thoe a Child Ought not to Comand His Father...'**

The letter-books of both Boothby and Dodsworth contain striking evidence of a conviction that the clergy were fitting objects for the counsel and admonitions of pious laypeople. Boothby envisioned an ideal form of pastoral relations whereby a minister would be wholly accountable to his flock. He expressed this in no uncertain terms: 'be you a father, or a teacher, or a brother, yet are you lyable so sayth the Scripture to admonition'.<sup>953</sup> In October 1656, he turned his epistolary attentions to one 'Mr Tho. Simpson', who can be identified as Thomas Simpson, vicar of Tottenham from around 1655. Having been involved in securing Simpson's appointment, Boothby evidently felt a particularly strong sense of responsibility for ensuring that his ministry was successful. He reminded his pastor that 'under god I was a meanes to bring you vnto *your* place ... and

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<sup>951</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 905-13, 902-3, at 905 and 911.

<sup>952</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fo. 16<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>953</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 832.

what a trubell & charge it was to haue it accomplished'. Boothby's disappointment that Simpson had proved himself 'an Idell, lasey Sheppard', having failed to keep a 'watchfull eye ouer *your* flock' for the 'eddyfyeing [*sic*] of *your* selfe, & us, in our most holy fayth', was, consequently, acutely bitter.<sup>954</sup> Particularly concerning for Boothby was his pastor's frequent periods of non-residency, during which time he was apparently engaged in a quest to find himself a wife. Rather amusingly, Boothby felt compelled to offer advice in this regard, observing that a 'sober, chaste, discrete' spouse, 'full of good works', would be most fitting.<sup>955</sup> Unhappily for the zealous merchant, Simpson was another self-professed godly Protestant who was not well disposed to receiving purportedly 'playne and frendly counsell' from amongst the community of the saints. Indeed, the Tottenham minister was 'stirred ... up to publish it in the pulpitt', publicly condemning Boothby's bold attempt to police clerical behaviour through letter-writing. Yet Boothby was undeterred by his pastor's hostile response; he wrote again the next March to urge Simpson to greater diligence in his ministry, presenting his admonitions as the dutiful advice of a 'loueing faythfull freind in Christ'.<sup>956</sup>

Similarly, in 1657, Dodsworth addressed counsel and reproof to an unnamed correspondent who had, 'as a Father[,] provided sperituall food for my soule and the soule[s] of *your* other Children, given to you not by nature but by spetiall providence'. The remainder of this letter indicates that the spiritual father to whom Dodsworth directed his advice was a parish minister of long acquaintance – in all probability one Thomas Tothall, who occupied the post of rector of Romalldkirk between 1621 and at least 1662, when he

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<sup>954</sup> Ibid., 820, 833. See *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, iv. 80.

<sup>955</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 821.

<sup>956</sup> Ibid., 832-3. Interestingly, Boothby's manuscript contains notes from sermons which Simpson preached both before and after this unpleasant incident: *ibid.*, 117, 151, 181.

subscribed.<sup>957</sup> Dodsworth, who had not received a University education, was rather more willing than Boothby to acknowledge the audacity of his epistolary intervention. He observed that it ‘may shoe mee to bee somewhat *presumptuous*’, but he pressed on regardless, remarking that ‘thoe a child ought not to comand his Father[,] yet hee may and I think ought to admonish and desire his Father to turne from things *which* is contrary to the wayes of god’. Whilst Dodsworth insisted that he saw nothing morally reprehensible in his former minister’s lifestyle, nevertheless, he felt that his ‘care of the soules of a great parish’ left something to be desired.<sup>958</sup> As Boothby had formerly warned Simpson, so Dodsworth cautioned Tothall: if any ‘under *your* charge die in there sinnes ... there blod will bee required [at] *your* hand if you haue not done *your* indeavour to draw them from sine vnto the Lord’. Thus, he counselled his former pastor ‘to be more earnest then (god knowes) you haue beene to beate downe those evill customes ... among *your* parishoners’. His particular grievance appears to have been the ‘loose kind of keepeing the Sabbath in *your* parish’, which involved regular ‘drinkeing to drunkenness’ and all manner of Sunday sports.<sup>959</sup> When considered alongside those composed by Wallington (see above, pp. 74-8) and Boothby, this illuminating letter provides a striking reminder that the early modern English clergy were not exempt from forthright admonitions which were intended to regulate their moral and professional behaviour in a manner that was undeniably unsettling to contemporary social and religious hierarchies.

### **Gender and Female Participation**

In recent decades, scholars have been interested to investigate the degree to which women were free to participate in this lay culture of conference and counselling and to

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<sup>957</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 19<sup>r</sup>. In accordance with the letter-book, Tothall was an aged minister of a very sizeable parish. ‘Tothall, Thomas’ (34692), *CCEd*.

<sup>958</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 19<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>959</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 19<sup>v</sup>-20<sup>r</sup>.

explore whether their activities may be regarded as subversive of contemporary patriarchal structures. Diane Willen has argued that puritan communal piety ‘created a unique context in which godly women as well as men acquired legitimacy and spiritual authority’. Thus, women ‘participated fully in the godly community as spiritual authorities and advisers to their fellow “saints”’.<sup>960</sup> Willen has remained unswervingly optimistic on this point, although her conclusions about female involvement in pastoral advice-giving do not always appear fully consistent. She has written both that, ‘through their spirituality women of good gifts found a temporary refuge from patriarchy’ (since ‘godliness tempered patriarchy’), and that puritan edification, ‘although not restricted by gender, still functioned within patriarchy’.<sup>961</sup>

That Willen’s former confident assertions should be taken with a note of caution is suggested by the telling case of Anne Venn (1627-1654), the daughter of a fairly prosperous London merchant, whose family shifted from Presbyterianism to Independency during the mid-1640s.<sup>962</sup> Venn embraced letter-writing as a means of counselling female friends. On one occasion, she comforted ‘a dear kinswoman’ who ‘lay under some sad dispensation from the Lord’, exhorting her correspondent in the words of Romans 8:28: ‘*all things work together for good to them that love God*’. By this action, Venn also found reassurance – ‘the Lord was pleased to cause it to fall with mighty power upon my heart’.<sup>963</sup> However, despite being a well-educated woman of moderate wealth and status, Venn, unlike Dodsworth, Boothby or Wallington, could not bring herself to instruct her minister. Once, during the 1650s, she longed to challenge the pastor of her gathered church, Isaac Knight, about his repeated failure to offer prayers for ‘the government’ and

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<sup>960</sup> Willen, “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 20. Idem, ‘Godly Women’, 578. Jung agrees: *Godly Conversation*, 153.

<sup>961</sup> Willen, “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 41, 30. Idem, ‘Godly Women’, 580.

<sup>962</sup> Keith Lindley, ‘Venn, Anne (*bap.* 1627, *d.* 1654)’, *ODNB*.

<sup>963</sup> Venn, *Wise Virgins Lamp*, 53-4.

petition 'the Lord for them in place'. Greatly troubled by this neglect, she drew up a 'draught of a letter to send to him' containing her 'scattered thoughts' and various 'hints' from Scripture. That Venn ultimately decided not to send this letter, 'fearing to presse too farre upon my own ability in that kind', seems to be characteristic of broader gendered patterns of involvement in godly advice-giving.<sup>964</sup>

Willen based her optimistic conclusions on the evidence of female devotional letter-writing, in combination with a significant body of women's funeral sermons. Likewise, Debra L. Parish used various mid seventeenth-century homiletic sources to argue that Protestant ministers presented women 'as propagators of religious advice and instruction, both within and beyond their family spheres'.<sup>965</sup> Whereas some of these sermons unambiguously depict women in the role of counsellors to their social and spiritual inferiors (chiefly children and servants), many lack explicit details on the sorts of individuals who were the objects of female advice-giving. The funeral sermon of the Protestant gentlewoman, Lady Mary Armyne, provides a characteristically vague example, noting her efforts to advance grace '*in others*; not by meer conference and counsel, for these were the cheapest sort of indeavours she used; but also by many Letters writ with her own hands'.<sup>966</sup> This brief reference supplies valuable confirmation of female engagement in epistolary instruction, but offers no concrete sense of the character and extent of this activity.

Some clerics certainly envisioned precise limits on women's didactic activities. Richard Baxter advised Katherine Gell to direct her spiritual charity 'to poore soules,

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<sup>964</sup> Ibid., 129-30.

<sup>965</sup> Debra L. Parish, 'The Power of Female Pietism: Women as Spiritual Authorities and Religious Role Models in Seventeenth-Century England', *The Journal of Religious History*, 17/1 (1992), 38.

<sup>966</sup> J. D., *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral Of that incomparable Lady, the Honourable, the Lady Mary Armyne* (London, 1676), 24.

especially thos under *you*, & related to *you*’; he encouraged her to ‘step now & then into the houses of *your* poore tennants’, but also recommended that she acquire assistance in this task from abler Christians.<sup>967</sup> Nonetheless, there were occasions when women assumed a greater degree of authority to counsel and instruct not only their inferiors, female friends and close relations, but male acquaintances. Dionys Fitzherbert’s epistolary admonition of the impious lifestyle of her ‘special friend’ has already been addressed. Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright have also discussed the fascinating case of the conformist Protestant, Anne Norman Ley, who during the 1620s or 1630s wrote a letter of ‘forceful complaint’ to the lecturer of a London church concerning the enthusiastic style of his puritan preaching. As Morrissey and Wright have observed, the context of this epistle is rather exceptional. Ley, the wife of the curate of St Leonard’s, Shoreditch, likely penned this semi-anonymous letter (signed only with her initials) with her husband Roger’s backing, in the hope of averting the controversial response which his open intervention would assuredly have triggered.<sup>968</sup> Decades earlier, in 1596, the remarkable humanist-educated gentry widow, Lady Anne Bacon, did take it upon herself to admonish Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, for rumoured adultery with her great-niece, counselling him to ‘sinne not against your owne soule’.<sup>969</sup> This letter has been analysed by the literary scholar, Lynne Magnusson, who argued that Bacon ‘fashion[ed] a ministerial role for herself that lays claim to a religious authority well beyond the scope the Elizabethan church is thought to have permitted women’. She further marvelled that ‘the English reformed church of Bacon’s day certainly never institutionalized any ministerial order of women authorized to admonish, exhort, and correct’.<sup>970</sup> Magnusson has interpreted admonition in the

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<sup>967</sup> DRO D3287/47/7, 161.

<sup>968</sup> Morrissey and Wright, ‘Piety and Sociability’, 50-2.

<sup>969</sup> *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, ed. Gemma Allen (Cambridge, 2014), 262-5. Lady Bacon also admonished his swearing in a notably more deferential letter: *ibid.*, 236-8.

<sup>970</sup> Lynne Magnusson, ‘Widowhood and Linguistic Capital: The Rhetoric and Reception of Anne Bacon’s Epistolary Advice’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 31/1 (2001), 28-9.

problematically narrow sense of an official clerical function, but the pervasive contemporary culture of lay edification provides the true context for Bacon's reproof. Interestingly, even Morrissey and Wright have concluded that female 'exchange of spiritual advice could transcend the gendered assumptions about women's subordinate role in the Church that we meet in prescriptive literature'.<sup>971</sup> Both conclusions would appear to overstate, to different degrees, the contemporary significance of these private epistolary interventions within their broader godly context.

Although clerics such as Baxter explicitly advocated a restricted female role, the prospect of godly women engaging in advice-giving and admonition certainly did not shock contemporaries. In justifying his own reproof of his pastor, Boothby evoked biblical examples of female admonition as particularly clear illustrations of the principle that inferiors could, and indeed should, rebuke the sins of superiors: 'Job tooke it from his hand made *seruant* & king dauid from a woman'.<sup>972</sup> Whilst this is assuredly rhetorical, others articulated genuine endorsements of feminine reproof. Church praised a female acquaintance who admonished him by letter, citing the same illustration in 1 Samuel 25: 'your reproofes meete me, and gives me a stand. *Abigal* meets *David* in a sinfull course ... Hee blessed God, and her both for it'.<sup>973</sup> In 1641, Samuel Jeake expressed an expectation that one 'Goody Rennard' would have 'plainly' reproved John Coulton for choosing to live apart from his wife. Earlier, around 1614, Jeake's mother was advised by a godly male companion: 'if you shall happen to be in presence where you see gods Commandements

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<sup>971</sup> Gemma Allen also questioned Magnusson's interpretation in *The Cooke Sisters: Education, Piety and Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2013), 112-13. Morrissey and Wright, 'Piety and Sociability', 49-50.

<sup>972</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 832. This may be evidence of intertextuality with Boothby's sermon notes, which record a similar point: *ibid.*, 351-2.

<sup>973</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sig. E7<sup>v</sup>.

broken[,] ... reprove it, by the worde of trueth'.<sup>974</sup> Furthermore, Dionys Fitzherbert was provided with a direct mandate for advising and instructing by her clerical contact, Edward Chetwynd. Chetwynd wrote that, on account of having endured spiritual temptation of the greatest magnitude, Fitzherbert should be 'by experience[,] enabled to comfort others', being 'better able to teach and comfort, than need in these points to be taught or comforted'.<sup>975</sup> Mary Morrissey has reflected at length on this criterion of 'experiential knowledge', which she claims afforded Fitzherbert the status of 'a physician of souls'.<sup>976</sup>

Whilst many contemporaries evidently did not consider women to be disqualified from godly advice-giving, it is important to observe a lack of evidence that they engaged in letter-writing practices which were truly comparable in scale or scope to those of godly laymen like Church, or even Boothby, Dodsworth or Wallington. Furthermore, that women frequently appear in the role of counselees of male advisors, even those who were their social inferiors, should not go without comment. In addition to examples already discussed, the epistolary relationship between Samuel Jeake's mother, Anne Jeake (née Peerson), and John Wilmsherst of Mayfield, East Sussex, can be cited. Around 1614, and then later in 1628, Wilmsherst instigated instructive correspondences with Anne, with whom he had been previously acquainted in youth. His early letters contain lengthy exhortations on the sinfulness of the coastal town of Rye where she resided. Quoting extensively from Joseph Hall's *Meditations and Vowes* (1605), Wilmsherst advised Anne against 'Converseinge with evill Companions', remarking: 'remember Ann that this worlde is not the place of your rest and abideinge but the place of your excile'. Later in April 1629, he responded to her report of her 'Crooked nature' and 'slow progresse in grace',

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<sup>974</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fos. 64<sup>r</sup>, 37<sup>v</sup>. See also Jung, *Godly Conversation*, 147-8.

<sup>975</sup> *Women, Madness and Sin*, 129, 141, 131.

<sup>976</sup> Mary Morrissey, 'Narrative Authority in Spiritual Life-writing: The Example of Dionys Fitzherbert (fl 1608-1641)', *SC*, 15/1 (2000), 2, 11-12. Morrissey has presented Fitzherbert in this light on the basis of her letters, but, crucially, evidence indicating that contemporaries actually regarded her in this way is lacking.

with directions to ‘be dilligent in searching your selfe that you may more clearely see your weakenesses’.<sup>977</sup> Willen has remarked on the ‘reciprocal nature of the relationship’. It is certainly important to note Wilmsherst’s 1614 comment that he hoped the two might ‘stire vp’ one another ‘to the practice of good duties’ and his remark, almost fifteen years later, that Anne had grown ‘so expert in kno[w]ledge & so zealous’.<sup>978</sup> Yet it would be misleading to suggest that this evidence confirms that theirs was a correspondence of genuine equals; Wilmsherst, who regarded Anne ‘as my owne sister’, adopted an authoritative, fraternal tone to deliver his extensive counsels, requesting repeated updates on her spiritual estate and commenting indulgently on her progress ‘in the schoole of Christ’.<sup>979</sup>

In contrast, the majority of evidence of women assuming an active role as advisers of their spiritual equals emerges from the context of female circles of advice-giving, either within the nuclear family or amongst godly friendship groups. In January 1632, Anne Jeake received a letter from her ‘louing & kind freind Anne Petter’ which alludes to their regular practice of meeting together in Rye as ‘Christian neighbours ... that we might tell one another what God hath done for *our* soules’. The godly participants in this circle of conference, referred to by Petter as a ‘band of vnitye’, were apparently all women.<sup>980</sup> Further epistolary evidence also draws into question Willen’s confident assertion that women participated within this broader lay devotional culture as fully, or in the same manner, as their male contemporaries. One set of female-authored mid seventeenth-century letters contained in Nehemiah Wallington’s exemplary collection have already received

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<sup>977</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fos. 35<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>, at 37<sup>v</sup>, 45<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>. See Joseph Hall, *Meditations and Vowes, Diuine and Morall* (London, 1605), 12-14.

<sup>978</sup> Willen, “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 37. ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fos. 37<sup>v</sup>, 47<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>979</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 43<sup>r</sup>, 48<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>980</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 49<sup>r</sup>. Willen cited this letter in a brief footnote as evidence of a ‘female network’ of edification, but she has not reflected in any detail on the sorts of individuals whom early modern women identified as fittings objects for instruction and the broader implications of this: “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 37 n. 82.

brief mention (see above, p. 40). They can be compared with the manuscript letter-book of the Yorkshire gentlewoman, Mary Arthington (née Fairfax) (1616-1678), which contains a plethora of spiritual counsel addressed to her by her sisters between the mid-1630s and the 1660s. Although the latter has received scholarly attention from Willen and from Morrissey and Wright, it merits further exploration, in comparative focus, as a demonstration of an interesting tendency for female edification to function along gendered lines.<sup>981</sup>

Between the late 1640s and 1651, Katherine Lanes and Mary Lawrence, two godly women from Maidstone, Kent, addressed letters of spiritual counsel to Anne Wade of Southwark who was apparently the wife of one of Wallington's friends. Katherine and Anne appear to have been sisters by either blood or marriage. Lanes once remarked that, 'being knit together by nature & grace[,] ... a double engagement lieth vpon vs to loue one another'. In contrast, Lawrence simply termed herself Wade's 'louing Freend'.<sup>982</sup> Lanes's correspondence is couched in expressly mutual terms; in 1648, she penned simple exhortations concerning her sister's need to profit from afflictions, but she concluded her letter by remarking that the two of them must 'comfort one another' since she, like Anne, did also 'meete with many troubls'.<sup>983</sup> Elsewhere, Lanes reflected on her 'Christian duty' to 'simpothis [*sic*] with you in your afflictions', beseeching her sister to regard God 'as a Father and then afflictions will be profitable, then they will euidence adoption'. Yet she also exhorted Anne to remember her own condition 'which for the present is also sadd'. Presumably Anne did oblige with reciprocal counsel and consolations, for Lanes acknowledged her 'many expressions of loue vnto mee and kinde acceptance of a little

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<sup>981</sup> See *ibid.*, 33-5; Morrissey and Wright, 'Piety and Sociability', 46-9.

<sup>982</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 181<sup>r</sup>, 191<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>983</sup> *Ibid.*, fos. 181<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>.

from me [which] hath often stirred vp some affection in me to answer loue[,] but meting with many hindrances I haue bine let hitherto'.<sup>984</sup>

Lanes's apology for having failed to send epistolary exhortations as often as she felt she should is repeatedly paralleled in Mary Arthington's letter-book. The approximately twenty-five letters which she received from her sister, Frances Widdrington, were penned over a period of around fifteen years. It was not, apparently, an extremely regular correspondence, for the letters are strewn with references to Frances's failure to have written 'so oft as I would' and apologies for being 'two slow in returning you an answere of your letter'.<sup>985</sup> Evidently, Mary was not the only relation to whom Frances supplied guidance. One undated letter, which cites Jeremiah 17:9 to counsel on the need to examine the heart for deceitful wickedness, was, Widdrington remarked, 'the same which I writt to my other sisters'.<sup>986</sup> However, since throughout much of this period Mary lacked the 'publicke helpes' of 'a good Minester', she relied especially heavily on the advice of her sisters, as well as on the various 'good bookes' which she acquired.<sup>987</sup> Moreover, although it has gone unmentioned in previous discussions, it seems likely that Mary's isolation within her husband's less zealous family was a contributing factor to her maintenance of strong epistolary ties with her religiously like-minded sisters. On one occasion, Frances evoked the Petrine claim that unconverted husbands might be won by the pious conversation of their wives (1 Peter 3:1), counselling her sister that 'seing the Lord hath placed you there ... labour to draw on others by perswasions, or at least by example'. Elsewhere, Mary was advised that since 'the Lord hath set you in a family alone

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<sup>984</sup> Ibid., fos. 183<sup>r</sup>, 184<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>985</sup> Bodl. MS Add. A.119, fos. 17<sup>v</sup>, 10<sup>v</sup> and amongst others, 4<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>v</sup>, 6<sup>v</sup>-7<sup>r</sup>, 8<sup>v</sup>-9<sup>r</sup>, 16<sup>v</sup>-17<sup>v</sup>, 19<sup>r</sup>, 22<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>, 23<sup>r</sup>, 25<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>986</sup> Ibid., fo. 14<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>987</sup> Ibid., fos. 6<sup>r</sup>, 9<sup>v</sup>, also 19<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>, 24<sup>r</sup>.

take heede you be come not a stumbling block & rocke of offence to them that are without'.<sup>988</sup>

A significant quantity of Frances's advice seems not to have been prompted by specific episodes in the devotional life of her sister. In February 1636, she counselled Mary that 'now in your single estate must be the time for you to store up knowledge & experience of the corruption or grace that is in you', since, once married, she would be occupied with many other cares. Frances concluded this exhortation with the note: 'thinkeing what subject to write on I found my heart ... brought this to my minde & I hope it may not be unprofitable for you'.<sup>989</sup> Several letters contain only generic exhortations to 'be constant, faint not' and 'labour to liue by faith, god honours that grace aboue all'.<sup>990</sup> Frances also encouraged mutual conference, thanking her sister for her 'kinde letter' and desiring 'larger from you ... as you doe grow into further aquentance with your owne heart so will you haue learger expressions'.<sup>991</sup> However, on several occasions, Mary evidently posed direct questions and grievances for which she sought her elder sister's advice and resolutions. In February 1636, Frances commenced a letter: 'you desire to know how you may gett aquentance with god'. Three months later, she acknowledged receipt of further letters, remarking: 'I haue beene long in Answering one of them, in which you complaine of your barrenness'.<sup>992</sup> At times, Mary evidently felt that her sister's responses were lacking in both speed and comprehensiveness; once, Frances was forced to write rather shamefacedly that she had been 'two slow in puting you in minde of' a particular issue: 'I thanke you for picking that quarell with me for I hope it will something quicken me'.<sup>993</sup>

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<sup>988</sup> Ibid., fos. 8<sup>v</sup>, 47<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>989</sup> Ibid., fo. 22<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>990</sup> Ibid., fos. 6<sup>v</sup>, 18<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>991</sup> Ibid., fo. 12<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>992</sup> Ibid., fos. 10<sup>v</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>, also 7<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>993</sup> Ibid., fo. 22<sup>r</sup>.

Morrissey and Wright have claimed that on only one occasion, concerning an issue of ‘especially topical political sensitivity’ (that of ‘bowing the knee to the name of Jesus’), did Widdrington ‘justify her advice by deferring to the opinion of others’. However, a year after this aforementioned letter, in October 1638, Frances was met with a technical enquiry into scriptural support for Sabbath observance for which she wished she ‘were as able as I am willing to answer your question’. Eager to ‘let not the truth suffer through my Ignorance’, she offered what ‘thoughts’ she could, but, in the end, advised her sister to ‘read Dod on the 4 command it will satisfie you a bout the sabbboth better then these lines’.<sup>994</sup>

Aside from these rare appeals to weightier expertise, women’s written advice to one another could be unquestionably authoritative and unconstrained by any sense of personal theological shortcomings. In April 1651, Mary Lawrence counselled Anne Wade on how to be certain ‘that her sufferings be for Christ’ – a matter which the latter had evidently sought advice on. The self-assured Lawrence presented four numbered signs against which Wade could try herself and discern whether her afflictions were an indication of her elect status. Throughout, Lawrence addressed her friend only by the title ‘Christian’, establishing some sense of authoritative distance between the two women.<sup>995</sup> Frances Widdrington’s counsel perhaps reached its authoritative peak in an undated letter of the early 1630s, composed whilst both women were yet unmarried. She wrote of her ‘forwardness to chide’ Mary over the necessity of carrying her ‘selfe humbely to all’, being glad that her plain words appeared not to have brought about ‘any breach of affection betwixt’ the sisters.<sup>996</sup> A greater quantity of un-moderated chiding was on offer in the few

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<sup>994</sup> Morrissey and Wright, ‘Piety and Sociability’, 48. Bodl. MS Add. A.119, fos. 7<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>, 13<sup>r</sup>-14<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>995</sup> BL Sloane MS 922, fos. 189<sup>v</sup>-91<sup>r</sup>. Wallington referred to both of the friends with the descriptor ‘poore woman’: *ibid.*, fol. 186<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>996</sup> Bodl. MS Add. A.199, fo. 26<sup>r</sup>.

letters which Mary received from her younger sister, Dorothy Hutton. Neither Willen nor Morrissey and Wright have compared the tenor of the Arthington sisters' letters (merely asserting their common 'easy assumption of spiritual authority'), but the most assertive pieces within the collection were certainly penned by Dorothy.<sup>997</sup> Responding to Mary's complaints of 'many wants' of grace, Hutton formulated an extended argument that 'the hungring after grace is a speciall sign of grace', imitating a formal homiletic style to counter anticipated objections:

but you will say that is your doubt whether you be in Xt or not, if you thinke you be not then tell me deare sister what meanes those lingerings & breathings you haue ... then that sencibleness of your want & decay, when you feele not sapp & nurishment come from Xt your roote.

Confidently assuming that her advice would prove profitable and effective, Dorothy continued: 'now being thus perswaded[,] what should hinder you from cherefull beleuing'.<sup>998</sup> Although Dorothy's letters contain many direct responses to Mary's grievances, she too was forced on occasion to apologise for neglecting her duties, once remarking: 'you may thinke I haue forgotten you, I writ so seldome'.<sup>999</sup> Reminiscent of Lawrence, Hutton drew up lists of spiritual grievances and graces against which her elder sister could interrogate her own experiences. In an attempt to determine the causes of Mary's melancholy, Dorothy enumerated various 'hinderance[s]' to her comfort and consolation, once more countering anticipated protestations with authoritative pronouncements: 'whereas you may object you do not mourne, I know not what argues it more then that hatered & Judging of your selfe which you express'.<sup>1000</sup> This sort of rhetoric stands in stark contrast with the two brief epistolary contributions of another of the Fairfax sisters, Eleanor Selby, who lacked the confidence of either Dorothy or Frances. In a letter

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<sup>997</sup> Morrissey and Wright, 'Piety and Sociability', 48.

<sup>998</sup> Bodl. MS Add. A.199, fos. 44<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>999</sup> Ibid., fos. 46<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>, 53<sup>r</sup>, also 49<sup>v</sup>, 52<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>1000</sup> Ibid., fos. 60<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>.

occasioned by her sister Mary's illness, Eleanor merely protested her 'unfit[ness] to giue aduice either for s[o]ule or body'.<sup>1001</sup>

The most important conclusion to draw from these illuminating collections of correspondence is that totalising narratives about gender frequently prove misleading and should not be favoured over close explorations of the intricacies of individual cases. With respect to 'rank, age and family situation' Morrissey and Wright have already observed 'the plurality of women's responses to early modern religious culture'.<sup>1002</sup> It seems necessary to add to this list the significance of individual personality. Evidently, some women were able to assume a strongly authoritative epistolary persona, chiefly within networks of female exhortation and advice-giving. However, that godly laymen appear to have been markedly more likely than their female contemporaries to compose pious letters with socially and religiously subversive implications, does imply that Willen's claim of an equal and corresponding contribution of the sexes to puritan edificatory culture requires careful nuance.

### **'The Bowells of a Tender Father to His Pretious Babes'**

One form of early modern advice literature which has attracted a greater degree of attention, the genre of parental counselling, has also been portrayed by a number of historians and literary scholars as being particularly influenced by the gender of its authors. In recent years, the secondary literature on mother's advice books has expanded at an exceptional rate. Notably, in 2011, Jennifer Heller argued that women's parental legacies display several features which distinguish them from men's. Barring the 'exceptional' contribution of the Independent minister, Hugh Peter, who published a work of

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<sup>1001</sup> Ibid., fos. 70<sup>v</sup>-1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>1002</sup> Morrissey and Wright, 'Piety and Sociability', 55-6.

predominantly religious instruction prior to his execution as a regicide in 1660, Heller contended that male-authored legacies for daughters ‘tend to focus on their domestic duties’ over their spiritual ones. In addition, fathers counselled their female offspring with less ‘sensitivity and sympathy’ than mothers did, despite the fact that both relied on ‘negative stereotypes’ about patriarchal gender roles. Elsewhere, Heller notes that ‘fathers spend more time addressing sons as heirs, giving them specific details about managing their estates and preserving the wealth they have so assiduously collected’, whereas mothers ‘place a stronger emphasis on their son’s religious values’.<sup>1003</sup> Susan Staub’s remark that, whilst men’s advice books of this period were primarily ‘concerned with policy and polite conduct’, mother’s advice literature ‘offer[s] an alternative to the many male-authored conceptualizations of the family’, similarly implies a gendered distinction.<sup>1004</sup> Also interesting is William Sloane’s claim, in a classic chapter on printed conduct literature, that since male contributors were ‘mostly men of the world bent on communicating to the child practical precepts for his guidance in a world which was not ideal’, even ‘the cultivated Puritan’s advice’ was, unlike the guidance of ‘the spiritual preachers’, ‘colored by a shrewd common sense’.<sup>1005</sup>

Such observations may well be broadly characteristic of the printed genre – although the existence of a not insignificant number of male-authored published legacies with an overwhelmingly religious focus should call into question some of Heller’s more forthright claims.<sup>1006</sup> However, these conclusions cast light on only one aspect of a broader picture of early modern parental advice-giving. A significant number of scholars have

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<sup>1003</sup> Jennifer Heller, *The Mother’s Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham, 2011), 69-70, 67, 86.

<sup>1004</sup> Susan C. Staub, ‘Introductory Note’, in *Mother’s Advice Books*, ed. idem (Aldershot, 2002), ix.

<sup>1005</sup> William Sloane, *Children’s Books in England and America in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1955), 42.

<sup>1006</sup> For example, William Tipping, *The Fathers Covnsell. Or, Certain usefull Directions, for all young persons* (London, 1643); Edward Burton, *The Fathers Legacy: Or Bvrtons Collections* (London, 1649); John Norden, *The Fathers Legacie. With precepts Morall, and prayers Diuine* (London, 1625).

recently investigated maternal counselling in letter form, drawing on the pious correspondence of prominent Protestant gentlewomen including Brilliana Harley, Anne Bacon, Katherine Paston, Grace Mildmay and her daughter, Mary Fane.<sup>1007</sup> Seventeenth-century paternal religious instruction in manuscript has received very modest attention in existing secondary literature. Yet surviving examples of epistolary counsel written for the offspring of zealous godly fathers, which were not seemingly composed with the aim of reaching a wider audience, provide a revealing counterpoint to the register of many male-authored printed advice books.

Eight letters of paternal spiritual advice, dating between 1640 and 1663, are contained within Walter Boothby's collection of exemplary religious correspondence. One of these, addressed generally to his 'most deere and loueing children', stretches to almost thirty pages. Although penned around twenty-eight years prior to Boothby's actual death, it is framed as a 'token of loues remembrance' intended to remind his children of 'what I herein haue recommended to you', 'when I shall goe unto my fathers & be seene noe more'. Thus, it falls within Heller's narrowly defined category of a parental 'legacy'.<sup>1008</sup> In this case, the epistolary form is something of a fiction, but the remaining pieces of correspondence are genuine, occasional letters addressed to several of Boothby's children who were dwelling at varying distances from the family home. All eight entries contain loving, affectionate and exclusively spiritual advice, addressed from 'the Bowells of a tender father to his pretious babes'. Boothby evidently felt a particular 'duty' to provide his children with comprehensive religious instruction. He articulated this sense of obligation

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<sup>1007</sup> See Magnusson, 'Widowhood and Linguistic Capital', 3-33; Susan E. Hrach, 'Maternal Admonition as Devotional Practice: Letters of Mary Fane, Countess of Westmorland', *ANQ*, 24/1-2 (2011), 63-74. Anselment, 'Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley', 431-53; Harris, 'Lady Brilliana Harley's Letters', *passim*. Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England* (London, 1999), 238-40.

<sup>1008</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 768, 796. Seven children are directly addressed. Some of these names were apparently added after 1640, when Boothby originally wrote out this text. On page 773, Boothby refers to himself as a 'loueing dyeing father', although the second adjective is also an insertion.

on several occasions, remarking: ‘as I haue deriued unto you (from my inbred naturall corruption) all manner of sinne, where by you are become miserable ... so, I would indeauour to bring you into a waye of eaternall life, & salluation’.<sup>1009</sup>

Interestingly, the first lengthy legacy in epistolary form contains precepts which are almost entirely non-gendered; Boothby counselled his children, as a unit, to strive for holiness, to prepare for the day of future judgement and, in the words of Ecclesiastes 12:1, ‘to remember thy creator in the dayes of thy yought [*sic*]’.<sup>1010</sup> Contrary to the picture which Heller has painted, Boothby is revealed to be wholly unconcerned by worldly issues of wealth, the management of property and polite conduct. He repeatedly exhorted his children not ‘to place your happynes in the abondance of ... earthly contentmentes’, since ‘its grace, not greatnesse, *which*, makes us louely’ in God’s eyes. In another letter of May 1661, he frankly advised his son, Isaac, to prioritise his moral development over his secular education: ‘redeem what time you can to instruct your soul ... for you haue more cause to know *your* spirituall condition, then *your* temporall’.<sup>1011</sup> One partial exception to this rule is his instruction, in February 1651, that his eldest son, Thomas, remain obediently in his calling as an apprentice. Although Boothby offered encouragement that this temporary period of service would be a means ‘to higher aduancement’ and ‘a more honourabell condition’, the whole letter is couched in thoroughly religious terms and contains repeated warnings that to stray disobediently from his present course would render his son liable to damnation. Aside from one brief, inserted command to be ‘a pattern of piety’ like the ‘vertuous woman’ of Proverbs 31, the counsel which Boothby addressed to his daughter, Hannah, is also entirely non-gendered. The overwhelming emphasis of this letter on

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<sup>1009</sup> Ibid., 768, 842, also 846-7.

<sup>1010</sup> Ibid., 782. Although Boothby’s brief exhortation against frequenting ‘night walkers’ was presumably only intended for his male offspring: *ibid.*, 770.

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid., 789, 791, 849. Isaac was admitted to St Catharine’s College, Cambridge, in 1664, aged seventeen: *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, i. 181.

‘gayning an interest in Christ’, stands in contrast with Heller’s printed paternal advice texts which prioritise the ‘secular duties’ of daughters.<sup>1012</sup> Yet the advice which Boothby gave his children was also not wholly generic and was often clearly tailored to their specific circumstances. His 1661 letter to Isaac certainly captures the uncertain ecclesiastical context of the immediate post-Restoration period, containing striking exhortations against ‘set prayer’, ‘bowing and chringing at an alter’ and ‘that simple ducking at the name of Jesu’ which is ‘most ridiculous’.<sup>1013</sup>

By referring to his children as a ‘little flock’, Boothby evoked a pastoral and patriarchal sense of himself as shepherd of his offspring. In the hope of instilling an unswerving obedience in his children, he also appealed to the biblical example of the ‘gratious Rechabites’ of Jeremiah 35, who honoured their father’s counsel despite the strangeness of his injunctions.<sup>1014</sup> But, whereas Heller observed of printed paternal advice literature, that ‘fathers do not imagine that their children will disregard them’, this was certainly not the case for Boothby. In 1652, he berated his wayward son, Thomas: ‘shall neither the seasionabell counsellis of a tender father nor the teares of a loueing mother ... *preuale with you*’. This gendered statement underscores both his belief that the religious instruction of children was a principally paternal duty and his recognition that he could never be assured of the dutiful compliance of his offspring.<sup>1015</sup> Yet even though Boothby expected his son to defiantly cast away his letters, he continued to urge him to repentance in the fiercest terms: ‘oh let the sight of Christ whom you haue crusified, & whose side you haue pirced cause you to mourne’.<sup>1016</sup>

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<sup>1012</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 802, 843. Heller, *Mother’s Legacy*, 68.

<sup>1013</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 847-9.

<sup>1014</sup> *Ibid.*, 794, 771-2.

<sup>1015</sup> Heller, *Mother’s Legacy*, 43. Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 813.

<sup>1016</sup> *Ibid.*, 823, 812.

An interesting comparison can be drawn with the letter-writing of the godly lawyer and future Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, during the early decades of the seventeenth century. In addition to addressing a plethora of religious counsel to his second wife, Margaret, Winthrop sent many letters to his adolescent sons – chiefly to John Winthrop Jr. during his time as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Dublin. Devotional concerns again loom large in this occasional correspondence, which displays obvious similarities to the extensive spiritual counsel which Lady Brilliana Harley addressed to her son, Ned, during his time as an Oxford undergraduate.<sup>1017</sup> In August 1622, Winthrop exhorted his sixteen-year-old son to ‘labour by all means to imprint in your heart the fear of God, and lett not the fearfull profanenesse and contempt of vngodly men diminish the reverent and awfull regard of his majesty in your heart’. A few months later, he drew on the epistolary models of both St Paul and, interestingly, St Jerome, to counsel his teenage son to avoid the ‘lustes of youthe’, commonly called ‘recreations’.<sup>1018</sup> In other letters, Winthrop articulated his joyful hope that his children were numbered amongst God’s elect and that he would ‘meet them in glorie to inioye them in Life eternall’. With this thought in mind, he exhorted John to ‘labour ... to have in high esteeme the favour of this God’.<sup>1019</sup> Winthrop’s offspring, unlike Boothby’s son, Thomas, evidently did value their father’s religious advice. In February 1627, Winthrop’s younger son, Forth, communicated his hearty thanks for his father’s ‘kinde lettres’ containing ‘good instructions and godly admonitions by your lovinge care praescribed to me’. Forth, conspicuously dutiful and devout, frequently penned pious Latin epistles in response to his

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<sup>1017</sup> See Anselment, ‘Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley’, 431-53; Harris, ‘Lady Brilliana Harley’s Letters’, *passim*. On spiritual counselling amongst the Winthrop network, see Adrian Chastain Weimer, ‘Affliction and the Stony Heart in Early New England’, in Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda (eds.), *Puritanism and Emotion in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke, 2016), 136-40.

<sup>1018</sup> *The Winthrop Papers. Vol. I, 1498-1628* (Boston, 1929), 271, 276.

<sup>1019</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

father's, signing himself 'filius tuus in omni obedientia'.<sup>1020</sup> Winthrop did not dispense with paternal advice-giving duties, even when his children had reached maturity. Around 1643, by which time the family had long been resident in New England, he penned an exemplary letter of spiritual counsel addressed to the now thirty-seven-year-old John Jr., his only surviving child of the six sons and daughters born to his first wife, Mary. In it, Winthrop reflected on the 'Vanity' of all 'Temporal things', exhorting his adult son to love God and his Word, to 'esteem it the greatest Honour to lye under the Simplicity of the Gospel of Christ Crucified' and to labour to also 'have your Children brought up in the Knowledge and Fear of God'.<sup>1021</sup>

Moving further back into the Elizabethan period, it is interesting to observe the overwhelmingly spiritual character of the epistolary legacy which the radical puritan, John Penry, bequeathed to his four infant daughters: Deliverance, Comfort, Safety and Sure-Hope, prior to his execution for treason in 1593. In this striking letter, the parental advice genre merges with that of the scaffold speech. With lengthy and tender exhortations, Penry instructed his daughters on how to make certain their future salvation in Christ. In words which held particular resonance against the backdrop of his own fate, he counselled them to be willing to 'forgoe life and all rather then to refuse to beare witness vnto the truth'.<sup>1022</sup> Whilst some of Penry's counsels reflect his own separatist concerns about contemporary church polity (including, for instance, cautions against the 'polluted institutions and ceremonies of Antichrist'), the majority of this letter consists of conventional devotional exhortations concerning prayer, public and domestic ordinances,

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<sup>1020</sup> Ibid., 342, 415. Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father* (Oxford, 2003), 131.

<sup>1021</sup> *The Winthrop Papers. Vol. IV, 1638-1644* (Boston, 1944), 366-7. This letter was so exemplary that portions of it were published in Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book II, 32-3.

<sup>1022</sup> BL Add. MS 48064, fo. 22<sup>f</sup>. An abridged version was printed in John Waddington, *John Penry, The Pilgrim Martyr, 1559-1593* (London, 1854), 136-45.

Bible reading and other ‘dueties of Godlynes’. Whilst Penry included a brief nod to the practicalities of his daughters’ future marriages and livelihoods, his overriding intention was to ensure their continued growth ‘in all graces of knowledge [and] godlynes in Christ Jesus’. Indeed, Penry concluded his legacy by remarking that he had: ‘vnburdened my carefull soule of some parte of that great solicitude which every waye I haue of yow, but especially of your salvation’.<sup>1023</sup>

When viewed in comparative perspective, these remarkable epistolary survivals, which span a chronological period of some seventy years, provide a striking contrast to the many printed books of paternal advice which have already received close scholarly assessment. Looking beyond prominent published contributions to investigate the epistolary activities of zealous puritan fathers, such as Boothby, Winthrop and Penry, one uncovers a rather different perspective to the narrative of divergent gendered approaches to parental advice-giving which has been most recently outlined by Jennifer Heller.

### **The Relationship Between Lay and Clerical Counselling**

Before concluding, it is necessary to consider lay epistolary counselling in comparative focus with its clerical counterpart. The type of instructive, edifying letter-writing in which godly laypeople engaged certainly shares many characteristics with contemporary clerical pastoral counselling. Kate Narveson has recently observed that ‘the self-understanding that laypeople gained through their interactions with scripture allowed them to establish an identity and assert authority in their family circle and even the wider community’.<sup>1024</sup> This developing lay confidence and proficiency in theological matters is certainly very apparent in epistolary sources, especially in the many remarkable letters of

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<sup>1023</sup> BL Add. MS 48064, fos. 22<sup>f</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>1024</sup> Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 7.

admonition cited in this thesis. Yet within this broad spectrum of continuity it is possible to identify certain broad distinctions between lay and clerical activity.

Firstly, it is important to observe that many laypeople appear to have considered the two to be of a different order. Consequently, lay and clerical counselling frequently went hand in hand. Laypeople who fulfilled their duties of spiritual charity by engaging in reciprocal advice-giving might also turn to clerical counsellors for guidance concerning more specific troubles or perplexities. So much has already been demonstrated in the case of Nehemiah Wallington (see above, pp. 70-4). In a similar vein, Matthew Dodsworth sought counsel at the hands of a pastor, one ‘Mr Norton[,] minister of St Martins Le Grand London’, with whom he was not personally acquainted, but whom he regularly heard preach.<sup>1025</sup> In a letter of August 1659, couched in highly deferential terms, Dodsworth implored this minister ‘to spaire a litle time’ for ‘the eternall benefitt of an almost undone soule’. On reading in the popular Swiss Reformed Theologian Johannes Wollebius’s *Compendium Theologiae Christianae*, of the ‘five fold’ division of faith, which included (according to Mark 16:17-18) the ‘faith of miracles’, Dodsworth had apparently been plunged into nervous anxiety: ‘I say I feare I haue not faith because I want the signes of it’. Seemingly taken aback on encountering this rather unusual reference to ‘miracle-working faith’, Dodsworth implored his clerical contact: ‘oh where is faith to be found tell me & I will doe any thinge to get it’.<sup>1026</sup> The self-portrait contained in this illuminating letter differs quite remarkably from the image otherwise presented of a young man brimming

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<sup>1025</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 11<sup>r-v</sup>. I have been unable to identify this ‘Mr Norton’. There was certainly no parochial church of St Martin’s Le Grand at this time, although this may refer to Norton’s dwelling place. He may have been a separatist minister of a gathered congregation because Dodsworth expressed a hope of becoming ‘a sheepe of your flocke when you find me cap[ab]le of the same’. A part of this letter is in shorthand.

<sup>1026</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 11<sup>r-v</sup>. Dodsworth apparently read the *Compendium* in Latin, perhaps in the recent Oxford publication of 1657. *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John W. Beardslee III (New York, 1965), 10-11, 161-2.

with confidence and eager to instruct and admonish friends, neighbours and relations.<sup>1027</sup> Dodsworth eagerly laid bare his intimate spiritual experiences; having previously ‘lived in much perplexity’, his present peace of conscience lent itself to the unsettling prospect of ‘sinfull security’. Dodsworth considered himself to stand in ‘much need of advice & direccion, for there is a great deale of deadnesse of speritt upon me’. This letter concludes with a respectful apology for having ‘beene thus much troublesome unto you’ and a final entreaty for ‘your direccions to these allready proposed’.<sup>1028</sup> As Wallington’s case similarly demonstrates, even those who were most willing to put themselves forward with conviction amongst their fellow laity might have recourse to the perceived expertise of ministerial authorities.

This tendency is particularly clear in the cases of several early modern women. In addition to providing counsel and comfort to fellow laypeople, Dionys Fitzherbert sought clerical confirmation of the soundness of her own religious estate (see above, pp. 188-9). Similarly, although she was lauded for her spiritual counselling of lay acquaintances, after the Restoration Lady Mary Armyne sought ‘Counsel for her further strength and comfort’ at the hands of Richard Baxter. According to her funeral sermon, Lady Armyne would regularly ‘open the state of her soul’ to the famous divine, ‘confess her infirmities, and produce her evidences for Heaven’, desiring his expert ‘judgement of them’.<sup>1029</sup> As a young woman, Anne Venn was also on the receiving end of regular personalised counsel, provided by the Presbyterian pastor, Christopher Love. Although this apparently proved

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<sup>1027</sup> Bodl. MS Rawlinson D.327, fo. 11<sup>v</sup>. Dodsworth did once communicate similar fears to his father: ‘I cannot reach heauen, I know not what heauen is nor what god is, truely I dare not deny either, but in my present knowledg I haue neither’: *ibid.*, fo. 39<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>1028</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 11<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>1029</sup> J. D., *Sermon Preached at the Funeral*, sig a2<sup>f</sup>.

ineffective at stilling her many 'fears', she also engaged in correspondence of a devotional nature with the Independent minister, John Rogers, during the 1650s.<sup>1030</sup>

In 1975, Anthony Fletcher made the surprising assertion that Anne Jeake 'demanded that her mentor John Wilmsherst should regularly soothe her anxieties about the weakness of her spiritual estate'. When close attention is paid to the surviving evidence, there appears to be little basis for this interpretation. Wilmsherst no doubt hoped that Anne would respond as a 'spiritual pupil' eager for instruction, but their correspondence appears to have been primarily propelled from his side.<sup>1031</sup> Despite his initial attempt to instigate regular contact in around 1614, their relationship lapsed for some fifteen years. Whilst, in a later letter, Jeake responded to Wilmsherst's requests for information concerning her religious estate, evidence of regular demands for resolutions is lacking. On the other hand, Anne did initiate contact with another individual whom, it could be argued, better fits Fletcher's and Diane Willen's category of religious 'mentor', but whose influence over her has gone unnoted by either historian.<sup>1032</sup> In 1626, during a time of personal spiritual anxiety when she felt especially keenly 'the troubles of Sathen', it was to a local minister, Thomas Housegoe, that Anne turned for comfort and direction. This letter evidently forms part of a broader correspondence which was instigated by Jeake herself, for Housegoe had to apologise for 'the slackenes of my writing vnto you', aware that he should before this time have held out 'a plaster for your sore'.<sup>1033</sup> The intimacy of Anne's spiritual relationship with Housegoe is displayed in the remarkably tender language with which he addressed her as 'mine owne deare hart', 'dearely beloued' and the 'most

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<sup>1030</sup> Venn, *Wise Virgins Lamp*, 6-9, 140-2, 149-52.

<sup>1031</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, 64; idem, 'Puritanism', 147.

<sup>1032</sup> Ibid. Willen, "'Communion of the Saints'", 36.

<sup>1033</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fo. 41<sup>r</sup>.

Intierlie beloued sister' of 'your loueing Brother in Christ'.<sup>1034</sup> This lengthy letter of spiritual counsel largely consists of sincere reassurances that Jeake was indeed numbered amongst the elect, alongside comforting encouragements to perseverance. Housegoe repeatedly affirmed: 'I say hee hath Chosen you ... nether Can you[,] nor euer shall you perish', 'you ar indeed the Child of God elect in Christ befor the foundations of the world were layd'. He further instructed his charge to pay no head to her 'vnworthines & vnthankfullnes', since these had no bearing upon her happy estate.<sup>1035</sup> Such concrete assurances were something which Wilmsherst apparently never felt qualified to offer. The closest he came was to point to 'evident signe[s]' of 'true grace' in which Anne could place her trust, so long as these remained 'constant and continuinge'.<sup>1036</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that Boothby ever sought out individual clerical counselling. Since he appears to have regarded this private 'ordinance' to be chiefly appropriate for 'that poore soule' who is unable to 'find any euidence of grace' and doubts of their election, he may have never felt a personal need to partake.<sup>1037</sup> However, it is interesting to observe that he derived significant portions of his written advice from pastoral homiletic instruction. Boothby seemingly considered his advice-giving to be both secondary and complementary to the primary clerical duty of public counselling and admonition. He felt a particular obligation to reiterate and reinforce his pastor's pulpit work through letter-writing. Thus, in 1662 he wrote to his sister: 'to put you in mind of that graue & godly aduice *which* mr Callamy gaue to you & mee & many more in a sermon preached An. 1641. about our euidences for heauen'. Aware that it was 'the custom of the world for to slight the wholsom counsell *that* our faithfull ministers from god doth tel

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<sup>1034</sup> Ibid., fos. 41<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>1035</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1036</sup> Ibid, fo. 45<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>1037</sup> Bodl. MS Eng. c.2693, 719-20.

them', Boothby hoped that his epistolary labours would provide a profitable legacy for his pastor's edifying teaching.<sup>1038</sup> In a further letter to his father-in-law, he included six reflections on why death 'is the most tirrabelest [*sic*] time', 'which long since our most worthy paster did sett forth unto us'. These, Boothby copied directly from his own notes on a sermon of October 1648. In 1661, he also sent his son, Isaac, 'the 42 signes of a reall saint delivered by mr Callamy 1648'. Yet Boothby did not only dredge up decades-old homiletic material. In 1660, he referred to an exposition on the believer's duties of 'both tables, our duty to God, & *our* duty to our neighbour' which Edmund Calamy had communicated to his congregation only 'last weeke'.<sup>1039</sup>

Reflecting more broadly on the relationship between lay and clerical counselling, it is important to note, with reference to the bipartite distinction between conference and authoritative spiritual direction outlined in the introduction, that lay letter-writing fell under the former category more frequently than its clerical counterpart. There was evidently a strongly mutually instructive dimension to godly sociability; laypeople regularly conversed with, or wrote to, one another with no other aim in mind than to reflect upon their present religious condition and share in reciprocal exhortation. In contrast, they more frequently corresponded with ministerial advisors during particular periods of affliction or spiritual crisis, or with the intention of eliciting specific, authoritative direction concerning some doubt or dilemma. Furthermore, as is clear in the cases of Boothby and Dodsworth, a particularly notable proportion of lay counselling was restricted to the family unit.

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<sup>1038</sup> Ibid., 837-8.

<sup>1039</sup> Ibid., 906-7, 224-5, 910-11, 844, 734. In many ways, Boothby's epistolary activity appears comparable to the lay duty of sermon repetition which Arnold Hunt has discussed in detail: *Art of Hearing*, 72-81.

Diane Willen has asserted that ‘counseling was a role any of the saints could perform’.<sup>1040</sup> Whilst this may have been true, it would be misleading to ignore those specific social and personal qualifications which appear to have particularly fitted laypeople to assume the status of spiritual advisor to their fellow Christians. Many of the individuals featured in this chapter possessed at least a comparatively high social status or level of education or theological knowledge. Some, like Wallington and Boothby, even acquired the quasi-ministerial office of ruling elder, albeit both engaged in epistolary counselling prior to this and neither cited it as a justification of their activity. Of course, such factors alone were insufficient; they proved authoritative only in combination with the more nebulous characteristics of recognised and respected skill and ability. In 1984, the historian Barbara Donagan observed, in an article on pastoral relations, that whilst ‘the laity could help each other as Christians ... unlike ministers they could not do so authoritatively’.<sup>1041</sup> It is certainly interesting to note that when the spiritual gifts of the young John Winthrop began to be sought after by his acquaintances (he having become ‘of some note for religion’ whereby ‘divers would come to mee for advice in cases of conscience’), his initial response was to set upon ‘the study of Divinity’, believing that such qualities would be most fittingly expressed within the established and authoritative remit of the ordained ministry.<sup>1042</sup> Yet according to his biographer, the Cheshire gentleman, John Bruen, was ‘reputed one of the best spirituall Physitians in all the countrey’.<sup>1043</sup> Only in the cases of Samuel Jeake and Henry Church, does direct evidence indicate that, contrary to Donagan’s remark, neighbours and friends actually sought them out for authoritative spiritual instruction in a way which is truly comparable to the recourse which many laypeople had to ordained pastoral authorities.

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<sup>1040</sup> Willen, “‘Communion of the Saints’”, 25.

<sup>1041</sup> Donagan, ‘Puritan Ministers’, 84.

<sup>1042</sup> *Winthrop Papers. Vol. I*, 156. Winthrop was apparently ‘diverted’ from this course by his friends.

<sup>1043</sup> Hinde, *Faithfull Remonstrance*, 191.

With respect to Jeake, it seems important to highlight a broad development in the nature of his letter-writing which historians have not, thus far, observed. Whilst his earliest correspondence displays reciprocal peer-support, a steady shift towards a more comprehensively authoritative model of epistolary relations seems clear. The earliest instance of a layperson applying directly to Jeake as a spiritual authority, rather than merely seeking mutual edification through letter-writing, dates to around 1647. On this occasion, Jeake counselled ‘a drooping Spirit to refresh it’, noting how his ‘bowells were turned within me, when I read your Letter to perceive how Satan troubles you’. He extended that ‘comfort of particular application’ which his correspondent hungered for, reassuring this ‘deare friend’ that, in time, ‘the Lord will give you to see the fruit of all his present dispensations’. Later, in August 1648, one ‘Thomas Frisle’ enquired of Jeake ‘whether or no a Soule being ingrafted into Christ may not faile from this grace’, to which the latter responded with reflections on the ‘unchangableness of love’.<sup>1044</sup> By this time, Jeake had evidently come to acquire significant religious authority in the town of Rye. He was certainly operating as a lay preacher in 1653 and he was celebrated in some undated encomiastic verse as ‘a good Sheperde’ of ‘well deseruing fame’ for his ‘trew teachinge’.<sup>1045</sup> Yet the majority of Jeake’s authoritative written direction dates from after the Restoration, by which time historians generally place him at the head of a dissenting conventicle. In 1661, Christopher Tidey of Eastbourne wrote that Jeake had been ‘the Instrument to administer more comfort to me then I ever received from man to this day’. Tidey solicited further directions, remarking on ‘how sutable & wholsome a Little of your aduice & counsell may bee’.<sup>1046</sup> In the same year, Jeake’s friend, John Byndlos, wrote of the Christian ‘dutie ... to builde up one another’, but noted his own lack of ‘that abilitie to

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<sup>1044</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fos. 97<sup>r-v</sup>, 100<sup>r-1</sup>.

<sup>1045</sup> Hunter et al., ‘Introduction’, xix. ESRO FRE 9/1/4778-9.

<sup>1046</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4243. See above, p. 229.

giue cou[n]sell[,] yet it is my ioy to receiue counsell'. In another letter, he explicitly thanked Jeake for providing 'goode counsell' in writing, reassuring him that he did 'esteeme [it] far before siluer or goulde'.<sup>1047</sup>

On account of the position which he came to assume, Jeake's case is, of course, highly distinctive and should be carefully distinguished from other evidence emerging from a context of moderate conformist puritanism. Some godly individuals who did not share Jeake's separatist impulses were keen to limit the freedom which he assumed to direct the consciences of others. As has already been mentioned, around 1646, one Joseph Nichols castigated him for becoming 'puffed up' and subverting the authority of his parish minister (see above, p. 257).<sup>1048</sup> Importantly, the activities of Henry Church also appear to have prompted some controversy. His printed collection contains an epistolary self-justification addressed to a correspondent who had co-opted their 'Lecturer' to confront Church with the charge that he 'was a conceited man'.<sup>1049</sup> This comparable accusation of pride and self-promotion may further demonstrate the sort of negative response which the activities of authoritative lay counsellors had the potential to inspire. Of course, ministerial admonition and personal instruction could also cause offence; just after the Restoration, the nonconformist divine, Henry Newcome, sent a blunt letter of reproof to a male parishioner which was, at least initially, badly received.<sup>1050</sup> Yet as has been observed in earlier chapters, the Protestant clergy generally appear to have been able to instruct and admonish remarkably freely without inspiring resentment in lay correspondents.<sup>1051</sup>

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<sup>1047</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4257 and FRE 9/1/4262.

<sup>1048</sup> ESRO FRE 9/1/4223, fo. 92<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>1049</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sig. H14<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>1050</sup> *Diary of the Rev. Henry Newcome*, 54-9.

<sup>1051</sup> On this point, see Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 399.

Church himself articulated a clear belief that certain laypeople possessed superior God-given abilities to instruct and console. He advised his readers to assess the aptitudes of their neighbours, for since ‘some are more excellent than others’ and ‘excell in some particular gifts’ (‘their Conference ... more deepe, their abilities being more large’), by scrutinising their skills ‘we may know whom to resort to for resolution, for comfort and encouragement’.<sup>1052</sup> Other laypeople certainly did resort to Church on account of his exceptional talents; one letter of October 1631 clearly responds to a direct approach from a friend: ‘I have by writing answer’d your desire, according to that ability which the Lord hath enabled me’.<sup>1053</sup> As was common in contemporary pastoral literature, Church depicted his counselling activity through the authoritative terminology of medical practice (see above, especially pp. 12-14). Presenting himself in the role of a soul physician, he wrote to his friend, ‘Mistresse *Rogers* ... musing how I might give you preventing Phisick’.<sup>1054</sup> Yet on other occasions Church also employed the rhetoric of mutual exhortation, desiring that he and his friends might ‘labour to edifie one another’. In this same letter, he carefully circumscribed the lay counselling role. On hearing that his written ‘Notes’ had comforted some troubled correspondents, Church protested that he was ‘both unworthy and unable’ to perform this task, since ‘the duty of Comfort is Angelicall ... and ‘tis the Ministers duty’. Elsewhere, he claimed that God, ministers and the Scriptures were all superior comforters, his own consolations being ‘but weake’.<sup>1055</sup> Whilst this rhetoric might be easily dismissed as a mere humility trope, Church’s wider works also witness to his sense of the need to limit the scope of lay conference in order to prevent disorder. He wrote that such topics as ‘Church-government’, ‘ceremonies’ and other ‘janglings’ were not fitting subjects for ‘private men’ to be concerned with, being ‘above our capacitie’. Later, Church remarked

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<sup>1052</sup> Church, *Good Mans Treasury*, 238-9, 261-2.

<sup>1053</sup> Church, *Divine and Christian*, sig. D12<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>1054</sup> *Ibid.*, sig. B1<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>1055</sup> *Ibid.*, sigs D4<sup>r-v</sup>, D9<sup>v</sup>.

that, whilst ‘some truths concerne me a private man, some are above my reach, and out of the scantling of my Calling to reason about’.<sup>1056</sup> Such statements are in line with his mainstream puritan ecclesiology, which, differing from the radical separatism of Samuel Jeake, led Church to articulate a more conservative sense of the proper hierarchy of lay and clerical activities, within the sphere of spiritual counselling.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined a wide-ranging body of lay pastoral counselling in the light of the pressing sense of religious obligation to instruct and admonish which, I have argued, underpinned the mutually instructive character of godly sociability. Recognising the problems inherent in treating the godly laity as a homogenous group, I have eschewed totalising claims, paying close attention to the intricacies of individual cases and using a significant number of unexplored sources in order to offer a nuanced appraisal of existing scholarly literature. This chapter has presented an original perspective on the interaction and mutual reinforcement of the individual and communal dimensions of puritan piety and shed fresh light on the relationship between the godly and the ungodly through a reassessment of evangelistic impulses within contemporary puritanism. The subversive potential of lay counselling has been addressed and evidence has been presented of the friction and hostility which reproof and admonition could generate amongst the godly. Certain caveats have been raised concerning the claim of equal participation of the sexes in epistolary counselling, but recent historical assertions of divergent gendered approaches to parental advice-giving have also been challenged through an exploration of neglected manuscript evidence of paternal counselling. Despite uncovering a notable degree of overlap between lay and clerical practices of religious instruction, this chapter has

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<sup>1056</sup> Church, *Good Mans Treasury*, 264-6, 275.

concluded by maintaining that ministers did exercise authority in distinctive ways within the pervasive contemporary culture of spiritual counselling.

## Conclusion

The themes of spiritual counselling and direction have been afforded limited attention in secondary literature on early modern Protestant piety, in contrast with their established place within the historiography of both pre-Reformation and early modern Catholicism. This thesis has sought to demonstrate the continued importance which was attributed to counselling the individual conscience across the Reformation divide, uncovering illuminating threads of continuity against a broader backdrop of religious change. As a counterpoint to the frequent scholarly claim that contemporary commentators on the post-Reformation pastoral ministry were almost exclusively concerned with the public duty of preaching, the first chapter of this study explored a broader range of devotional and pastoral literature which reveals a prevalent clerical commitment to ministering on an individual level, especially in terms of relieving afflicted consciences. I have situated my epistolary case studies against the backdrop of this widespread assertion of the value of clerical counselling and making individual confession to a minister, whilst also illuminating contemporary ideals of mutual conference, counselling and confession amongst Protestant laypeople.

The principal aim of this thesis has been to investigate the use of letter-writing as a medium for providing spiritual counselling in early modern English Protestantism – a theme which has offered significant scope for fresh historical and theological investigation. As recently as 2013, Gary Schneider observed that the study of religion and letter-writing in this period is a rich field of enquiry which is only just beginning to receive the historical attention it merits.<sup>1057</sup> This thesis has presented an original contribution to current

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<sup>1057</sup> Gary Schneider, 'Introduction', in Dunan-Page and Prunier (eds.), *Debating the Faith*, 11–12.

understanding of English Protestant piety and devotion by demonstrating just how significant and extensive a culture of pastoral epistolary counselling existed throughout the century between the Elizabethan settlement and the Restoration. Individuals resorted to the letter form for a variety of reasons: chiefly, in order to communicate with celebrated pastoral experts at a geographical distance, or to maintain spiritual fellowship when separated from friends and relations, to whom particular religious obligations were often felt. Alternatively, some early modern Protestants simply found themselves better able to express their thoughts and feelings in writing, especially because unburdening oneself to a minister or friend, or admonishing another's transgressions, were activities which were particularly likely to cause discomfort and embarrassment. Importantly, epistolary counselling was often either a substitute for, or supplement to, preaching or face-to-face discourse. It proved a particularly important method of communication during times of persecution or repression, especially when clergy were deprived of their public ministries. However, some pastors and laypeople did actually articulate, or at least appear to have recognised, specific advantages of epistolary communication. Most notably, letters of spiritual counsel could be read and reread at particularly suitable times, as well as being preserved for future devotional application.

Through focused and comparative examination, this research has shed fresh light on unfamiliar and underexplored printed and manuscript sources, as well as uncovering new, unstudied archival material. It is important to observe that those records of epistolary direction which do survive may actually represent only the tip of an iceberg. In 1627, the puritan minister, John Davenport, alluded to the preponderance of epistolary counselling amongst his Protestant forebears and contemporaries, lamenting 'that so many worthy Letters as are written ... for resolution of spirituall doubts ... are imprisoned in secret

closets and Cabinets’ which, if published, ‘would not onely exceed all that euer hath beene done in this course, since the Apostles time, but also be the best helpe for resolution’ of those ‘cases and doubts’ which continued to ‘disquiet Christians’.<sup>1058</sup> On account of the insights which they allow into both the nature and content of religious advice-giving, letters of spiritual counsel are particularly valuable sources for exploring Protestant pastoral practices. In relation to the latter, my analysis of epistolary evidence in chapter three has provided illuminating insights into both the importance placed on moderating grief and the conspicuous absence of the theology of predestination in contemporary bereavement counselling. These sources also have much to reveal about both ideals and realities of the lay-clerical relationship. I have argued, chiefly in chapters two to four, that a significant quantity of epistolary evidence reflects a hierarchical model of pastoral relations which is consistent with the prescriptive ideals of ministers, as demonstrated in their vocal assertions of professional expertise. Indeed, contrary to the view that Reformation ideology diminished the stature, not only of the cleric’s sacramental office, but of the ministry overall – that ‘the Reformation, by reducing the authority of the priest in society, simultaneously elevated the authority of lay heads of households’ who ‘stepped into the place of ministers’ – this study has drawn attention to widespread assertions of the dignity and spiritual expertise of clergy.<sup>1059</sup> Such evidence supports the conclusion that ‘clericalism’ remained a constant feature of this period.<sup>1060</sup> As has been especially clearly illustrated in chapter four, some troubled, scrupulous laypeople were eager to acquire expert ministerial guidance and to be examined and directed on their spiritual estates. Moreover, the devotional value which they attributed to examples of epistolary counselling

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<sup>1058</sup> Davenport, ‘Epistle to the Reader’, sigs A10<sup>v</sup>-A11<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>1059</sup> Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964), 446, 465-6. Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge, 1987), 96, 219-26, at 225 also draws a clear link between puritanism and anti-hierarchical impulses and the privileging of the ‘autonomous individual conscience’. See also Gibson, *Social History*, 169-72.

<sup>1060</sup> John Spurr has remarked on the expression of ‘different brands of “clericalism”’ across churchmanship: *The Post-Reformation: Religion, Politics and Society in Britain, 1603-1714* (Harlow, 2006), 269.

has been demonstrated through explorations of the practices of preserving, rereading and also printing and scribally disseminating exemplary letters of spiritual guidance.

Chapter three of this thesis has also argued that distinctions of social status did not have to constitute an obstacle to the clerical exercise of religious authority. It has been shown, on the basis of several case studies, that clergymen who successfully demonstrated their pastoral abilities could exercise religious influence with pious elites, especially women, through spiritual counselling relationships. Indeed, across various sections of this thesis, attention has been paid to exploring the possibilities which existed for spiritual counselling to cut across social barriers in what remained a very hierarchical society. But the need to prove one's value as a counsellor was important. During this period, some laypeople availed themselves of the religious services of extended networks of pastors and sought out resolutions and opinions on their spiritual estates from multiple advisers. This tendency is well illustrated by the surviving correspondence of the Derbyshire gentlewoman, Katherine Gell, which was examined in chapter four. As is clear from existing secondary literature, scholars have been chiefly interested in exploring the parts of Gell's epistolary corpus which shed light on the pastoral theology and practice of the illustrious Richard Baxter. By focusing attention on the full range of Gell's epistolary remains, this thesis has revealed the equivalent influence which various other ministerial counsellors exercised over her spiritual life. On the other hand, these and other sources have also served to illustrate how some ministers acquired particular reputations, both locally and even nationally, for their especially expert abilities at dealing with troubled and doubt-ridden souls.

Turning attention to the other side of this study, my research has also demonstrated that religious advice-giving amongst the laity was motivated both by love and a desire for spiritual fellowship and communal sustenance, as well as often by a pressing sense of obligation and responsibility to edify and admonish fellow believers. Epistolary evidence examined in chapter five reveals an abundance of this activity at varying social levels. Importantly, lay practices of conference and instruction display significant continuity with clerical pastoral counselling. However, it has been suggested that only in the cases of a few rather exceptional laypeople do we find evidence of engagement in spiritual counselling on a level akin to celebrated ministerial guides. Furthermore, several of my case studies centre on laypeople who, despite demonstrating significant personal involvement in epistolary counselling, continued to recognise a particularly important role for ministerial advisors. Individuals such as Nehemiah Wallington and Matthew Dodsworth confidently exhorted and admonished friends, relations and neighbours, yet they also sought expert resolutions from faithful pastors in their own doubts and anxieties. The latter even went hand in hand with a readiness to reprove false and deficient ministers. At several points in this thesis, the significance of gender has also been explored. With respect to the broad range of correspondence surveyed here, it can be observed that where women do appear in the source material they most commonly occupy the role of counselees of either ministers or laymen. I have particularly encountered this trend when seeking out records of private spiritual counselling of gentry. Furthermore, evidence does seem to point towards a generally more restricted role for laywomen as spiritual counsellors. Alternatively, it has been suggested, particularly in chapter two, that gender distinctions were not as important in practice as historians such as Patrick Collinson have implied. The impulse to seek out spiritual counselling in times of trouble and affliction was certainly far from gender-specific.

This research has demonstrated the complex interconnection of concurrent trends of individualism, communalism and clericalism, which acted in tension within early modern English Protestantism and especially puritanism. An awareness of the importance of individual devotion and introspective self-examination, which much recent scholarship has explored at length, must be met with a complementary emphasis on the importance of the godly communal culture of mutual edification and sociability and on the significance which many laypeople attributed to acquiring expert resolutions of cases of conscience, especially from able and learned pastors. Much scope exists for further investigation of the interdependence of these coexisting trends with respect to the wider devotional landscape of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. This study might also be profitably extended through a parallel examination of epistolary sources which reflect relationships of spiritual guidance amongst English Catholics. A close comparative analysis of the nature and content of Catholic pastoral direction and prescriptive pastoral literature would shed light on similarities, as well as any important differences, between ideals and realities of Protestant and Catholic spiritual counselling. An important aspect of such research would be comparing pastoral recommendations for making confession to a minister. The continuance of this practice in post-Reformation England is an interesting and underexplored subject which certainly merits further investigation and offers scope for enhancing our understanding of cross-confessional continuity. This thesis has also raised interesting questions concerning both the professionalisation of the post-Reformation ministry and the clergy's perception of their office in this light. These themes could be explored further by assessing clerical-authored epistolary counselling in parallel with medical advice correspondence, to investigate how authority was bolstered through the language of professionalism and specialist expertise.

Marking the beginning of a radical change in ecclesiastical context, 1660 has provided a fitting upper chronological limit for this thesis. Yet since surviving evidence also indicates the importance of epistolary counselling across the Restoration divide, it might be considered a somewhat artificial cut-off point. As Alexandra Walsham has observed, in the wake of 1662, ejected dissenters often needed to seek out alternative methods of communication in order to maintain contact with former congregations and individual parishioners. During this period of persecution, nonconformists may have particularly relied on letter-writing as a means of sustaining pastoral relations.<sup>1061</sup> Consequently, it would also be valuable to explore post-Restoration epistolary counselling through specific case studies, including the correspondence of the Derbyshire Gell family and that of nonconformist ministers such as Joseph Alleine and John Hieron. After 1660, one might also expect to find greater quantities of laypeople engaging in epistolary counselling and it would be interesting to investigate whether the partial distinctions which this thesis has maintained between clerical- and lay-authored spiritual advice correspondence break down in the subsequent period. Alternatively, a broader view of the devotional landscape could be acquired by extending the focus of this study to include the Quakers and other Civil War sects, or by incorporating wider British, and especially Scottish, source material. Profitable comparisons could be drawn with the correspondence of eminent letter-writers, such as the Covenanter, Samuel Rutherford, as well as a variety of less well-known individuals.

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<sup>1061</sup> Alexandra Walsham, 'Preaching Without Speaking: Script, Print and Religious Dissent', in Julia Crick and idem (eds.), *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700* (Cambridge, 2004), 222-4, 230. Also N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1987), 78-82.

Combining ongoing academic interests in lay-clerical relations, personal devotion and Protestant social networks, this doctoral research has important implications for the study of spiritual authority, gender and social status in the early modern period. By presenting an original, comparative perspective on Protestant pastoral counselling, chiefly through use of the valuable and underused resource of edifying and instructive spiritual correspondence, this thesis has offered a timely contribution to current scholarship and opened up a range of illuminating questions which could be the subject of future research.

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