

**DESCENT FROM MIDWIFE AND PHYSICIAN
JANE (ANGELL) HAWKINS (1580-1659),
KNOWN FOR ECSTATIC PROPHECY AND EXTEMPORE
PRAYER IN ST. IVES, HUNTINGTONSHIRE; SUSPECTED
OF WITCHCRAFT IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS BAY**

Jane Angell (1580-1659), m.1602 Richard Hawkins (1577-1656);
parents of
Thomas Hawkins (1612-1670), m.1637 Hannah Baker (1618-1644);
parents of
Hannah Hawkins (1641-1664), m.1661 Edward Howard (1616-1688);
parents of
Matthew Howard (1663-1732), m.1687 Mary Case (1662-1740);
parents of
William Howard (1691-1760), m.1723 Mary Parker (1704-1739);
parents of
Zephaniah Howard (1721-1813), m.1756 Valeriah Woolley (1737-1813);
parents of
Silas Howard (1776-1860), m.1808 Amelia Cash (1783-1853);
parents of
David Howard (1815-1885), m.1838 Caroline Sweet (1821-1863);
parents of
Lafayette Howard (1842-1911), m.1862 Catharine Jane Moore (1839-1911);
parents of
Franklin Elmer Howard (1876-1966), m.1900 Adeline Denegar (1873-1953);
parents of
Catherine Margaret Howard (1908-2003), m.1933 Paul Weeks Balint (1911-1989);
parents of
Joy Ann Balint (living), m.1959 David Milton Webber (1938-2008);
parents of
David Jay Webber (living), m.1984 Carol Ruth Wimble (living)



Contemporaneous Sources on the Career of Jane (Angell) Hawkins as a “Rhyming Preacheress” and Wayward Puritan

...I shall desire your Lordship if His Majesty may have heard of one Jane Hawkins here at St. Ives, that in a rapture or ecstasy, into the which she fell the 24th of March last past, has uttered strange things in verse (which she will not confess she could ever make before or can do now), in matters of divinity and state, that Your Lordship would let His Majesty understand what I conceive [to be] the truth of the business, having been personally upon the place, upon Saturday and Sunday last, and spoken (in a disguised personage) with the woman concerning these particulars, and examined most of the parties which had any relation to the action.

The woman is not yet (generally) of any good, and has been of very bad fame. [Yet she is] Very precious and dear unto the vicar of the town, so addicted, whom with much ado, for fear of deprivation, I brought to conformity some two years since. She is a witty and a crafty baggage, and the chief in this imposture. Feigning herself in a trance, she began (like the Eleventh Sybil) to preach in verse. But not anything (as the report went) concerning the state or the government of the church. But only by way of answer to private temptations of her own, and magnifying the ministry of Mr. [Job] Tookie (the vicar) and his power (together with Christ's) in getting her the victory over Satan, etc.

This versifying continued for 3 days and 3 nights in an auditory of very near two hundred people, the most being of the weaker sex. The vicar, and one Mr. Wise, his wise curate, and another scholar, sitting composedly at the bed's feet, and copying out the verses, which the poor woman (for she is but a pedlar) did dictate, which (amounting to some thousands) they had transcribed and written over [again in a more] fair [hand], with intent to print and divulge them, when, coming thither suddenly, I seized upon the copy and the originals.

The miracle (stiffly maintained by the churchmen [the vicar and the curate]) is this: That she never could make verse before, nor can now which she likewise most impudently avows. But, as I clearly conceive, falsely and untruly.

I required the vicar and his curate, to acknowledge their error in scandalizing this most famous church, by making themselves actuaries to the impostures, dotages and reveries of a frantic woman. Which because the vicar refused to do, I have suspended him from his place, and put the curate (too familiar with the said woman) quite away, out of my diocese. I have also, with two other justices, left a warrant with the constables, to look to the woman (who pretends great weakness still) that no more of her neighbors than one at once [at the same time] come to visit her. And that Mr. Tookie the vicar abstain from her company.

And preaching there upon the [following] Sunday, I took occasion to speak (upon my text) of the scandal which the papists put upon our church, that we maintain private spirits, and infusions by ecstasies and raptures which I showed to be false, and that we claim no inspiration of the Holy Ghost, otherwise than what is given us, by hearing, reading, meditating the Word of God, and the devout receiving of the Blessed Sacraments. And that the Spirit of God, never does, nor did, under the Gospel, speak in raptures and ecstasies. And (as I hear) this has satisfied all the people, that they have quite forsaken this rhyming preacheress. I doe not send Your Lordship the verses, because there is nothing in them relating to the State: nor, in my opinion (wherein the vicar differs much from me) containing any sense. Sometimes they are in rhyme, but seldom in any reason.

And I would to God I were sure I had any reason to be thus troublesome unto Your Lordship in a matter somewhat eccentric from Your Lordship's sphere, and of no more moment. But I presumed thus far, lest the king might have heard of it. (John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln,

letter to Viscount Dorchester [Dudley Carleton], Secretary of State, April 28, 1629, in *Notices of Archbishop Williams*, compiled and edited by B. H. Beedham [London: 1869], pp. 49-51. Edited for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.)

I will be very vigilant that this poor imposture of the woman at St. Ives shall spread no further. The curate and schoolmaster I have quite discharged. The Vicar himself, though at first he refused, has since made an open acknowledgment in writing:

1. That this is no miracle or wonder, nor was [it] by him so reputed.
2. That it proceeds not, nor possibly can [proceed], from God's Spirit.
3. That he is sorry for his indiscretion in copying out these verses, and will do so no more.
4. That he holds it fit that none of his parish should give any credit, or take any heed, to what the woman said, in these whether real or feigned trances, etc.

And this he has read openly in the church. And (as I am informed) it has fully satisfied those people, and that they cry out against the woman for this imposture. All that may have any reflection upon the state I have transcribed and enclosed on this piece of paper. The rest is of that subject I wrote of before. (John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, letter to Viscount Dorchester, May 5, 1629, in *Notices of Archbishop Williams*, pp. 51-52. Edited for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.)

O let it be forever told | to ages that succeed
That they may lay it up in store, | for then will be most need.
When that you see these fearful times | which now in part you fear –
For they are sure to come to us, | oh, they draw wondrous near! –
And then (good truth) you may believe, | I take it still for grant,
That punishment will follow sin | and ever will it haunt.
And therefore now in shortest speech, | oh, labor to believe,
Lest afterwards it be too late, | when you so sore shall grieve.

(Verses from Jane Hawkins sent by Bishop Williams with his second letter to Viscount Dorchester, in *Notices of Archbishop Williams*, pp. 52-53. Edited for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.)

I could bring many instances to the same purpose, but I will only add one, so remarkable, as will sufficiently prove that the faculty of extempore prayer may be so far from being the gift of God, that it may [instead] be the gift of Hell; and that such who are almost under an irreversible sentence of damnation, may have it even in perfection. The story is thus.

At St. Ives in Huntingdonshire not many years ago, there was a woman whose name I do not very well remember, though many in that place very well do; she was one of those who, for distinction, were called Puritans, a great follower of the Presbyterian doctrine, a constant frequenter of godly meetings and religious exercises; this woman came to be so eminent, especially in the gift of prayer, that she was generally admired, and looked upon as a saint of the full magnitude. The noise of her fame, and the boasts of her party, brought many ministers in the adjacent countries of Cambridge and Huntingdon to hear her pray, which she did in that ravishing manner, that they never parted from her without an excess of admiration and astonishment. After some time, for what reason I am not able to determine, this holy sister went over into New England, as about the same time many others did for liberty of conscience. For a while she was there [in New England] in the greatest esteem and height of reputation, but the devil owed her a shame, and she became at last suspected and accused for a witch, was brought to a trial,

confessed her guilt, and [confessed] that her contract with the devil was, that in lieu of her soul, which she made over to him, he should assist her with the gift of extempore prayer; after which confession, sentence [was] passed upon her, and she was accordingly executed as a most abominable sorceress. (Thomas Lewis, *The Scourge: In Vindication of the Church of England*, No. 13, April 29, 1717, pp. 85-86. Edited for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.)

(While we can be quite sure that this account pertains to Jane Hawkins, it errs in stating that she was tried and executed for witchcraft in New England. This does, therefore, call into question the accuracy of other aspects of the account. But since the author was writing in England, he may have had better information concerning the events that he said took place there, as compared to the events that said took place in America.)

...the midwife, one [Richard] Hawkins' wife [Jane], and a rank familist also..., went out of the jurisdiction; and indeed it was time for her to be gone, for it was known, that she used to give young women oil of mandrakes and other stuff to cause conception; and she grew into great suspicion to be a witch, for it was credibly reported, that, when she gave any medicines (for she practiced physic), she would ask the party if she did believe, [and only then could] she could help her, etc. (John Winthrop, *Journal*, April 1638).

...Mrs. [Anne] Hutchinson..., when she dwelt in Boston, gave cause of suspicion of witchcraft, for it was certainly known that Hawkins' wife (who continued with her, and was her bosom friend) had much familiarity with the devil in England, when she dwelt at St. Ives, where divers ministers and others resorted to her and found it true. (John Winthrop, *Journal*, September 1640)

She [Jane Hawkins] is but a poor silly woman, yet having so much wit as, perceiving Mrs. Hutchinson's ambitions of proselytes, to supply her wants, she attended on her weekly lecture. Where Mrs. Hutchinson broached any new doctrine, she would be the first to taste it. And being demanded whether it were not clear to her, though she understood it not, yet would say "oh yes, very clear." By which means she got, through Mrs. Hutchinson's affection for her, some good victuals, insomuch that she followed Christ for loaves. (John Wheelwright. Edited for punctuation.)

...the congregation of the people of God began to be forsaken, and the weaker sex prevailed so far, that they set up a priest [Anne Hutchinson] of their own profession and sex, who was much thronged after, abominably wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction. This masterpiece of women's wit drew many disciples after her, and to that end boldly insinuated herself into the favor of none of the meanest, being also backed with the sorcery of a second [Jane Hawkins], who had much converse with the devil by her own confession, and did – to the admiration of those that heard her – utter many speeches in the Latin tongue, as it were, in a trance. This woman [Hawkins] was wonted to give drinks to other women to cause them to conceive, how they wrought I know not, but sure [it is that] there were monsters born not long after [from Mary Dyer and Anne Hutchinson]... (Edward Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England* [1654]. Edited for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation)



St. Mary's Church, Bluntisham-cum-Earith, Huntingdonshire, England (four miles northeast of St. Ives).
Jane Angell and Richard Hawkins were married here on July 11, 1602. Three of their children were baptized here.



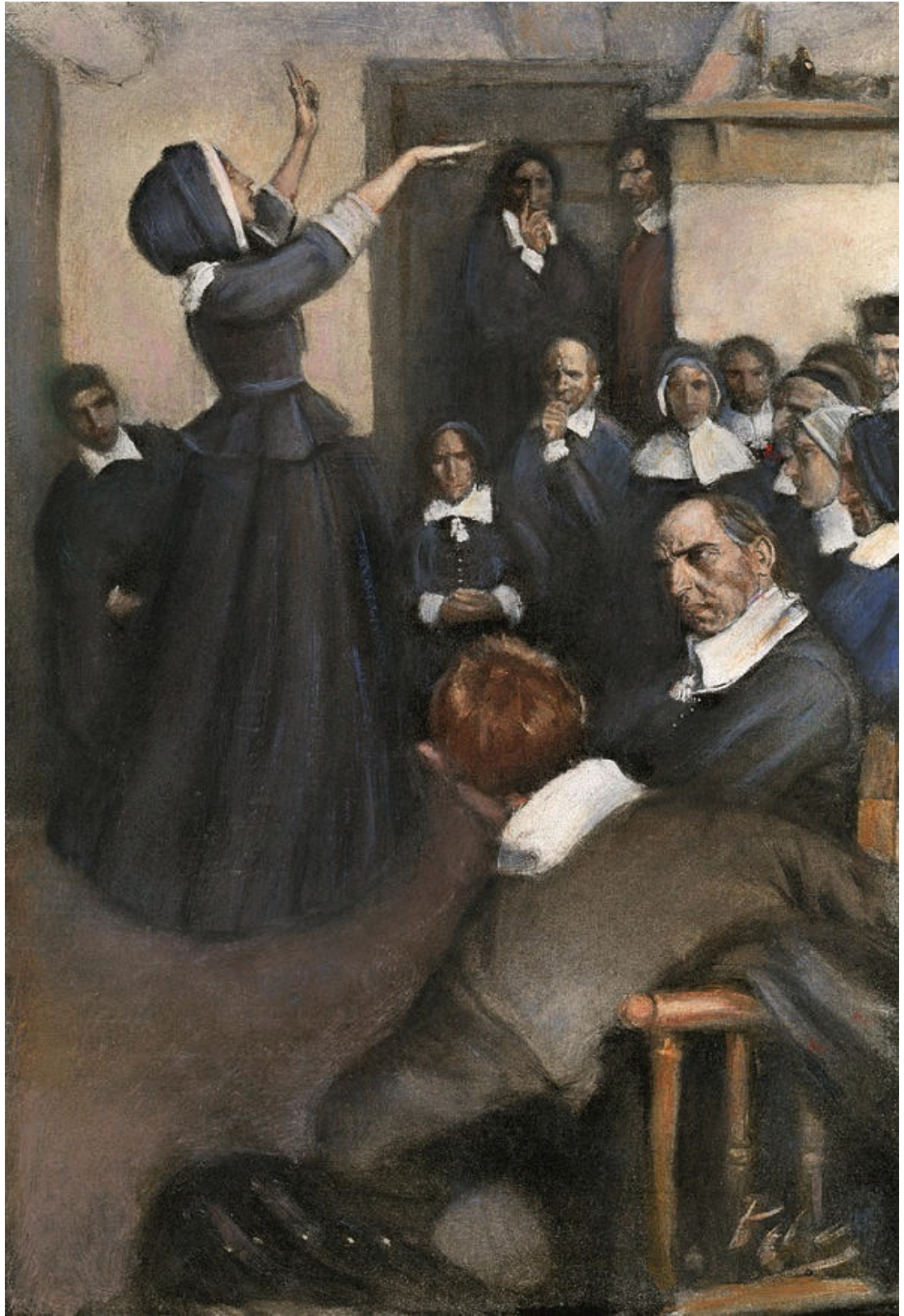
St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, England, circa 1880



Interior of All Saints Church, St. Ives, 1860. Six of the Hawkins' children were baptized here.



John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln (later Archbishop of York)



Anne Hutchinson conducting a religious meeting at her home in Boston, Massachusetts