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## PASTORAL CARE THROUGH LETTERS IN THE BRITISH ATLANTIC

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## Pastoral Care through Letters in the British Atlantic

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**Abstract:** Choosing the right words is itself an act of caregiving. Centring on correspondence archives allows pastoral letters to be analysed as a distinct literary genre that contributed in complex ways to early modern practices of caregiving, negotiating political oppression, geographical isolation, and colonial experimentation. Forms of care were solicited, given, and received through the material technology of the letter as a literary artefact. The exchange of letters created new bureaucratic and pastoral structures and entanglements between Protestant believers and others across the British Atlantic and reveals the contentious balance between care and cure within early modern communities. Pastoral care involves exercising power: epistolary exchanges sustain, exploit, shape, and distort the spiritual and material well-being of individuals and communities in a landscape fissured by religious division, enslavement, and imperial expansion.

**Keywords:** pastoral care, letters, enslavement, literary caregiving, Richard Baxter

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