A Seventeenth-Century Stew:

Midwives, Infant Baptism, and William Harvey

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The position of midwives in Seventeenth-Century England is a complicated story with many facets to it. In the tumultuous political climate of Seventeenth-Century England there was a movement that pushed for increasing the education of midwives. This can be inferred by the amount of literature that appears in this era written specifically for or about midwives. Many of these writings were of an advanced medical nature, with a focus on complicated anatomy and physiology. Also, some reflected the political and religious debates of the time, interspersed with the technical advice given to this group of women. Reasons as to why it would have been important to bring a new awareness and insight into the field of midwifery will be demonstrated.

In order to fully understand why these various directions were taken to educate midwives one must take into account the political climate of Seventeenth-Century England and the issues that arose within it. In 1625 James I of England died passing the throne to his son, Charles I. The reign of James I was relatively peaceful with only limited debates between King and Parliament, which he usually lost.\(^1\) The reign of King Charles I took England in an entirely different direction. Charles held his own opinion in such high order that he made the decisions he thought right, feeling no need to justify them with his subjects or Parliament.\(^2\) As a result of Charles’ actions there were many altercations between Parliament and King during the period of 1625-29, concerning

\(^2\) Ibid., 98-99.
religion, foreign policy, and financial expenditures. Although there were many arguments, there was also no concerted effort made to challenge the King’s policies and by 1629 Parliament was dissolved completely leaving Charles to rule alone.

The moves that Charles made which were the most threatening to his crown and caused the most dissent among the people were his religious actions. Charles supported the work of Archbishop, William Laud, who advocated many practices that were much like those of the Roman Catholic Church and is said to have thought that it was the true church, although he believed it to be tainted. This unsettled the Anglican, Puritan and other Protestant populations alike who saw it as sneaky invasion of Popery into the Church of England. When Charles sought to impose the Laudian religious views on Scotland, the people rebelled. Moreover, the aid he received from Irish and Highland Catholics, offers he received from Spain and the Papacy itself, only increased tensions that finally culminated in the English Civil War. It was a volatile battle between Catholics and Protestants, King and Parliament that lasted until the trial and execution of Charles in 1649.

In the midst of this political turmoil, midwifery –like many things – felt direct effects from the conflict excited between the Crown and Parliament. From as early as the Seventh-Century midwives were given the authority by the Church to perform emergency infant baptisms. By the Seventeenth-Century, coming out of the Dark Ages, the practice of infant baptism was in decline because it was beginning to be thought that infants were

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3 Ibid., 99.
4 Ibid., 100.
5 Ibid., 100-101.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 102.
born innocent and that conversion based on faith from personal choice was the correct route to salvation. Although the practice of infant baptism may have been in decline, a tremendous amount of debate on the subject occurred in the 1600s.

Anglicans and Catholics, who supported the Crown, generally fought for the cause that infants should be baptized as soon as possible, even privately, which was another issue being debated and a duty often performed by midwives in the case of an emergency. Without baptism a child was thought to face damnation or limbo if it perished. Many titles can be found on the subject, such as one written by a George Burches, called *Mans Inbred Malady or The Doctrine of Original Sin maintained, As also the necessity of Infants Baptism or Infants Baptizing Proved lawfull by the scriptures: Objections against it resolved and removed*. Anglican Thomas Wall wrote many articles on the subject of infant baptism one being:

> Christian Warning-Piece For All True Protestants By Way Of Christian Counsel and Advice to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, and all His good Protestant Subjects…Wherein is clearly shewed, the true Causes why the Lord in former Ages brought his Severe Judgments on his own People, both before the Law, under the Law, and under the Gospel. All which being applied to the present state of Protestants, is proved both by Scripture and History.

Wall firmly supported that the “Infants of Believers” should be baptized, that it was the parent’s obligation to make sure it was done and if they did not “they ought themselves to be excluded from the Lords-Supper.”

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11 George Burches, *Mans Inbred Malady, or the Doctrine of Original Sin Maintained, As also the necessity of Infants Baptism* (London: Printed by W. Wilson, 1655).
In contrast to these points of view were those of other protestant sects such as the Puritans and the Baptists or Anabaptists. Puritans did not dispense with infant baptism altogether but the sacrament was much less important to them than it was for other religious sects because of their belief in predestination. The Anabaptists held that persons had to find God for themselves and that children were not capable of reasoning on this level. Therefore, they should not be baptized until they could make the choice to do so themselves; this acceptance or “believers baptism” was an important part of the conversion process.

On examining the literature produced by both sides it can be seen just how intense the arguments were. A plethora of books were printed pushing for or against infant baptism. Many of the contestants openly denounce each other, using names or initials. Thomas Wall participates in such a debate in an article titled, *A Necessary treatise for this age, or A Plain discovery of that great error of denying baptism with water to the children of believers*, arguing in favor of infant baptism. The work continues with “In justification of the Arguments of John Turner, for Infant Baptism, against Robert Admond.” Another anti-infant baptism piece purported itself to be *A Christian plea for infants baptisme. Or a confutation of some things written by A.R. in his treatise, entituled, The second part of the vanitie and chilishnesse of infants baptisme*, written by S.C.

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16 Thomas Wall, *A Necessary Treatise for this Age or a Plain discovery of the great Error of denying Baptisme with water to the Children of Believers* (London: Printed for Tho. Wall, and Barn. Frencham, 1669).
There are many writings that defend the opposing side as well. One of the books examined in support of infant baptism was called *The fallacy of infants baptisme discovered. Or, Five arguments, to prove that infants ought not to be baptized. Delivered in private by Captain Hobson, who should that day (with master Knowls, and some others) have discussed the thing in publike with Master Callamy, and Master Cranford, &c. And now published for the benefit of those that seeke the truth in love.*

Another book written by Mr. Henry Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism*, created a tremendous amount of turmoil. A Mr. Obed Wills responds with his own book of 259 pages entitled *Infant Baptism Asserted and Vindicated by Scripture and Antiquity: In Answer To a Treatise of Baptism lately published by Mr. Henry Danvers: Together with a full Detection of his Misrepresentation of divers Councils and Authors, both Ancient and Modern. With a just censure of his Essay to Palliate the horrid Actings of the Anabaptists in Germany.* The next year Danvers republished his *Treatise of Baptism. Wherein That of Believers, and that of Infants, is examined by the Scriptures; with the History of both out of Antiquity: making it appear, that Infants Baptism was not practiced for near 300 years after Christ.* However, this time he includes “*A Reply to Mr. Wills in Defence of the said Treatise And A Second Reply to Mr. Baxter in Defence of the same As also A Rejoynder to Mr. Wills his Vindictae With an answer to his Appeal.*”

It can be seen from the above examples that infant baptism was an important issue. Not only was each side eager to prove that their stance was right, they also actively strove to prove the other side wrong. At times it seems an outright verbal battle between

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parties baiting each other back and forth. In the middle of this altercation stand the emerging midwives and their prominent positions in relation to the issue of infant baptism. As the ones who were given authority to perform the sacrament, it can be seen why it would have been important to make sure they were educated.

Ergo, midwives being among the first to come into contact with infants, it would have been important to the religious powers at large to be assured of their backgrounds concerning issues such as infant baptism. Depending on what faith one ascribed to, not having an infant baptized may have been just as important as making sure one was baptized. Moreover, being secure that the child entered the world into the “true” faith would also have been of concern. This was most likely one of the roles that the ecclesiastical licensing, imposed by the Church of England, played.

It is not known when licensing for midwives started exactly. Most believe its inception to be around 1512 and the reign of Henry VIII, when the same was being done for medical practice.21 However, during the early Seventeenth-Century there was an increasing interest in the enforcement of licensing by the Church.22 Before obtaining a license a midwife was required to serve as an apprentice first, usually for a lengthy period of time, much like what occurred in guilds.23 When she was ready to apply for the license, the midwife had to present six representatives in person to attest to her good character.24 Indeed, most emphasis was placed on the character of a woman, religion

21 Evenden, Midwives of Seventeenth-Century, 25.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid. 51.
24 Ibid.34.
being a key factor in that they were expected to comply to certain spiritual and moral standards, and very little placed on her skill.\textsuperscript{25}

Midwives were required to take an oath, in which they promised not only to perform their midwifery duties but also a variety of others, such as escorting women to church to make sure babies were baptized, into the “right religion,” and that the women themselves took part in the churching ritual. Also, it was a midwife’s responsibility to inform the Church when these things did not happen. In addition to this, midwives were paid “visitations” by Church officials in order to check up on them, collect licensing fees, make sure they practiced with licenses and to ascertain whether other midwives in the area were also complying.\textsuperscript{26}

The Church did have a difficult time getting women to comply with licensing efforts and by the 1720s efforts were abandoned. Women outside the Church of England, Catholics or Quakers for instance, were not eligible to obtain a license and of course the threat of excommunication had little effect on them.\textsuperscript{27} Therefore, it can be determined that licensing served more of a religious purpose than to assure the skill of the practitioner.

The intertwined political and religious conflicts occurring in Seventeenth-Century England influenced the medical profession as well in that it had effects on which theories were accepted and which were not. Naturally, midwives would have also have felt this influence being members of the medical community. This is evident in examining William Harvey’s discovery of the closed circulation of blood.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. 49-50.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. 34; 42-46.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. 24; 14-15.
William Harvey and the Circulation Debate

William Harvey was elected to the Royal College of Physicians in 1607 where he became active in a variety of its affairs and held many positions. He was given the position of Lumleian lecturer and retained it from 1615 until one year before his death in 1657. By 1618 Harvey became one of the physicians extraordinary to James I and with Charles I, he continued to advance to the position of Senior Physician in Ordinary.²⁸ He is said to have had a close relationship with Charles I, who supported and showed an interest in his work to the extent of even providing him with royal deer and other animals for vivisection. Harvey was outspoken in his loyalty towards Charles I, even during the English Civil War and petitioned Parliament to attend the King as his private physician, even after Charles’ capture, remaining until the time of his execution.²⁹

Harvey discarded the traditional Galenic views to which most physicians of the time ascribed. Galen’s physiological system emphasized the liver as the chief organ from which blood flowed to nourish the body and the heart as being connected to the lungs in control of temperature regulation.³⁰ The influence of Aristotle in Harvey’s work is more apparent than Galen, as he makes many references to Aristotle and is more often in conformity with him. The influence of Aristotle on Harvey was key in his recognition of the closed circulation of blood. ³¹

Harvey did not make public his findings of the closed circulation of blood until the publishing of De motu cordis in 1628. At the beginning of De motu cordis Harvey

²⁹ Ibid. 151.
³¹ Dictionary of Scientific Biography, “William Harvey” 152.b
includes a dedication to King Charles calling him “the most Illustrious and invincible monarch.”

(vii) In the dedication he goes further saying:

The heart of all creatures is the foundation of life, the Prince of all, the Sun of their Microcosm, on which all vegetation does depend, from whence all vigor and strength does flow. Likewise the King is the foundation of his Kingdoms, and the Sun of his Microcosm, the Heart of his Commonwealth, from whence all power and mercy proceeds.

Therefore, Harvey relates his findings of the circular motion of the blood around the heart to the natural position of the sun being the center of life. He goes further to compare the king’s position in society to that of the sun, giving the king a prominent natural position. Therefore, anyone contesting the sovereignty of the king would be challenging the natural order of how things are supposed to operate. When inserted into the English timeline, this dedication becomes very significant. Harvey published *De motu cordis* in 1628, right during the time when the friction between Charles I and Parliament were at their zenith, turning the circulation of blood into a political statement as well as a medical break-through. Given Harvey’s comparison, the circulation theory would not have been looked at kindly by supporters of Parliament.

Indeed, a political division can be seen between royalists who accepted Harvey and Parliamentarians who refuted the circulation theory, even among the ones who published works on midwifery. Moreover, not only can the political influence be found in what theories the authors support, some of them are openly political. The physician and male midwife Percivall Willughby was one of Harvey’s contemporaries and an ardent follower of his theories. He was a member of the Royal College of Physicians and

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33 Ibid.
34 Towler, *Midwives in History*, 72.
committed to improving the practice of midwifery.\textsuperscript{35} In his work \textit{Observations in Midwifery} Willughby states:

\begin{quote}
I know none but Dr. Harvey’s directions and method, the which I wish all midwives to observe and follow, and oft to read over and over again, and, in so doing, they will better observe, understand and remember the sayings and doings of that most worthy good and learned Dr., whose memory ought to be had for ever in great esteem with midwives and childbearing women.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

Willughby, along with Harvey, was opposed to some of the practices employed by whom they saw as inexperienced midwives, in which drugs or other actions were given to women in order to hasten the birthing process. They proffered to let nature take her course.\textsuperscript{37} Although his manuscripts were not published until long after his death, Willughby seems too have left an impact on the midwife community by being an influential member during his lifetime. Moreover, when he was published in the 1800’s, his works were still a viable tool in the trade.\textsuperscript{38}

Another male midwife and contemporary of Harvey was Dr. Peter Chamberlen. Chamberlen was elected a Fellow of the Royal College in 1628, although dismissed later for his questionable conduct. Chamberlen claimed to have the interest of midwives at the heart of a movement he started to license them under himself. He was also the developer of the delivery forceps, which his family kept as their secret tool for years, even after their deaths.\textsuperscript{39}

Chamberlen himself was a prolific writer who became involved in political matters, including the issue of infant baptism. Chamberlen was very anti-Catholic and pro-infant Baptism. In his poem, \textit{The Jesuits Justification, proving they Died as Innocent}

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Towler, \textit{Midwives in History}, 72.
\textsuperscript{39} Keynes, \textit{Life of William}, 218-219.
as the Child Unborn, Chamberlen lampoons the Jesuit faction of Catholicism for
purportedly saying that a child dies as innocent as the child unborn. About the Jesuits he
states:

Idolatries, Lyes, Blasphemes and Worse, Are their Religion, bound up with a
Curse. Poysons, Rapes, Massacres, are Saint-like Ware, And Holy Dictates, of the
Roman Chair. Perjuries, Murtherers, are their Laws [and continues saying] They
are more Troublesome than Egypt’s Frogs, And must be Kill’d as Vermine, or
Mad Dogs. Thus they Promote the Scarlet Interest, In Honour to the Whore, and
the Beast.

The reason Chamberlen chose to attack the Jesuits on the issue of infant baptism
cannot be determined. Being a sect of the Catholic Church it would be assumed that they
also supported infant Baptism, but perhaps their order looked at it differently enough to
insight such a response. However, it can be said that Chamberlen had such a strong
opinion on the subject that he was willing to share and he was directly connected with the
midwife community.

Moreover, Peter Chamberlen’s son Hugh Chamberlen is credited with having
translated from French one of the few midwifery texts found that supports the circulation
of blood, written by Francis Mauriceau. On the title page Hugh Chamberlen states that it
is “A work much more perfect than any yet extant in English: Very necessary for
Chirurgeons and Midwives practicing this Art.”

Indeed, Mauriceau makes reference to the circulation of the blood in his book
titled The Diseases of Women with Child, and in Child-bed. One passage says:

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40 Peter Chamberlen, The Jesuits Justification (London n.p., 1679)
41 Ibid.
42 Francis Mauriceau, The Diseases of Women with Child, and in Childbed, trans. Hugh Chamberlen, 2nd
   ed. (London: Printed by John Darby, 1683)
I say, the Arteries convey the Blood, for as much as the circular motion, which is made continually in all living Animals, shows us, that they alone are capable of doing it and not the veins, which serve only to reconduct to the Heart.  

There are many other such passages that illustrate his belief in what he calls “the ordinary motion of the blood.” Another point to be taken into account supporting Mauriceau’s belief in circulation is that he makes no references giving prominence to the liver, as do followers of Galen. Another book of French origin was also found supporting the circulation that included information for midwives.

In contrast there were many physicians who did not agree with the theory of circulation and many of them were supporters of Parliament. Such as Thomas Sydenham (1624-89) who did not make any reference to Harvey at all in any of his numerous publications on anatomy and physiology. Sydenham came from a Presbyterian family that saw four, possibly even five, sons fight in the Civil War on the side of Parliament. Sydenham himself even attained the rank of captain and was elected to Parliament in 1659.

Another who rejected Harvey was the physician Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654). Culpeper was a Parliamentarian who fought and sustained a chest injury in the Civil War. Among his writings was A Directory for Midwives: or, A Guide for Women, In their Conception, Bearing, And Suckling their Children. The Directory is claimed to be aimed at midwives themselves, and that Culpeper’s intent is to enlighten them by being

43 Ibid. 20.
44 Ibid. 86.
46 Keynes, Life of William, 320.
as truthful as possible. Therefore, he even covers taboo subjects, such as male anatomy, on which others doctors have left midwives out. Moreover, he goes further to include a dictionary at the end of anatomical technical terms. These statements can be found in the first section where he says:

Lest kind Women (whom my intent is to please in this Treatise (if doing good to them wil please them) should be offended, that I explain not those strange names which the Rabbies of our, and former Ages have used to muffle up our eyes, lest we should see the Truth, and so break their yolk of bondage from off our necks) lest (I say) they should be offended, I desire them to take notice, that they shall find them all explained in Alphabetical Order at the latter end of this book.

Culpeper was almost the opposite of Harvey in every way. It is evident in the Directory that he was an avid supporter of the Galenic tradition. Also, he never misses an opportunity to take a stab at Aristotle’s theories on blood and the heart, which Harvey generally respected, accusing him of “having an overwhelming conceit of himself that he knew everything.” His views on the circulation are expressed in the first few paragraphs of the first chapter of the book. He States:

And hereby the way let me instruct you in one Notion, (for I make no question but Physicians have kept you ignorant enough) the liver is the original of blood and distributes it through the Body by the veins, and not the heart, as Aristotle waking dream was, vis. That the Heart was first formed in Man, and is the seat of blood, and the Sun of the Body, as the Sun is the Heart of the World: but we shall prove another manner of microcosmical sun by and by, when we come to shew Astrologically how man is formed in the womb.

Indeed, the acceptance or refutation of the circulation of blood around the heart did also have an impact on how the generation of the fetus in the womb was viewed.

Those that believed in the circulation gave more prominence to the formation of the heart

49 Nicholas Culpeper, *A Directory for Midwives In their Conception, Bearing, And Suckling their Children* (London: Printed by Peter Cole, at the sign of the Printing Press in Corn-hill, neer the Royal Exchange, 1656), 5.
50 Ibid. 12.
51 Ibid. 7-8.
than those that did not favor the liver. Harvey’s view was that the blood and vesicles appear first with the heart, liver, and other organs forming at the same time, the heart situating itself into place in the chest cavity first.\textsuperscript{52} Mauriceau sights the liver as forming last.\textsuperscript{53} However, Culpeper believes that the first speck of blood, that can be seen, forms into the liver, from which all else arises.\textsuperscript{54}

Culpeper’s \textit{Directory} was also filled with political opinions and statements that condemned the Monarchy and Catholicism. In many places his political ideology takes precedence over the medical advice that is supposed to be given. Found in the middle of chapter four, called “Of the Vasa Deferentia,” he accuses physicians of keeping people in ignorance saying:

\begin{quote}
For just for al the world as Popish Priests serve those they call the Laity…which is, People in plain English, as thought Priests were no People, but either Angels, or (which is more probable Monsters) as I say, the Popish Priests serve their Laity, so do our Physicians serve the commonality of this Nation; viz. Hide all from them they can.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

As a supporter of Parliament Culpeper had a lot to say about the subject in his \textit{Directory for Midwives}. There are several areas in the book where he breaks away from the medical subject matter completely to let his opinions be known at length. Colorful analogies are employed to get his points across; for instance, at the beginning of his chapter on the formation of the child in the womb there is a three-page section that is entirely political. Among other things in this part he says:

\begin{quote}
We can not know, Whether Creatures at liberty have any religion of Knowledge of God, or not; we may guess from Psal.104 if we do but mark what we reade,
\end{quote}

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{53} Mauriceau, \textit{The Diseases of Women With Child}, 29-30.
\item\textsuperscript{54} Culpeper, \textit{A Directory}, 50.
\item\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. 17.
\end{enumerate}
that they have: however this is certain, They never went together by the ears about it as we have done; but as for an absolute Common-wealth, take it as a Free-state, or Monarchical, Man comes as far short of the wisdom of the Creatures, as I do the wisdom of Solomon.

1. Take such of the Creatures as hold a Free-State, and if Agur may be believed, such are Locusts: The Locusts have no king, yet go forth in Bands: They have no King, therefore a free state; they go out in bands, therefore have they Government, as well as Number; for Souldiers ungoverned, wil sooner make a Rout than a Regiment.\(^{56}\)

He goes on to talk about the monarchical state of bees and how they act only for the good of each other in a “Martial Common-wealth” that man “for all his Reason he brags so much of, and all his Reading and Learning, could never frame such a Monarchy.”\(^{57}\) In this way Culpeper’s opinions on the subject are given clearly and freely. Culpeper’s attitude throughout the book seems to be one in which he genuinely is working to break the bonds of ignorance in the common man and woman alike. In fact, other evidence of his striving to do just that can be found elsewhere. Culpeper outraged the Royal College of Physicians by publishing an unauthorized version of their Pharmacopoeia translated into English, titled A Physical Directory, or a Translation of the London Dispensatory.\(^{58}\) The College let their feelings be known, in a royalist publication called Mercurius Pragmaticu, it was printed that the book was:

Done (very filthily) into English by Nicholas Culpeper,” who “commenced the several degrees of Independency, Brownisme, Anabaptisme; admitted himself of John Goodwin’s Schoole (of all ungodliness) in Coleman street; after that he turned Seeker, Manifestarian, and now he is arrived at the battlement of an absolute Atheist, and by two yeeres drunken labour hath Gallimawfred the apothecaries book into nonsense, mixing every receipt therein with some scruples, at least, of rebellion or atheisme, besides the danger of pysoning men’s bodies. And (to supply his drunkenness and leachery with a thirty shilling reward)

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\(^{56}\) Ibid. 41.
\(^{57}\) Ibid. 41-42.
endeavored to bring into obloquy the famous societies of apothecaries and chyrurgeons.\textsuperscript{59}

It has been said that Culpeper’s translation was correct, not having the liberties above taken with it, and that the attack was most likely political and personal because of the exclusive rights that some held on the exposed information.\textsuperscript{60} It must be concluded that Culpeper felt it was just as important for midwives to be educated about the debated political systems as well as the body because of the amount of time he spends on it in a book written specifically for them.

Despite the evidence given to support why it would have been important to educate midwives for political and religious reasons, there is another that cannot be ignored. In this era the influence of science was starting to spread throughout the medical field and forms of licensing were becoming required in order to practice within the different branches of medicine.\textsuperscript{61} A movement emerged that even took obstetrics and midwifery to scientific levels and began to elevate it to a respected practice for male physicians, which had previously been an almost exclusively female tradition.\textsuperscript{62}

Among the forerunners of this movement was William Harvey, with publishing of\textit{De generation animalium} or \textit{Disputations Touching the Generation of Animals} in 1651; Harvey provided an extensive anatomical and physiological piece giving a day-by-day account of fetal development based on his personal observation.\textsuperscript{63} Harvey also dedicates an entire chapter to parturition, describing the birthing process in humans, with advice in assisting child delivery; that breaks away from the more scientific theme of the rest of the

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Towler, \textit{Midwives in History}, 64.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid. 71.
\textsuperscript{63} Harvey, \textit{Disputations} passim.
book. This has led many to classify it as one of the first original works on midwifery in England. Moreover, as mentioned before, physicians, such as Harvey and Willughby, were actively interested in the dissemination of correct information for women’s benefit.

The women midwives also strove to better their practice. Women would have been in the best position to see the impact of the current state of practice had on other women, namely the high mortality rate for both infants and mothers. Moreover, commonalities of gender, childbirth, and motherhood, would most likely have made them more sympathetic.

Evidence of this can be seen in the actions women took themselves when they wrote their own books on the subject or disseminated the information of others whom they trusted. Indeed, one of the books examined was a compilation of texts by various physicians, including Chamberlen and Culpeper, entitled *The Complete Midwives Practice Enlarged* and is signed with the initials R.C., J.S., M.S., T.B., W.C. and M.H., “Practitioners of the said Art,” which was later found to be compiled by women. Most likely women used their initials in order to keep their identities secret because of the fact that they were women.

In conclusion, issues such as infant baptism placed midwives in the middle of the struggle given that they had the power to administer the sacrament. Increased regulation was attempted in order to monitor the activities of these women, but as mentioned, with limited success. Moreover, even attempts made to genuinely improve the practice of midwifery would have been influenced by religion and political views because of their

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64 Ibid. 393-418 passim.
66 Towler, *Midwives in History*, 44.
inseparability, such as evidenced in the case of Harvey and the circulation theory, and in the literature published for midwives.

Therefore, it can be seen what a complicated time the Seventeenth-Century was for midwives. The next generation was placed in their care and it was important to make sure that generation would succeed to perpetuate the beliefs of their parents. Therefore, it was important to make sure midwives who helped bring infants into the world had the same religious and political views, these terms being synonymous as the separation of church and state was as yet unheard of. Thus, the education of midwives became an area of central importance because they were prominent figures in a society deeply in the midst of political and religious struggle.
Burches, George. *Mans Inbred Malady, or the Doctrine of Original Sin Maintained, As Also the necessity if Infants Baptism*. London: Printed by W. Wilson, 1655.


Wall, Thomas. *A Necessary Treatise for this Age or a Plain discovery of the great Error Of denying Baptisme with water to the Children of Believers*. London: Printed for Tho, Wall, and Barn. Frencham, 1669.