

---

## Coventry

John Davenport was born in April 1597 in Coventry, England, and baptized on the ninth of that month in Holy Trinity Church by the parish vicar, Richard Eaton. Coventry had been the major urban center of the English Midlands in the late medieval period and a center of provincial trade routes. By the time of Davenport's birth the city was in decline, though still significant.<sup>1</sup> Today, visitors of the city are drawn to the preserved ruins of the cathedral of St. Michael's, destroyed by incendiary bombs in a German air attack in 1940, and to the modern cathedral next to it, which was built after the war. But walking the streets, one is still able to find remnants of the city in which John Davenport spent his first seventeen years. St. Mary's Guildhall, where his uncle Christopher and his father, Henry, were elected mayor, still stands. Holy Trinity Church is still a place of worship four hundred years after John was baptized there. A walk along Spon Street reminds the modern visitor of the physical appearance of the shops and housing of the early modern period. It offers a useful supplement to the archival records scholars explore as they seek to understand John Davenport's experiences in the city and how they prepared him for his future.

Coventry is in the northeastern part of the county of Warwick. It was described in Davenport's time as "sweetly situated on a hill" on a bend of the River Sherborne, which flows through the city.<sup>2</sup> Along with a pair of brooks and streams the Sherborne formed a system of waterways that powered mills and provided water for the town residents.<sup>3</sup> The surrounding countryside had enough woodlands to fill some of the city's needs for fuel and building timber.<sup>4</sup> One of the notable features of the city in Davenport's time was the imposing wall that encompassed the community.<sup>5</sup> A visitor in 1639 called