

Summary

The present book concentrates on the analysis of selected Puritan ego-documents: *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618–1654*, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616–1683*, *The Life of Adam Martindale, Autobiography* and *Diary of Henry Newcome, Autobiography* authored by Joseph Lister, *The Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft of Ashover, 1627–1706* and *The Diary of Isaac Archer, 1641–1700*. The key criterion that informed the selection of these primary sources was that all texts were written by men who became fathers at some stage of their lives and devoted a significant part of their works to describing this experience. The selection stage of the source material was also based on social criteria. The focus was on authors representing the middling sort of people in England in the Stuart era. Three of them, Wallington, Wheatcroft and Lister, were a wealthy artisan, village handyman, and a farmer respectively. The remaining four were non-conformist priests. The most important feature connecting selected source texts is the importance attached by their authors to spiritual matters. Each of them experienced his religiosity in an individual way, but all were convinced of the crucial role of divine providence in their own lives and the lives of their families.

The book addresses the question of how emotional responses to various aspects of fatherhood were expressed in Puritan self-writing and how this expression was affected by the authors' religious formation. The topic is approached from the constructivist standpoint in which Barbara Rosenwein's concept of emotional communities proved to be an extremely effective analytical tool. Rosenwein uses the term "emotional community" to describe a social group that assesses and expresses emotions in a particular way. In this sense, any community with the same interests and goals will constitute an "emotional community", identifying with a certain cultural code of perception, behavior and expression.

At the first stage of this project a database of all mentions of autobiographers' offspring was created. The underlying assumption that informed the analysis of

this database was that the appearance of each such entry was conditioned by some emotional experience related to the presented situation. The qualitative analysis of collected material focused on the question of the relationship between the verbalization of emotional experience of fatherhood and the authors' membership of the Puritan emotional community.

The book comprises an introductory chapter, three main chapters divided into sections, and a chapter concluding the thesis. The first chapter, titled *Becoming a Father – Feelings and Emotions on the Threshold of Fatherhood*, is an attempt to prove the significance of the emotional code available to the authors of the analyzed texts in verbalizing their feelings about their wives' pregnancies and childbirths. The second chapter, titled *Experiencing Everyday Fatherhood*, follows the lifecycle of early modern fathers, from the time they assisted their wives in childcare, through the period of schooling and religious education at home, to witnessing the children's first steps on the labour market and in married life. The third chapter, *The Hardest Aspects of Fatherhood – Accidents, Illnesses, Death*, is dedicated to the exploration of the ways in which the emotions of anxiety, fear, grief, and suffering were felt and expressed. The final chapter summarizes and concludes the main points of the book. It considers the pivotal influence of the selected writers' membership of Puritan emotional community on their verbal communication of feelings, emotions and attitudes related to their roles as fathers.

The authors of all the texts analyzed in this book perceived their fatherhood as a religious experience in which God's providence was pervading and governing all aspects of their existence, from the most mundane worries of child upbringing to serious matters of their offspring's life and death. The formulas and images they used are conventional in nature – they are deeply embedded in Biblical phraseology and religious lexis conditioned by Puritan preaching practices in the period. Discussed ego-documents contain numerous references to God's mercy, God's will, God's grace, human sinful condition, salvation, and godly conduct. Characteristically, the authors were consistent in their use of religious vocabulary to verbalize their joy and anxiety, emotions of positive as well as negative valence. Even the most difficult ones, manifested by apathy, silence or, on the contrary, nervous hyperactivity, were experienced in relation to God and verbalized in the language of faith. Similarities between the texts under consideration, revealed in the discursive treatment of the experience of fatherhood, indicate the authors' membership of an emotional community of earnest Protestants. Their Puritan identity clearly manifested itself in the language in which they narrated their lives.