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Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History

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THE CHURCH IN AN AGE OF DANGER

Parsons and Parishioners, 1660–1740

DONALD A. SPAETH
For Tam and Ellen
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This book has been many years in gestation. My work for ten years in academic computing, while rewarding, left me with regrettably little time for research and writing on early modern England. The book had its origins as a Brown University Ph.D. thesis. In considering how best to turn the thesis into a book, I came to conclusion that it was necessary to do more to place the incidents of lay–clerical conflict under review in context. Rather than stitching together a number of scattered incidents on various themes, it seemed worth while investigating whether it was possible to cast light on popular behaviour and belief through a number of in-depth case studies. This ambitious programme involved returning to the archives, in particular to mine the rich sources for Exchequer and Chancery in the Public Record Office. A local approach carries with it the dangers of parochialism, so it is perhaps paradoxical that these case studies have led me to look (from a different angle) at some of the political and religious issues that have tended to occupy historians of this period, providing an inkling of the complex relationship between Westminster and the provinces.

I have benefited greatly from the wealth of scholarship published by historians in recent years on religion under the later Stuarts and the Hanoverians, transforming what was a quiet backwater into one of the most exciting periods in English history. In researching and writing this book I have incurred many debts. While I was still an undergraduate, Michael MacDonald awakened my interest in the beliefs of the common people by introducing me to English social history, and in particular to the work of Margaret Spufford. I was fortunate to be supervised as a Ph.D. student at Brown University by David Underdown, to whose gentle guidance, enthusiasm for popular culture, and love of the West Country I owe much. Tony Molho helped me to obtain a Beneficial Foundation Travel Scholarship from Brown, and my grandparents, Rex and Gertrude Arragon, also supported my research financially. I am grateful to the archives listed in the bibliography for permission to use their material and to the archivists for their advice and assistance. Particular thanks are due to the staff of the Wiltshire Record Office, who always cheerfully dropped whatever they were doing in order to help me, and sometimes gave me access to materials and catalogues not
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ABBREVIATIONS

Alumni Cantabrigiensis  J. Venn and J. A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigiensis, Part I (Cambridge, 1922–54)
BL  British Library
Burnet, Pastoral Care  A Discourse of the Pastoral Care (London, 1692)
CSPD  Calendar of State Papers Domestic
DNB  Dictionary of National Biography (London, 1899)
Foxcroft  H. C. Foxcroft, ed., A Supplement to Burnet’s History of My Own Time (Oxford, 1902)
Matthews, Calamy Revised  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)
PRO  Public Record Office
WAM  Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine
WRO  Wiltshire Record Office

Most of the references to sources in the Wiltshire Record Office are in the form D1/39/1 or 1232/10. In the former case, the WRO has been omitted to save space; in the latter, WRO has been included, since the numbers on their own may be ambiguous.

In the text dates are given in Old Style but the year is taken to begin on 1 January. Quotations are given in their original spelling and punctuation.
Case studies and towns mentioned in the text.
(Wokingham, which was partly in Berkshire, is not shown in the correct position.)