COURTIER, SCHOLAR, & MAN OF THE SWORD

Lord Herbert of Cherbury and his World
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CHRISTINE JACKSON
For my family
Preface

This book has been an unconscionably long time in the writing. Family, friends, colleagues, and students are doubtless as relieved as I am that it is finished. My decision to write a biography of Lord Herbert of Cherbury was sparked, and has been sustained, by discussion of his inimitable autobiography and extensive writings with colleagues and successive cohorts of undergraduate and postgraduate students over two decades. It seemed nonsensical that a flamboyant Stuart courtier, diplomat, and duellist, who numbered among the leading intellectuals of his generation, had never attracted a full-length English biography. My exploration of his life stealthily expanded as I strove to highlight and assess the most remarkable and significant aspects of Lord Herbert’s life, career, and intellectual activities and to position him within the aristocratic world and historical epoch that formed him.

During the years in which I have pursued my study of Lord Herbert I have been assisted by many individuals and institutions. I am grateful to Kellogg College and the Department for Continuing Education at the University of Oxford for granting me sabbatical leave to research and write the book and for supporting my archival research. I owe much to the generous assistance and expertise of librarians and archivists in the Bodleian Library, British Library, Huntington Library, National Archives, National Library of Wales, and other libraries and archives in which I have worked, and should like to offer particular thanks to colleagues in Rewley House Library for their invaluable assistance over many years. The project would not have been possible without the deposit of family papers by the earls of Powis at The National Archives and National Library of Wales, and by Mr and Mrs M. More-Molyneux at Surrey History Centre, and I am additionally grateful to John Herbert, 8th earl of Powis, for permitting me to consult Magdalen Herbert’s ‘Kitchin Booke’ at Powis Castle. Gratitude is also due to Jesus College, Oxford for allowing me to study Herbert’s books in the Fellows Library and to Queens College, Oxford for access to a copy of Herbert’s ‘Memorial on Supremacy’. I further wish to thank the Bodleian Library, Folger Shakespeare Library, National Museum of Wales, National Portrait Gallery, National Trust, and Royal Collection Trust for permitting me to use images from their collections and to acknowledge my debt to the scholars who have translated and edited Herbert’s Latin works.

I owe a particular debt to friends and colleagues including Tom Buchanan, Janet Dickinson, Elizabeth Gemmill, Cathy Oakes, Susan Doran, and Marianne Talbot, who have read and commented on individual or multiple chapters and
other materials. I should like to thank Tom Buchanan for his generous support throughout the research and writing of the book, Ian Archer and Alex Gajda for encouraging me to expand the project, Richard Cust for sharing ideas on chivalry, and Dunstan Roberts and Janet Dickinson for discussing Herbert’s library and bookbinding. I am particularly sad that Cathy Oakes, who provided stalwart support when I faltered, and Angus Hawkins, with whom I discussed the pains and perils of writing biography, did not live to see the book go to press. Further gratitude is owed to Jane Thomas for her hospitality in London and to Margaret Stearn for driving me to Kew. I would finally like to thank people who have encouraged and supported my interest in studying and teaching history over many decades, particularly David Jackson, Roger Lockyer, Ross Wordie, Ralph Houlsbrooke, Joan Dils, Felicity Heal, Clive Homes, Kate Tiller, and Adrienne Rosen. I have benefited considerably from the assistance of the editors, anonymous readers, and the production team at Oxford University Press and would like to thank Cathryn Steele and Stephanie Arnold for their thoughtful and generous encouragement, Vasuki Ravichandran for keeping me gently on course, and the anonymous readers for their detailed and helpful feedback.

Above all, I am grateful to my husband, Roy, children, Tom, Sarah and Ben, and parents and parents-in-law, Roger, Olive, Ray, and Joyce, for their support and tolerance of my Herbert project, and to my granddaughters, Summer, Hannah, and Ruby, for providing a welcome distraction from it, and it is to them that I dedicate this volume. I am particularly indebted to Roy for allowing my pursuit of Lord Herbert to encroach on so many holidays and for patiently resolving my computing challenges.

Christine Jackson

*Kellogg College, Oxford*
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List of Abbreviations


**BL** British Library

**Bodleian** Bodleian Library

**Camden epistolae** *V. cl. Gulielmi Camdeni et illustrium virorum ad G. Camdenum epistolae*, ed. Thomas Smith (London, 1691)


**CSP Dom** *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series 1625–1649* (London: Longman, 1858–97)


**Dsp** Died without issue

**EHR** *English Historical Review*


**Expedition** Edward Herbert, *The Expedition to the Isle of Rhe*, ed. Lord Powis (London: Whittingham & Wilkins, 1860)

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H  History

Henry VIII  Edward Herbert, The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth (London: Thomas Whitaker, 1649)

Herbert Correspondence  William J. Smith, ed., Herbert Correspondence, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Letters of the Herbets of Chirbury, Powis Castle and Dolguog (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1963)

HL  Huntington Library

HLQ  Huntington Library Quarterly

HMC  Historical Manuscripts Commission

HP online  The History of Parliament, https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/research

JBS  Journal of British Studies

JMH  Journal of Modern History

KJV  The Holy Bible, King James Version (London: Robert Barker, 1611)


Montgom. Collections  Collections Historical and Archaeological relating to Montgomeryshire and its borders

NLW  National Library of Wales


Old Herbert Papers  Old Herbert Papers at Powis Castle and in the British Museum (London: Whiting & Co., 1886)

P&P  Past and Present

PCC  Prerogative Court of Canterbury


Religio laici  Herbert, Edward, De religione laici, trans. and ed. H. R. Hutcheson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944)


Rossi, Vita  Rossi, Mario M., La vita, le opere, i tempi di Edoardo Herbert di Chirbury, 3 vols (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1947)

SHC  Surrey History Centre

TNA  The National Archives

TRHS  Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

TSC  The Seventeenth Century
Note on the Text

In the text, personal and place names are given in the form most commonly used in English language writing. The name Herbert is reserved for Edward, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury. All other Herbets are identified by first and last name or by their familial relationship. The spelling of Cherbury used by Herbert for his English title in his will and other documents has been adopted rather than the Chirbury preferred by some authors. Changes in individual title relevant to the narrative are indicated in the text as they occur.

Dates are given in the Old Style or Julian calendar but the year is taken to start on 1 January not 25 March. In the case of Herbert’s embassy to France and travels in Europe where the Gregorian or New Style calendar had replaced the Julian Calendar, and dates were ten days ahead of England, letters are double dated in the footnotes.

Quotations taken directly from early modern manuscripts or texts have been left in their original form except that u has been silently changed to v and i to j to conform with modern usage, ‘then’ has been silently modernized to ‘than’ where appropriate, and contractions and standard abbreviations have been silently expanded (for example, ‘Lo:’ for Lordship and ‘yt’ for that).
Introduction

Isaac Oliver’s celebrated portrait miniature of Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury, presents a scholarly knight lying in melancholic mood beside a tranquil brook with the accoutrements of chivalry, his horse, armour, and jousting lance, displayed in the woods behind him.¹ The exquisitely executed and carefully composed image was painted during the middle years of Herbert’s life and before he was raised to the peerage. It captures not only his elite status and physical attractiveness and athleticism, but many of the paradoxes that shaped his aspirations and achievements. Herbert was a Janus figure who looked back nostalgically to the elite masculine values and martial lifestyle of earlier centuries but also embraced the Renaissance scholarship and civility of the early modern court and anticipated the intellectual and theological liberalism of the Enlightenment.² Like many men born in the Elizabethan period he sought to combine the attributes of Mars and Minerva in a composite ideal of gentility drawn from the Christian knight of the medieval period and the pagan statesman of antiquity, but he also admired the great scholars and polymaths of his own and earlier generations.³

Herbert possessed the appearance and courteous and cultivated manner of a courtier but was too impulsive, passionate, and honest to enjoy long-term success in court or council. For much of his adult life, as the portrait suggests, he was torn between wielding sword and pen: between upholding family honour, establishing his reputation, and defending his values and beliefs valorously in duel or battle, or pursuing his intellectual curiosity in serious scholarship and expressing his feelings, ideas, and views less glamorously but more permanently in print. He was full of energy and travelled frequently between London and his estates and widely in mainland Europe, but was prone to relapsing bouts of malarial fever and the languor and depression that accompanied them. He was sociable and highly socialized but also inclined to introversion and oscillated between seizing centre stage and hovering on the periphery of the social, political, and scholarly circles of the period.

This book is a study of Herbert’s life and works and the intricate relationship between them. It considers his complex personality and wide-ranging talents and the extent to which they were shaped by cultural notions of gentility, masculinity, and honour. It traces and evaluates the multiple overlapping careers he pursued as a county governor, landowner, courtier, soldier, diplomat, aspirant statesman, and published scholar, and his personal experiences as a privileged eldest son and brother, absentee husband and father, doting grandfather, and loyal but impulsive friend, that impacted upon them. It examines the interconnecting family, county, court, diplomatic, military, and scholarly circles in which he operated and the relationships he developed within them, including his extensive European networks. Where possible, Herbert’s life-story is presented in sequence but his intellectual activities, unless tightly related to political or social events, are examined separately in parallel chapters dedicated to his philosophical, theological, and historical writings, and poetry and musicianship, ensuring that he is accorded due recognition not only as a scholarly member of the titled political elite but as one of the leading English philosophers of his generation and as a ground-breaking historian and competent poet and musician, respected and admired by contemporaries.

Biography has frequently been an underestimated historical genre. Like other contributions to the ‘biographical turn’ in the humanities, this book reasserts the importance of biographical studies in contributing building blocks for the reconstruction and interpretation of the past and in providing multiple vivid and intimate prisms through which to view the development and impact of events and ideas upon both the individual and a social generation. Herbert was born and bred at the apogee of the Elizabethan religious, cultural, and military achievement and lived through forty-five years of Stuart rule to witness the eruption of the Thirty Years War in Europe and civil conflict in the British Isles. This account positions him securely within the history of his era and examines his involvement in courtly and parliamentary politics, his response to the rise of political absolutism and violent pursuit and enforcement of religious partisanship, and his engagement in the intellectual advances of the Jacobean and Caroline eras.

Herbert has bequeathed us a substantial legacy of papers, including his diplomatic correspondence, drafts of his published and unpublished works, and political, legal, financial, and estate papers, but a disappointingly small proportion of the personal letters he sent and received has been preserved compared with the voluminous number that has survived for some contemporaries. Herbert’s papers, letters, and published works provide the basis for my study and are supplemented with materials drawn from the State Papers Domestic and Foreign, the Lords and Commons Journals, contemporary correspondence, and

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5 See bibliography for manuscript and published sources.
other sources. Most of Herbert’s published Latin works have been translated into English and I have used these in preference to the Latin original when available. The survival of two drafts of Herbert’s autobiography, composed at Montgomery Castle during the Civil War and published posthumously in multiple editions, is a mixed blessing.\(^6\) It is useful to be furnished with the inside view and a reasonably continuous and detailed account of four decades of Herbert’s life, but his autobiography cannot be treated unquestioningly as a factual record of his existence or as an accurate representation of his identity. His claim that he wrote with ‘all Truth and Sincerity’ counts for little because it was impossible for him, as both subject and author, to provide an objective account of his own life.\(^7\) Autobiographical narrative is, of necessity, self-centred, self-assertive, and extrovert.\(^8\) The factual personal history that Herbert presents in his autobiography is demonstrably largely accurate, but the facts he uses to re-create his life are carefully chosen and presented and need to be checked against, and supplemented with, other evidence. The person and narrative Herbert constructs are drawn from selected memories, shaped by complex motivations, and reflected his needs, doubts, and priorities at the time he committed the account to paper.\(^9\) Although he provides genealogical information and thoughtful educational guidance for his descendants, the lively account of his life he chooses to present tends to downplay his intellectual and diplomatic achievements and to focus on his exploits as an aristocratic dilettante and vainglorious devotee of the duel. Publication of the autobiography in the eighteenth century coincided with accusations that his philosophical and theological ideas had provided a stimulus for the rise of deism in England and both have coloured the portrayal and assessment of his character and career ever since.\(^10\)

In his introduction to the first edition of the autobiography in 1764, Horace Walpole lionized Herbert as ‘one of the most extraordinary characters which this country has produced’ and cast the autobiography as a fusion of the ‘History of Don Quixote’ and ‘Life of Plato’ which would inspire men ‘of the proudest blood . . . to distinguish themselves in letters as well as arms’, but privately admitted reading Herbert’s egocentric and unconsciously humorous manuscript aloud with friends and being unable to ‘go on for laughing and screaming’.\(^11\) A self-professed

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\(^6\) NLW, Herbert of Cherbury Manuscripts and Papers, E1/1, ’Autobiography of Edward Herbert’; E1/2, ’The Life of Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury’.
\(^7\) Life, p. 1.
\(^10\) See Chapter 10.
deist, Walpole was doubtless interested in the evidence it provided of Herbert’s religious unorthodoxy but expressed regret in a separate letter that ‘a man who found it necessary to take up arms against Charles I. should have palliated the enormities of Henry VIII.’ in his widely circulated history of the Tudor king’s reign.¹² In 1886, Sidney Lee, author of Herbert’s entry in England’s recently launched Dictionary of National Biography, published a new edition of Herbert’s autobiography with extensive notes and a continuation of his political career from 1624 until his death in 1648.¹³ He was clearly far from impressed by Herbert. While acknowledging the energy, discretion, and achievements of his embassies to France and the extent and industry of his publications, Lee criticizes his exceptional and ‘overweening conceit of his own worth’ built upon the ‘trivialities of fashionable life’ and ‘butterfly triumphs won in courtly society’ and itemizes the inconsistencies he found in his character and behaviour.¹⁴ He allows credit for the originality of some of Herbert’s philosophical and theological ideas but exaggerates his manipulation of historical truth and again criticizes him unfairly for providing an ‘unmeasured eulogy of Henry VIII’s statesmanship’ and for excusing ‘the crimes of the Tudor king’s private life’.¹⁵

Since the late nineteenth century, American, British, French, Italian, and German scholars across a range of academic disciplines have produced five seminal studies of Herbert’s life and writings together with numerous articles, edited volumes of his works, and other studies.¹⁶ Although only a part-time philosopher, historian, and poet, Herbert’s academic contributions to the disciplines are examined in surveys of British and European philosophy and studies of metaphysical poetry and historical writing.¹⁷ The French politician and writer Charles de Rémusat published a brief and objective appraisal of Herbert’s career and scholarship in Lord Herbert de Cherbury, sa vie et ses œuvres in Paris as early as 1874.¹⁸ He emphasizes the rare contradistinctions Herbert exhibited as a nobleman cum philosopher and the significance of his contribution to English

without Walpole, Herbert would have been lost to history as ‘a crabbed metaphysician, a third-rate poet, and a ponderous historian.’ Stephen Leslie, ‘Lord Herbert of Cherbury’, National Review 35 (1900): 661–73.

¹² Ketton-Cremer, Horace Walpole, p. 115.
¹⁶ For German perspectives, see Carl Güttler, Edward Lord Herbert von Cherbury, Ein Kritischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des Psychologismus und der Religionsphilosophie (Munich: Beck, 1897) and the invaluable introductions to Günter Gawlick’s facsimile editions of Herbert’s major works.
intellectual history as a metaphysician and proponent of religious toleration. He highlights the centrality of religion within Herbert’s philosophy and provides a French perspective for Herbert’s diplomatic posting to the court of Louis XIII and intellectual connections in Paris.¹ Mario Rossi published his extensively researched three-volume study, La vita, le opere, i tempi di Edoardo Herbert di Chirbury, in Florence in 1947. The Anglophile Italian philosopher provides a comprehensive account of Herbert’s life and erudite analysis of his scholarly and literary works, but his interpretation of Herbert’s motives and actions is frequently subjective and takes insufficient account of elite cultural values and the complexity of English politics in the period. Rossi reinforces the view that Herbert’s polymathy should be seen as dilettantism and stresses the imitative rather than the original qualities of his writing. Herbert, he complains, was neither a revolutionary nor innovative thinker and possessed no exclusive aspiration in life, merely an overweening desire to secure fame for himself in some field.² He awards him credit for his independence of thought and integrity but is antipathetic to his religious rationalism, criticism of Christian revelation, advocacy of free will, and mingling of philosophy and theology.³ He portrays him as the part-time head of a dysfunctional family, and as a courtier with the air of a soldier rather than a true military man, but awards generous praise for his industry and idealism as resident ambassador at the French court.⁴

Ronald Bedford’s The Defence of Truth: Herbert of Cherbury and the Seventeenth Century (Manchester: 1979), and Eugene Hill’s Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (Boston, Massachusetts: 1987), are intellectual biographies and provide limited coverage of Herbert’s life and times. Bedford traces the intellectual inheritance and religious and political circumstances that shaped Herbert’s ideas and assesses the extent of his originality and contribution to the identification of truth, containment of scepticism, and emergence of rationalism, religious toleration, and deism.⁵ He locates Herbert firmly on the cusp between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and draws a clear distinction between Herbert’s professed views and the ways in which they were later interpreted and deployed.⁶ He challenges attempts to label Herbert as an atheist or deist in the context of the times he lived in, and concludes that he died a Christian and an unorthodox member of the Church of England.⁷ Hill consciously seeks to rebuild Herbert’s intellectual reputation and uses literary theory to derive new insights into Herbert’s authorial intentions and achievement.⁸ He traces Herbert’s interest in natural religion across his scholarly and literary works and places particular emphasis upon his discreet but deliberate promotion of deism and his anticipation

of the Enlightenment.² His interpretation of Herbert’s works is lively, accessible, and provocative, but his reading of De veritate as a ‘philosophical charter for the religious doctrine called natural religion or deism’ is not wholly convincing.²

Jacqueline Lagrée’s Le Salut du Laïc, published in Paris in 1989, presents a French translation of Religio laici with a book-length introductory commentary examining the main themes of the text within a wider study of Herbert’s epistemology and theology. She shares Bedford’s reluctance to categorize Herbert as a deist and moderates criticism of his method, eclecticism, and lack of originality, pointing out that he is not a philosophe de métier.² Her engagement with Herbert’s philosophy produces a warm commendation of an honnête homme driven by his fundamental humanity to seek philosophical solutions to counter scepticism and avert religious conflict.³

In re-examining and re-evaluating Herbert’s character, career, and writings, I have followed the instincts of a historian rather than those of a philosopher or literary scholar. I have dogged Rossi’s footsteps in the archives, and permitted myself moments of triumph when, thanks to good luck or digitization, I have found items that escaped his attention or interest. I have drawn selectively and gratefully upon research into all aspects of Herbert’s life and scholarly activities to construct a comprehensive but compact account and assessment of his personal, public, and intellectual lives. I have approached his philosophical, theological, historical, and literary works and his musical activities and artistic commissions from a distinctly historical perspective and focus heavily on their contemporary context. I have drawn upon new, and sometimes conflicting, interpretations of the politics, religion, diplomacy, warfare, family relationships, and elite culture of the early modern period and consciously striven to embed Herbert in the history of his times and to reflect the ongoing scholarship that refreshes the way we view those times and the men and women who peopled and governed them. I have used his life and works as a prism to capture his experience of pursuing political ambitions, cultivating aesthetic and intellectual interests, and maintaining an aristocratic lifestyle in a period often regarded as a disappointing sequel to the Tudor Age or as the prelude or highroad to civil wars provoked by aristocratic discontent and religious grievances.

There is widespread agreement that Herbert was a product of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean ages in which he grew to manhood. He was raised among family and friends who had seen life-changing political, social, economic, and religious changes following England’s break with the Church of Rome in the 1530s and he witnessed the continuation and impact of these changes during his own lifetime with the gradual fracturing of relations between monarchy and

Parliament, and the deepening divisions between those who supported the national Protestant Church established by Elizabeth I at the beginning of her reign and those who rejected or sought to change it. His values, beliefs, and aspirations were shaped by the classical and religious education of the period and by the cultural norms endorsed and exhibited by men and women within his social circle.³¹ He was strongly influenced by the chivalric and feudal traditions of his forebears, by the Renaissance humanism he encountered in private households and at court, and by his Calvinist upbringing and direct experience of religious war and theological conflict.³² He absorbed the scholastic and humanist teaching of the universities but embraced the burgeoning rationalism and empiricism he discovered beyond their walls.³³ He remained a monarchist and member of the Church of England throughout his adult life but engaged enthusiastically with the constitutional and theological debates of the period and strongly rejected absolutist ideologies and religious intolerance.³⁴

Invested as a knight in 1604 and raised to the lowest rung of the nobility in 1624, Herbert owned or controlled land in three kingdoms and was a member of the rapidly expanding and increasingly diverse British political elite of peers and gentlemen. He was born into the ranks of a gentry which had profited from the Tudors’ redistribution of church property and reluctance to govern through a salaried bureaucracy or great noblemen and later from the Stuarts’ generosity and need for support. The number of gentry grew rapidly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and reached around 12,000 or more families by the early eighteenth century as ambitious newcomers with landed estate from the professional and military classes and from trade, agriculture, and industry secured gentle status.³⁵ Herbert belonged to the top tier of around 1,000 greater or county gentry families who served as unsalaried government officials throughout England and Wales and acted as the main intermediaries between Tudor and Stuart monarchs and their subjects.³⁶ As justices of the peace and deputy lieutenants, they governed their counties and maintained law and order, administered justice, enforced religious loyalties, raised taxes, regulated the economy and society, and oversaw the training of the local militia.³⁷ As Members of Parliament, they participated in national government and represented the interests of their locality and the landed

³³ See Chapters 9 and 10.
³⁴ See Chapters 10, 13, and 14. ³⁵ Heal and Holmes, Gentry, p. 12.
³⁷ Ibid.
elite. As major landowners, they accumulated social power and dominated provincial society but enjoyed access to the royal court and spent part of each year living in London. Some, including Herbert, pursued careers at court. A significant number sought, and ultimately achieved, noble title in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Elevation to the Irish peerage in 1624 as Baron Herbert of Castle Island secured Herbert the hereditary noble title he coveted for his lineage, but an inferior one. The award in 1629 of the English title Baron Herbert of Cherbury accorded him greater status and enabled him to take a seat in the English House of Lords during the 1640s. While noble title retained its attraction for ambitious gentry families, it no longer conferred the distinctive mark of social superiority, provincial power, and royal favour associated with membership of the peerage in earlier centuries. While, over the Tudor period, the number of new creations had roughly balanced the number of forfeitures and deaths without heirs, the first twenty-five years of Stuart rule saw the English peerage more than double in size from around 55 families to 126 families. Ministers, soldiers, diplomats, and favoured courtiers continued to dominate the ranks of the newly titled, but blood connections with the royal family and leading noble families became less important and some titles were openly bought by members of the gentry for hard cash. Herbert was one of the last courtly gentlemen to benefit from the largesse of James I and the duke of Buckingham and was awarded his Irish title for his service as ambassador to the court of France. His blood connections within the English nobility secured his elevation to an English title under Charles I and his illustrious lineage insulated him from the taint of being considered nouveau. Although a perennial courtier and loyal servant of the Crown, he never enjoyed the degree of royal favour or financial resources thereafter to secure promotion to an earldom.

Herbert revelled in his Welsh paternal blood-line and took pride in recording in his autobiography his descent from, and kinship to, leading families from Wales and the English border counties (Table 1). It was widely and conveniently believed by members of the nobility and gentry at this time that, in addition to transferring title and property, male primogeniture conveyed key elite masculine qualities such as courage and equitable dealing along the blood-line from father to son, and that a long and honourable male lineage, with a proud tradition of loyal service to Crown and Commonwealth, inculcated virtue in succeeding

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40 See Chapter 9.
44 *Life*, pp. 2–7.
generations. The Herbert family had come to England with William the Conqueror in 1066 and was initially granted land in Hampshire. In the early thirteenth century, the fifth generation of the family acquired land in Wales, and through the marriage of successive heirs to Welsh heiresses, Herbert’s ancestors accumulated wealth, power, and extensive estates in south-east Wales. The name Herbert was revived as a family surname in the English manner in the mid-fifteenth century by the sons of Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan Castle, William Herbert, 1st earl of Pembroke, and Sir Richard Herbert of Colebrook. Herbert traced his descent from the younger brother, Richard, while his wife, Mary Herbert, and his kinsmen, William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, Philip Herbert, earl of Montgomery, Edward Somerset, earl of Worcester, and William Herbert, Lord Powis, were descendants of the earl of Pembroke. Herbert’s great-grandfather, Sir Richard Herbert (son of Sir Richard Herbert of Colebrook), was a courtier and Crown steward who supported and profited from the union of Wales with England under Henry VIII and established a cadet branch of the Herbert family in Montgomery as a client of Charles Somerset, 1st earl of Worcester. Herbert’s grandfather, Edward Herbert, made his reputation and a fortune serving as a soldier under William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, in the 1550s. He expanded the family’s estates, acquiring lands in both Wales and England, and dominated the government of Montgomeryshire as a client of Pembroke and Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, and with the support of family connections to the powerful Lloyd, Pugh, and Price families.

Herbert’s father was despatched to England to be educated, and served a long apprenticeship in local government and estate management under his father in Montgomeryshire, before belatedly succeeding to his inheritance. Richard Herbert eschewed the preference for marrying Welsh brides demonstrated by his Herbert ancestors and opted to build political connections in Shropshire by pursuing a cross-border alliance with Magdalen Newport, the youngest daughter of Sir Richard Newport and Margaret Bromley. The marriage paved the way for his family’s elevation to the nobility in the next generation. The Newports were an influential and long-established Shropshire gentry family who claimed descent from Gwenwynwyn, prince of upper Powys, and kinship with several branches of the English nobility (Table 2). Newport’s father had increased the wealth, status, and political influence of the family through investment in land and marriage to a daughter of the Corbet family, which enjoyed connections with the Talbot,

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48 Herbert Correspondence, p. 4.
49 Ibid., p. 4.
50 Ibid., p. 5.
51 Ibid., p. 5; ‘Edward Herbert I (c.1513–93)’, *HP 1558–1603 online*; ‘Montgomeryshire’, *HP 1558–1603 online*.
52 ‘Richard Herbert I (c.1557–96)’, *HP 1558–1603 online*.
53 Life, p. 7.
Table 1 The Herbert family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Marriage Details</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sir William Herbert of Raglan Castle, called William ap Thomas (d. 1445)</td>
<td>m Gladys, dau. and widow of Sir</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 st gen</td>
<td>William Herbert, 1st earl of Pembroke (8th creation)</td>
<td>m Ann dau. of Sir Walter Devereux of Bodenham and Webley</td>
<td>c.1423–1469</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 nd gen</td>
<td>Sir Richard Herbert of Ewyas</td>
<td>m Margaret Craddock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sir William Herbert of Pembroke, 1st earl of Huntingdon 1455–1490</td>
<td>m Sir George Herbert of Swansea, founder of the Swansea line of Herbert family</td>
<td>c.1506–1570</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>m Charles Somerset, 1st earl of Worcester, c.1460–1526</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Somerset, 2nd earl of Worcester, c.1496–1549 Heirs cr. marquis of Worcester and duke of Beaufort</td>
<td>m Mary dau. of Sir Henry Sidney</td>
<td>c.1538–1601</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Herbert, 3rd earl of Pembroke 1580–1630 d.s.p.</td>
<td>m Philip Herbert, 4th earl of Pembroke and 1st earl of Montgomery 1584–1650</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary Herbert, m Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury and Castle Island 1582–1648</td>
<td>m Elizabeth, m Sir Henry Jones of Abermarles</td>
<td>c.1573–1655</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard, 2nd Baron Herbert of Cherbury, c.1607–1655</td>
<td>m Mary dau. of John Egerton, earl of Bridgewater</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edward, 3rd Baron Herbert of Cherbury 1633–1678 d.s.p.</td>
<td>m (1) Ann, dau. of Sir Thomas Middleton of Chirk Castle (2) Elizabeth, dau. of George Brydges 6th Baron Chandos</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry, 4th Baron Herbert of Cherbury c.1640–1691 d.s.p.</td>
<td>m Katherine, dau. of Francis Newport, 1st Earl of Bradford</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 The Newport family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth-Death</th>
<th>Mother/Marriage Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sir William Vernon of Haddon Hall</td>
<td>c.1420–1467</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Richard Corbet of Moreton Corbet</td>
<td>c.1451–1493</td>
<td>m Elizabeth dau. of Walter Devereux 8th Baron Ferrers of Chartley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Newport</td>
<td>Bef 1473–1512</td>
<td>m Alicia dau. of Sir Thomas Swnerton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Francis Newport</td>
<td>c.1555–1623</td>
<td>m Beatrix dau. of Rowland Laco of Willey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Richard Newport of High Ercall</td>
<td>By 1511–1570</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Newport 1st Baron Newport of High Ercall</td>
<td>1587–1651</td>
<td>m Rachel dau of Sir John Leveson of Trentham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six further Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Newport 1st earl of Bradford</td>
<td>1619–1708</td>
<td>m Lady Diana Russell dau of Francis Russell 4th earl of Bedford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Newport 1st Baron Torrington</td>
<td>c.1655–1719</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Katherine Newport</td>
<td></td>
<td>m Henry Herbert 4th Baron Herbert of Cherbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Newport 2nd earl of Newport</td>
<td>1644–1723</td>
<td>Six further children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Richard c.1587–1622
William 1590–1617
Charles c.1592–1617
George 1593–1631
Henry 1594–1673
Frances c.1595–c.1670
Thomas 1597–c.1642

Margaret Swinfnen m Margaret Bromley

Sir Henry Vernon of Haddon Hall c.1445–1515

Mary m. 1. William Gratwood 2. Ralph Sneyd; Isobel m. Sir Charles Foxe;
Elizabeth m. 1. Francis Lawley 2. Thomas Lawley; Andrew Newport of High Ercall, MP
for Shrewsbury.

Devereux, and Vernon families.\textsuperscript{55} Newport's own marriage was equally judicious. His wife, Margaret Bromley, was the daughter and sole heir of Sir Thomas Bromley, Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, who had purchased a country estate and lands in Shropshire following the dissolution of the monasteries. The union ensured that Newport ultimately became one of the wealthiest and most powerful landowners in the county with influential family connections along the Welsh Marches and in legal and commercial circles in London.\textsuperscript{56}

Herbert inherited extensive estates in Montgomeryshire, Merionethshire, and Shropshire following his father's early death in 1596 but struggled to secure the social and political ascendancy enjoyed by either of his grandfathers.\textsuperscript{57} This was due partly to the fact that Edward Herbert had carved out small estates from his Welsh lands for his younger sons, Matthew and Charles, and Sir William Herbert had acquired the lordship of Powis with a substantial acreage in Montgomeryshire, but also to Herbert's initial delay in building social power in the region due to his youth.\textsuperscript{58} His mother's decision to marry him away from the area secured him additional wealth, land, and social status but did not consolidate his local position and connections.\textsuperscript{59} James I's decision to award the title earl of Montgomery to a royal favourite, Philip Herbert, brother of the 3rd earl of Pembroke, dealt a further blow to Herbert's position because it assigned the 'place' with which his family was associated and the location of its main seat to another branch of the family.\textsuperscript{60} Herbert ultimately regained ownership of Montgomery Castle from his kinsman and built a fine country house within its walls, but was forced to take the title for his English barony from his subsidiary estates in Chirbury.\textsuperscript{61} Though his wife's landholding in Monmouthshire, Glamorganshire, Caernarvonshire, and Anglesey was extensive, he appears to have made no attempt to exert his authority in Monmouthshire, where his father-in-law had established his main residence and been politically active.\textsuperscript{62} The county was already dominated by its resident peer, his distant kinsman, Edward Somerset, 4th earl of Worcester, and William Herbert, 3rd earl of Pembroke, also enjoyed influence there.\textsuperscript{63}

From childhood, honour, lineage, and learning were the triple leitmotifs of Herbert's life. The good fortune of being the first-born son and heir to an ancient,
wealthy and well-connected gentry family guaranteed him the social prestige, public position, and leisure time needed to shape his own life and pursue personal interests, but such privileges came at a cost. He was also expected to demonstrate elite moral virtues and to shoulder the burden of producing male heirs, preserving and expanding the family estates, and protecting and enhancing family reputation. Honour required him to serve monarch and commonwealth loyally, demonstrate courage in defending state and church, and show honesty, self-control, and consideration in his dealings with others. Lineage required him to provide support to his siblings and to embrace an arranged marriage which enriched his estate, inflated his status, and provided an heir, but lacked warmth and companionship. Both competed with his lifelong pursuit of knowledge and search for intellectual truth. It is poignant that Herbert was an acknowledged gentlemen scholar and counted leading literary figures and scholarly authors among his close friends, relations, and acquaintances but scarcely mentions them in his autobiography. The following pages introduce an ambitious, passionate, and impetuous man who was prone to selfishness and vanity but placed a premium on integrity, loyalty, and learning, and was not immune to self-doubt and lapses in confidence. They seek to capture not only his pride in his aristocratic Anglo-Welsh heritage but his cosmopolitanism and modernity, and to foreground the exceptional versatility of his character and talents and the scale of his personal achievement. Above all, they offer a revisionist account of a well-known but sometimes misunderstood and maligned nobleman, who sought to lead an honourable and fulfilling life, increase the position and reputation of his family, and achieve social, political, and intellectual distinction amid domestic difficulty, political and religious conflict, and intellectual uncertainty.
GREAT EXPECTATIONS
1

A Promising Youth

Edward Herbert entered the world ‘between the hours of twelve and one of the Clocke in the Afternoone’ on 3 March 1582.¹ ‘I was borne at Eyton in Shropshire’, he tells us, in ‘a house which, together with fair Lands, descended upon the Newports by my… Grandmother’.² The hamlet of Eyton-on-Severn was situated in the parish of Wroxeter, close to the county town of Shrewsbury and England’s once turbulent border with Wales. The house and surrounding lands had been purchased by his maternal great-grandfather some forty years earlier following the dissolution of Shrewsbury Abbey.³ It was not unusual for babies to be born away from home in the sixteenth century because childbirth, and especially the delivery of a first child, was a time of anxiety as well as excitement for parents, family, and friends.⁴ The fact that Herbert was born in the spacious and comfortable home of Lady Newport, his wealthy widowed grandmother, suggests that his mother, like many young women, turned to her own family for practical and spiritual support during her first confinement. The youngest of five surviving sons and daughters, and of ‘tender age’ when her father, Sir Richard Newport, died in 1570, Magdalen Herbert maintained close relations with her mother and siblings after her marriage.⁵ She had probably been married for less than a year and was no more than sixteen or seventeen years of age when she conceived and bore her first child.⁶ Her husband, Richard, the eldest son of Edward Herbert of Montgomery and Elizabeth Price of Newtown, was probably some ten years older.⁷ It is unlikely that Richard Herbert witnessed the birth of his son. With the exception of the occasional male doctor, childbirth, contemporary accounts emphasize, was women’s work, overseen by an experienced midwife and witnessed and supported by female friends and relations.⁸

¹ Herbert does not supply the date of his birth but his age is specified in an inquisition post mortem taken following his father’s death. TNA, C 142/249/62, Chancery Inquisitions Post Mortem. Mario M. Rossi, ‘The Birth Date of Lord Herbert of Cherbury’, Modern Language Notes 63, no. 2 (1948): 144.
² Life, p. 11.
³ Richard Newport (by 1511–1570), HP 1509–1558 online.
⁵ TNA, PCC Wills, PROB 11/53/456, Will of Sir Richard Newport, 11 September 1570.
⁷ ‘Richard Herbert I (c.1557–1596)’, HP 1558–1603 online.
⁸ Cressy, Birth, Marriage and Death, pp. 55–9.
The safe delivery of a son to continue the Herbert line and ensure the orderly descent of property would have been welcome news to both families. Celebration typically began in the birthing chamber and continued with post-natal visits, gift-giving, and a christening feast for friends and family. Unless ill and considered unlikely to live, babies were received into the Church of England on the Sunday or Holy Day immediately after their birth. Christenings were treated as social as well spiritual events and the selection of godparents offered an opportunity to reaffirm or create kinship and patronage ties.¹⁹ We know that Lady Newport acted as Herbert’s godmother because she named him as one of her godsons in her will.¹⁰ It is likely that his paternal grandfather, Edward Herbert, stood as one of his godfathers. Herbert indicates in his autobiography that he was baptized by Ralph Shawe, perpetual vicar of St Andrew’s Church, Wroxeter.¹¹ The Newports enjoyed a close association with the church, which housed the magnificent alabaster tomb-chests and effigies Herbert’s grandmother had commissioned to provide a perpetual memorial to the piety, wealth, and power of her husband, Sir Richard Newport, and her parents, Sir Thomas and Lady Bromley.¹² The church’s post-Reformation whitewashed walls and plain wooden reredos painted with the Lord’s Prayer, Ten Commandments, and the Creed bore clear witness to the austere Calvinism imposed by the state and probably endorsed more enthusiastically by the Newports than the Herberts, who, at least as late as the 1570s, were thought to remain covert Catholics and supporters of Mary, Queen of Scots.¹³

It was rare for gentlewomen to breastfeed and look after their own babies or to be closely involved in the daily care and supervision of their children. Herbert includes few anecdotes about his birth and infancy in his autobiography but his sparse account confirms that he was brought up by nurses.¹⁴ More unusually, he records that he lived in the household of Lady Newport until he was sent away to school at the age of nine.¹⁵ He provides no explanation for the separation from his parents but may have been entrusted to the care of his grandmother because he suffered from febrile convulsions. He claims that severe ear infections delayed the development of his speech and that he was not taught to read until he was seven years old and considered free of the epilepsy suffered by his ancestors.¹⁶ It was not uncommon for children to live with other family members, but when the physical separation was combined with the privileged position he enjoyed as eldest son it was perhaps inevitable that it would create distance, suspicion, and envy between

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¹⁹ Ibid., p. 156.
¹⁰ TNA, PCC Wills, PROB/11/93/149, Will of Dame Margaret Newport, 20 March 1593.
¹¹ Herbert, Life, p. 16. Ralph or Randolph Shaw served at Wroxeter c.1563–1605.
¹⁴ Life, p. 11. ¹⁵ Ibid. ¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 11, 14.
Herbert and his siblings.¹⁷ Family correspondence suggests that his relationship with his mother was not easy and that he never developed the familiarity and generosity with his brothers and sisters that they displayed towards each other.¹⁸ His autobiographical presentation of his grandmother is noticeably more sympathetic than that of his mother and it is clear that Lady Newport played a key role in shaping his character, behaviour, and interests.¹⁹

Gentry families relied heavily upon household breeding to train children for the political power, social authority, and family responsibilities they exercised in adulthood.²⁰ The normative cultural codes of gentility were handed down carefully from generation to generation and only responded slowly to wider political and social changes. Their children learned appropriate gender, class, and religious values through observation and instruction from the nursery onwards.²¹ Gentlemen were expected to display courage and physical strength in the face of danger, insult, or suffering, exhibit integrity, prudence, and loyalty in their personal and public lives, and possess the self-control and self-reliance needed to occupy political office and exercise military command.²² As boys, they were encouraged to be physically active and adventurous and to learn to conquer fear and pain but, like their sisters, they were also taught obedience, temperance, and truthfulness, and were expected to demonstrate piety, deference to their parents and superiors, and good manners in their dealings with others.²³ In recording his life and character, Herbert emphasizes his abhorrence of lying and deceit from childhood but admits to struggling to control his temper, ‘being subject ever to Choller and Passion more then I ought’ and inclined to speak his mind freely.²⁴

Although Eyton Hall was situated on a ridge overlooking the Severn Valley, in easy reach of fields, woodlands, and river, it does not appear that significant emphasis was placed upon developing Herbert’s physical hardihood. He was an enthusiastic horseman throughout his life, and must have learned to ride at a young age, but makes no claim for athleticism, only telling us that he never found time to learn to dance and that he abandoned learning to swim for fear of drowning.²⁵

It is often assumed that elite masculine values were transmitted from father to son but, in reality, some noble and gentry sons barely saw their fathers and female relations assumed a significant role in the development of masculine identity.²⁶

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 8–11. Three sisters and six brothers were born over the following fifteen years. See Table 1.
¹⁸ For example, TNA, PRO 30/53/10, f. 5, Herbert Papers, Magdalen Herbert to Herbert, 12 May 1615; Epistolary Curiosities, p. 6.
²¹ Connell, Gender, p. 4. ²² Kelso, Doctrine of the English Gentleman, p. 16.