

# Image, Text and Church, 1380–1600: Essays for Margaret Aston

Edited by

LINDA CLARK, MAUREEN JURKOWSKI  
and COLIN RICHMOND

This collection of essays has been assembled as a tribute to the eminent ecclesiastical historian Dr. Margaret Aston, Fellow of the British Academy. Many of the contributors are themselves distinguished scholars of the late medieval and early modern Church. The twelve essays reflect the extraordinary breadth of Dr. Aston's interests, reaching beyond history into the cognate disciplines of literature, theology, art history and codicology. Colin Richmond's personal appreciation is followed by Anne Hudson's engrossing study of how John Wyclif gained access to the books that he used and cited. Essays by Ann Eljenholm Nichols, Elizabeth Eisenstein and Richard Marks all focus, in different ways, on the relationship between religious text and image. Three biographical essays – by Jeremy Catto, Alison McHardy and Maureen Jurkowski – describe widely varying careers in the late medieval church, from the archbishop of Canterbury to an obscure Lollard preacher. Lollardy is the subject also of Norman Tanner's essay on the conciliar treatment of heresy and the condemnation of Wyclif's teachings, while Ian Forrest considers the role of defamation and heresy in late medieval social life. Andrew Hope compares reputation and reality in the career of the early Tudor reformer John Colet, and John Bossy examines the devotional compositions of the Elizabethan nobleman, Lord Henry Howard. While providing ample testimony of Aston's influence, these essays are also of considerable – even seminal – importance in their own right, and deserve a place on the shelf of any serious student of the period.



PAPERS IN MEDIAEVAL STUDIES 20

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Lambeth Palace Library

Central University Libraries, Southern Methodist University

UCL Library

Warburg Institute, London

Dr. Williams's Library, London

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First of all, warm thanks are due to the History Department of University College London (UCL) for agreeing to host the one-day conference which served as the prelude to the publication of this volume. We are especially grateful to Nazneen Razwi and Helen Matthews of UCL for their assistance with its organization and to our conference moderators – Dr. Margaret Harvey, Ann Kettle, Dr. Susan Brigden and Professor David d’Avray – for their splendid contribution to its success. Dr. Jonathan Mackman and Helen Watt provided welcome help with publicity. Most importantly, the scholars who delivered papers at the conference are to be congratulated not only for their stimulating performances on the day but also for managing to submit their contributions in advance of the assembly, which enabled them to be circulated to participants. All who took part would no doubt agree that this format considerably enhanced the quality of discussion.

We are grateful to the Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies (PIMS) for agreeing to publish the essays, to the commissioning editor Professor James Carley for facilitating publication, and to the PIMS editor Fred Unwalla for all his efforts in overseeing it. Special thanks are due to their copy editor Nate Dorward for his skill, patience and attention to detail throughout the final phases of production. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the Francis Coales Charitable Foundation for its generous donation towards the publication costs.

Not least, we offer our appreciative thanks to Margaret Aston herself for invaluable assistance with the compilation of the bibliography of her publications, and to her daughter Sophie Buxton for providing us with a delightful photograph of our honorand in characteristic pose, surrounded (of course) by books.

Linda Clark  
Maureen Jurkowski  
Colin Richmond



# Abbreviations

Aston, <i>England's Iconoclasts</i>	<i>England's Iconoclasts</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)
Aston, <i>Faith and Fire</i>	<i>Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350–1600</i> (London: Hambleton, 1993)
Aston, <i>Fifteenth Century</i>	<i>The Fifteenth Century: The Prospect of Europe</i> (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968)
Aston, <i>King's Bedpost</i>	<i>The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
Aston, <i>Lollards and Reformers</i>	<i>Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion</i> (London: Hambleton Press, 1984)
Aston, <i>Thomas Arundel</i>	<i>Thomas Arundel: A Study of Church Life in the Reign of Richard II</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967)
BL	London, British Library
Bodl.	Oxford, Bodleian Library
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i> (60 vols., London: H.M.S.O. 1902–63)
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i> (71 vols., London: H.M.S.O. 1901–86)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
EETS	Early English Text Society
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
Emden, BRUC	A.B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963)

Emden, BRUO	A.B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford</i> (3 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957–9)
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
L. and P. Hen. VIII	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , ed. J.S. Brewer, James Gairdner and R.H. Brodie, 21 vols. (London: HMSO, 1862–1932)
LALME	<i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English</i> , ed. Angus McIntosh, M.L. Samuels and Michael Benskin (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986)
Oxford DNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 61 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
PPC	<i>Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England</i> , ed. N.H. Nicolas, 7 vols. (London: Record Commission, 1834–7)
RO	Record Office
Rot. Parl.	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum; ut et Petitiones, et Placita Parlamento</i> , ed. John Strachey <i>et al.</i> , 6 vols. (London: 1767–77)
STC <sub>2</sub>	<i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, 1475–1640</i> , ed. A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave, 2nd edition, revised by W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson and K.F. Pantzer, 2 vols. (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1986)
TNA	Kew, London, The National Archives
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
VCH	<i>Victoria County History</i>
Venn, <i>Alumni Cantabrigiensis</i>	<i>Alumni Cantabrigiensis</i> , ed. John Venn and J.A. Venn, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922–54)

## Introduction

This volume contains, apart from one additional contribution, the proceedings of a special one-day conference held at University College London on 15 March 2008 to celebrate the work and achievements of Dr. Margaret Aston, Fellow of the British Academy. With its theme of ‘Religious Conformity and Non-Conformity, c.1380–1600’ the conference attempted to reflect something of the breadth and depth of Margaret’s interests in late medieval and early modern religion. (It cannot be said to have been entirely successful, since her third book, *England’s Iconoclasts, Volume I*, reached well into the seventeenth century!) It was an occasion much enjoyed by the 65 colleagues, friends and students who attended. The papers provoked some lively discussion on the day and they are published here to pay tribute, in some small way, to Margaret’s immense contribution to historical research over the last fifty years.

Margaret Evelyn Bridges was born into a highly distinguished family. Her love of history was no doubt nurtured by her father, Edward, the first Baron Bridges (*d.*1969), a fellow of All Souls College. Wounded while on active service in the First World War, he devoted his life thereafter to government administration, rising through the ranks of the civil service to become Secretary to the Cabinet during the Second World War. Her mother, Katherine Dianthe Farrer (*d.*1986), was the daughter of Thomas Cecil Farrer, the second Baron Farrer. Margaret’s paternal grandfather had been Robert Seymour Bridges, poet laureate from 1913 to 1930, who married Mary Monica Waterhouse, the daughter of Alfred Waterhouse (*d.*1905), a famous architect of the Gothic Revival. It is a fine coincidence that Alfred should have designed the original University College Hospital building across the street from the venue of the conference held in honour of his great-granddaughter’s achievements.

Margaret grew up at Boars Hill, near Oxford, and perhaps also in the house built by her great-grandfather at Yattendon in the Chilterns – it is hard to know, Margaret’s reticence about herself being legendary. She was educated at Downe House, Berkshire, and read history at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. In 1954, while still a research student, she married the social and economic historian Trevor Aston (*d.*1985), editor of the then-fledgling journal *Past and Present*, in which Margaret published in 1960 her first

and perhaps most influential article, ‘Lollardy and Sedition, 1381–1431’. Margaret continues to publish under the surname ‘Aston’, but divorced Trevor Aston in 1971 and later married Paul William Jex Buxton (*d.*2009), a diplomat and former Under Secretary for Northern Ireland, by whom she had two daughters. As a postgraduate she was fortunate enough to have been supervised by the inspirational K.B. McFarlane, who spawned a generation of late medieval, and especially fifteenth-century, historians. While a student she lectured at St. Anne’s College, from 1956 to 1959, and was awarded her D.Phil. in 1962 for her thesis on the early career of Thomas Arundel.

In the 1960s she held a series of research fellowships in Britain, Europe and the United States. She was an Una Goodwin Scholar and Amy Mary Preston Read Scholar at Oxford, a Theodor Heuss Scholar in West Germany, and a fellow at Newnham College, Cambridge, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., and the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California. She lectured at Newnham and the Catholic University of America in Washington. In 1984–5 she was an Honorary Research Fellow at Queen’s University, Belfast. The excellence of her scholarship was recognised further by her election in 1994 as a Fellow of the British Academy. Since 1996 she has been a member of the advisory committee of the John Foxe Project at the Humanities Research Institute, University of Sheffield, which seeks to publish an electronic edition of all the variant versions of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. In 2000–1 she served as President of the Ecclesiastical History Society, choosing as the theme of the annual conference ‘The Church and the Book’, and delivering a presidential address on ‘Lap Books and Lectern Books: The Revelatory Book in the Reformation’.

Margaret published the first of her seven books in 1967 – a study of the career of Thomas Arundel, as bishop of Ely and then archbishop of York, during the reign of Richard II, based upon her doctoral thesis. This was closely followed by a popular textbook in the Thames and Hudson series, *The Prospect of Europe: The Fifteenth Century* (1968), in which she demonstrated the astonishingly wide learning to which Colin Richmond pays tribute in his contribution to this volume. Its appeal has proved lasting; in 1994 a second edition was called for. In 1984 the Hambledon Press published the first of Margaret’s two collections of essays, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion*. This volume reprinted eight articles and chapters on the Lollard heresy, the Reformation and historiography – some of them truly seminal – and offered two new essays. It quickly became a classic and has found a place on the bookshelf of every serious student of late medieval religion. Her next book, *England’s Iconoclasts, Volume I*, published by Oxford University Press in 1988 and praised by one reviewer as ‘a wide-ranging and



deeply learned study of the theology, long-term roots and practical expression of image destruction during the period',<sup>1</sup> is now a standard reference work. A second collection of reprinted articles (*Faith and Fire*) followed in 1993, containing four papers on images and iconoclasm, others on Lollardy and late medieval religion, and a long chapter on the Northern Renaissance.

Imagery again features in Margaret's sixth book, *The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1994. The volume is ostensibly an investigation into the composition and context of a painting in the National Gallery, *Edward VI and the Pope*, which convincingly redates its execution from Edward VI's reign to the crisis years of that of Elizabeth I, 1569–70. This investigation also serves, however, as a platform for an extremely broad discussion of art, image-making and iconoclasm in England and the Low Countries. Copiously illustrated, it has been described by one reviewer as 'learned, beautifully produced and easy and fascinating to read'.<sup>2</sup> Margaret's love of painting and images is further attested by her thematically organised collection of over 1,000 images with a biographical dictionary of prominent Renaissance figures published by Thames and Hudson in 1996 as *The Panorama of the Renaissance*. Such was its success that the volume has just been republished in a paperback format as *The Renaissance Complete* to celebrate the publisher's 60th anniversary.

In addition to these solo efforts, in 1997 Margaret edited, with Colin Richmond, a fine collection of essays, *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages* – the proceedings of a conference which she had organised at Newnham College two years earlier. Then, with Rosemary Horrox, she put together a delightful volume of essays about gentry culture as a gift for Colin Richmond, inventively entitled *Much Heaving and Shoving*. This collection of edited documents with commentaries, published in 2005, is all the more remarkable for being a self-publication by the editors, requiring a Herculean effort on their part, far beyond the call of duty. At present Margaret is finishing the long-awaited second volume of *England's Iconoclasts*. Although sadly recently widowed, she is experiencing the joys of grand-parentage, as the grandmother of twin baby girls and a third step-granddaughter, all residing close by.

Beyond the excellence of her scholarship she excels in the business of being a human being. All who know her speak of her unstinting generosity and kindness. Always cutting a very elegant figure, she possesses a warmth and wit that come through strongly in many of her publications. She lives

1 Diarmaid MacCulloch, in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20 (1989), 491.

2 Paul Christianson, in *American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), 1560.

history, also, in the sense that she resides in an historic house about which she has written recently in a collection of essays published by a local history group. Built on the site of Ongar Castle by the fervent Protestant William Morice in 1547, Castle House retains original carved wooden decoration and vestiges of its surrounding moat. Her colourful account of its history and early modern owners is written in a characteristically scholarly manner, although she tells the story with perhaps a bit more relish than usual – hardly surprising, given that it is clearly a subject of more than passing personal interest for her.

All of these publications reveal the astonishing breadth of her interests, and the twelve essays that fill this volume reflect this diversity very clearly. Readers will find that they reach beyond history into the cognate disciplines of literature, theology, art history and codicology. While a thematic approach might be rewarding, we have nevertheless chosen to present them in chronological order so as to emphasize the remarkably long period of time covered by Margaret's scholarship. So, after a personal appreciation by Colin Richmond, the first essay is Anne Hudson's original analysis of the books used and cited by the Oxford theologian John Wyclif (*d.* 1384) and her attempt to find out where he gained access to them. After much painstaking research, she concludes that the college libraries at Queens, Balliol and Merton were his main sources, but also – rather surprisingly, given his well-known objections to mendicancy – that he was able to consult the papers of Robert Grosseteste in the library of the Franciscan convent in Oxford. Ann Eljenholm Nichols then explores the (non-Wyclifite) English gospel glosses in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge MS 32, suggesting that they were written for the devotional use of a lay patron, and presenting a fascinating analysis of the accompanying illustrations and their integration with the text. Alison McHardy offers the first of five biographical essays in this collection, examining the career of the Chancery clerk John Scarle, who rose in the service of Thomas Arundel to the chancellorship of England, and concluding with an intriguing set of speculations about Scarle's networks of influence, involvement in high politics and contributions to the *Westminster Chronicle*. Arundel himself is the subject of Jeremy Catto's essay. Aiming to present a broader view of the archbishop beyond the prelate's more usual portrayal as a reactionary conservative, he depicts him as a scholar and early reformer at the centre of a circle of like-minded churchmen interested in devotional contemplation. Arundel's view of church reform, however, was surely very different from that of the Lollard preacher Robert Herlaston, whom Maureen Jurkowski's essay rescues from obscurity. She traces Herlaston's career over 36 years, from his origins as a chaplain at Tamworth College through three incumbencies to his conviction and sentence of life imprisonment for heresy in 1428. Norman Tanner then considers the treatment of heresy by Church councils

generally and the condemnation of John Wyclif's teachings at the Council of Constance in 1415 specifically, publishing here a full translation of the 45 articles of condemnation.

While all of these essays are located within the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Ian Forrest's broad essay on defamation and heresy draws its examples mostly from the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Elucidating the subtle differences in legal procedure and types of defamation, he explores what they can tell us about defamation suits for heresy and the role played generally by defamation in late medieval social life. Although also making use of several early sixteenth-century examples, a copiously-illustrated essay by the art historian Richard Marks then examines depictions of text tables in parish churches, concluding that such painted texts were commonly written in English long before 1500. Moving into the post-Reformation period is the thought-provoking essay by Elizabeth Eisenstein on the opposition between Catholics' championing of orality and hearing, on the one hand, and the Protestant preference for writing and sight, on the other – a paper which generated much discussion at the conference. Andrew Hope's biography of John Colet (*d.* 1519), dean of St. Paul's Cathedral and an advocate of church reform, judiciously assesses both his post-Reformation reputation and the actual evidence of his alleged Lollard sympathies. Moving on considerably in chronology, but drawing surprisingly similar conclusions, is the final essay by John Bossy on the devotional compositions of Lord Henry Howard, written between 1584 and 1596. In a close and absorbing examination of their content, Bossy is able to show that Howard's natural inclinations as a member of a famously Catholic family were strongly tempered by his desire to conform to the new English national church.

Taken altogether these are indeed a diverse group of essays, all of which in their own way touch upon some aspect of Margaret's research. With their publication we hope that Margaret will realise how much she is appreciated by the scholarly community of historians of medieval and early modern England. While still only a small token of our appreciation, this volume provides some testimony to the enormous influence that she has had on the direction and scope of historical scholarship over many years.

COLIN RICHMOND

*Keele University*

## Margaret Aston: An Appreciation

Dear Margaret, I appear to have thrown away (as being unsatisfactory) the notes I used when introducing your day in London; the following may, of course, be no better.

What could be celebrated that day was: the profundity of your scholarship and its breadth, for which see the essays in this tributary volume. I spoke particularly of *The Fifteenth Century: The Prospect of Europe*, published in 1968, a year of crisis, when much that might have changed in Europe failed to do so. All rather like 1450 in England, when opportunities were missed; in England they always are, as they were in what you and I might think of as our own times, in 1926 and 1945. I digress. I do so because I am wondering why such a consummately good book has not had the impact it ought to have had. Was that because it appeared in a year which we have been commemorating forty years later in a good old nostalgic wallow, the seriousness of the events having been reduced to innocuity, such being the nature of populism? For me, the discovery of the book was a revelation, broadly of the visual culture of a century I had fallen in love with over a decade before, and specifically of the riches of that culture to be found east of what was still the Iron Curtain. Nor was it only the pictures that were captivating.

There were also the personalities encountered for the first time. How energizing was the width of your knowledge and its unassuming presentation: the reader was taken into the author's confidence as an equal, one who was bound to want to know about Nicholas of Cusa, Matthias of Janov, John Gerson, Peter Payne, John of Segovia, and Pius II. It is a list that might be easily extended. A few years later I wrote about one of those East Europeans, whose name now escapes me, and received a medal from the Poles for doing so, inscribed *Amicus Poloniae*. I no longer have the article, but have kept the medal. It has come to mind because it is you who should have had the medal, Margaret, for introducing me to a new world of scholarship, art, and thought. Without your book I would never have discovered the wall paintings in the castle chapel of Lublin, or stood in admiration before the house of Jan Dlugosz in Krakow, or lectured at the Copernicus University, Torun, on Robin Hood, Beowulf and Sutton Hoo

(at twenty minutes notice), and that astonishing play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Essentially, you opened my mind to all that was decidedly not England. For that I shall be forever grateful.

It is only part of the gratitude I owe. Of your generous spirit too few are aware, because you keep it well hidden; how you must detest the current culture of celebrity. All your acts of helpfulness are done, like those of Mr. Wemmick, well out of the public eye. Like Pip, I grew into some sort of learned maturity under your supervision, my elucidation of the Pastons being achieved with your unswerving support and unstinting encouragement. It would not have seen the light of day otherwise. Many, many others are able to say the same where their work is concerned. Such generosity is based on an attitude towards scholarship that deems it, first and foremost, one of communal endeavour. The doing of history is a social enterprise. It may be carried out by individuals poring over documents in archives, looking conscientiously at images in churches and palaces, and reading books in their studies and libraries, but it is a work whose fruits are to be shared and not only after publication. If there is such a thing as a community of scholars, you have been a leading member of it. Your integrity is as unquestionable as your erudition; it is, nonetheless, your unbounded *virtu* and your steadfast *amicitia* that I shall close with.