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“A mind enrich’d with Virtue, shines more bright”: Women and Virtues in Early Modern Sermons and Poetry

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“A mind enrich’d with Virtue, shines more bright”: Women and Virtues in Early Modern Sermons and Poetry

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Introduction

Virtues, or being virtuous, was of great importance within early modern English society. The importance of virtue is underscored by Langis as he states that “virtue figured as an important social ideal” (1) within English literature and culture. Furthermore, virtue was of importance for both men and women; however, for women virtue had the ability to determine the course of their life. Namely, women’s position within society depended upon their virtue as the reputation of their family and the possibility of marriage was determined by virtue. (Gowing 112). Society’s norms regarding virtues were to some degree determined by the church opinions towards virtue. Early modern Protestant theologians, such as Luther and Erasmus, discussed the importance of virtues as well as debated on the definition of virtues within Protestant theology. These definitions were then used by society and implemented on women in their daily lives. Although these virtues can be seen as just a theological concept Gowing, proves that the virtues did not just stay within theology but influenced secular life as well. In her book, she remarks on the language of insult within early modern English society as well as the definition of morality regarding women. She states that in early modern English society morality was “often read as women’s sexual conduct” and both society and church stressed the importance of chastity (Gowing 2-3). The emphasis on morality, and virtue, led to a society in which women were held responsible for chastity and faithfulness of both men and women. However, virtue does not only entail chastity but rather contains a range of virtues. Within literature these virtues have not been divided but are rather talked about in general. For example, Gowing talks about living virtuously and refers to chastity and faithfulness, but also acknowledges other aspects of virtue such as “silence, obedience, submissiveness and restraint” (2). Virtue is described as a way of living that consists of the different virtues, but the implications of the individual virtues are not discussed in detail. Even so within early modern Protestant theology a division within the virtues can be seen. Therefore, this thesis will divide the general concept of virtue into individual virtues and the concept of living virtuously will be analysed by taking the definition of several individual virtues as the norm. Furthermore, within early modern English society sermons and religious poetry bridged the gap between theological and secular. The definition of virtues and the importance of virtues within Protestant theology are made apparent within sermons and religious poetry. Therefore this thesis will

explore the position of women in early modern Protestant theology by comparing and analysing the way in which sermons and religious poetry engage with the virtues of chastity, wisdom and strength.

The virtues of chastity, wisdom and strength will be analysed within the poetry of Aemilia Lanyer and sermons by John Donne, John Mason, Thomas Grantham, Edward Reynolds and Ignatius Fuller. The selected poetry of Aemilia Lanyer consists of the poem “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” and “The description of Cooke-ham”. Aemilia Lanyer was an English poet who published a full edition of poems and claimed herself a “professional poetic voice” (Woods XV). Furthermore, Lanyer had access to court circles during her life, which explains several of her poems addressed to duchesses or countesses as well as an education which resulted in familiarity with classical tradition and techniques of rhetoric (Woods xvii). Lanyer wrote several poems, however, only the poems “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” and “The description of Cooke-ham” will be analysed within this thesis. During 1600 Lanyer spent some time at Cooke-ham which turned out to be an inspiration for both afore mentioned poems. The poem “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” was officially published in 1611, is addressed solely to women and acknowledges no male authority other than a short mention of Lanyer’s husband. The fact that the poem is written for women and addressed to women was unique within early modern England. Especially during the Reformation period and within Protestantism women in which women had to find their voice. Woods describes how women found their voice within Protestantism:

During the sixteenth century Englishwomen found voices through the contradictory injunctions of Protestantism, which on the one hand reasserted the traditional expectation of womanly silence and subservience, but on the other hand affirmed the supremacy of the individual conscience, even within women, to whom God could speak directly and, in theory, allow exceptions to the general rule of silence (Woods xxxi)

It is within this scope that Lanyer writes “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” and it is also the contradictions within Protestantism that she uses to address women and give them a voice. Lanyer, therefore, writes within the theology of Protestantism, while at the same time using the space created within the theology to write a poem for women. Furthermore, the poem is unique in its exclusive dedication to women patronesses as well as its religious aspect (Woods xxxii). Several poems were written before Lanyer’s poem both as a dedication to the Queen and other patronesses, as well as on religious topics. However, “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” claims “biblical and historical authority and grants the

viewpoint of women as much or greater authenticity as that of men” (Woods xxxii). Lanyer’s choice to create a poem for women which claims both biblical and historical authority in which she consciously gives women a greater authenticity and all within the margins of Protestantism is the reason why the poem has been selected for this thesis. Furthermore, the poem consists of several individual sections, such as an address to all virtuous readers and sections addressed to countesses or the queen, with “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” as central section within the poem.

The poem “The description of Cookeham” refers to her time in Cookham and can be understood as written somewhere during her time there. Cookham was manor “occupied by the Countess of Cumberland at some periods during her estrangement from her husband” (Lewalski qtd in Woods n. 28 xxv). Within the poem Lanyer openly discusses her relation with Cookeham and the people that reside there. Furthermore, the poem reflects on her life and youth and addresses in a way the privileges she has had being brought up around court and within the household of the Countess of Kent (Woods xxvi-xxvii). The poem, therefore, can also be understood as a farewell to her youth and the privileges it had entailed. The poem was written before “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” and therefore it both complements and underscores the themes within “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum”. The poem itself is not as explicitly dedicated to women as “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum”; however, it does reflect on Lanyer’s time at Cookeham through description of both the place as well as the people who reside there. Therefore, both the description of Cookeham and the people, within a frame of Protestantism, as well as its position of a farewell before the creation of “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” have resulted in its selection for this thesis.

The sermons analysed within this thesis are all preached between 1600 and 1700. The timeline of the sermons has been based upon the time frame of the reformation period as the focus will be how Protestant theology, during the reformation period, dealt with these specific theological themes. The choice for sermons by John Donne, John Mason, Thomas Grantham, Thomas Manton, Samuel Rutherford, Edward Reynolds, and Ignatius Fuller has then been based on the topics of their sermons as the selected sermons all engage in some way with the concept of virtues.

The primary sources are analysed through close reading which is informed by a historical and theological context. The poems and sermons are analysed based on a historical understanding of early

modern English society through secondary sources. Consequently, primary sources by Erasmus and Luther are discussed and taken as a base for the definition of virtues and they serve as a framework for the analysis of the poetry and sermons. Within the analyses this thesis draws explicitly on temporary theological debates concerning virtues, grace and salvation. Furthermore, the development within the theological debate during the Reformation period has been taken into account by comparing and contrasting the views of Luther, Erasmus and Aristotle.

In chapter one theological texts by Luther, Erasmus will be used to define the concept of virtues and divide the general idea of virtue into more specific virtues. In order to analyse the way in which early modern sermons and poetry engage with virtue three individual virtues will be analysed; namely, the virtue of chastity, strength and wisdom. These virtues have been chosen because of their difference in degree of femininity and masculinity. The virtue of chastity is seen as a more feminine virtue and in several texts the word virtue refers just to chastity, which is often used as a way to describe women. The virtue of wisdom on the other hand bridges the gap between masculinity and femininity as it is used to define both men and women. Contrastingly, the virtue of strength is mostly used to describe men, as women are often viewed as the weaker sex. Although there are some instances in which women are praised for their strength in those instances strength is often characterised as a male aspect that is present in a female. Therefore, in a way these three virtues contain the range from femininity to masculinity within the general concept of living virtuously. Although some can be characterised as a more masculine quality this thesis will explore the extent of this within poetry and sermons by identifying the presence of all three virtues within the lives of women.

The virtues of chastity, wisdom and strength will be analysed within religious poetry and sermons while taking the definitions of virtue provided by the theological texts as a frame. In chapter two the virtue of chastity will be analysed within the poem "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" and sermons by John Donne, John Mason, Thomas Manton, and Samuel Rutherford. Within the chapter the analyses of the parable of the ten maidens holds a significant role, as the parable connects the virtue of chastity with the concepts of salvation and grace. Therefore, the virtue of chastity will not only be analysed in terms of faithfulness but rather in a larger scheme of purity. At the same time the

symbolism of the lily within theology and poetry as well as the implications of chastity for grace and salvation will be taken into account. Furthermore, the role of beauty within society will be analysed within a larger concept of nature and virtue, by analysing how Lanyer engages with the concepts of beauty, virtue and nature within “The description of Cooke-ham”. In chapter three the virtue of wisdom will be analysed within the poem “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” as well as sermons by John Donne and Edward Reynolds. The chapter will use a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. Furthermore, this distinction will then be used to analyse the way in which Lanyer and the sermon writers engage with the concept of wisdom in connection with salvation. Consequently, the relation between God and men contained within the definition of wisdom will be analysed. Furthermore, the chapter will have a focus on the presence of wisdom within women and biblical women both within the poem and sermons. Chapter four will analyse the virtue of strength within the poem “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum and sermons by Fuller. The chapter will focus on a definition of the virtue of strength and will use Lanyer’s distinction between weakness and strength, as well as the early modern definition of wisdom and strength, as a framework in which the presence of the virtue of strength within women will be analysed. Furthermore, the connection between strength and holiness will be analysed as both a general concept of holiness as well as the concept of withstanding temptations within faith.

Chapter 1: The role of virtues

In order to analyse the role of virtues within early modern English poetry and sermons, it is necessary to establish the role of virtues within Protestant theology. The theology of virtues within Protestantism will be based upon works of Erasmus, Luther and Aristotle. Furthermore, the virtues of chastity, wisdom and strength will be discussed in more detail. Additionally, the role of women within Protestant theology and early modern society will be underscored by analysing the presence of virtues within early modern society and protestant theology. I will use the definition of virtues within those texts to analyse the way in which early modern poetry and sermons describe virtues. I will be approaching the texts with a new historicist approach while also taking gender studies into account. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss virtues within theology and society as well as the roles of sermons and religious poetry within early modern society.

1.1 The importance of virtue

Within Protestant theology the role of virtue within salvation and justification is seen differently. During the seventeenth century a difference occurred, within Protestantism, between religious theory and moral practice. The shift to “holy living” (Cefalu 4) theology contained an emphasis on sanctification instead of justification which created more space to preach the importance of virtues. These developments are in contrast with earlier Protestant theologians who tried to integrate the “morality of external behaviour with a theology of justifying righteousness” (Cefalu 4). Furthermore, this shift underscores a difference in understanding virtues between Luther and Aristotle as well as Luther and Erasmus. The difference between Luther and Aristotle occurs on the subject of virtues and especially the moral virtues. Moral virtues, or morality, exists within the categories of “potentiality or power” (Cefalu 4), which can also be described as “habits” (Cefalu 4). Aristotle, therefore, believed that these moral virtues are formed through habit and need to “be performed with skill and care” (Cefalu 4) in order to acquire “a certain degree of “virtuosity”” (Cefalu 4). In contrast, Luther described morality as a sign and consequence of grace rather than a cause (Cefalu 5). Consequently, Luther’s view is in stark contrast with that of Aristotle, as Aristotle believes one would be able to train the occurrence of moral virtue within one’s life. Contrastingly, Luther believes one is

dependent on grace in order to conduct oneself virtuously, which defines virtues as a sign of grace (Cefalu 4-5). Furthermore, Luther believes that virtue is a part of who we are but depends on what God does within someone's life. Luther, therefore, is of the opinion that one should not try to act virtuously, but rather present ourselves as we are; namely, sinful human beings (Herdt 140). Consequently, Luther believes that only by focusing on God and our neighbours and not on "acquiring virtue", "we begin to make progress in true goodness" (Herdt 140). Both Luther and Erasmus believe Christian virtue can only occur when one recognises human sinfulness and acknowledges "the bankruptcy of human agency" (Herdt 140). Therefore, the view on grace and salvation determines the role of virtue within these concepts. Within early modern Protestantism Luther's view on morality was followed thus opposing Aristotle's view. Luther believed that virtue was dependent on God and not something one has control over. He opposed the idea of virtue as something trainable and not in us from nature, but stressed that virtue only becomes part of one's life through grace. which results in early modern Protestantism in a understanding of virtue being a consequence of grace. Virtue was therefore seen as a result of grace not a condition for grace. However, this does not mean that one was not expected to behave virtuously. Virtues were seen as an outcome of grace and could therefore also point to the existence of grace in one's life. Behaving virtuously, thus, illustrated the presence of grace in one's life and could therefore be seen as a sort of marker of one's faith.

1.1.2 Chastity

Chastity within protestant theology links the concept of virginity with that of virtue while also containing a link to salvation. Within protestant theology, chastity did not only contain the importance of virginity until marriage, more than that chastity was still of importance during marriage. The concept of chastity is described by Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo as not just a "physical category, since physical virginity did not ensure virtue. Conduct was a crucial element in its construction, and spiritual chastity was more important than its bodily analogue" (Katajala-Peltomaa, Toivo 9). Chastity, therefore was placed within a broader context, which underscores the Protestant view of virtue and conducting oneself virtuously. Furthermore, the need to conduct oneself virtuously contains the need for chastity of which virginity is just a small part. Consequently, within marriage the need for virginity

was no longer present, however, faithfulness was stressed. Luther remarks on the need for chastity and purity in his *Small Catechism*. In this, he states that one must be pure in words and deeds (Luther, Stump) , which is more of general statement and not necessarily restricted to a specific phase in life. He elaborates on this by stating that one should be pure in heart, words and deeds. He feels that one “should keep [one’s] heart free from impure thoughts and desires” (Luther, Stump). In order to keep our heart pure it is of importance to avoid “immodest conversation, unchaste words, vile stories and shameless jests” (Luther, Stump). Most of all he stresses that it is God who sees everything and that if one does something that shames them for the eyes of God one should stay away from it. Luther, therefore, puts chastity in a larger frame of purity and does not define it solely in terms of virginity and faithfulness.

1.1.3 Wisdom

The virtue of wisdom connects the possibility of choices for women with living virtuously. The connection between grace and virtue and the role of imitation of Christ within those concepts links them to the virtue of wisdom. The notion of imitating Christ, furthermore, is contained within the concept of wisdom as it relies on one’s choices. However, Erasmus also stresses the connection with grace and virtue as for “Erasmus, grace is active in our acting, in the beauty of virtue displayed that engages and transforms our affections, allowing us to play a part that becomes our own as we play it” (Herdt 143). Consequently, the virtue of wisdom occurs in connection with grace and is also dependent on wisdom as one needs to consistently choose to implement the biblical virtues in one’s life. An example of such choices can be found in the afore mentioned diary of Lady Margaret Hoby. Her diaries illustrates how one can consistently choose to uphold biblical values in one’s life. Women such as Lady Margaret Hoby actively created space within their daily tasks to focus on religion (Eales 95). In contrast with the virtue of chastity, the virtue of wisdom was less clear to see within someone’s life. Even though, one could asses one’s life choices intentions, thoughts, and considerations remained private. Creating time within one’s day to focus on Christ, as Lady Hoby did, influenced the household and her direct surroundings but it was too small and private to influence a larger community. In a way, wisdom can therefore be seen as something private. However, as mentioned

before wisdom links grace, virtue and the need to imitate Christ which comes to the fore in all life choices. Therefore, the presence of wisdom is underscored by one's whole life, daily tasks and choices.

1.1.4 Strength

In early modern society and theology women were defined as weak, but were also praised for their strength. Within early modern sermons, women were instructed to take biblical women as examples and therefore conduct themselves obediently, wise and chaste. However, there were also biblical women who did not only portray these specific virtues. Shami mentions three women rulers who were praised for their "femininity, spirituality and governance" (157), although they were perceived as an exception to "normative female behaviour" (Shami, 157). Furthermore, these women were seen as taking on "masculine qualities [such] as courage and bravery in order to perform tasks unnatural to their sex" (Shami 157). The distinction between male and female qualities, and the possibility to attribute male qualities to females, therefore, redefines the virtue of strength. The conventional definition of the virtue of strength may not be applied to women, or the virtue of strength may not be praised within early modern women; however, that does not mean that the virtue of strength is not present within women. Therefore, the virtue of strength does not only consist of the conventional aspects but rather embodies a larger definition. Consequently, weakness can define or redefine the virtue of strength. Within early modern theology and sermons women were often viewed as the weaker sex, resulting in the presence of strength being defined as male qualities. The distinction between male and female often contained a similar distinction between weak and strong. Women were praised for their wisdom and strength (Shami 157); however, these virtues were defined as male characteristics. Furthermore, women were seen as a "weak creature, not endowed with like strength and constancy of mind" (Shami 158). Therefore, within early modern society and theology women were often defined as weak. However, the definition of weakness does not necessarily eliminate the possibility of strength within women as writers such as Lanyer challenged the conventional definitions of strength and weakness. Thus, within early modern protestant theology women were defined as weak but also praised for their strength.

1.2 Women and virtue

Within the Protestant ideology women were encouraged to play an active part within their family and community concerning religious ideas. For early modern women the importance of their household and the influence on their surroundings was emphasized. Furthermore, women were expected to uphold the church traditions within their household. Therefore, the dependence of the church on women was emphasized in their role in raising their family and upholding church traditions within their home (Eales 87). The role of women within their household is underscored by diaries of women such as Lady Margaret Hoby. Her diary gives an insight into her daily life and the way in which religion was part of that daily life. Lady Margaret's diary, therefore, illustrates that religion had a considerable part within her everyday life. On the one hand religion was a part of her life in reading and praying as activities such as reading and praying were thought of as very important for women. Additionally, the commonplace book of Lady Brilliana Harley illustrates how women reserved time in between their daily tasks to engage in reading, praying, writing and thinking about religion. Women, therefore, actively took the time to engage with religion. On the other hand, religion comes also to the fore in the women's task to instruct "members of [their] household" (Eales 95). As mentioned earlier women were to take an active religious role in their homes and families which came to the fore in their duty to influence the people around them in upholding religious values. Subsequently, women had the power to undermine the authority of the household. The possible threat of women being disobedient or unruly and thus threatening the foundation of a functioning household underscores the power women held within their families (Katajala-Peltomaa, Toivo 37). Thus, women were encouraged to play an active part within their families and community and held some power in the way they chose to conduct themselves.

1.2.1 Virtue and marriage

Chastity holds an important position within Early Modern society. For society the importance of chastity was linked to the importance of marriage, but not only to marriage. Chastity and virtue took on different roles within the life circle of women. Chastity, therefore, was important in the period before marriage, during marriage and after marriage. The importance of chastity in all life cycles is

underscoring in a play by Shakespeare. In his play, Shakespeare categorizes women as either maid, wife or widow. If a woman fails to fit one of these categories “she is nothing then” (Matchinkse 90). The statement underscores the importance of fitting into the before mentioned categories for women as the value of a woman is determined because of that. As mentioned earlier, chastity was defined within a broader theme of purity in Protestantism. Although within society chastity was not necessarily defined in terms of a concept such as purity the importance of the virtue in all life circles of women does point to a larger concept than just chastity. In order to remain chaste as a maid, wife or widow women had to adapt the definition and characteristics of chastity to fit the stage of life they were in.

Virtue was an important concept for women both within and outside marriage. The virtue of women was not solely restricted to her husband and the relation between them. Furthermore, the virtue of women was seen as reflecting on her surroundings. Murphy describes how in early modern literature and sermons the significance of virtue is emphasized. Women are believed to be able to transform their husbands through their virtue, while also having a positive influence on the people surrounding them (Murphy 259). The obligation for women to be virtuous, however, was not a sign of their subjection and powerlessness. Furthermore, the need for women to remain chaste and conduct oneself virtuously was not only projected onto them, as “early modern women were not taught to be unquestioningly obedient, but rather that they had a responsibility to be virtuous” (Murphy 260). Therefore, within their responsibility to be virtuous they had to be subjective to others in order to show their virtue and reform them (Murphy 260). On the one hand, this nuances the position of virtue or chastity within society as women are taught to actively conduct themselves virtuously rather than being unquestioningly obedient. On the other hand, the importance chastity holds within society limits the choices of the women. Even though, they were not expected to just obey they still had to conduct themselves virtuously in order to hold their place within society. The expected behaviour, therefore, gave them a choice to some extent but ultimately narrowed their choices. The expectations ultimately pushed women to guard their virtue and behave in a certain way as their behaviour did not only affect themselves but also reflected on the people around them.

For early modern women chastity dictated the changes of marriage and influenced the reputation of both the woman and family. Within early modern society marriage was seen as “a

continuous economic and sexual exchange of goods” (Gowing 1). This view of marriage largely relied upon the presence of chastity as unchastity disrupted this exchange. For a woman, therefore, to marry within a good family and have a marriage that would be prosperous for the family it was of the highest importance that she kept her virtue. Furthermore, in society “sexual virtue was seen as the essence of feminine integrity” (20), which entailed that the women’s reputation relied heavily on her virtue.

Keeping ones chastity gave the woman, and the family, the possibility of a good marriage.

Furthermore, a women’s chastity did not only affect her choices in marriages but also her husband once they were married, as for women their reputation in regard to chastity relied on their own sexuality but for men it depended on the woman connected to them (Gowing 112). Chastity, therefore, had different implications for men and women and these different approaches led to an emphasis on women’s chastity as women’s actions reflect not only upon themselves but also on men. Therefore, “women’s sexual misconduct had implications for the whole honour of a marriage” (Gowing 112). Thus, the chastity of a women not only determined the possibility of a marriage, but was also a factor within the reputation of her family and husband.

1.4 The role of sermons and religious poetry

The church, or sermons, can be seen as a mediator between theological doctrines and societies norms. In early modern society religion and secular life were “inexorably intertwined and entangled” (Katajala-Peltomaa, Toivo 3). Faith and religion were part everyday life and religion can be seen as crucial in daily life (Katajala-Peltomaa, Toivo 3). Religion influenced daily life in the way one lived, interacted and participated in one’s community. Within the church daily life and theology were connected and sermons used the connection to make theological doctrines more practical.

Furthermore, religious poetry also connected theology to everyday life. Through poetry, writers could engage with theological doctrines and translate them to everyday life. The link between religion and secular life, therefore, comes to the fore in both religious poetry and sermons. Furthermore, this chapter will elaborate on the role religious poetry and sermon had when it comes to connecting theology with daily life. Additionally, this chapter will deal with the differences between religious poetry and sermons when it comes to engaging with theology.

1.4.1 Sermons

Within early modern English society sermons played an important role. Sermons allowed preachers to present and explain a certain view on life. This view on life was based on the bible and contained morals, values as well as more practical views on life. Sermons, therefore, had to follow a set of rules in order to be successful. It was believed that “preachers should be learned but not flaunt their education; and, while denouncing specific sins was acceptable, preachers who targeted individual members of the congregation were often deemed divisive” (Green 135). Preachers, therefore, had to keep this in mind while preaching. Furthermore, it was believed that sermons should be delivered orally resulting in the loss of a large number of sermons. It was only later that sermons were published, or written especially for publishing (Hunt 163). The sermon itself often contained a religious theme as well as a link to everyday life. Protestant reformers, furthermore, believed that the preached word was more effective than the written word (Oates 203). Thus, they emphasized the importance of sermons and the importance of informing and explaining to the congregation. Preachers’ tasks were therefore to explain certain doctrines and to draw lines between the scriptures and one’s everyday life (Oates 203). Furthermore, they were not expected to target individuals but rather speak to the congregation as a whole with the goal of “encouraging individuals to draw closer to God” (Oates 203). The audience of a sermon could, therefore, be seen as a whole made up of individuals. Consequently, preachers had the task of creating a sermon that would speak to the whole of the congregation as well as encourage individuals to implement the doctrines in their life. Sermons, therefore, bridged the gap between life and the church as they explained and illustrate how one could incorporate the doctrines of the Church into one’s life. Furthermore, sermons did not discuss solely theological matters but rather combined the realities of life with theology. Therefore, sermons played an important role within early modern society as it connected secular life with the theological doctrines.

Some sermons included a certain view of women. In the early modern period there were several sermons that dealt for example with the duties of women. The different categories of sermons discuss different aspects of women within religion. Funeral sermons contained a “theoretical and

conventional discourse on the duties of wives and on female (religious) identity” (Shami 154). These concepts will also be analysed in the later chapters when discussing the view of women explained in sermons in connection with the presence of virtues in sermons. Furthermore, in sermons women were often compared to biblical figures in order to praise a certain virtue. Shami uses a sermon by Fealty to illustrate which biblical women were used as examples: “For obedience, she was a Sarah: for wisdom a Rebecca: for meeknesse a Hanna” (qtd in Shami 156) and so on. These sermons, therefore, illustrated the virtues of women and elaborated on the expectations for one’s life. In a way these sermons also categorized women to fit into the requirements of certain virtues as comparing women with biblical figures reduces women to a single virtue. The lives of women, which sermons elaborated on, were therefore linked to the concept of virtues and illustrated through the use of biblical figures. Sermons also remarked on the life phases of women such as “daughter, wife, and widow” (Shami 159). These life phases were elaborated on and linked to biblical themes or compared to similar phases in the lives of biblical figures. Thus, sermons contained the link between virtues and everyday life of women explaining the church doctrines in discussing biblical figures and comparing life phases of women to those of women in the Bible.

1.4.2 Religious poetry

Religious poetry allowed early modern writers to engage with theological doctrines and link them to everyday life. Religious lyric, therefore, is described by Lewalski as a “private mode, concerned to discover and express the various and vacillating spiritual conditions and emotions the soul experiences in meditation, prayer and praise” (4). Although, religious poetry created the possibility to engage with theological doctrines the personal aspect of it mostly illustrates the way early modern writers thought about and dealt with theology. Within the poetry the subjects dealt contained a theological perspective but more concerning personal thoughts and ideas. In this, religious poetry was a way to bridge the gap between church teachings and everyday life. Within religious poetry writers engaged with theological doctrines through the description and analysis of theology but also by describing and analysing their own feelings. Furthermore, during the reformation the Bible became increasingly important as “an embodiment of the divine truth” (Lewalski 6). Therefore, poets

relied on the Bible as a model for their poetry and “grounded [their poetry] upon scripture” (Lewalski 7). Furthermore, poets used their own religious life within their poetry. Poetry, created the opportunity to explore one’s relationship with God. Exploring one’s relation with God through poetry could occur through engagement with the scriptures, telling of the biblical stories or engagement with the “Protestant paradigm of sin and salvation” (Lewalski 13). In contrast to sermons poetry allowed a writer to explore one’s relationship with God and work through theological concepts and struggles through writing poetry.

Thus, the role of virtues within Protestant theology and early modern English society becomes apparent within the texts by Luther and Erasmus as well as sermons. Luther and Erasmus defined virtue within theology and Protestantism followed Luther’s view on virtue opposing the idea that one could obtain virtue but rather stating that one is dependent on God for virtue. Virtue was, therefore, seen as a consequence of grace which also marked the presence of grace in one’s life. Furthermore, the virtues of chastity, wisdom and strength become apparent within theology as well as society. The virtue of chastity is placed by Luther within a larger framework of purity, thus, entailing not just chastity but also faithfulness and purity of life. The virtue of wisdom is linked with grace and virtue as one needs to choose Christ daily. The choice to imitate Christ, which is contained within the virtue of wisdom, becomes particularly apparent within diaries of women. The virtue of strength contains a tension between feminine and masculine qualities as the presence of strength within women is praised; however, strength itself is characterised as a male quality. Although women are characterised as weak within early modern Protestant theology it does not diminish the possibility of strength within women. Furthermore, within society virtue for women is emphasized as it determines the lives of women, while at the same time they are encouraged influence their surroundings by living virtuously. Lastly, the gap between theological doctrines and everyday life was bridged with the use of sermons and religious poetry. Sermons gave the church the opportunity to link theological doctrines directly to everyday life, while religious poetry enabled writers to engage with Protestant theology in their writing.

Chapter 2: The virtue of chastity

Chastity was of significance in both Early Modern society and the church. In early modern society marriages were important for the family's position and in order to obtain a good marriage reputation had to be maintained. Therefore, chastity was of importance before marriage, as it influenced the possibility of marriage, but also during marriage. Within a marriage the need for a good reputation still remained and for a man that relied on the virtue of his wife. Therefore, within a marriage women had to conduct themselves virtuously in order to preserve the reputation of the entire house. Although, chastity was of importance both before and during marriages, it was presented differently within these two contexts. The concept of chastity fits into the larger theme of purity and changes its exact definition whether outside or within marriage. Therefore, this chapter will explore how early modern women poets and early modern sermons deal with the concept of chastity and virtue both within marriage and outside. In order to explore this the poem "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" by Aemilia Lanyer and several sermons by John Donne, John Mason, Thomas Manton, Samuel Rutherford, and Thomas Grantham will be analysed. This chapter will focus on the larger theme of chastity and purity presented in the poem and sermons by analysing the parable of the ten maidens, the symbolism of lilies, and the narrative of marriage within the church.

2.1 Parable of ten maidens

In "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" and sermon by John Mason references are made to the parable of the ten maidens, which underscore the importance of being virtuous as part of one's relation with God. In "To all virtuous Ladies in general" in "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum", Lanyer uses the parable of the ten maidens to underscore the importance of virtue within faith. The poem states:

Put on your wedding garments every one,
The Bridegroom stayes to entertaine you all;
Let Virtue be your guide, for she alone
Can leade you right that you can never fall; (8-11)

The parable of the ten maidens contains the story of ten maidens going out to meet the groom. While they are waiting for the groom they fall asleep. The maidens "that were foolish took their lamps, and

took no oil with them: but the wise too oil in their vessels with their lamps” (Matthew 25:3-4). The passage above contains a reference to the first part of the parable. In order to meet the groom the maidens have dressed themselves in their wedding garments and have taken lamps with them. Lanyer uses the same language in her poem, but continues with a reference to virtue. Line 10 states that virtue alone can be the guide and ensure that one never falls. The use of virtue in connection with the parable of the ten maidens contains an emphasis on both chastity and wisdom. The importance of chastity comes not only to the fore within the parable of the ten maidens, and the fact that they are maidens, but also in the reference to the clothing one should wear. The description of clothing in lines 15-17 emphasize the importance of chastity: “Let all your robes be purple scarlet white, / Those perfit colours purest Virtue wore / come dekt with Lillies that did so delight” (15-17). These lines use certain colours and flowers to reference a virtuous attitude. The robes described in line 15 use the colours purple scarlet white, which is a reference the robes that Christ wore before his death (note to l. 12). Thus, the poem establishes an explicit connection between Christ and the women mentioned. Furthermore, lilies are used to describe to be “preferr’d in Beauty” (18). Connecting the lily with being beautiful and conducting oneself in a certain manner once again emphasises the importance of chastity within this poem. However, the lines also underscore the virtue of wisdom in their reference to the parable. In the parable a distinction is being made between the foolish and wise maidens. As stated before, the foolish maidens did not take oil with, however, the wise maidens did. Therefore, when the bridegroom arrived the wise maidens could go with him, but the foolish maidens had to stay behind and found themselves locked out. Lanyer uses this distinction in her poem as she states: “But fill your Lamps with oyle of burning zeale, / That to your Faith he may his Truth reveale” (13-14). She urges her readers to take the parable of the ten maidens into consideration and pursue faith with an eagerness. The choice for virtue to be one’s guide is therefore also part of wisdom as one needs to make the choice in order to truly follow the bridegroom and have “his Truth reveale[d]” (14). Thus, mentioning the parable of the ten maidens stresses the importance of virtue by linking it to Christ, wisdom and grace.

In his sermon, John Mason underscores the importance of chastity in the parable of the ten maidens. The parable of the ten maidens is defined by Mason through the narrative of marriage.

According to Mason the parable of the ten maidens contains the doctrine “That Death to a Saint, is the Soul’s Marriage to Christ; and to a Sinner, is the Soul’s everlasting divorce from Christ” (8), which he links to the passage of the parable in which the foolish virgins are shut out and the wise virgins allowed to enter. Consequently, he uses the narrative of marriage throughout his sermon and emphasizes the importance of chastity. Firstly, his emphasis on Christ as the groom underscores the importance of the ten women being maidens. In his sermon, Mason places the ten maidens within the narrative of Christ’s church as “the Bride is the Church of God” (14) and the maidens being part of the wedding are contained within the church as “the whole Church is Christ’s Spouse” (14). Consequently, the maidens are used as an example for the Church on how one should act as the wise maidens are allowed to enter the wedding and the foolish maidens must remain outside. Furthermore, Mason references Revelation 14:4 as an answer on the question who the virgins were: “These are Protestant Gentiles. Compare this with Rev. 14:4. These were not defiled with Women, for they are Virgins; It was spoken of the 144000 redeemed from Popery” (15). The passage Mason references is the following:

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. (Revelation 14:2-4).

In this passage a view of heaven is described and the people present are mentioned as not being defiled with women but they are virgins. The virgins in this context are defined as people who have not engaged with physical or spiritual/ecclesiastical infidelity (Henry 858). Although the passage does not solely refer to women the contrast between women and virgins within the passage does place an emphasis on the duties of women. Indirectly the passage emphasises the need for women to remain chaste and links chastity to following God and entering the kingdom of heaven. Consequently, mentioning this passage in a section on the parable of the ten maidens underscores the importance of chastity within the Bible. Thus, in his sermon Mason emphasizes the importance of the virtue of

chastity by using the narrative of marriage and establishing a connection between being chaste and entering the kingdom of God.

2.1.1 Grace and virtue

The parable of the ten maidens, referenced in Lanyer, also underscores the need for grace in order to live virtuously. As mentioned before, early modern Protestant theologians debated on the need for grace in order to live virtuously. Luther contradicted the view of Aristotle and stated that one needed grace in order to live virtuously and that virtues could not simply be taught or solely used within one's daily routine in order to obtain grace (Cefalu 4-5). In "To the Ladie Anne, Countess of Dorset", Lanyer follows this view especially in regards to the parable of the ten maidens. The poem states:

Blest by our Sauiors merits, not my skil,
Which I acknowledge to be very small;
Yet if the least part of his blessed Wil
I haue perform'd, I count I haue done all:
One sparke of grace sufficient is to fill
Our lampes with oyle, ready when he doth call
To enter with the Bridegroome o the feast,
Where he that is the greatest may be least (ll. 9-16)

In this passage Lanyer places virtue within the grace of God and credits only the "Sauiors merits" (l. 9). Faith is seen as a consequence from God's grace and by no means as a result from one's skill. In this, Lanyer follows the opinion that one needs God's grace in order to live virtuously. She continues by ending the passage with a reference to a biblical passage: "that is the greatest may be least" (l. 16). The biblical passage she references is Matthew 20: 16 in which Jesus states: "So the last shall be first, and the first last". In referencing this specific bible verse, Lanyer underscores the belief that one relies on God in everything. As mentioned before, grace is a gift from God and does not rely on one's skill or conduct. Therefore, fighting to be "first" will not matter as it is God who will decide. Furthermore, Lanyer believes that virtue relies solely on the grace of God: "Whose virtuous deeds by his especial[...] grace / Have gain'd his love, his kingdome, and his crowne, / Whom in the booke of Life he hath set downe" (ll. 22-24). This passage underscores the idea that virtue is dependent on grace as

is expressed by Luther. Furthermore, it describes virtuous deeds as only being present because of the grace of God. The line contains no soteriological agency but rather presents the presence of virtue as a consequence of God's choices and grace. Therefore, Lanyer underscores grace as a necessity for virtue through the parable of the ten maidens.

2.2 The symbolism of lilies

In the poem "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" the lily is used as a symbol of virtue. The poem "To all virtuous Ladies in general" opens by calling women to deck themselves "with lillies" (l. 17), which establishes a connection between women and the symbol of the virtue. Furthermore, the lily is mentioned in connection with virtue which is significant as the lily symbolizes feminine beauty and chastity. In her article, Caldwell describes that the lily symbolised a wide variety of ideas but that "the lily-white" flower [was] also one of the saintly attributes of the Virgin Mary and a symbol of chastity and purity" (2). Furthermore, Lanyer mentions Christ in combination with the symbol of the lily which emphasizes the importance of chastity. In the poem "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum", Christ is first described as the bridegroom after which His features are discussed: "His lips, like Lillies, dropping downe pure mirthe" (l. 1319). Connecting Christ with the symbol of the lily ties in with the earlier references to the lily and virtue in general. Furthermore, by mentioning the lily Lanyer establishes a relation between the virgin Mary, the concepts of chastity and purity, and Christ. Firstly, she uses the lily as a symbol for the virgin Mary and emphasizes the importance of virtue in women. As mentioned before, she calls the women to deck themselves with lilies, thus calling them to live virtuously. Mentioning the virgin Mary in combination with living virtuously emphasizes the importance of chastity for women. Secondly, the lily symbolizes the concepts of purity and chastity. As mentioned before, Luther viewed the concept of chastity in a larger theme of purity. Lanyer follows this definition as she mentions the lily in combination with Christ and thus references the purity of words, thoughts and deeds as "His lips [are] like Lillies" (l. 1319). Therefore, in Lanyer's poem the virtues mentioned are not limited to chastity alone but rather embody the larger concept of purity and underscore the importance of living virtuously by following Christ's example. Lastly, Lanyer describes Christ as "the purest coulours underneath the Sunne" (l. 1282) and references his crucifixion

and death: “There this most pretious body he incloses; / inbalmd and deckt with Lillies and with Roses” (ll. 1279-1280). Throughout the poem Lanyer emphasizes the importance of Christ and the need for one to follow Him in everything. Describing Christ as being decked with lilies indicates the character of Christ and sets an example for everyone reading the poem as to follow the example that is set. Thus, Lanyer uses the symbol of the lily to define the concept of purity within Christ, the presence of the virtue of chastity within the virgin Mary and the need for women to follow both Christ and the virgin Mary in terms of virtue.

The beauty of lilies is emphasized in sermons. In a sermon by Thomas Manton, lilies are discussed for their beauty. Manton delivers a sermon on the topic of clothing and in his sermon underscores the importance of dressing modestly. Furthermore, he states that it is grace and virtue one should pursue as “grace is the best Dressing” (79). Within this context the lilies are also mentioned for their beauty as Manton discusses a passage in which it is stated “that Solomon in all his Glory was not arrayed like one of the Lillies” (79). The passage refers to the lilies in terms of beauty and emphasizes that no garment could outshine the beauty of a lily. One should dress oneself with virtue and grace and “neither delight in Bravery or Envy, when thou seest the Bravery of others, thou hast a fairer Flower in thy Garden” (79). The comparison to flowers, therefore, points to virtue and the need to focus on living virtuously. Furthermore, Samuel Rutherford uses lilies as a way of describing “the pure and uncorrupted Word of God, or the Lillies are fruit of the Spirit [...] Or the lillies, the saints of God, that are Lillies amongst Thorns” (24). In this passage lilies are described as being pure and uncorrupted, compared to the word of God or used to define saints. All these characteristics indicate something of purity, chastity and virtue. The lily is used to define something that is holy and part of God and his words. Therefore, in the sermon the emphasis on the beauty of the lilies also underscores the holiness, purity and virtue the lily represents.

2.2.1 Nature and virtue

The importance of chastity within society is emphasized in “The Description of Cooke-ham” in using nature as a narrative for virtue and chastity. The poem analyses chastity within society as “the country house serves as a metonym for the state or civilization itself” (Pearson 87). The opening of the

poem establishes Cooke-ham as a place “where Virtue then did rest” (l. 1) and where the “Mistris of that Place” (l. 11) “did spring this worke of Grace” (l. 12). Therefore, after establishing the virtue of the place Lanyer continues by describing how the virtue can be seen within Cooke-ham. She describes the beauty of the place with its “faire tree” (l. 59) and how “each plant, each floure, each tree / Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee!” (ll. 33-34). Cooke-ham embraces the Countess of Cumberland and in turn she is able to encounter God within the nature of the estate:

And in their beauties did you plaine descric,
His beauty, wisdom, grace, loue, maiestie
In these sweet woods how often did you walke,
With Christ and his Apostles here to talke; (ll. 79-81)

Furthermore, Lanyer connects the virtue of the ladies she mentions to the nature of Cooke-ham, which gives the place a sense of virtue. Cooke-ham seems to enable one to live virtuously, and she emphasizes the connection between virtue and beauty in the following passage: “whose virtues did agree / With those faire ornaments of outward beauty” (ll. 100-101). The virtue is reflected in beauty, and in turn the beauty and virtue of the ladies is reflected within Cooke-ham. Lanyer, namely attributes feelings and thoughts to nature as “the very leaues did wither” (l. 135) and nature “often wept, though speechlesse” (l. 138) because of their departure. In a way Lanyer places her own feelings on leaving the place within nature and uses nature to express her feelings and emphasize the importance of virtue. The poem, mentions theology but places more of an emphasis on virtue in general. Using nature as a way to express the virtue of women she illustrates the importance of virtue in society as virtue is not only present within church or theology but can even be encountered within nature. Additionally, the poem ends with mentioning how virtue leaves Cooke-ham as the ladies depart:

The house cast off each garment that might grace it,
Putting on Dust and Cobwebs to deface it.
All desolation then there did appeare,
When you were going whom they held so deare.
This last farewell to Cooke-ham here I giue,
When I am dead thy name in this may liue,
Wherein I have perform'd her noble hest,
Whose virtues lodge in my unworthy breast,
And euer shall, so long as life remains,
Tying my heart to her by those rich chaines. (ll. 201-210)

With the departure the house loses its beauty and the “greene tresses [are turned] into frostie gray” (l. 193). It is Cooke-ham where the virtues have been places within her and it are the virtues that she will take with her when she leaves the place. The nature of Cooke-ham, therefore, emphasises the importance of chastity within society as one of the ladies is described as “a virgin faire” (l. 160) and it was nature where they felt safe. Furthermore, it was nature that taught them to behave virtuously as the poem states: “to this faire tree, taking me by the hand” (l. 162). Thus, nature illustrates the emphasis on the virtue of chastity within society.

2.3 The contrast between beauty and virtue

In “Salve Deus Rex Judaerum”, Lanyer opposes beauty and chastity. In her poem, Lanyer touches upon the role of beauty within society and immediately diminishes the role it plays when it comes to virtues:

That outward Beautie which the world commends
Is not the subject I will write upon
Whose date expir'd, that tyrant Time soone ends,
Those gawdie colours soone are spent and gone:
But those faire Virtues which on thee attends
Are always fresh, they never are but one:
They make thy Beautie fairer to behold (l. 185-191)

These lines underscore the importance of virtue in contrasting it with the role of beauty. Lanyer mentions the importance of beauty within society and weighs its importance against virtues. The passage indicates that beauty is nothing unless virtue is present. Beauty on its own will expire when time comes and its features will fade. Virtue, however, will enhance ones beauty and will not be subject to the power of time. Lanyer continues to emphasize the need for virtue later on as she states: “A mind enrich'd with Virtue, shines more bright, / Adde everlasting Beauty, gives true grace” (ll. 197-198). For Lanyer, virtue is more than just beauty as it is everlasting and linked to true grace. Beauty, therefore, can be seen as a consequence of virtue as the concept of beauty does no longer centre around features but rather ones actions and conduct. Furthermore, Lanyer goes as far as to say that virtue “frames an immortall Goddess on the earth, / Who though she dies, yet Fame gives her

new berth” (ll. 199-200). In these lines, Lanyer stresses once again the immortality of virtue and the ability for one’s actions and attitude to live on forever through virtue. Thus, Lanyer uses the importance of beauty within society to emphasize the need to live virtuously by characterizing it as the ultimate beauty.

Lanyer uses the concept of holiness to compare beauty and virtue. Lanyer discusses beauty and virtue in stating beauty of virtue and the usefulness of beauty. First she mentions beauty:

Faire Rosamund, the wonder of her time,
Had bin much fairer, had shee not bin faire;
Beautie betraid her thoughts, aloft to clime,
To build strong castles in vncertaine aire,
Where th’infection of a wanton crime
Did worke her falle, first poison, then despaire,
With double death did kill her periur’d soule,
When heauenly Iustice did her sinne controule. (ll. 225-232)

In this passage, Lanyer mentions Rosamond who “was the mistress of King Henry II, said to have been poisoned by Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine” (61 fn. to l. 225); furthermore, the story was familiar from *The Complaint of Rosamond*. The central section of *Complaint of Rosamond* retells the myth “of Io in terms of English history in order to inculcate the moral that the sin of lustful prostitution, particularly when adulterous, results in self-metamorphosis into a beast”(Clark 152). Lanyer opens the section by shortly describing Rosamond and mentioning that she was known for her beauty; however, she continues by adding that it was also her beauty that caused her downfall. According to Lanyer she had been “much fairer, had shee not bin faire” (l. 226) as it was beauty who betrayed her thoughts. These lines indicate that it is beauty who takes over one’s life and leaves no room for anything else. In Rosamond’s case her beauty “evoke[d] Rosamond’s abition, which provoked her to yield to King Henry’s lust” (DiPasquale 361). Consequently, it was Rosamond’s beauty that instigated the king’s advances and it was ultimately her beauty that resulted in her being pushed to become the “king’s mistress (Go 88). The poem, therefore, also stresses the importance of virtue in mentioning the position beauty holds within the concept of virtue. Lanyer uses this within her own poem to stress the importance of virtue and reflect on the possible consequences of discarding once virtue. Furthermore, Lanyer states that her soul was killed with a double death “when hauenly Iustice did her sinne controule”. The double death Lanyer mentions refers to Rosamond’s fall “into whoredom” as well as

her transformation into “bestiality” (Clark 158). Rosamond’s sin has, therefore, not only resulted in the loss of her virtue but she also serves as a symbol of shame for others. Furthermore, the story of Rosamond emphasises the need for virtue as it is the loss of her virtue that transforms her.

In contrast with beauty, Lanyer mentions virtue and its effects on one’s life and soul. She mentions Matilda who, together with Rosamund, was known for her beauty; however, she chose virtue over beauty:

Here Beauty in the height of all perfection,
Crown’d this faire Creatures euerlasting fame,
Whose noble minde did scorne the base subiexion
Of feares, or Fauours, to impaire her Name:
By heauenly grace, she had such true direction,
To die with Honour, not to liue in Shame;
And drinke that poison with a cheerefull heart,
That could all Heavenly grace to her impart. (ll. 241-248)

In these lines beauty is praised, however, not because of beauty but because of how it reflects virtue.

In contrast to Rosamund it is not beauty that drives her in life, but she bases her life choices on virtue and because that her “beauty [is] in the height of all perfection”. Matilda was a “virtuous maiden lustfully persued by King John” (61 ft. to l. 223). However, in contrast with Rosamond she “rejects not only man’s lust but all that it threatens” (DiPasquale 361), focussing only on virtue. Lanyer

continues by praising her fair mind and prescribes her choice to die with honour to “heavenly grace”.

Consequently for Lanyer the grace is present in Matilde’s life in the way she conducts herself and the

virtuous attitude is what will be remembered. Furthermore, Lanyer reflects on beauty and virtue by

opposing the two concepts within the mentioning of Rosamond and Matilda. She does not condemn

the women but rather the beauty that makes women object for masculine desire (DiPasquale 360).

Lanyer faults beauty in the loss of virtue, but does so in emphasizing the significance of virtue in one’s

life. Thus, Lanyer opposes beauty and virtue by mentioning the fleeting aspect of beauty and praising

the lasting power of virtue.

2.4 Marriage

The importance of marriage is underscored by the notion of Christ as a groom and the church as His wife. Lanyer uses the parable of the ten maidens to indicate the importance of virtue, but this

parable also indicates Christ as groom and the church as his wife. This notion is underscored by Lanyer later in the poem as she states:

For he is rize from Death t'Eternall Life,
And now those pretious oyntments he desires
Are brought unto him, by his faithfull Wife
The holy Church; who in those rich attires,
Of Patience, Loue, Long suffering, Voide of strife,
Humbly presents those oyntments he requires (ll. 1289-1294)

In this passage the church is described as a wife, thus following the narrative of a marriage. The narrative of marriage illustrates the importance of marriage in general as the relation between Christ and his church is characterized as a marriage. Donne describes the marriage, in Sermon III, between Christ and the church as “the spirituall and mysticall marriage of Christ Jesus to the Church, and to every marriageable soule in the Church” (15). He distinguishes between secular marriage and spiritual marriages and describes spiritual marriage as Christ marrying one’s soul. Donne, therefore, elaborates on the importance of marriage in contrasting it with the marriage between people: “a secular marriage” (15). Within Donne’s use of the marriage narrative a secular marriage occurs between people, both Christian and non-Christian; however, a spiritual marriage is between God and his church. Furthermore, he uses Adam and Eve as an example for the first secular marriage, and he elaborates on the good of marriage as God decided to make them “wives” (16) and not mistresses which is “unmanly” (16) or servants which is “unnoble” (16). The narrative of marriage, therefore, indicate the way one should act within life and marriage as Christ and the church are the examples of how one’s marriage should be. The emphasis therefore on chastity within marriage is in a sense derived from Christ’s marriage with the Church and the way purity and chastity are part of that union. Although the definitions of purity and chastity in a marriage between Christ and the church are different, the essence remains. Namely, one is called to live virtuously and follow Christ in the way he has conducted Himself.

2.4.1 Marriage of Christ and his church as a nuance

The symbolism of Christ and his church underscores a nuanced view on marriage. Within theology the relation between Christ and his church is often compared to a marriage. As mentioned

before, Lanyer and Donne use the narrative of marriage to underscore the importance of purity and chastity. However, Donne does not only emphasize the importance of chastity within marriage but using the narrative of marriage rather indicates the equality between man and women. In the relation between Christ and his church, Christ is described as the groom while the church is his bride. Although the church has several commandments and obligations towards Christ, Christ has the same towards his church. It is Christ who is righteous and loving towards his church, thus in comparing a marriage to the relation between Christ and the church gives the women as well as the man obligations towards each other. Several of the obligations women face within marriage have already been discussed within Donne and Lanyer. However, the tasks men face within marriage have not yet been mentioned. It is Christ who is described as “Head of the Church” (572), and as a result the man is seen as the head of the household. However, as Christ has certain tasks as head of the Church a man has tasks and obligations as head of a family. First, Donne mentions that a man must love his wife as “there is not a more uncomely, a poorer thing, then to love a Wife like a Mistresse”. A man, therefore, must truly respect and love his wife. Furthermore, Thomas Grantham references Solomon in describing women as a wife is “a crowne to her husband, she is the glory of her husband”. Although in the early modern theology wives were sometimes referred to as being inferior to the husband and created to help him, the comparison with Christ does nuance this. The church is in a way subject to Christ, as could be said of a wife, however as mentioned before, Christ loves his church and treats her with righteousness and so must a man. Furthermore, Donne remarks on the relation between men and wife in “Sermon III”:

The husband helps as legges to her, she moves by his motion; The wife helps as a staffe to him, he moves the better by her assistance. And let this mutuall help be a part of our present benediction too; In all the ways of fortune let his industry help her, and in all the crosses of fortune let her patience help him; and in all emergent occasions and dangers spirituall, or temporall (18)

In the passage above, Donne emphasises the obligations men and women have towards each other. He does not remark on just the obligations of the wife but rather emphasises the husband’s duty within marriage. Donne, therefore, brings a nuance to the concept of marriage and places marriage within the narrative of marriage between Christ and his church, by mentioning the duty of both husband and

wife. Therefore, the comparison to Christ and his church and the narrative of marriage within the symbolism does not place obligations solely on women but rather creates a marriage that is more nuanced as both are expected to follow Christ's example.

2.4.2 Chastity and marriage

Chastity is a part of marriage and does not conflict with the concept of marriage. In "Sermon XVII", Donne states that marriage and chastity are compatible as "marriage is honourable and the bed undefiled" (6). In this passage, Donne links chastity to a broader concept of honour and uses this broader theme to combine the two concepts. As mentioned in chapter one, within Protestantism chastity contained a broader theme than just virginity as it was also linked to purity of heart (Luther, Stump). Donne uses the broader theme in his sermon to stress the importance of chastity within marriage. However, in this chastity moves towards faithfulness as the importance of virginity has gone, but the need for faithfulness within a marriage remains. Donne references faithfulness in his expression that marriage is honourable and the within marriage the bed must remain pure. Furthermore, Donne sees marriage as a way to preserve the chastity of a woman from the "temptations of more men" (13). In this sermon, Donne links the importance of chastity as a virtue with marriage in discussing marriage in a broader theme of purity. Additionally, he describes marriage as a way to guard the chastity of women and thus stresses the importance of marriage. Therefore, marriage does not interfere with the possibility of chastity as the virtue of chastity remains within marriage within a broader concept of honour.

Thus, this chapter has analysed the virtue of chastity within three different contexts. Firstly, how chastity is presented and defined in the parable of the ten virgins. Within this parable virtue is mentioned in connection with one's relation with God. In the poem by Lanyer, the virtue connects both wisdom and grace as the virgins choose to remain virtuous in order to obtain God's grace. Within the sermons the virtue of chastity within the parable is defined through the narrative of marriage. Furthermore, the need for chastity is underscored in defining Christ as a groom and Christ's church as virgins. Therefore, the parable of the ten virgins underscores the virtue of chastity in connection with wisdom, grace and Christ's church. Secondly, the symbol of lilies are used to indicate purity and

chastity within one's life. The symbolism of the lilies comes to the fore in both the parable of the ten maidens as well as the description of Christ. The use of lilies within those two contexts therefore emphasises the virtue of chastity within theology. Furthermore, the use of lilies introduces the concept of beauty in comparison with virtue. The concept of virtue within nature becomes apparent within "The description of Cooke-ham" as Lanyer connects virtue within society to the nature present at Cooke-ham. Furthermore, Lanyer remarks on the contrast between beauty and virtue by opposing the two concepts and illustrating that one must choose virtue over beauty as virtue is the ultimate beauty. Lastly, the narrative of marriage of Christ and his church is used as an example for marriages. The importance of chastity within marriage becomes apparent from the presentation of Christ as the bridegroom and his church as the bride as the need to live virtuously is emphasised. Furthermore, the metaphor of marriage for Christ and his church brings a nuance to marriage as it underscores the obligations husband and wife have towards each other. The use of Christ's marriage to his church as an example, therefore, also translates the duties Christ and his church have towards marriage in daily life.

Chapter 3: Virtue of wisdom

In her poem Lanyer touches upon the subject of wisdom as in her eyes “a mind enrich’d with Virtue, shines more bright” (ll. 197). The virtue of wisdom, therefore, does not only touch upon the subject of knowledge but also contains references to God and virtue in general. This chapter will analyse how the virtue of wisdom is defined in Lanyer’s poem “Salve Deus Rex Judaerum” and sermons by Donne and Reynolds. The virtue of wisdom will first be defined by describing the difference between knowledge and wisdom, after which the dependence of one’s wisdom on God’s wisdom will be discussed. Furthermore, the presence of wisdom in women’s lives will be analysed in both Lanyer’s poem and a sermon by Reynolds.

3.1 Knowledge and wisdom

The virtue of wisdom, or wisdom in general, can be defined differently. Firstly, wisdom can be defined as knowledge which focuses more on earthly matters. Secondly, wisdom can be defined in terms of divine wisdom which has the purpose to honour God and define one’s relation with God. Both these definitions are described in the poem by Lanyer and the sermons by Donne and Reynolds. In her poem, Lanyer emphasises the heavenly aspect of knowledge as well as one’s dependence on God’s wisdom in everything. Furthermore, Donne distinguishes in his sermon between the different aspects of wisdom in mentioning both civil and heavenly wisdom. He connects wisdom with salvation by establishing the presence of wisdom in one’s ability to acknowledge sins, which relates to Lanyer’s definition of wisdom as it influences thoughts and actions. However, Donne does not mention wisdom in connection to women. Contrastingly, Reynolds mentions women in connection with knowledge by emphasizing the part women have played in saving men. Lanyer, follows this as she underscores the presence of wisdom in women. She describes the presence of virtues in their lives and emphasizes God’s hand within wisdom as well as thoughts and actions.

In her poem “To the Ladie Lucie, Countesse of Bedford”, Lanyer distinguishes between knowledge and wisdom by contrasting earthly and the divine. The description of wisdom in general opens with a remark on knowledge after which she contrasts it with divine wisdom:

T’unlocke the closet of your louely breast,

Holding the key of Knowledge in her hand,
 Key of that Cabbine where your selfe doth rest,
 To let him in, by whom her youth was blest:
 The true-loue of your soule, your hearts delight,
 Fairer than all the world in your cleare sight. (ll. 2-7)

In this passage knowledge is used in connection with choosing Christ. Lanyer describes how the countess of Bedford holds the key of knowledge with which she is able to let Christ in, as the true love of her soul. In this passage knowledge refers to knowing the importance of Christ and choosing to “let him in” (l. 5). However, later on Lanyer changes the meaning of knowledge slightly as she contrasts it with wisdom by connecting knowledge to earthly matters and wisdom to the divine. This division between knowledge, wisdom, earthly and divine is first presented in the description of Christ and his wisdom: “Whose heaunly wisdom read the earthly storie” (l. 10). In this line the divine and earthly matters are set against each other and wisdom is characterised as heavenly. Consequently, wisdom is connected to Christ initiating the role of God within wisdom, while at the same time underscoring the heavenly aspect of wisdom. The holiness of wisdom is also emphasized in the following lines of “to the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet”: “If highest thoughts true honour do imbrace, / And holy Wisdom is of them respected” (ll. 5-6). In these lines wisdom is connected to thoughts, which in turns create a link with the before mentioned passage of “To the Ladie Lucie, Countesse of Bedford” in which the “key of knowledge” (l. 3) was described. Based on these lines, thoughts, and in a sense choices, are dependent on the presence of holy wisdom which initiates those “highest thoughts” (l. 5). As a consequence, wisdom stands at the base of thoughts and actions and is characterised through the presence of divinity and holiness. Although, one’s thoughts and actions cannot be claimed as divine or holy, as only God is divine or holy, wisdom is based on that heavenly wisdom. Consequently, wisdom is linked to choices and actions regarding God and one’s soul. Contrastingly, knowledge is linked to earthly matters not only in the contrast with the holiness of wisdom, but also in the connection with Adam and Eve. Lanyer, uses the word knowledge often in her telling of the fall in paradise, in “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum”, and in all these instances knowledge is linked to the fall, inherently giving it a negative connotation. First she describes the cause of Eve’s fall: “If Eve did erre, it was for knowledge sake” (l. 797), after which she continues with Adam’s choice to eat the apple: “whereby his knowledge

might become more cleare” (l. 804) and “Yet Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke / From Eus faire had, as from a learned Booke” (ll. 807-808). However, Lanyer’s description of the fall in paradise will be discussed more elaborately in chapter four. Yet, these lines do illustrate the difference between knowledge and wisdom in the way knowledge is associated with certain events. As mentioned before, these lines do not only link knowledge to earthly matters, but link it to the fall in paradise. Lanyer describes Adam’s choice as being based on the desire to acquire more wisdom so that he may boast of his knowledge. However, the knowledge described is in stark contrast with the holy wisdom, as the knowledge Adam seeks is based on his own honour. In contrast, the wisdom mentioned earlier serves only to honour God and allows one to truly follow Christ. Peters emphasises the nuance within late medieval theology on the fall (151), and states that the “stereotype of Eve enshrined in the idea of pit pedestal was a long way from the complex views offered to the late medieval piety” (151). Lanyer, places her narrative of the fall within that nuance although she does condemn Adam more within her version. Furthermore, these lines show that for both Adam and Eve knowledge resulted in the missteps as it was knowledge who persuaded Eve, in the presence of the snake, and it was because of the acquirement of knowledge that Adam took the apple. This view on knowledge is also presented in the Bible as Genesis 3:6 describes the tree of knowledge of good and evil: “and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise”. The cause, therefore, for the fall in paradise has knowledge and the desire for earthly knowledge as its base, as the heavenly knowledge, or wisdom, centres only around God. Thus, Lanyer distinguishes in her poem between knowledge and wisdom in linking it to earthly and divine and ultimately opposing it by taking the honour of God as reference.

3.1.1 Wisdom and salvation

In Sermon VIII Donne defines wisdom in connection with salvation. He follows Lanyer in defining wisdom in terms of the divine. Donne connects wisdom and the divine by describing wisdom as being part of confessing one’s sins and choosing to follow God:

We must discover all our sinfull steps, in a free and open confession to almighty
God. This may be that which Solomon calls, sound wisdom; My sonne keep sound

wisdome, and discretion. There is not a more silly folly, then to thinke to hide any sinfull action from God. Nor sounder wisdom then to discover them to him, by an humble, and penitent confession; This is sound wisdom, and then, discretion is, to wash, and discerne, and debate, and examine all our future actions, and all the circumstances, that by this spirit of discretion we may see, where the sting, and venome of every particular action lies: My sonne keep sound wisdom, and discretion, says he, And then shalt thou walke thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble (62)

In this passage Donne describes confessing one's sins as part of being wise. As mentioned in chapter one, Luther and Erasmus believed that one could live virtuously by accepting one's sinful nature as well as relying on God in everything. The importance of accepting one's sinful nature, as part of virtue, is also expressed by Donne in this passage. Donne discusses the virtue of wisdom, by underscoring the need to "discover all our sinfull steps" (62) in order to "walke thy way safely" (62). Accepting one's sinful nature is, therefore, presented as a requirement of virtue. Furthermore, acknowledging sin and examining oneself is presented as part of wisdom. As Lanyer mentioned, the virtue of wisdom consists of the choices and actions which are part of the divine knowledge of God. Donne follows this understanding, as he defines thoughts and actions within the virtue of wisdom. Furthermore, within wisdom he acknowledges God's part, but more than encourages the congregation to examine their life and confess their sins. Thus, wisdom in this passage is defined by thoughts and actions which all centre around the honour of God as Donne urges his congregation to confess their sins so that they will walk safely.

3.1.2 God's wisdom

One's wisdom is depended on and contained within God's wisdom. Lanyer and Donne both describe wisdom in connection with God's wisdom. Lanyer sets one's wisdom within the wisdom of God and underscores the dependence on God's wisdom. As mentioned before, one's wisdom links choices and thoughts with the desire to act in a way that honours God. In this wisdom is the key in making choices with the divine wisdom in mind and not the pursuit of earthly knowledge. In the following line the dependence on God's wisdom in regards to choices and action is underscored: "And in his Wisedome, doth thy waies controule" (l. 52). It is in God's wisdom that one's actions are controlled and it is within that wisdom that one is able to pursue wisdom. Wisdom, therefore, is not a

concept that stands on its own within one's life, but is characterised by its dependence on God.

Furthermore, Lanyer uses herself to illustrate how one's life and pursuit of wisdom can be dependent on and contained within God's wisdom:

Yet if he pleaseth t'illuminate my Spirit,
And giue me Wisdom from his holy Hill,
That I may Write part of his glorious Merit,
If he vouchsafe to guide my Hand and Quill, (ll. 321-324)

In this passage, Lanyer emphasises her dependence on God not only when it comes to wisdom, but also in her life. She opens this passage by asking God to give her wisdom from "his holy Hill" (l. 322).

In this passage, Lanyer again links holiness with wisdom, but more than that she acknowledges her dependence on God. As mentioned before, wisdom forms the base of one's choices and actions, and Lanyer follows this by asking God to give her wisdom in order for her to be able to write about his "glorious Merit" (l. 323). Furthermore, she asks God to "guide [her] Hand and Quill" (l. 324) which indicates once again her dependence on God. In this passage, therefore, Lanyer establishes that her wisdom is part of God's wisdom and underscores dependence on God by using her own dependence on God as an example.

Donne emphasises the relation between wisdom and God's wisdom within his sermon. As mentioned earlier, Lanyer underscores the dependence of one's wisdom on God's wisdom in presenting wisdom as part of God's wisdom. In "Sermon XXXV", Donne does the same:

Almighty God, who gives that civill wisdome, to make us of other mens infirmities,
Give us also this heavenly wisdome, to make use of our own particular sins, that thereby
our own particular sins, that thereby our own wretched conditions in our selves, and our
meanes of reparation in Iesus Christ may be the more manifested unto us; To whom with
the blessed Spirit, &c (319)

In this passage Donne describes the different aspects of wisdom, which all depend on God's wisdom.

He mentions "civill wisdome" (319), which is linked to infirmities and deals with the more earthly matters. Furthermore, he mentions "heavenly wisdome" (319), which helps to focus on Christ in realising the severity of our sins. Although, these wisdoms regard different things they both refer to God as Donne states that it is the "almighty God" who gives these wisdoms. Therefore, Lanyer and Donne have the same understanding when it comes to the virtue of wisdom as they both believe one is

completely depended on God. Human wisdom is not only linked to Godly wisdom, but all wisdom is contained within God's wisdom, and only because God gives it, it is present in one's life. Furthermore, the role of Christ is underscored by Donne as he mentions that the heavenly wisdom has the goal to make us realise "our own wretched conditions" (319) so that we will go to Christ for our salvation. Wisdom is, therefore, not only present because of God's wisdom, but in itself refers back to God. Thus, in his sermon Donne underscores the dependence of God in defining wisdom by the concept of heavenly wisdom.

3.2 Wise women

Comparison to or mentioning of biblical women in sermons illustrate the occurrence of virtues in the Protestant theology. Within the Bible several women are characterised by a specific virtue. Furthermore, these characterisations are present in sermons or poetry. For example, the virtue of wisdom is often characterised by Rebecca. As mentioned before, in sermons women were often compared to biblical women to emphasize the need to follow their example. In a sermon to the governor of the East-India company, Edward Reynolds emphasises the importance of intelligence, or wisdom, by using several biblical examples. He starts by mentioning several virtues present in men such as faith, meditation chastity, patience and so on. After mentioning several virtues he moves to the importance of wisdom. Within his sermon he uses intelligence which he defines as "remote intelligence and correspondence" (2). Furthermore, he uses biblical example to explain the importance of knowledge in redirecting threats. Although, Reynolds does not use wisdom in the biblical sense Lanyer and Donne have done so far; although, he does mentioned a number of women when it comes to the saving abilities of that knowledge:

Rebecca her intelligence saved Jacob, Gen. 27.42. The intelligence which the spies brought, animated Israel, Josh 2. 23, 24. Abigail's intelligence saved Nabal, 1 Sam. 25 14. Hushai's intelligence preserved David, 2 Sam 17. 15,22. Many a man by speedy intelligence is enriched, is delivered. (3)

In this passage, Reynolds uses several women as an example for intelligence that delivered men. The women are praised for their wisdom and part in saving men. Although, he defines wisdom more in terms of knowledge it does emphasize the virtue of wisdom. Wisdom can either be defined as

heavenly wisdom or knowledge and both these definitions can be part of women's lives. Heavenly in terms of choosing God every day comes to the fore for example in the life of Lady Margaret Hoby, mentioned in chapter one. However, knowledge which is part of one's everyday life is underscored by Reynolds in this sermon. In using biblical women as an example he shows that they are able to save men through their wisdom. Therefore, mentioning of biblical women underscores the occurrence of virtues in Protestant theology.

In her poem, Lanyer praises the importance of the virtue of wisdom in her mentioning of women as well as writing for women. The poem "Salve Deus Rex Judaorum" contains multiple sections written for specific women. In these sections she addresses countesses or duchesses and often praises her virtues. On the virtue of wisdom, Lanyer writes "To the Ladie Lucie, Countess of Bedford":

Me thinks I see faire Virtue readie stand,
T'vnlocke the closet of your lovely breast,
Holding the key of Knowledge in her hand,
Key of that Cabbine where your selfe doth rest,
To let him in by whom her youth was blest; (ll. 1-5)

This passage has been analysed earlier in this chapter in terms of defining knowledge and wisdom; however, this passage also illustrates the virtue of wisdom within women. In the passage, Lanyer addresses the Countess of Bedford by praising the presence of virtue in her life. She opens by stating "I see fair Virtue readie stand / T'vnlocke the closet of your lovely breast, / Holding the key of Knowledge in her hand" (ll. 1-3). In these lines, Lanyer connects virtue and wisdom by underscoring their presence in the countess. It is through virtue, that knowledge can be present and it is the countess in which the virtue of wisdom is present. Lanyer, underscores the presence of the virtue of wisdom also in the life of Lady Margaret Countess Dowager of Cumberland:

And in his Wisedome, doth thy waies controule:
He through afflictions, still thy Minde prepares,
And all thy glorious Trialls will enroule:
That when darke daies of terror shal appeare,
Thou as the Sunne shalt shine; or much more cleare.

Similar as with the countess of Bedford, Lanyer first establishes a characteristic of wisdom after which she connects it to the life of woman. In this passage Lanyer defines wisdom by placing it within God's

wisdom and connecting it to actions and thoughts. Furthermore, Lanyer describes these characteristics of wisdom by analysing them within the life of the dowager countess. She speaks directly to the countess as she states that it is within God's wisdom that he guides her ways and prepares her mind. Lanyer, emphasises God's presence in the countesses' life by underscoring the virtue present in her life. The notion of wisdom present in women is also underscored by Osherow as she states that in the Old Testament "the woman of valour openeth her mouth with wisdom... the law of kindness on her tongue" (653). The presence of wisdom within women is then praised and women intelligent in speech are to be praised (Osherow 653). Within such a context Lanyer's praise of women's wisdom is also grounded upon the Scriptures. In comparison with Reynolds she points to the presence of wisdom within women's lives, however, in contrast she points out the heavenly aspects of wisdom within women. In contrast to the sermons by Donne she explains the definitions of wisdom by taking women as an example, which simultaneously points to the presence of wisdom in women's lives.

Thus, the distinction between knowledge and wisdom also contains a distinction in holiness and divinity. Knowledge is often used in events such as the fall of paradise giving it a negative connotation. Furthermore, knowledge refers to earthly matters, whereas wisdom is used to describe salvation and finding grace. The concept of wisdom, therefore, refers to God and is contained within and dependent on God's wisdom. Furthermore, Donne establishes a connection between wisdom and salvation as knowledge of one's sins leads to the realisation that God is needed, which in turn leads to salvation. Additionally, the presence of the virtue of wisdom within women becomes apparent from both the poems by Lanyer as well as sermons by Reynolds. Biblical women are used as an example for wisdom and early modern women are compared to them. In her poem, Lanyer emphasises the virtues of women mentioned within her poetry and underscores their wisdom. In his sermon, Reynolds discusses knowledge and praises biblical women for their part in saving their men through their wisdom. Furthermore, the concept of wisdom within women is also present within the Bible as women are praised for their intelligence. Thus, the virtue of wisdom is defined by contrasting it with knowledge and pointed out within the lives of (biblical) women.

Chapter 4: Virtue of strength

Within Protestant theology the virtue of strength is often described in connection with men. Lanyer, however, challenges this as she redefines the definition of strength and weakness within her poem. The virtue of strength, therefore, does not only contain the conventional definition of strength but also includes an analysis of the definition of weakness. This chapter will therefore analyse the virtue of strength within Lanyer's "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" as well as sermons by John Donne and .. Fuller. Firstly, the virtue of strength will be defined by the redefinition of weakness as well as an analysis of the role signs of weakness, such as tears, play within the virtue of strength. Furthermore, the question of weakness and strength will be analysed within the fall of paradise, discussed by Lanyer. Subsequently, the virtue of strength in connection with faith will be analysed by discussing strength and holiness and the role the virtue of strength plays in faith and withstanding temptations.

4.1 Weakness as strength

In her poem, Lanyer describes the virtue of strength in redefining weakness. Lanyer acknowledges that women are often connected to weakness but chooses to redefine the weakness into strength. She defines strength by discussing the fall in paradise and analysing who is to blame for the fall. The fall and question of blame are described in different stanzas which will be analysed by themselves or in pairs. The first stanza deals with the question of blame, the next pair of stanzas that will be discussed oppose beauty and knowledge, and the last stanza that will be discussed describes women's faults as being part of men.

4.1.1 Strength and weakness within the fall of paradise

Lanyer narrates the fall in paradise and places the blame on Adam by embracing the weakness of Eve. In the passage Lanyer defines strength and weakness by analysing the fall in paradise and the parts Adam and Eve played in it:

But surely Adam cannot be excus'd
Her fault, though great, yet he was most too blame;
What Weaknesse offred Strength might haue refus'd,

Being Lord of all the greater was his shame:
 Although the Serpents craft had her abus'd,
 Gods holy word ought all his actions frame:
 For he was Lord and King of al the earth,
 Before poor Eve had either life or breath (ll. 777-784)

In this passage Lanyer does not present Eve without fault, but rather emphasizes Adam's fault. She opens by stating that one cannot just excuse Adam. Although Eve's fault was great, Lanyer believes Adam is "most too blame" (l. 778). The reasoning behind this shift of blame is elaborated on in the following lines as Lanyer continues by characterising Adam and Eve in terms of strength and weakness. Lanyer defines Eve as weak and Adam as strong, which follows early modern theology in which women were often defined as weak and men as strong (Shami 157-158). However, she challenges the definition of strength and weakness as she questions the strength of Adam in not being able to refuse Eve. In her opinion strength could not be persuaded by weakness, therefore, the definition of strength is challenged. Furthermore, she states that Adam's fall was greater as he was king of the earth even before Eve lived. Consequently, it should have been Adam that followed God's word; thus, refusing the fruit. In this passage Lanyer does not place Eve without blame, as she was persuaded by the serpent and did take the first fruit, but she emphasises Adam's blame.

Lanyer opposes the reasoning for taking the fruit, beauty and wisdom, and defines the question of fault accordingly. The poem continues with discussing the question of guilt by challenging the definitions of strength and weakness. However, in the following stanzas, Lanyer discusses the reasoning for taking the fruit:

We know right well he did discretion lacke,
 Being not perswaded thereunto at all;
 If Eve did erre, it was for knowledge sake,
 The fruit being faire perswaded him to fall:
 No subtill Serpents falsehood did betray him,
 If he would eate it, who had power to stay him? (ll. 795-800)

The lines above describe Adams persuasion to take the fruit, or in Lanyer's eyes lack of persuasion. She states that the fall of Eve was because of knowledge and the "subtill Serpents falsehood" (l. 799). However, Adam did not have a serpent to persuade him rather he took the fruit based on it being "fair" (l. 798). Describing the fall in such a way, Lanyer not only reduces Eve's blame for the fall but

presents Adam's reasoning to take the fruit as not valid. She describes it as if Adam did not have any good reasons to take the fruit, but rather had more reason to follow God. Therefore, his decision to take the fruit was a far greater fault than Eve's. Furthermore, Lanyer emphasises the part beauty and lust play within Adam's reasoning as only "arising from desire for a beautiful object" (DiPasquale 168). The desire, or lust, of men for beautiful things is condemned by Lanyer and used as a reason for why women are not able to refuse them. She, therefore, links the strength of men to the weakness of women in stating that women are powerless when a man is intent on "satisfying the lust of his eyes" (DiPasquale 168). Although this remark on the weakness of women it does redefine the strength of men as men are described as strong, however, negativity is immediately linked towards it. The fault of women is diminished and the weakness is rather used as an asset and example of strength.

Furthermore, Lanyer remarks on the differences in reasoning on taking the fruit. These differences in reasoning are expressed in the following lines:

Not Eue, whose fault was onely too much love,
Which made her giue this present to her Deare,
That which shee tasted, he likewise might proue,
Whereby his knowledge might become more clearer;
He never sought her weaknesse to reprove,
With those sharpe words which he of God did heare:
Yet Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke
From Eves faire hand, as from a learned Booke (ll. 801-808)

In these lines, Lanyer continues by stating the innocence of Eve when she took the fruit and offered it to Adam, but judges Adam for not declining the offer or being stronger in his convictions. According to Lanyer, Eve gave the fruit out of love for her husband. Consequently, Adam took the fruit to increase his knowledge and in that went directly against the commandment God had personally given him. In these lines, Lanyer places more weight on Adam's promise to God as he heard God's commandment personally from Him. Furthermore, Lanyer judges the acquirement of knowledge as she states that "Men will boast of knowledge" (l. 807), even though they took it "From Eves faire hand" (l. 808). Consequently, Lanyer challenges the question of blame within the fall by questioning Adam's motives for taking the fruit. Additionally she criticises the way in which men boast of the knowledge, ultimately attained through women, while simultaneously condemning women for giving the same knowledge. Lanyer, points to the discrepancy within that as especially men should be able to

resist the fruit, and if they choose to take it the blame should not lie with the women, but rather with themselves. As a result of this, Lanyer believes that Adam should have reproved the weakness of Eve with the “sharpe words” (l. 806) which he heard of God. However, he chose not to do so, and embraced the fruit and the knowledge as a result. Thus, Lanyer defines the question of guilt in terms of knowledge and strength and uses a redefinition of strength and weakness to place blame of Adam.

Lanyer places the fault of women on men as women are part of men. The question of fault can be viewed and analysed in different ways, however Lanyer states that even when women are blamed for the fall this will still reflect upon men:

If any Euill did in her remaine,
 Being made of him, he was the ground of all;
 If one of many Worlds could lay a staine
 Upoin our Sexe, and worke so great a fall
 To wretched Man, by Satans subtill traine;
 What will so fowle a fault amongst you all?
 Her weaknesse did the Serpents word obey,
 But you in malice Gods deare Sonne betray (ll. 809-816)

In the first line, Lanyer challenges the presence of evil in Eve, however, she does not just argue for the innocence of Eve. As mentioned before, she acknowledges Eve’s part within the fall and emphasises the responsibility of Adam within the fall in acknowledging Eve’s fault. Lanyer, references the origin of Eve as she was created from Adam. According to Lanyer, Eve being created out of Adam gives him ultimate responsibility as “he was the ground of all” (l. 810). Furthermore, she judges men for placing the fault on Eve in its entirety as it might be Eve’s weakness that made her listen to the serpent; however, it was Adam who betrayed God’s words. Lanyer stays within the narrative of strength and weakness and judges Adam based on the definition of strength.

In her poem, Lanyer redefines strength into weakness by challenging the definition of strength. Throughout the lines discussed above, Lanyer stays within the set definitions of strength and weakness. She does not challenge the characterisation of women as weak or man as strong, but rather follows it throughout her poem. However, she does redefine the definition of weakness and in that challenges the characterisation of men as strong. In her poem, she openly questions Adam’s choice to eat the fruit and links it to strength of mind. She states that if Adam was really strong he would not

have any trouble resisting his wife. In her opinion he should have been able to refuse “what Weaknesse offered” (l. 779), in this challenging the presence of strength within Adam as the weakness of a woman was able to persuade him. Rather than following the opinion that Eve was weak for listening to the serpent and being convinced by him, she states that in fact it was Adam who was weak for taking the fruit just because of its beauty. It was Eve who was convinced by the serpent by the Serpents “subtill” (l. 779) “falsehood” (l. 779). Lanyer, therefore presents Eve’s fault as being inevitable and in no way a reflection of her weakness, whereas Adam, being the definition of strength, should have been able to resist the urge to take the fruit. Thus, the question of strength and weakness within women is presented as a complex concept as weakness and strength are part of each other’s definition. Although Lanyer acknowledges the presence of weakness within women she uses the characterisation of strength within men to emphasize their faults in order to praise women and ultimately attribute strength to them.

4.1.2 Signs of weakness redefined

Crying and tears are not defined as weak but rather increase one’s relation with God. Lanyer not only challenges the definition of weakness in her lines on the fall in paradise, but she also discusses signs of weakness. She describes the crucifixion of Christ and contrasts the men and women present by describing their actions. First she describes the women:

Most blessed Daughters of Ierusalem,
 Who found such favor in your Sauiors sight,
 To turne his face when you did pitie him;
 Your tearefull eyes beheld his eyes more bright;
 Your Faith and Loue vnto such grace did clime,
 To have reflection from this Heau’nly light:
 Your Eagles eyes did gaze against this Sunne,
 Your hearts did thinke, he dead, the world were done (ll. 985-992)

In the lines above, Lanyer describes how the women were present at Christ’s crucifixion and how they held his “favor” with their “tearefull eyes”. She praises the cause of their tears and states that those “tearefull eyes beheld his eyes more bright”. In these lines, the tears are an reflection of their love and devotion to Christ. Therefore, she does not describe the crying as weakness but rather praises the

women for showing their love for Christ in such a way. In his book, Kuchar underscores the importance of Lanyer's mentioning of the tears of women, and especially those of the Virgin Mary. The tears by the Virgin Mary can be analysed in different ways, however, Kuchar believes that it illustrates Lanyer's attempt to give women more authority (Kuchar 146). Furthermore, the example of the Virgin Mary and the emphasis on her tears presents, according to Kuchar, "calls Mary's bodily perfection into question" (146). Therefore, Lanyer "presents a version of Mary that is more deeply human and thus more relevant to the lived experience of women" (Kuchar 146). Second she describes how it were the men that killed Christ:

When spitefull men with torments did opresse
 Th'afflicted body of this innocent Doue,
 Poore women seeing how much they did transgresse,
 By teares, by sighs, by cries, intreate, nay proue,
 What may be done among the thickest presse,
 They labour still these tyrants hearts to moue:
 In pitieand compassion to forbear

Their whipping, spurning, tearing of his haire,
 But all in vain, their malice hath no end,
 Their hearts more hard than flint, or marble stone; (ll. 993-1002)

These lines are a stark contrast to the ones used to describe the women. Lanyer states that it is the men who tormented Christ and who did not listen to the women's cries as "their malice hath no end" (l. 1001). She uses words such as "spitefull" (l. 993) and "tyrants" (l. 998) to describe the men which is in contrast with the early mentioned "blessed daughters of Jerusalem" (l. 985). In these lines, Lanyer does not necessarily oppose strength and weakness but rather uses signs of weakness, such as crying, in a context in which it is praised. At the same time she connects men, which are often connected to strength, and connects them to an event such as the crucifixion of Christ. In the passage the description of the men is in no way positive or links them to the favour or grace of God. Instead the women, especially in their weaknesses, are linked to the favour of God and described as blessed. This notion is underscored in Kuchar as the tears of women underscore an authority as "Lanyer's claim to poetic and priestly power resides in her assertion that she has intuitive or unmediated access to the kind of sorrow exemplified by Mary under the cross" (125). Therefore, in the passage Lanyer emphasises the position of women by describing the Crucifixion "as a public historical action taken by men alone", which

“vindicates, once and for all, female nature and feminine values” (Mueller qtd. in Grossman 101). She ultimately presents signs of weakness as strength and condemns the strength men might possess as she emphasises their actions against God. Lanyer, thus, stays within the conventional norms of strength and weakness but describes it in such a way that what might be perceived as weak is ultimately strong.

4.2 Faith

4.2.1 Strength and holiness

Strength is used in connection with holiness and virtue as a cause for maintaining holiness and virtue. In his sermon, Ignatius Fuller describes strength in connection with holiness, wisdom and salvation. Firstly, he describes strength in terms of mortality as when one dies “thy strength supported by the tree of life shall begin to languish, and fail” (2). However, he does not just mention it in terms of mortality but connects it to eternity. It was sin who had brought death into the world, however, at the same time God had been merciful in saving mankind. Death, therefore, can be indicate both natural death and eternal death and the strength of one can be perceived as literal strength or seen as a virtue which consists of a larger concept than just earthly strength. The larger concept of strength is mentioned by Fuller, as secondly he describes the faith aspect of strength: “This the love of God [...] that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. These overcome the World, and that too by their Faith, which inspires strength into them” (6). The passage indicates that it is faith which works strength within one and it is because of faith one is able to “overcome[...] all such things as the World objects to him” (6). Therefore, faith allows one to withstand the temptations of the world and it is because of strength one is able to do so.

4.2.2 Strength and faith

In her poem, Lanyer references to the virtue of strength in withstanding temptations and holding on to one’s faith. The definition of the virtue of strength within the sermon of Fuller is also present within Lanyer’s poem. She describes how one can withstand the temptations of the world and stay true to their faith:

The meditation of this Monarchs love,
 Draws thee from caring what this world can yield,
 Of joys and griefes both equall thou dost prove,
 They have no force, to force thee from the field:
 Thy constant faith like to the Turtle Dove
 Continues combat, and will never yield
 To base affliction; or proud pomps desire,
 That sets the weakest minds so much on fire (ll. 153-160)

Lanyer describes how the love of God takes the dowager countess from all the world could offer as her faith is constant. She is strengthened by the love of God to withstand all temptations. Furthermore, she is in combat with afflictions that might reduce her faith. Within this fight the virtue of strength gives her the ability to counter those afflictions and it gives her a strong mind. She no longer cares what the world has but focuses solely on God. In these lines the virtue of strength is defined as strength of mind and faith which is present because of God's love. This definition follows Fuller's statements that strength is part of our love of God and that it gives one the ability to overcome all afflictions. Furthermore, the strength is inspired by one's faith. Within Lanyer's lines it is that definition that is mentioned about the dowager countess. Therefore, Lanyer's mentioning of the virtue of strength also underscores the importance of faith and the ability to withstand temptations.

The virtue of strength is presented as a redefinition of weakness within Lanyer. The question of strength and weakness is analysed within the narration of the fall in paradise as Lanyer remarks on the question of guilt while at the same time challenging the meaning of strength and weakness. Although she does not challenge the characterisation of men as strong and women of weak, she does redefine the meaning of weakness. The question of guilt, within the fall of paradise is therefore described in terms of strength and weakness which results in a questioning of men's strength as they are not able to refuse a women's weakness. Furthermore, Lanyer attributes strength and authority to women through signs of weakness such as crying. She emphasises women's beauty in the eyes of God and praises their conduct by condemning that of the men. Lastly, Lanyer and Fuller describe the connection between strength and faith by discussing the role strength has in standing within one's faith and withstanding temptations. The strength in one's faith will ultimately give one holiness and lead to a holy strength of standing within one's faith.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the virtues chastity, wisdom and strength formed an important theme within early modern Protestant theology and society and that these virtues are discussed within early modern sermons and poetry. The sermons of John Donne, John Mason, Thomas Grantham, Edward Reynolds and Ignatius Fuller and the poetry by Aemilia Lanyer deal with the tension between secular life and theological doctrines surrounding the virtues of chastity, wisdom and strength.

In early modern Protestant theology, virtues were defined in connection with justification and sanctification. The theology of Luther and Erasmus on virtues were followed during the early modern period, thus, moving away from Aristotle's view on virtues. Therefore, virtues were believed to be a consequence of grace and not subject to habit. Furthermore, the virtue of women is stressed as women played an important role within their family and community. Women were not responsible for the reputation of their husband, they were also able to influence their surroundings, whether positively or negatively. The tension between secular life and theology on the topic of virtues is in a way dealt with through the use of sermons and religious poetry. Sermons and religious poetry functioned as a mediator between theological doctrines and everyday life. Within a sermon, the preacher had the opportunity to explain the theology by using examples from everyday life and speaking directly to his congregation. Additionally, in religious poetry writers were able to convey their personal attitudes towards theological doctrines as they were able to engage with Protestant theology in their writing.

The virtue of chastity was of significant importance in both Protestant theology as well as early modern society. In early modern Protestant theology the virtue of chastity was linked to salvation in using Christ as an example. Furthermore, the need for purity was stressed; thus, placing chastity within a larger frame of purity. The importance of chastity is underscored in Lanyer's discussion of the parable of the ten maidens. She uses the parable of the ten maidens to underscore the significance of virtue within faith as grace is seen as a necessity for virtue; thus, also underscoring Luther's view on virtue as a consequence of grace. Additionally, nature and the symbol for lilies are used to indicate the importance of virtue within theology and society. Within theology the lilies are mentioned in connection with Christ and the virgin Mary, thus giving women an example within life. Consequently, within society nature is used as a way to describe virtue and beauty and virtue are contrasted in

underscoring the fleeting aspect of beauty. Furthermore, the virtue of chastity is made apparent within the narrative of marriage which contains both the notion of a marriage between people on earth as well as a spiritual, or theological, marriage between Christ and his church. Within marriage the need to follow Christ's example is stressed which puts an emphasis on the need for purity and at the same time nuances husband and wife's role within marriage as Christ and his church are the example to follow.

The virtue of wisdom is defined by contrasting knowledge and wisdom, and consequently earthly and divine. Wisdom is understood as something divine that is used in connection with God. Knowledge is, therefore, given a negative connotation as it deals with earthly matters and is used in connection with the fall in paradise. Wisdom, furthermore, is contained within and dependent upon God's wisdom as it is God who gives one wisdom. Within this, the dependence on God is stressed and made apparent in Lanyer's poetry. Additionally, wisdom is connected to one's choices which establishes a link to the concept of imitating Christ and choosing to follow his example. Furthermore, the virtue of wisdom is pointed out in several biblical passages. The wise women mentioned serve as an example for early modern women. Furthermore, the wisdom of women is praised within Lanyer and sermons, also emphasizing the need for knowledge of one's sins in order to obtain grace. Thus, the virtue of wisdom is present within women and emphasises the need for salvation.

The virtue of strength is often described in connection with men; however, Lanyer illustrates that it does not only apply to men. Strength, therefore, is defined by the redefinition of weakness, and signs of weakness. The definitions of strength and weakness are challenged within Lanyer's account on the fall in paradise, which places women within a stronger position even though the characterisation of women as weak remains. Lanyer stays within the framework of Protestant theology but attributes authority to women through signs of weakness such as crying. Additionally, the connection between strength and faith is made apparent as it is through strength one is able to withstand temptations. Thus, the conventional definitions of the virtues of chastity, wisdom, and strength are challenged and underscored by placing women within all virtues and using biblical examples to underscore the presence of the virtues within women.

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