

Katherine Suffolk, The Puritan Duchess

©Michael A. G. Haykin* email: mhaykin@sbts.edu

** Dr. Haykin is professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and the Director of the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies. He was born in England of Irish and Kurdish parents. He has authored numerous books and articles.*



In Evelyn Read's (1901–1991) fine study of Katherine Willoughby (1519–1580), the Duchess of Suffolk, published in the early 1960s, Read summed up her life thus:

[She] was born a Catholic and became a convinced and zealous Puritan; she was born to a sheltered and secure life and, by her own honesty and outspokenness, she courted persecution and lived in danger. She was a woman of wit and beauty and charm, and of great integrity. Her life would not be regarded as important in the development of the politics and affairs of England, but at least one great statesman cherished her friendship,¹ and many whose thinking and writing and preaching were basic to the Protestant Reformation owed much to her generosity and religious zeal and to the stimulus of her eager mind.²

More recently, British historian Alec Ryrie has described Katherine Willoughby as an “evangelical firebrand” and perhaps “the most aggressive of the reformers” within the royal circle around Henry VIII.³ In her own day, a

¹ This was William Cecil (1520–1598), Lord Burghley, the chief advisor of Elizabeth I for most of her reign.

² Evelyn Read, *My Lady Suffolk: A Portrait of Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), [7].

³ Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54–55, 194–195.

hostile Spanish Roman Catholic source described her as “one of the worst heretics in England” and one who had “studied at Geneva.”⁴

Early years and marriage to Charles Brandon

As Evelyn Read noted, though, she did not start off that way. Katherine Willoughby’s life began in a staunch Roman Catholic environment. Her father, Lord William Willoughby (1482–1526), maintained to the end of his days a “belief in the efficacy of the mass, the existence of purgatory, and the importance of good works.”⁵ He had married an ardent Spanish Roman Catholic by the name of Doña Maria Sarmiento de Salinas (c.1490–1539), who was the confidante and favourite lady-in-waiting of Queen Katherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII (1491–1547). Maria probably named her only daughter after the Queen. Moreover, Katherine Willoughby’s godfather was Stephen Gardiner (c.1483–1555), later Bishop of Winchester, also an ardent Roman Catholic.⁶

Katherine’s father died when she was seven years old, and she inherited a significant amount of land and money upon his death. Because her mother spent most of her time at court as the queen’s lady-in-waiting, Katherine was placed in 1528 as a ward in the care of Charles Brandon (1484–1545), the 1st Duke of Suffolk and a close friend of Henry VIII, and his wife Mary Tudor (1496–1533), Henry VIII’s sister.⁷ Here, in Brandon’s home, she would have learned to read and write, and also been schooled to some degree in Latin and Greek.⁸ Charles and Mary had been married in 1515, and among their children was Frances Brandon (1517–1559), the mother of Lady Jane Grey. The Duke and Duchess of Suffolk were also conservative Roman Catholics, like Katherine’s parents.⁹

Sadly Mary Tudor died in June of 1533. Ten weeks later Charles Brandon married his ward, Katherine Willoughby, who was only fourteen. He was 49! This shocks us, but neither the difference in age nor the alacrity with which he wed after Mary’s death were necessarily regarded as unusual in that day.¹⁰ Eustace Chapuys (c.1490–1556), however, the Spanish ambassador to the

⁴ “Simancas: September 1574,” in *Calendar of State Papers, Spain (Simancas)*, Volume 2, 1568–1579, ed. Martin A. S. Hume (London, 1894), 484–485 (*British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/simancas/vol2/pp484-485>; accessed July 2, 2017).

⁵ Megan Spruell, “‘A Simple Zeal and Earnest Love to the Truth’: The Religious Journeys of Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Katherine Parr, Queen of England” (MA thesis, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2013), 12.

⁶ Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 22–23.

⁷ Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 26–28.

⁸ Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 29–30.

⁹ Spruell, “A Simple Zeal and Earnest Love to the Truth,” 15–16.

¹⁰ Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 33.

English court, did regard it as a “novelty,” as he put it in a report to Charles V (1500–1558), the king of Spain.¹¹

Throughout the 1530s, despite the massive religious changes that were taking place in England, Katherine Willoughby, now Katherine Brandon and the Duchess of Suffolk, remained a staunch Roman Catholic.¹² This is evident from such things as: her friendship with Katherine of Aragon’s daughter, the future Mary I (1516–1558); her close relationship with her conservative Catholic mother; and even small things like using saints’ days to date her letters.¹³ And yet it would have been during this decade at the court of Henry VIII that she first heard the preaching of Hugh Latimer (c. 1485–1555), rightly described by Evelyn Read as “one of the greatest and most powerful exponents of religious reform in sixteenth-century England.”¹⁴

During the 1530s Katherine also had two sons: Henry (1535–1551), named after the king, Henry VIII, who was his godfather, and Charles (1538–1551), named after his father. Further indication of her status within the royal court is the fact that when Henry VIII was preparing to marry his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves (1515–1557) in 1539, Katherine was asked to meet Anne at Dover and escort her to London.¹⁵ Katherine subsequently became one of Anne’s ladies-in-waiting. This only lasted a few months though, as Henry had the marriage annulled in the summer of 1540.

Almost immediately after the annulment, Henry married Katherine Howard (c. 1523–1542), his fifth wife, who was the first cousin of Anne Boleyn and also the niece of the zealous Roman Catholic Thomas Howard (1473–1554), the 3rd Duke of Norfolk. But Katherine Howard lost her crown and her head when she was found guilty of adultery in 1542. She was succeeded by the evangelical Katherine Parr (1512–1548) in 1543, Henry’s sixth and final wife, who was a close friend of Katherine Brandon, and asked Katherine to return to court as one of her ladies-in-waiting. When Henry married Katherine Parr in a small ceremony at Hampton Court, Katherine Brandon was one of only eighteen people present, again indicative of her standing at the court.¹⁶

Katherine’s conversion

Now, when was Katherine Brandon converted to evangelical convictions? Or to put it as Paul Zahl does: “what inward springs and development” turned this brilliant woman into an “unquenchable, irrefutable” adherent of the

¹¹ Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 33.

¹² David Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love: The Extraordinary Life of Katherine Willoughby, Lady-in-Waiting to the Tudors* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2015), 54.

¹³ Spruell, “A Simple Zeal and Earnest Love to the Truth,” 30–36, 61–63.

¹⁴ Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 37–38.

¹⁵ Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love*, 54.

¹⁶ Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 48.

Reformation?¹⁷ This is not at all easy to determine. Megan Spruell, in a 2013 thesis, has argued that it was her appointment as a lady-in-waiting within Katherine Parr's household in 1543 that was the key factor in her embracing evangelical convictions.¹⁸ Spruell itemizes three key elements in Katherine Parr's household that led directly to Katherine's conversion to evangelical views:

1. First, as a member of the queen's household, Katherine Brandon was expected to attend sermons on a daily basis in which evangelical beliefs, such as the authority of Scripture, were expounded by evangelical preachers.
2. Katherine Parr also initiated discussions of religious ideas that would have been an integral part of Katherine Brandon's daily life in the queen's service.
3. Then, Katherine Parr ordered that copies of a book she had written, *Prayers or Medytacions* (1545), a work in which she included evangelical teachings about salvation, be given to every woman in her household so that it could be used as a resource in discussing controversial issues of the day.¹⁹

By the mid-1540s, we know that Katherine believed that Scripture was the supreme guide to the Christian Faith. She had acquired a copy of William Tyndale's New Testament and begun to be openly critical of Roman Catholicism.²⁰ Her embrace of evangelical convictions can be seen in such small things as no longer using saints' days to date her letters.²¹ After her husband Charles Brandon died in August of 1545, Katherine became more open in her commitment to evangelical views. By the late 1540s she had rejected the concept of transubstantiation and that we can be saved by faith and works.²² And in the late 1550s she came to embrace the doctrines of predestination and election.²³

¹⁷ Paul F. M. Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2001), 76. Zahl devotes a chapter of this book to Katherine Willoughby: *Five Women of the Reformation*, 75–91.

¹⁸ Spruell, "A Simple Zeal and Earnest Love to the Truth," 65. See also Baldwin, *Henry VIII's Last Love*, 60–62.

¹⁹ Spruell, "A Simple Zeal and Earnest Love to the Truth," 65–66.

²⁰ Baldwin, *Henry VIII's Last Love*, 57; Spruell, "A Simple Zeal and Earnest Love to the Truth," 66.

²¹ Baldwin, *Henry VIII's Last Love*, 57.

²² Baldwin, *Henry VIII's Last Love*, 57.

²³ Baldwin, *Henry VIII's Last Love*, 57; Laura Lunger Knoppers, "Reviews: Melissa Franklin Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England*:"

As one of the wealthiest women in England, she began to use her wealth to support the cause of reform. In Lincolnshire, for example, she did all she could to ensure that every parish church had a copy of the Bible.²⁴ When the great German reformer Martin Bucer (1491–1551) came to Cambridge as Regius Professor of Divinity in 1549, Katherine befriended him as she had moved to Cambridge to be close to her two sons who had gone there to study at St. John’s College.²⁵ She also served as the patron of various leading evangelical preachers and reformers, of whom the chief was Hugh Latimer, who had “the greatest influence on Katherine’s religious thinking” and seems to have been something of a spiritual mentor to Katherine.²⁶

Textual evidence of her faith

Sadly, in 1551, there was an outbreak in England of what has been called the “sweating sickness,” which took the lives of both of Katherine’s sons. There had been other such outbreaks in England in 1485, 1502, 1507, and 1528. Those afflicted with this disease first experienced a cold shivery stage attended by dizziness, headache and various pains in the neck, shoulders and limbs along with fatigue. All of this was shortly followed by an intense sweating stage, which was marked by delirium, rapidity of pulse, palpitations, and thirst. The final stage was complete exhaustion and collapse or sometimes an irresistible urge to sleep. If a person survived the first twenty-four hours, they usually lived.²⁷

When cases of this disease appeared in Cambridge in July of 1551, Katherine had her sons taken north to a family home in Buckden, Cambridgeshire, but it was too late as both of the young men had been infected and they died within minutes of each other. Their tutor, Thomas Wilson (c.1525–1581), famous for his oft-reprinted work *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), noted understandably that their mother did take “their death most greuously [*sic*].”²⁸ The Italian Reformed theologian Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562), who had come to teach at Oxford in 1547, noted of the elder son,

Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire’s Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580,” Fides et historia, 41 no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2009), 97.

²⁴ Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love*, 57.

²⁵ Georgina Bertie, *Five Generations of a Loyal House* (London: Rivingtons, 1845), I, 8, n.1; Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love*, 97–98.

²⁶ Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love*, 60.

²⁷ Susan Abernethy, “The English Sweating Sickness” (*The Freelance History Writer*, August 25, 2012; <https://thefreelancehistorywriter.com/2012/08/25/the-english-sweating-sickness/>).

²⁸ *Wilson’s Art of Rhetorique*, ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 66. See also his remembrance of the two boys in *Wilson’s Art of Rhetorique*, ed. Mair, 14–17, 67–69, and the details of their lives in Thomas Wilson, *Vita et obitus duorum Fratrum Suffolcinsium Henrici et Caroli Brandoni* (London, 1551).

Henry, that “he had made such progress in learning, godliness, and piety, as to be the admiration of every one.”²⁹

Katherine’s textual response is the following letter, which was written to her friend William Cecil in September 1551 from her main home in Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire:

I give God thanks, good Master Cecil, for all his benefits which it hath pleased Him to heap upon me; and truly I take this last (and to the first sight, most sharp and bitter) punishment not for the least of His benefits; inasmuch, as I have never been so well taught by any other before to know His power, His love, and mercy, my own weakness, and that wretched state that without Him I should endure here. And to ascertain you that I have received great comfort in Him, I would gladly do it by talk and sight of you; but as I must confess myself no better than flesh, so I am not well able with quiet to behold my poor friends, without some part of those *veyl drages* [vile dregs] of Adam, to seem sorry for that whereof I know I rather ought to rejoice. . . . So with many thanks for your lasting friendship, I betake you to Him that better can, and I trust, will, govern you to His glory and your best contentation.³⁰ From Grimsthorpe, this present Monday.

Your poor but assured friend,

K. Suffoulk.³¹

This is a fascinating letter in so many ways. It reveals Katherine’s struggle with hiding her deep grief in the presence of her friends, but also her awareness that in the midst of this great sorrow her God is a good God. And he was using this sorrow to teach her about “His power, His love, and mercy,” as well as her own weakness and that not to know this God is to be in a truly “wretched state.” Thus, she can begin the letter with a line of praise: “I give God thanks, good Master Cecil, for all his benefits which it hath pleased Him to heap upon me.”

Marriage to Richard Bertie and exile

Katherine would also have been able to praise God for a man named Richard Bertie (c. 1517–1582), who had joined her household in the late 1540s. Richard had been educated at Oxford and was employed as Katherine’s “gentleman usher,” that is, a trusted official who would walk ahead of her in ceremonial

²⁹ Cited Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love*, 103.

³⁰ That is, satisfaction.

³¹ Cited in Bertie, *Five Generations of a Loyal House*, I, 11. See the reflection on this letter in Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 79–80. Zahl notes that this letter is one of the most important texts for understanding Katherine’s theology (*Five Women of the Reformation*, 84).

processions and be her escort at all official functions of the court. He also handled her business affairs, which were extensive owing to her significant lands and properties.³² He spoke French, Italian, and Latin fluently, and he was decidedly evangelical. The Bishop of Lincoln, for instance, described Bertie as a man who was “earnest in religion.”³³ By 1552 he and the Duchess were firmly in love. They were married by Hugh Latimer either in the summer of 1552, or at the latest, the beginning of 1553.³⁴

With the accession of Mary to the throne in 1553, however, Katherine was in danger of being incarcerated or being subjected to religious demands that would violate her conscience. Richard was commanded to appear before Stephen Gardiner, who was hoping to force the couple to swear allegiance to the Roman Catholic faith. But Richard told him that his wife abhorred the mass and that she would be a false Christian to profess something she did not believe. As he told Gardiner, “To force a confession of religion by mouth contrarie to that in the heart, worketh damnation where salvation is pretended.”³⁵ Through this exchange with Gardiner, it became clear to Katherine and Richard that they needed to quit England and flee to the European continent.³⁶ It is noteworthy that Katherine was prepared to relinquish all of her lands and wealth, aristocratic standing and position, for the sake of her evangelical faith.

The next few years had numerous anxious moments as they made their way down the Rhine to Wesel and then Weinheim in Germany. Eventually they received an invite to Poland, where Protestantism was flourishing at the time. On the advice of the Reformer Jan Łaski (1499–1560), who was a friend of Martin Bucer, Sigismund II (1520–1572), the king of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, not only gave Katherine and Richard a place of safe refuge but also the opportunity to be involved in advancing the reform of the church. Sigismund needed a Protestant governor to administer the Polish province of Samogitia, which was largely Protestant, and is now one of the ethnographic regions of modern-day Lithuania.³⁷ So he enlisted Richard. For a year, 1558,

³² Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 89–90; Baldwin, *Henry VIII's Last Love*, 106.

³³ “Bertie, Richard (1517–82), of Grimsthorpe and Stamford, Lincs.” (*The History of Parliament: Member Biographies*; <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/bertie-richard-1517-82>; accessed June 30, 2017).

³⁴ Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 92; Baldwin, *Henry VIII's Last Love*, 107; Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 81.

³⁵ Cited Bertie, *Five Generations of a Loyal House*, 18. For other details of their discussion, see Bertie, *Five Generations of a Loyal House*, 15–19.

³⁶ For details of their escape from England and their time on the continent, see Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 101–129; Baldwin, *Henry VIII's Last Love*, 127–168. See also the brief summary in Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 81–83,

³⁷ Samogitia had been the last pagan area of Europe.

he and Katherine spent their last year in exile administering this Baltic province for the King of Poland.

Further textual evidence of Katherine's faith

Mary died in 1558 and it was now safe to return to England. As soon as Katherine heard that Elizabeth had become queen she wrote the following letter from Samogitia. The text is another key window into her worldview.

The almighty and ever-living God so endue your Majesty with his Spirit, that it may be said of you, as of his prophet David, "He hath found one even after his own heart."³⁸ Your Majesty, I know, well knoweth how, most naturally, all creatures embrace liberty and fly servitude, but man most specially, because God, of his fore-conceived kindness, created him thereunto; and, fallen from it, freed him again. Wherefore so much the more lively is not only the desire, but the sense of it, in mankind, than in brute creatures, as the sharpness of reason exceedeth the dulness of unreasonableness. But yet then he feeleth it most at heart, when the liberty or freedom of conscience by unlooked fortune falleth out, even as sudden misfortune, after great sorrow, freezeth the heart; and as health is most delectably felt after extreme sickness, so is the sense most inward in changes chiefly when oppression or deliverance of conscience showeth itself. And though such alterations follow commonly the people of God, not by chance, but by his providence, and albeit He in all his works is good, and his works profitable to those that be his; yet as his wrath and chastisement giveth just matter of mourning, so must his mercy and cheerful countenance fill our souls with gladness. Wherefore now is our season, if ever anywhere, of rejoicing, and to say, after Zachary, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,"³⁹ which hath visited and delivered your Majesty, and by you us, His and your miserable and afflicted subjects. For if the Israelites might joy in their Deborah,⁴⁰ how much we English in our Elizabeth that deliverance of our thrall'd conscience. Then first your Majesty hath great cause to praise God that it pleased Him to appoint you the mean whereby He showeth out this his great mercy over that land; and we generally ought to praise, thank, and honour Him in you, and you in Him, with an unfeigned love and obedience all the days of our lives. It is comfort enough to all your subjects, that you do the will of Him that hath raised you up, spite of His and your enemies; but unto the heavy hearts of your persecuted subjects, these tidings distil

³⁸ Cf. 1 Samuel 13:14.

³⁹ Luke 1:68.

⁴⁰ See Judges 4–5.

like the sweet dew of Hermon⁴¹; and though I have my portion of this gladness equal with the rest, yet I cannot choose but increase it with the remembrance of your gracious good will towards me in times past, and with hope, continuance of the same in time to come; only I greedily wait and pray to the Almighty to consummate this consolation, giving me a prosperous journey once again presently to see your Majesty, to rejoice together with my countryfolks, and to sing a song to the Lord in my native land. God for his mercy grant it, and to your Majesty long life, with safe government, to his glory, your honour, and subjects comfort.

From Crossen, in Sanogelia,⁴² the 25th of January.

Your Majesty's

Most humble, loving, and obedient subject,

K. Suffoulk.⁴³

Three key aspects of this important letter need to be noted. First, notice the way that Katherine described God:

- He is the “almighty and ever-living God”;
- He is the creator of humanity and their liberator;
- He is the One who rules this world by his providence, not chance, and who raises up rulers like Elizabeth;⁴⁴
- He is the God who “in all his works is good”;
- He is One who shows mercy to individuals and to nations;
- But to the wicked He is a God of wrath;
- He is a prayer-hearing God;
- And because of all these things, he is a God to be praised, thanked, and glorified.

Then, Katherine assumed that men and women have been created in such a way that their hearts long for freedom—in modern parlance, it is in their DNA. The reign of the Roman Catholic Mary I had been one of tyranny in which the English had been “persecuted” and their consciences forced into bondage, “our thrall'd conscience,” as Katherine put it. For her, liberty is an affair of the heart ultimately: “he feeleth it most at heart, when the liberty or freedom of conscience by unlooked fortune falleth out... so is the sense most inward in changes chiefly when oppression or deliverance of conscience showeth itself.”

⁴¹ See Psalm 133:3.

⁴² Now Samogitia, which is an area of Lithuania today.

⁴³ In Bertie, *Five Generations of a Loyal House*, 34–35.

⁴⁴ Katherine had an “extremely high doctrine of providence”; for her, “God’s providence is all. He alone has free will” (Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 85–86).

Finally, Katherine was convinced that God had raised Elizabeth up to bring deliverance to the English people, and if Israel “might joy in their Deborah,” the biblical judge who delivered the Israelites from the bondage of the Canaanite king Jabin, “how much we English in our Elizabeth.” The comparison of Elizabeth with Deborah was one commonly made at the time – hence, the need for English men and women to pray for Elizabeth to be empowered by the Spirit of God and be given “long life, with safe government.”

The return to England

Katherine and Richard travelled back to England in the late spring or summer of 1559. Like many of those who came to be called Puritans, however, she was ultimately disappointed by the Queen’s religious policy.⁴⁵ While Elizabeth shared many of their theological convictions, she insisted that she was the head of the church and was tolerant of worship practices in the church that reminded the Puritans of medieval Catholicism.

Katherine’s disappointment can be seen in a letter she wrote to William Cecil on March 4, 1559, which is described by Paul Zahl as “a classic.”⁴⁶ The heart of the letter ran as follows:

...for the love I bear you I cannot forbear to write... and if it shall please you to heed a simple woman’s mind. Undoubtedly the greatest wisdom is not to be too wise, which, of all others, you should by experience chieflyest know. For if there were anything whereby that good duke, your old master,⁴⁷ deserved and felt the heavy stroke of God, what is there else whereof men may accuse him but only that when God had placed him to set forth His glory (which yet of himself he was always ready to do) but being still plucked by the sleeve of [by] worldly friends, for this worldly respect or that, in fine gave over his hot zeal to set forth God’s true religion as he had most nobly begun, and turning him to follow such worldly devices, you can as well as I tell what came of it: the duke lost all that he sought to keep, with his head to boot...

Wherefore I am forced to say with the prophet Elie, “How long halt ye between two opinions?”⁴⁸ ...If the Mass be good, tarry not to follow it nor take from it no part of that honour which the last queen, with her notable stoutness, brought it to and left in (wherein she deserved immortal praise seeing she was so persuaded that it was good) but if you be not so persuaded, alas, who should move the

⁴⁵ See Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love*, 165–167.

⁴⁶ Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 83. Zahl regards this text as being a vital text for understanding Katherine’s theology: *Five Women of the Reformation*, 84–85.

⁴⁷ Edward Seymour (1500–1552), the Duke of Somerset.

⁴⁸ 1 Kings 18:21.

Queen's Majesty to honour it with her presence, or any of her counsellors? ...To build surely is first to lay the sure cornerstone, today and not tomorrow; there is no exception by man's law that may serve against God's. ...Christ... hath left His Gospel behind Him a rule sufficient and only to be followed. Thus write I after my old manner, which if I persuade you, take it as thankfully and friendly as I mean it; then I will say to you as my father Latimer was wont to say to me, "I will be bold to write to you another time as I hear and what I think; and if not I shall hold my peace and pray God amend it to Him." With my hearty prayer that He will so assist you with His grace that you may the first and only seek Him as His eldest and chosen vessel.⁴⁹

Here we see again the depth of Katherine's evangelical convictions:

- "Hot zeal to set forth God's true religion" is recommended by means of the negative example of Edward Seymour (1500–1552), the 1st Duke of Somerset, who was Lord Protector during the early years of the reign of Edward VI (1537–1553), and, though an evangelical, an inept ruler;
- She takes the show-down between Elijah and the prophets of Baal to be a model in some ways for her day: there are only two options—"God's true religion" or that religion centred on the Mass;
- There is one sure foundation for the Christian Faith: "Christ... hath left His Gospel behind Him a rule sufficient and only to be followed"—Katherine "wanted a Bible-led and Bible-organized church" and it is therefore "not anachronistic to understand Katherine as a Puritan"⁵⁰
- There is an urgency to building the proper foundations and she disapproved of caution in reforming the church: "To build surely is first to lay the sure cornerstone, *today and not tomorrow*"⁵¹
- Finally, note the reference to Hugh Latimer: "my father," that is, "my spiritual father"

Final days

In the final twenty years of her life, Katherine was frustrated at the Elizabethan settlement. Well has Paul Zahl described her as "a frustrated Puritan" during this period of her life and spoken of her "insistent impatience with Elizabeth"

⁴⁹ In Read, *My Lady Suffolk*, 133–135. Part of this letter can also be found in Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 114–116.

⁵⁰ Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 87.

⁵¹ Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 87, 88.

and her “snail’s pace in the Reformation of the Church.”⁵² This impatience began with the issue of reforming the Church, but overflowed into more personal matters. She long petitioned Elizabeth to give her husband the title of Duke, but all to no avail. A number of her final letters relate to this worldly matter and Katherine’s frustration that Elizabeth would not listen to her. It is evident that Elizabeth had an antipathy towards Katherine. Why? At this remove in time, we cannot say for certain. Zahl comments that if Katherine had said “the sky is blue, Elizabeth would have said, no it is red!”⁵³

When Katherine died in 1580, her husband Richard had a sculptor by the name of Thomas Goodlord erect a huge memorial to his wife in the parish church of St. James, Spilsby, which also became a memorial to him as well, when he died two years later. On the back of the memorial, which is quite visible to anyone in the sanctuary, are six panels of texts, five in Latin and one in English. One of them, in Latin, expresses Katherine and Richard’s hope:

We know that our Redeemer lives, and we believe that we shall rise again out of the dust and though after our skin worms destroy our bodies, yet shall we see God in our flesh, and not another.

⁵² Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 76, 83, 88–89.

⁵³ Zahl, *Five Women of the Reformation*, 89.