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**THE WORKS OF MARY BIRKETT CARD  
1774-1817**

**ORIGINALLY COLLECTED  
BY HER SON NATHANIEL CARD  
IN 1834**

**AN EDITED TRANSCRIPTION  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO HER LIFE AND WORKS  
IN TWO VOLUMES**

**BY**

**JOSEPHINE TEAKLE**

**A thesis submitted to  
The University of Gloucestershire  
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities**

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## ABSTRACT

### THE WORKS OF MARY BIRKETT CARD (1774-1817), ORIGINALLY COLLECTED BY HER SON NATHANIEL CARD IN 1834: AN EDITED TRANSCRIPTION WITH AN INTRODUCTON TO HER LIFE AND WORKS

This thesis makes available the writings of Mary Birkett Card, a Dublin Quaker, as collected by her son Nathaniel Card in 1834. It provides an annotated transcription of the manuscript collection, with textual and editorial notes, and an introduction recovering her life within her cultural community. The writings consist of a spiritual autobiography, 43 religious letters, other prose pieces and over 220 poems. Two poems were published in her lifetime: *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* (1792) and *Lines to the Memory of our Late Esteemed and Justly Valued Friend Joseph Williams* (1807).

The introduction is in three parts. Part 1 offers a biographical outline and sets Mary Birkett Card's childhood poems in the context of the Quaker community in which she grew up. Part 2 explores her autobiography, questioning concepts of a separate female autobiographical tradition. It then investigates her encounter with 'deist' thought, and later conflicts, after her marriage. These concern money (seeking to reconcile the spiritual and material) and issues of language and gender (a desire for 'a pure language', linked to constraints upon women's speech). Part 3 contrasts her 1790s verse with her later poems, and epistles, arguing that embedded within these works as a whole lies a struggle with her literary imagination.

Throughout, the writings are set within the context of contemporary literary forms in poetry, Quaker writing and women's writing. They are considered in relation to now current critical debates - on public and private spheres, autobiography, abolitionist verse, women's intimate friendships, domesticity, philanthropy and sensibility. It is shown that Mary Birkett Card's literary creativity was intimately connected with her Quakerism, and, moreover, with attempts to negotiate an ideal of Quaker womanhood. One important aspect is the challenge her work poses to assumptions, still generally prevalent, about Quaker women's far greater autonomy within marriage in comparison to women in society at large.

## **DECLARATION**

**This Thesis is the product of my own work. I declare that it is not being submitted for a comparable academic award at any other institution. It incorporates and elaborates on some work included in my BA Dissertation, 'Mary Birkett: A Feminine Perspective in the 1790s' (Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, 1994). I also state that the views expressed within this Thesis are those of the author, and not of the University of Gloucestershire.**

**I declare that this Thesis is available for photocopying, reference purposes and Inter-Library Loan. However, no part of the writings of Mary Birkett Card may be reproduced or stored in an information retrieval system, other than short extracts for the purpose of research, academic study and review, without the express permission of the copyright holder, my mother Mary Morris, via myself.**

## **DEDICATION**

**This Thesis is dedicated to my mother, Mary Morris, whose choice of the writings of Mary Birkett Card from amongst the items left on the death of my great-aunts, Edith and Mary Beakbane, in 1955, enabled them to be preserved.**



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Gathering the information for this project has taken me on several exciting and enjoyable journeys – to Dublin and other places in Ireland like the (originally) Quaker village of Ballitore, Milford Haven in South Wales, London, Cheshire. On these trips, and during the course of my research generally, I have received assistance and friendly support from many people. Her writings show that friendship was of tremendous importance to Mary Birkett Card and I am sure she would be pleased to know that studying her work has led me to deepen existing friendships and make many new ones. She would no doubt be glad too that several of her descendants have met one another for the first time as a result of this research.

My thanks go to the staffs of several libraries and archives. I would like to thank especially Mary Shackleton and Betty Pearson of the Friends' Historical Library, Dublin, for seeking out information on my behalf and for their patience. My thanks also go to: Mary Jo Clogg and Ian Jackson, Librarians at Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, Josef Keith and staff at the Friends' House Library, London, Jackie Ray at Kendal Public Library, John Tyndall at Maynooth College, Stephen Kennedy at Trim Library in Ireland, Sandra Matchett at Halton Lea Library in Cheshire, and the staffs of the British Library, the English and History Faculty Libraries at Oxford University, the Land Registry in Dublin, the Ballitore Museum, the Archive Department at Manchester Central Library (and Hardshaw East Quaker Monthly Meeting for granting permission to access Quaker documents stored there), Cheshire County Record Office, the Representative Church Body Library of the Church of Ireland in Dublin and, last but not by any means least, the library at the University of Gloucestershire.

I would like to acknowledge particularly the continuous support and guidance I received from my supervisors, Dr Shelley Saguaro and Professor Philip Martin at the University of Gloucestershire, both of whom were always liberal with their time and encouragement, but especially so when I was experiencing doubt or difficulties. Their knowledge and insights were invaluable and I am profoundly grateful to them both.



I would also like to express my thanks to Padraig Doyle and his family of Mount Prospect, Rathangan, for their help and hospitality, to Ken McKay of the Milford Haven Museum for sharing his research on the Rotch family, to the present owners of Castle Hall, Milford, for allowing access to their property, to Richard Harrison for his guidance on accessing Irish records (particularly the Land Registry), to Barbara Samples initially and then Richard Corbett particularly, both of The Family History Society of Cheshire, for locating a Cheshire Card marriage for me, to Dr Nini Rodgers, Queen's University, Belfast for information on Irish 'Cherokees', and to the people of Ballitore for making my cousins and me so welcome. I must mention too the friends and relatives who helped by providing accommodation: in Dublin - Antoinette and Chris Wilson and Yvonne and David King, in Manchester – Andrew Ward and Angela Cox, in London – my cousins Vanessa and Mary Beakbane. The continuous encouragement and assistance, particularly with one journey to Dublin, of James Clarke, one of the cousins I met through undertaking this project, proved invaluable. To all these, and the other friends and/or members of Cheltenham Quaker Meeting (June Drummond, Rosemary Hoggett, Audrey Hayward, Sue Smith and, once again, James Clarke) who spent time re-checking biblical references and proofreading the edited material for me, my thanks.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my family for their support, especially my husband, Mike, for relieving me of most the drudgery of housework while I explored the life and work of Mary Birkett Card.

## NOTE ON THE TEXTS

Mary Birkett Card's writings were collected by her second surviving son, Nathaniel Card, and copied into two hard backed volumes. The title pages bear the date 1834. Volume 1, entitled 'The Miscellaneous Works of Mary Card', mainly contains prose: a spiritual autobiography spanning the years 1794-1817, forty-three letters, miscellaneous 'meditations' and prose pieces on events such as the sufferings of Quakers in the 1798 Irish Rebellion. Volume 2, entitled 'The Poetical Works of Mary Card', contains over two hundred and twenty poems written from the young Mary Birkett's arrival in Ireland in 1784 until circa 1809. Two of the poems were published in her lifetime: *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* in 1792, and *Lines to the memory of our late esteemed and justly valued Friend Joseph Williams* in 1807. (Publication details are given in the headnotes to these poems, see Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.139 and 400.)

The volumes were handed down from Nathaniel Card to his daughter Lucy Ann, the wife of a Liverpool tanner named Thomas Beakbane, and then on to her daughters Edith and Mary Beakbane. These sisters never married and lived together all their lives. When they died within days of one another in 1955, the items in their house - Birkdale at Bowness-on-Windermere in the Lake District - were either sold or shared amongst the children of their brother, Thomas. One niece, my mother Mary Morris née Beakbane, found the volumes in her aunts' bedroom and, having a fondness for poetry, decided, with the agreement of her siblings, that these were two of the items she wished to keep.

My mother dipped into the manuscripts on occasion, and I too attempted to read them as a child. But the recovery of their context only began when I looked at them anew as an undergraduate at the then Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education. A selection of the young Mary Birkett's writings from the 1790s formed the basis of an undergraduate dissertation in 1994. Subsequently, a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust in 1996 allowed me sufficient time to transcribe the collection in its entirety and to undertake the further research that led to the production of this edition.

The two volumes are octavo, bound in calf. Their spines have gilt bands, now very much faded. Each volume has two front and two rear flyleaves, in addition to paste-downs, though one front flyleaf in Volume 2 is loose. Both contain 280 lined leaves,



with handwriting on recto and verso pages, but neither is full - 72 leaves are unused at the end of Volume 1 and 29 leaves at the end of Volume 2. The pages measure 21.2 cm in length by 13 cm in width. They are numbered by hand up to the last page of poetry (p.499) but only to p.359 of the 414 pages of prose. There are also some errors in the numbering: the prose volume has 2 x pp. 159 and 301 but p.299 is omitted, the poetry volume omits pp.190 and 258 but has 2 x p.204. The leaves are in good condition but, unfortunately, the covers and spines of both books are worn and loose. It is intended to have the volumes rebound professionally.

The handwriting, in brown ink, is generally legible and of good quality, although large sections are faded. The copying must have been a collaborative effort, probably on the part of several family members, as there are four different hands. Hand A, in Mary's brother George Harrison Birkett's account of her death at the beginning of Volume 1, is large and sloping with big loops on tall consonants. It only lasts until the middle of the second line on p.7, when the handwriting changes abruptly to Hand B which is smaller, neater and more rounded. Near the bottom of p.66, in the middle of a long journal entry entitled 'Progress of Infidelity', the writing changes again. It becomes larger but is still neat and even, and so similar in style that it may be the same hand. For the sake of simplicity, however, we shall call it Hand C. On the ninth line of p.96, in a letter, a much more sloping and lighter hand appears in very pale ink (Hand D), which continues, although the ink sometimes gets darker, for the rest of the book. Volume 2 is written in Hand C until p.65, when Hand D takes over on the second line and continues thereafter.

The collecting and copying processes raise many questions. Did Nathaniel Card inherit the collection *en masse*, or did he draw it together from a number of sources? Insertion of some material out of his planned chronological sequence indicates that some writings were passed to him once the copying was well under way. What happened to Mary's original manuscripts? It is unlikely that they were thrown away. Does the collection include all the work that survived her death, or were there other writings that Nathaniel considered unworthy of preservation? In 1994, I thought not. I cited the fact that even though Nathaniel was a founder member of the United Kingdom Alliance, an organisation devoted to the suppression of liquor consumption, he still included some of Mary's writings that show that, as a young woman, she drank socially along with much of her acquaintance.<sup>1</sup>

However, I now realise that the collection cannot represent her entire output.

Someone who used the pen as readily as she did, who travelled and enjoyed a wide circle of friends, would have written many more letters than the forty-three contained here, for example. These particular letters were copied mainly for their religious content. Perhaps Mary herself copied them into her spiritual journal in the first instance, as they are chronologically interspersed between diary entries in the manuscripts, or Nathaniel may have decided to keep these only. It is interesting to note how much Nathaniel was concerned to preserve the memory of his mother as someone recognised to be of value within the Society of Friends, or having contact with well-known Friends. For instance, he includes an excerpt concerning her taken from a letter to her friend, Hannah Wilson Forbes, from the famous Quaker minister Thomas Scattergood, and a footnote is added to a poem explaining that a prayer quoted was spoken during a visit by the celebrated minister Deborah Darby and her companion, Rebecca Young.<sup>2</sup>

There is evidence that the volumes were read by family members in succeeding years. At the back of each volume, someone has noted titles or details of a few pieces with their page references and, above this in Volume 2, the death of Mary's sister-in-law, Abigail Birkett, in 1837, is recorded.<sup>3</sup> Between pages containing Mary's childhood poem, 'A Wish', imagining her ideal future, is the flap of a tiny envelope with the name of her granddaughter Lucy Ann Card hatched out and the date ' 2.nd, 9.th mo.1868.' This was when Lucy Ann changed her name to Beakbane on her marriage. Dried flowers lie between some of the pages. And in blank pages near the end of Volume 1 my mother has pressed a flower from her aunts' garden at Birkdale, picked on the day she chose to keep the writings, with a few words and the date written in Quaker fashion - '4th Mth 21st 1955'.

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<sup>1</sup> Teakle, 'A Feminine Perspective in the 1790s', unpublished BA Dissertation, 1994, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, 'Extract of a letter from Thomas Scattergood to Hannah Wilson Forbes dated 12<sup>th</sup> Mo 24<sup>th</sup> 1797', p.168 and Vol. 2, Poetry, end of 'Elegy' written on the death of Hannah Wilson Reynolds née Forbes, 1799, p.258 (p.260).

<sup>3</sup> The writing is in the same hand as the words 'Mother aged about 6yrs' written above the first manuscript poem in the second volume - see Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Farewell to Old England', undated, p.3, so it is possible it is that of Nathaniel Card.



## EDITORIAL NOTES

It is still often customary in academic biography to refer to the subject by their surname only. But this project began as a personal one, and became more so as it progressed. Not only is Mary Birkett Card my great-great-great-grandmother, but my work on her and her writings over several years has led to the development of what feels like a personal relationship between us. Calling her 'Card' or 'Birkett Card' seemed to belie this relationship, so I abandoned it in favour of, simply, 'Mary'.

It is clear that when putting together his collection of his mother's writings, Nathaniel Card attempted a chronological order. The prose half of the collection begins in 1794 with the first entry in Mary's journal written at Park Gate on a visit to England, and continues with journal entries, letters and other prose pieces interspersed but following more or less sequentially in date order. Most pieces are dated. With the poetry he was less successful. It does move broadly from childhood to adulthood, but there is considerable muddle within this overall pattern. It is obvious that some poems must have come to hand once the copying was well under way, and were therefore added at that point, when chronologically they belonged much earlier. In addition, many poems are undated, which must have led to confusion about where they should be placed. Several poems appear twice, sometimes a hundred pages or more apart, or in both the prose and poetry sections of the collection. Probably, Nathaniel Card did not realise that they had been copied once already, presumably because he was dealing with so much material. Differences between copies of the same poem, however, are very marginal (mainly in the areas of punctuation and capitalisation), except in the case of one childhood poem where there are two versions, with different titles.<sup>1</sup>

Because one of the special, and perhaps unique, features of this collection is the way in which it represents each stage of a woman's life at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, I have kept and sought to improve upon its chronological order. I did consider amalgamating the whole collection - poems, letters, diary - into one overall date order, but felt that this would be detrimental to another key feature of it - the way in which different genres can be seen to develop over the course of time. So I decided not only to keep Nathaniel's division between poetry and prose but, within the prose collection, to separate the spiritual autobiography, the letters, and the other prose pieces and meditations, whilst maintaining the chronological order within each. I have sorted the poetry into date order under three broad headings: childhood (1784-1789), adolescence and young single womanhood (the 1790s) and



from courtship and marriage to the seeming abandonment of writing poetry (1800-c.1809). With undated poems it is usually fairly clear which of these periods they belong to, either from their style, diction and subject matter or from their site in the manuscripts. For instance, poetry from the 1790s is more heavily laden with classical references and heightened, or formal, poetic diction. Undated poems have been placed at the end of each section. Where more than one copy of a poem exists, I have reproduced one (choosing a dated copy, for instance, in preference to an undated one) and shown the differences between the two copies in my footnotes, indicated by square closing brackets.

I have tried to create a facsimile of the manuscript text as far as is possible within the constraints of a word-processor in order to enable the reader, again as far as possible, to experience the text as it was written. Original spelling and punctuation is therefore retained (with one exception – as the majority of the dates for prose writings carry no punctuation, or mere dots, barely visible, I decided, for the sake of simplicity, to leave them unpunctuated). The manuscript punctuation is highly erratic. It tends to be almost devoid of full stops, and to run on at breakneck speed with a surfeit of commas, exclamation marks and dashes, and infrequent paragraph breaks. It is often difficult to distinguish between a comma and a full stop. There are a number of colons and semi-colons, but their usage does not conform to any standard rules. Sometimes 'and' is written in full, sometimes the ampersand (&) is used. Spelling frequently differs from modern usage, but generally adheres to common eighteenth-century forms. Words like 'colour', for instance, are usually spelt 'color', as is still the case in America today. I have replicated these features as exactly as I could, but have necessarily followed some modern typing conventions, for instance inserting two spaces after a full stop, exclamation mark or question mark, and a line space between paragraphs and after headings. Also, as the manuscript pages are considerably smaller than A4 size, no attempt has been made to reproduce the original page length, or the numbering (which is, in any case, incomplete).<sup>2</sup>

To render the text easier on the eye, I have imposed some uniformity with regard to the layout of headings and indenting of paragraphs. In manuscript, headings can be single or double underlined, or not underlined at all, sometimes centred and sometimes not. I have used single underlining throughout. The titles of poems and prose pieces such as meditations are mostly centred while the dates forming the headings of journal entries are more frequently aligned with the left margin. This indicates the original editor's preferred format, possibly taken from that of Mary Birkett



Card's own manuscripts from which the copies were made. I have decided to make the most frequently used practice within each genre standard. Again with regard to indenting, because the first lines of the majority of journal entries in manuscript start at the left margin while the first lines of letters are mainly indented, I decided to make these preferred practices uniform.

The use of capital letters in the period was very idiosyncratic. The initial letters of nouns in the manuscripts are frequently capitalised, even in the middle of a sentence, and it is often difficult to distinguish between upper and lower case letters at the beginning of words, particularly with such letters as M, W and N. The letter 'a' is often written in lower case but in a larger size, like a capital letter. Where a capital 'A' would be correct, either at the beginning of a sentence or a line of poetry, I have transcribed it in upper case. I have also done this where a capital seems to be clearly intended in manuscript, for example in the word 'Amen'. Otherwise, I have transcribed it as lower case. Overall, I have used judgement to reproduce the actual text as closely as possible.

The copyists' hands, once one is familiar with the different scripts, are not difficult to read, and it appears the copyists had little difficulty in reading Mary's original manuscripts - there are virtually no deletions or emendations and few gaps. Where a word in manuscript is difficult to read or is incorrect, but the correct form can be ascertained with a degree of certainty, my suggestion as to the correct text is placed in square brackets immediately adjacent, as [ ]. Spellings that differ from those in use today, words that can only be partially deciphered, or instances where the text is clearly written but is either an error on the copyist's part or not readily comprehensible today, are indicated by the use of 'sic' enclosed in square brackets, as [sic]. If appropriate, they are subject to an explanatory footnote. Contemporary abbreviations such as *thot.* for 'thought' or *yr.* for 'your' are also footnoted, as are gaps.

In headnotes and footnotes I have generally tried to explain, or place in context, rather than impose my own interpretation or viewpoint. But occasionally, in order to make a piece accessible at all, I have had to write a fairly lengthy introduction covering the background or explaining the nature of the genre to which it belongs. One example is 'The Philosopher[']s Death In imitation of old Irish verse', which Mary wrote while still a young child. I have shown how it fits into the body of poetry known as 'Ossianic', popularised by the publication of the supposed verse of an ancient bard named Ossian by the Scottish writer James MacPherson, and also how it differs from that model.<sup>3</sup>

Annotations are used to identify people, places and events mentioned, biblical and literary or classical references, Quaker terms or other expressions unfamiliar today, and some forms of poetic diction. In Mary's day, her readers would have been familiar with the biblical echoes and classical references in her work, and until quite recently we could assume a shared knowledge to some extent, even if more limited in scope. This is no longer the case. The objective, however, has been to be indicative of the relationship of Mary's work to other texts rather than comprehensive - her work, like much other writing of her time, is heavily permeated with such references and drawings from other authors. It is anticipated that interest in Mary's work will probably come, in the main, from two quarters: modern Quakers, particularly women, who want to know more about their own history, and those interested in eighteenth/nineteenth-century women's writing. The former may know little about eighteenth-century poetry, the latter little about Quakerism. The aim, therefore, has been to provide quite detailed notes without being too abstruse or encumbering the text with a heavy apparatus.

Biblical references were located with the aid of a CD Rom entitled Bibleworks containing the full text of the Bible together with a search engine.<sup>4</sup> The text quoted in footnotes is taken from the King James version, as it would have been the one available to Mary.<sup>5</sup> Unless Mary's text is an exact quotation, I have reproduced the full text of relevant verses, as well as citing the biblical reference, so that the reader is able to compare Mary's text with the biblical one without having to look up the text concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'On the Power & Goodness of God', 1787, p.26.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Note on the Texts' above, p.xi.

<sup>3</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'The Philosopher[']s Death', undated, p.120.

<sup>4</sup> *Bibleworks for Windows*, 1995 Databases (Hermeneutika Complete Bible Research Software).

<sup>5</sup> I have reproduced spelling and punctuation as in my own copy of the King James version of the Bible (London: Collins, 1909), but have omitted its frequent italicisation and use of upper case letters for the words 'God' and 'Lord'.



## BIBLICAL ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for the books of the Bible.

### The Old Testament

Genesis	Gen
Exodus	Ex
Leviticus	Lev
Numbers	Num
Deuteronomy	Deut
Joshua	Josh
Judges	Judg
Ruth	Ruth
1 Samuel	1 Sam
2 Samuel	2 Sam
1 Kings	1 Kgs
2 Kings	2 Kgs
1 Chronicles	1 Chr
2 Chronicles	2 Chr
Ezra	Ezra
Nehemiah	Neh
Esther	Esth
Job	Job
Psalms	Ps
Proverbs	Prov
Ecclesiastes	Ecc
Song of Songs	Song
Isaiah	Is
Jeremiah	Jer
Lamentations	Lam
Ezekiel	Ezek
Daniel	Dan
Hosea	Hos
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obadiah	Obad
Jonah	Jon
Micah	Mic
Nahum	Nah
Habakkuk	Hab
Zephaniah	Zeph
Haggai	Hag
Zechariah	Zech
Malachi	Mal

### The New Testament

Matthew	Mt
Mark	Mk
Luke	Lk
John	Jn
Acts	Acts
Romans	Rom
1 Corinthians	1 Cor
2 Corinthians	2 Cor
Galatians	Gal
Ephesians	Eph
Philippians	Phil
Colossians	Col
1 Thessalonians	1 Thes
2 Thessalonians	2 Thes
1 Timothy	1 Tim
2 Timothy	2 Tim
Titus	Tit
Philemon	Phlm
Hebrews	Heb
James	Jas
1 Peter	1 Pet
2 Peter	2 Pet
1 John	1 Jn
2 John	2 Jn
3 John	3 Jn
Jude	Jude
Revelation	Rev

## MARY BIRKETT CARD – A CHRONOLOGY

- 1774 Born on 28 December in Liverpool.
- 1784 Moved with family to Dublin.
- 1787 Deaths of siblings Hannah, Edward and Sarah, and friend Mary Haughton. First poem addressed to friend, Hannah Wilson Forbes.
- 1789 Visit to relatives in the North of England.
- 1790s Intimate friendships with Hannah Wilson Forbes, and Debby Watson from 1793.
- 1792 Publication of *A Poem on the African Slave Trade*.  
Wrote poem on the death of Richard Shackleton.  
Death of sister, Susannah Birkett.
- 1793 Wrote 'Soliloquy supposed to be written by Marie Antoniette [sic] just before her separation from the Dauphin'.
- 1794 Commenced spiritual journal in May on journey to visit uncle, anti-slave trade campaigner George Harrison, and family in London. Then visit to other relatives in Kendal, Warrington and Liverpool.
- 1795 Visit to Mount Prospect at Rathangan, probably at the home of Joshua and Hannah Wilson.
- 1796 Appears to have recommenced spiritual journal in July, though intervening entries relating to 'deism' may have been lost or destroyed.
- 1796/7 Struggle with 'deism'.
- 1797 Visit to Hampstead – journal entry written there in August.
- 1798 June – Friend Susanna Hill attended Enniscorthy Quarterly Meeting in the group led by evangelical American travelling minister David Sands immediately after the Battle of Vinegar Hill during the Irish Rebellion – Mary may have attended with her.  
August – Formal recantation of 'deism' in narrative entitled 'Progress of Infidelity'.  
(Later wrote account of the 'Deliverances' of Friends in the Rebellion.)
- 1799 Commenced courtship with future husband Nathaniel Card this year, or shortly before.  
May – death of friend Hannah Wilson Forbes, now Reynolds, in London after childbirth.
- 1801 Married Nathaniel Card on 13 March at Sycamore Alley Meeting House.  
Death of sister Jane Henrietta Birkett in October.
- 1802 Birth of first child, William, on 10 January.
- 1803 Birth of second child, Nathaniel, on 21 July.

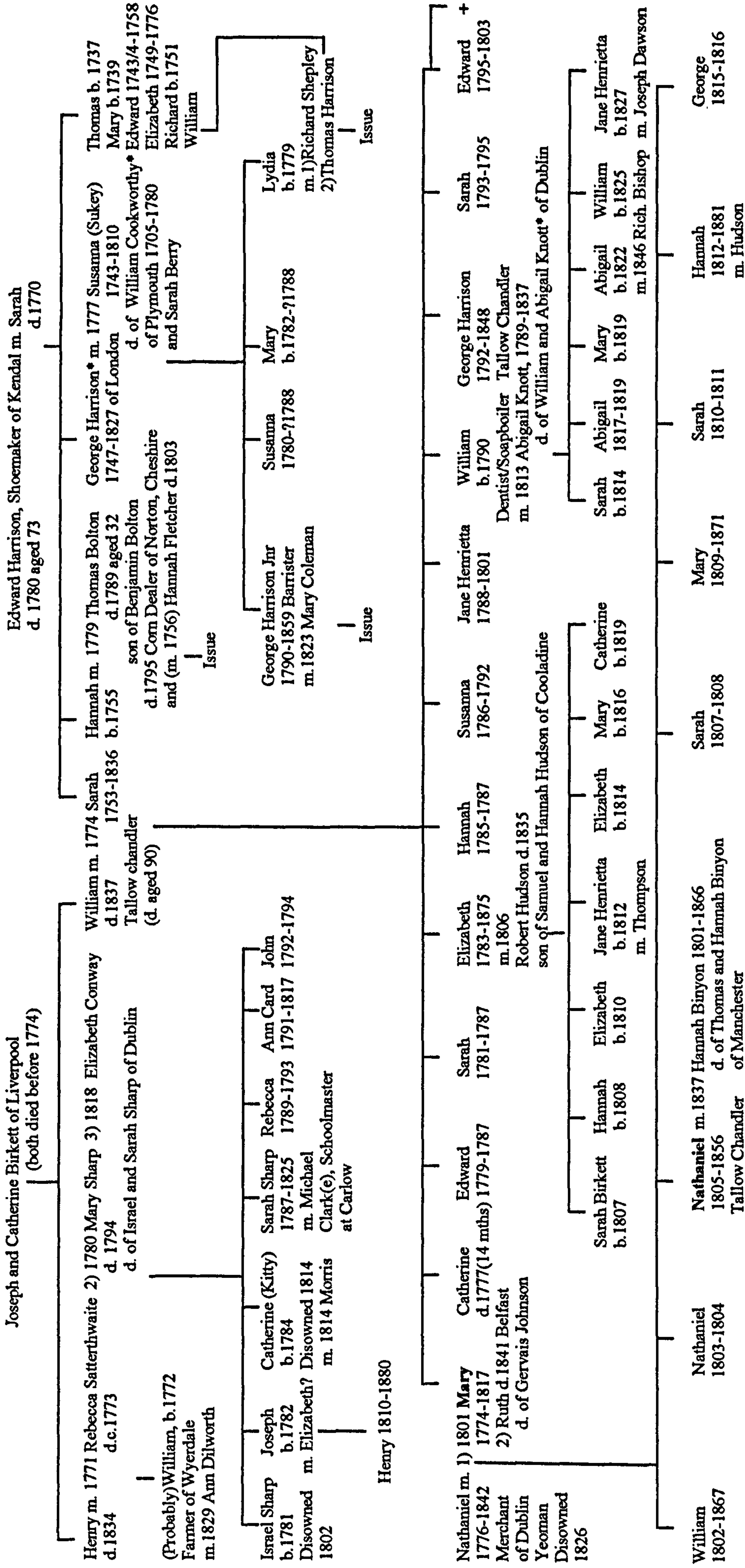


- 1804 January/February – visit to Castle Hall, home of American Quaker whaling magnate Benjamin Rotch and family at Milford Haven.  
April – death of second child, Nathaniel, in Dublin.  
36 to 40 poems written this year, nearly 30 of them at Milford Haven, but very little prose (two diary entries and two letters).  
October – commencement of letters remonstrating with 'giddy' cousin Catherine (Kitty) Birkett and other letters of encouragement and exhortation to individuals.
- 1805 Family plagued with acute business worries and fear of bankruptcy.  
First child William acutely ill in March.  
1 February – birth of third child, the second to be named Nathaniel (collector of his mother's writings).  
Most prolific year for spiritual journal – 51 dated entries, and six letters, but very few poems – only three are definitely dated 1805.  
Met Sarah Hoare, Dublin schoolmistress and campaigner against cruelty to animals, later of Bristol and Bath – also poet and author of works on conchology and botany.  
Commenced annual appeals to Elizabeth Dawson on behalf of the General Daily Free School.
- 1806 Wrote poetic address to Hans Hamilton MP in anti-slave trade cause.
- 1807 Wrote poetic 'epistle' to poet and author Mary Leadbeater of the Shackleton schoolteaching family at Ballitore.  
Published poem on the death of Quaker elder Joseph Williams.  
24 August – birth of fourth child and first daughter Sarah.  
December – first record found of work in Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting.
- 1808 Friendship with the Knott family of Ballinclay.  
Produced advertisement for an 'asylum' for female servants.  
Wrote thoughts on a plan for a circulating library.  
14 September – death of daughter Sarah and, in November, composition of poem on her loss entitled 'To Hope'.  
Appears to virtually cease writing poetry.
- 1809 20 February – birth of fifth child and second daughter Mary.  
Wrote appeal to Elizabeth Dawson on behalf of female servant scheme (last two dated poems).
- 1810 19 March – birth of sixth child and third daughter, the second to be named Sarah.  
April – appointed to Committee for Appointment of Overseers, Dublin Monthly Meeting.
- 1811 23 April – death of third daughter Sarah.
- 1812 31 March – birth of seventh child and fourth daughter Hannah.  
24 August – wrote address to her children concerning their spiritual welfare, fearing her own death imminent through a 'disease of the liver'.  
December – appointed to Committee for the Poor, Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting.
- 1813 Appointed Writing Clerk to Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting. Also appointed to Committee for Provincial School.

- 1814 Disownment of cousin Catherine (Kitty) Birkett for marriage outside the Society, by a priest.  
Threat of failure of speculative venture in family business.
- 1815 3 February – birth of eighth child and fourth son George.  
March – appointed to Select Meeting of Elders and Overseers, Dublin Monthly Meeting.  
Death of close friend, the minister Susanna Hill – letter to Quaker minister David Sands in America to inform him.
- 1816 6 January – death of last child George.  
February – released from position as Clerk to Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting. Appointed representative to Quarterly Meeting.
- 1817 March – drafted will.  
June – re-appointed as representative to Quarterly Meeting.  
August – addressed last letter to her husband.  
24 October – died at father's country house at Killester; interred at Friends Burial Ground, Cork Street in Dublin, on 28 October.



# FAMILY TREE 1

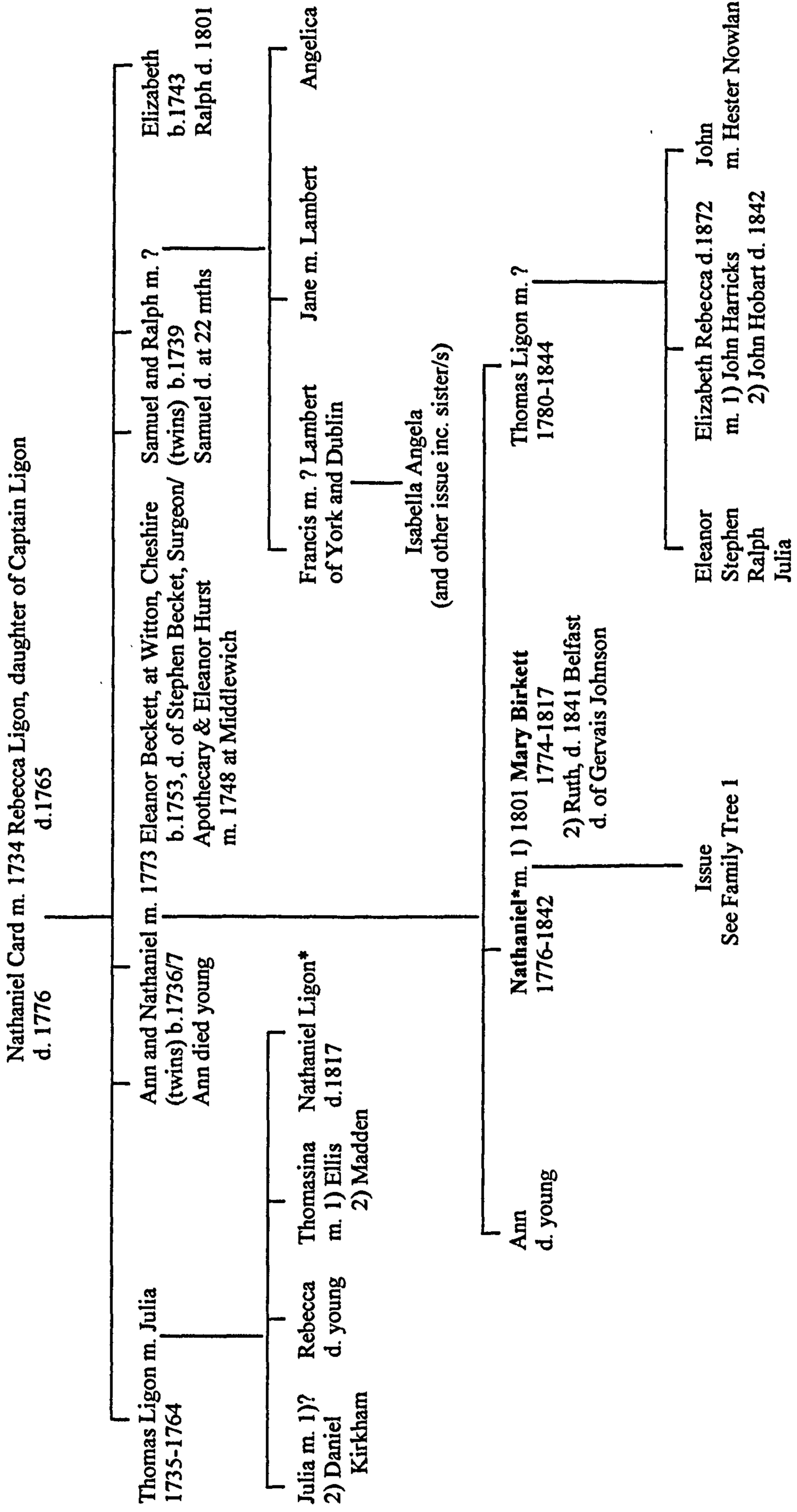


+ Another child was probably born to William and Sarah Birkett in Liverpool before they moved to Dublin in 1784, but no birth record has yet been located.

\* George Harrison, anti-slavery campaigner  
 \* William Cookworthy, discoverer of china-earth/English porcelain  
 \* Abigail Knott, daughter of John & Abigail Wright of Ballinclay

Thomas b. & d. 1872  
 Edith 1869-1955 (of Bowness-on-Windermere)  
 Mary Hannah 1873-1955  
 Thomas Card Beakbane m. 1904 Hilda Littler 1876-1960  
 1 son and 4 daughters including Mary m. Joseph Morris

## FAMILY TREE 2 - THE CARDS



\* Nathaniel Ligon, d. 1817 - interred in family vault, St Michael's Church, Dublin. Many other Cards from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are buried there.

\* Nathaniel, Mary's husband, buried in Cork Street Friends' burial ground, Dublin.

Tree (apart from marriage date - see below) compiled from genealogical information in several hands given in Card Family Bible (London: King James edition, Moses Aaron, 1672) in possession of James Clarke. Nathaniel Card, Mary's father-in-law, is said to be the son of Thos L. & Rebecca Card, but this conflicts with other information given, and has a pencilled cross beside it, perhaps indicating an error. The only Rebecca mentioned (Rebecca Ligon) married a Nathaniel Card, and one of their sons was Thomas Ligon. It is thought that Mary's father-in-law was another of their sons - Nathaniel, Ann's twin.

Date of marriage of Nathaniel Card and Eleanor Beckett (1773) first obtained from Bertram Merrell's Index of Marriages in Cheshire and Marriage Register for Witton Parish Church - thanks are due initially to Barbara Samples, Family History Society of Cheshire, and then to Richard Corbett, also of the Cheshire Family History Society, who located the marriage licence, and also that of Eleanor's parents and her baptismal entry.



## GLOSSARY OF QUAKER TERMS

- Membership** In the eighteenth century, 'birthright' Friends (children born to Quaker parents) predominated, though a number of individuals still joined the Society from other denominations. Those wishing to be received into membership apply to a local Monthly Meeting which appoints two Friends to visit them. These Friends then report to the Monthly Meeting on the individual's readiness to join.
- Disownment** Individuals were disowned (expelled) from membership for immoral behaviour or major infringements of the Quaker discipline. Common causes were recognition of the established clergy by paying tithes or marrying in church ('marrying out'), and financial irregularity.
- Reinstatement** Those disowned could still attend meetings and later apply to be reinstated.
- Meeting House** The building in which Friends meet for worship and other meetings. In traditional meeting houses, seating took the form of rows or benches and until the later nineteenth century men and women sat separately. One or two rows of seating were raised. The recorded ministers sat on these, also the elders.
- Meetings for Worship** Held on First Days (Sundays) and often mid-week, Quaker gatherings for worship are based on silence. Individuals engage in silent prayer, meditation or communion with God. Any individual may then rise to minister if moved by the spirit: to offer prayer, or share an insight or concern, that they feel will be of service to those present.
- Business Meetings/  
Meetings for Discipline** Meetings to conduct administrative affairs. No votes are taken. The object is to reach consensus through listening to the spirit or being attentive to God's will for the group. A clerk is appointed to draw together 'the sense of the meeting' on each item and incorporate it into a written minute with which all those present are in unity.

The structure of Preparative, Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings (for business) was set up by George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, in the 1660s:

- Preparative Meeting**                      An individual local Meeting based at a particular meeting house. It dealt with narrowly local matters, and had little power in decision-making.
- Monthly Meeting**                        Friends were, and are, registered with their local Monthly Meeting which encompasses a number of Preparative Meetings. It undertakes most formal functions: registration of births, deaths and marriages, collecting subscriptions, administering funds, membership and expulsions.
- Quarterly Meeting**                      Monthly Meetings belonged in turn to this next level, which functioned in the main as a link to Yearly Meeting. (Today, General Meetings operate on a regional basis.)
- Yearly Meeting**                         London Yearly Meeting was established in 1678. In effect the governing and policy-making body of the Society, Yearly Meeting is an annual assembly of Friends from all over the country held over several days. An executive committee operates between Yearly Meetings called the Meeting for Sufferings (originally it aided Friends suffering persecution for their beliefs in the seventeenth century). Ireland has its own Yearly Meeting – see below.
- Women's Meetings**                      Established by George Fox to allow women to contribute to the life of the Society, particularly in the traditionally feminine spheres of marriage, children and poor relief. Paralleling the preparative, monthly and quarterly meetings, their structure only mirrored the men's at all levels in England by the end of the eighteenth century when a Woman's Yearly Meeting was finally established in 1784. Ireland, however, had a Women's National Meeting from 1678. Women's meetings continued to be held separately until near the end of the nineteenth century. Though their contribution was significant, they had no power to make or alter the rules, or discipline, of the Society.
- Men and women sat together on Meetings for Ministers and Elders (see below) and some other committees.



## Meeting Structure in Ireland

Ireland had, and still has, its own Yearly Meeting held in Dublin. This national meeting was at first a half-yearly meeting and the structure beneath was of province and monthly meetings. In 1797, the Half-Yearly Meeting became the Yearly Meeting of Friends in Ireland (or Dublin Yearly Meeting), with a committee to administer affairs in the course of the year, and the Province Meetings became Quarterly Meetings.

Women had their own Yearly Meeting in Ireland from 1678.

## Ministers

Although any individual may offer ministry, from 1723 to 1924 those perceived to have a special gift in this direction were recorded as ministers by their Monthly Meeting. Such Friends often became 'Public Friends', travelling to speak to other Meetings or in public places. Their Meeting would endorse them by providing them with a certificate, and although the ministry was unpaid, they could receive funding for travel. Ministers were recorded for life, though they could be disowned if their ministry or behaviour became incompatible with the ethos of Friends.

## Elders

Respected Friends appointed for a period to be responsible for the spiritual welfare of the Meeting, including supporting the ministry. In the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries, elders identified those members whose ministry indicated their suitability to become recorded ministers.

## Overseers

Responsible for the more general aspects of caring for the membership, including encouragement and advice or practical assistance to those in need. In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, overseers were also most involved in matters of discipline, and were appointed to visit offending members. Like elders, overseers were unpaid and appointed for a period of time.

## Meetings of Ministers And Elders, or Select Meetings

Ministers and elders conducted their own meetings from 1727, usually prior to monthly, quarterly or yearly meetings. Overseers sometimes joined them and in 1876, they became known as Select Meetings on Ministry and Oversight. Women and men sat together on these groups.

## Advices and Queries

Queries were first devised by Yearly Meeting to obtain information about the condition of the Society and its members in 1682. In the eighteenth century, formal systems for monthly and quarterly meetings to read and answer the queries in writing were instituted. Queries became focussed primarily on discipline, but also functioned as a means of self-examination. The 1791 Yearly Meeting, when revising the queries, drafted the first advices. Originally supplementary, advices offered guidance mainly on the conduct of everyday life. A considerable proportion of time in Meetings for Discipline was taken up with advices and queries.

In Ireland, they were kept mainly in manuscript form until the 1811 publication of *Advices and Rules agreed to by the Yearly Meeting of Friends in Ireland*.

## Light (The), or The Inward Light

The light of Christ experienced as a source of strength, leading or guidance or as a spiritual reality within the individual. Other terms encompassing the concept of guidance included The Inward Teacher or Monitor. This is considered to be present and therefore accessible in all people, regardless of their knowledge of the historical Jesus.

## Seed (The)

A term in use from the time of the earliest Friends, but much evident in the theology of Robert Barclay (1648-1690). Synonymous to some extent with the concept of the Inward Light, that of God in everyone, it denoted specifically the element of the divine implanted within through grace and capable of growth.

## Truth

According to *Quaker Faith and Practice* (19.33): 'sometimes the word is used for God, sometimes for the conviction that arises from worship, sometimes for the way of life'. Often it is the experience of the reality of Christ or the Gospel, the teaching of Christ received through the Inward Light. Early Friends called themselves 'Children of the Light' or 'Friends in the Truth'.

## Experientially/ Experimentally

To know through one's own personal experience. The emphasis is on the Inward Light as the primary source of verification, rather than the authority of Church or scripture.



<b>Favoured/Engaged/ An Opportunity</b>	<b>Expressions for giving ministry when moved by the Spirit.</b>
<b>Weighty Friend</b>	<b>A Friend whose spiritual stature, ministry and influence carried weight.</b>
<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Religious teaching, and regulations for church government. The first compilation of guidance (Book of Discipline) was made in 1738, in manuscript, revised and printed in 1782. (Revised many times since, it is now <i>Quaker Faith and Practice: The Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Great Britain.</i>)</b>
<b>Plain Language</b>	<b>This was based on the egalitarian practice of seventeenth-century early Friends whereby grammatical forms such as ‘thee’ and ‘thou’, conventionally used to address social inferiors or those with whom one was familiar, were used for everyone. Friends retained these archaic forms as a testimony to their faith long after they had fallen into general disuse. Plain language also encompassed the rejection of names for months and days of the week, because these originated in paganism, in favour of First Day, First Month and so on. The plain language, in its widest connotation, meant sincere, direct speech.</b>
<b>Plain Dress</b>	<b>Seventeenth-century Friends testified to simplicity by adopting simple contemporary forms of dress, without decoration or bright colours. When these forms were retained into the next century and beyond, they became the distinctive Quaker dress.</b>

## PREFACE

This edition makes available for the first time a corpus of writing in a variety of genres by Mary Birkett Card (1774-1817), a Quaker and a poet. It aims to make her work accessible to scholarship and other interested readers through annotation and an introduction recovering her life and the cultural community in which that life took place. This objective is furthered by setting the form and content of her writings within the context of contemporary literary forms in poetry, Quaker writing and women's writing.

Mary's son considered her writings sufficiently 'valuable' to warrant a family project that occupied several people, perhaps for months or more, in making copies some seventeen years after her death. And nearly 170 years later I find myself re-enacting this initial amanuensis on a word-processor and, furthermore, contextualising her work. This preface considers why such a project is valid.

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In the archives of the Historical Library of Friends (or Quakers as they are more usually known) in Dublin is a scrapbook containing the funeral cards of a considerable number of Friends from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some carry additional handwritten remarks, seemingly added by one individual, giving genealogical information. Very occasionally there are also other comments about the deceased Friend. The printed card for the funeral of Mary Card (née Birkett), dated '26th of 10th Month, 1817', tells us that her funeral was to proceed from the house of her father, William Birkett, at Killester on 'third day, 28th Inst. at One o'Clock, to Friends' Burial Ground, Cork-street' in Dublin. At the bottom is a pencilled note which, beside giving her relationship to others as mother, daughter, or sister, pronounces her 'a valuable woman'. No one else is described in this way. Why did the pencil writer consider her valuable and why did he or she record this estimation of her?

The writer would almost certainly have been a Quaker and readers of the funeral cards would, initially, have been drawn almost exclusively from the Society of Friends. First, then, we can be sure that Mary Birkett Card exemplified what was admired in a Quaker woman in such a way as to have gained some form of recognition. To do so she must have played a visible role within the Society and lived her outward life according to values accepted by her Quaker community. And in her life and work she did indeed fulfil the highest expectations of her family and the Society to which it belonged. Showing early promise when she published an anti-slavery poem at the



tender age of seventeen, she went on to work devotedly in a number of philanthropic causes beside abolition, such as schools for Dublin's poor. She spoke in the ministry and held a number of responsible positions within her Quaker Monthly Meeting, becoming clerk to the Women's Meeting from 1813-1816. She wrote poems on the deaths of people much respected in the Society: the famous Quaker schoolmaster Richard Shackleton in 1792 and the revered Elder Joseph Williams in 1807, the latter poem being published. As a mother, she sought to imbue her children with the same values and commitment to the Society - goals in which she achieved some success. As far as is known, all of them maintained their Quaker witness and her son Nathaniel Card, collector of her writings, became a noted philanthropist in Manchester and founded a temperance organisation called the United Kingdom Alliance.<sup>1</sup> Even in the press cutting announcing his death in 1856, his special qualities are explained by reference to his mother's – 'from his mother, of whom he was deprived when young, and who was a woman of great piety, superior attainments, and ceaseless benevolence, he inherited many of [. . .] [his] traits'.<sup>2</sup>

The word 'valuable' would also have held deeper connotations for Friends, connotations associated with the inner life from which these visible achievements sprang. More than any other church, the Society of Friends fosters the development of an inner spiritual life without aid of external ritual or formal creed. George Gorman, writing of the seventeenth-century founder of Quakerism, George Fox, said that he 'fearlessly proclaimed his understanding that authentic religion was not primarily concerned with accepted religious observances enshrined in church order and dogma, but with a living response to an awareness of spiritual values to be discovered deep in the human personality'.<sup>3</sup> The 'principles [Friends] discovered' through this experience were, and still are, expressed 'in terms such as Truth, Equality, Simplicity, and Peace'<sup>4</sup> that are then given visible expression in life as actually lived. An oft-quoted Quaker injunction is 'Let your lives speak', in other words - express, communicate, even embody these internal spiritual values and principles in all aspects of your life. It follows that a 'valuable' person might be one who, it was felt, 'spoke' to others in this way. Mary's writings provide ample evidence of such witness, particularly in their record of her friendships and her spiritual nurturing of others.

Yet the term 'a valuable woman' has other dimensions. It still has on first hearing a 'natural ring', even today when there is an increasing awareness of gender issues. On reflection, we realise that, in the case of a man, it would have been felt necessary to qualify the notion of value by reference to his work or role – the young Quaker Dinah

Goff, for instance, speaks of American evangelical David Sands as 'a valued minister'.<sup>5</sup> Only for a woman could her worth be somehow inextricably linked with her gender so that she is valued insofar as she attains some undefined but nevertheless all-encompassing ideal, an image or concept, clearly present yet not explicit, of what a woman should be. And, as the pencil-writer clearly felt no need to clarify or explain, it is implicit that his or her readers will also share this concept. The word 'valuable' also has, of course, connotations connected with ownership. Today, when we describe someone as 'valuable' to us, we can mean that they are of great significance to us personally, or that they are useful to us. Both these senses of the word could be present in Mary being 'a valuable woman' - being dear to others and being 'of service'. Yet both carry a resonance of possession, of belonging in some way to other people. And there is a sense in which the affixing of such a label to Mary is also a form of 'ownership' – it lays claim to her as an exemplar of her community's construction of 'woman'.

The Society of Friends during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was, in many ways, a group separated from the 'world' with its own values but, being part of its time, it necessarily reflected some values found in the world outside too. This resulted in tensions in the ideal of the Quaker woman. Quakers had always regarded women as spiritually equal, and were the only Christian sect to allow women to become ministers (other than some offshoots of Methodism in the early 1800s) and to travel widely in the ministry. Women were also able to conduct their own affairs in separate business meetings. Thomas Clarkson, the anti-slave trade campaigner, remarked on how these elements gave Quaker women 'a public character' denied to others.<sup>6</sup> However, these opportunities were in fact more limited than they first appear. In the words of historian Elizabeth Isichei, 'the powers open to women were so large compared with their restricted role in other religious – or, for that matter, secular - organisations [. . .] that they deserve to be regarded as one of the most striking elements in Quaker organisation', but this 'equality [. . .] was more apparent than real'.<sup>7</sup> All major decisions were made at Men's Yearly Meeting, the governing body of the Society, and Women's Meetings held a subordinate position. Tasks allotted to them were connected with women's caring role: poor relief, education, supervision of servants, regulation of marriages. The very separateness of these activities and meeting structures is indicative of a keen awareness of gender roles and a construction of 'woman' that shared much with that of contemporary society. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall point out:



The Quaker belief in the seed of God residing in all spirits, regardless of their sex, did not lead them to believe in social equality. Quakers had a strong sense of sexual difference, reflected in their forms of organisation, down to the separate seating for men and women. [. . .]

Their [i.e. women's] power to preach and pray was a special dispensation, which could, with increasing difficulty, be allowed to coexist with notions of feminine propriety.<sup>8</sup>

The Quaker woman, then, to become 'valuable' or highly regarded, had to negotiate a complex path encompassing the public and the private. Activities of a public nature (duties in Quaker Business Meetings, philanthropy), while not compulsory, were enjoined upon her by virtue of her membership of the Society, and the call to ministry, if it came, was to be obeyed. Yet she had to be careful what activity she engaged in - it was acceptable to become involved in public philanthropic campaigns but only in certain causes considered suitable for female concern, such as anti-slavery and charity schools. It was laudable to attend Quarterly Meetings away from home, but a woman could be criticised for paying insufficient attention to her family.<sup>9</sup> She had also to fulfil her private role of wife and mother to the same standards, and a similar ideology of femininity, as that pertaining in the households of devout non-Quaker Christians. Yes, she had more opportunities than other women, but not only was she subject to some of the same limitations, she was also subject to more pressures in some respects. Part of the value of Mary's writings is the insights they provide into these complexities and contradictions - the struggle to be the 'ideal Quaker woman' - and particularly the challenges they present to notions still generally prevalent that women Friends enjoyed a much more autonomous sense of self, and a much less subordinate subject position within Quaker familial structures than women in society generally.

Moving on to consider her writings in their entirety, much of their significance for us lies in the way they lead us to question our contemporary values by presenting us with an ideology, a blend of late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century and Quaker values, so much at variance with our own. The majority of her work is in some sense didactic. Her childhood poems serve to express and internalise the values she has been taught, while her adult work re-inforces them, or promotes them in others. Some of this ideology can make us, in the early twenty-first century, feel distinctly uncomfortable. For instance, this life is seen merely as a 'testing ground' for the next, a site of constant warfare between virtue, sometimes synonymous with Truth, and vice. Although salvation is offered through Christ, we must co-operate by making virtue our choice, not just once but by continual struggle. The rewards, and aims, are peace and

contentment in this life, and eternal peace in the hereafter. The difficulty for modern readers is not these objectives in themselves, but the virtues to be cultivated to attain them and the view of life as a transitory 'vale of tears' where suffering is visited on individuals deliberately in order to prepare them for Heaven. From the perspective of a culture that stresses personal assertiveness, human rights rather than responsibilities, and free expression of the self, many of the virtues Mary extols appear negative and restrictive. Most involve the subjugation of the self and its desires (duty, obedience, controlling the passions, self-denial, submissiveness, humility, resignation) and they often have a passive quality (mildness, gentleness, detachment, serenity, docility). Children, for instance, are told they must 'bend the will' and are praised when they are as 'docile as wax'. A real problem for us is what seems like excessive self-denigration – Mary's frequent casting of herself before God as a helpless and worthless worm, for instance, even though we may be aware that this was a much-used cliché at the time. Coupled with this are images of suffering as God's 'chastising rod' or a purification process similar to refining metal. Whatever we feel about pain and suffering today, most of us will recoil from a view that treasures pain and grief as tokens of God's tender care of us:

And every pain whose piercing dart  
 Hath serv'd to purify the heart  
 And every grief whose stern controul  
 Refin'd and Angeliz'd the soul  
 More precious than fine gold will prove  
 The pledge of pure paternal love.<sup>10</sup>

We may know that these ideas reflect views generally accepted at the time by many convinced Christians or, particularly with regard to the upbringing of children, society at large. Yet engagement with Mary's texts can lead us, by the very process of asking why we find some of the attitudes expressed repellent or experience them as obstacles, to query values we accept today as 'given'.

This is true not only of the content of Mary's texts but of the forms chosen to convey it. Today, originality is frequently our primary criterion when evaluating art. Literature is considered 'good' insofar as it contains the author's own ideas, and offers new insights or experience to the reader. So embedded is this approach that we forget it only came about as a result of the literary movement in literature at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries known as Romanticism. Prior to, and even during much of, that period, what many people looked for when reading was not 'newness' so much as imitation. Literary productions, particularly poems, were expected to follow set forms



and draw on well-known texts by respected authors, even to incorporate some of their phrases. This both proved, as it were, their literary credentials and provided a keen pleasure to the reader through familiarity and the fulfillment of expectation. Mary's writings, both poetry and prose, are very much eighteenth-century productions in terms of the adoption of models available to her through her culture and community, and in their relationship to other texts. Part of their fascination is their intertextuality, and they cannot be appreciated without abandoning our preconceived ideas about originality. Yet she was writing at the juncture between the eighteenth century and Romanticism, along with many other women writers who have until recently been ignored. No attempt is made in this thesis to locate her writing within traditions labelled 'eighteenth-century', pre-Romantic or Romantic, mainly because it is concerned to explore how Mary herself engaged with (then) contemporary literary traditions in creating her texts. Yet it is not just that these terms - imposed subsequently by literary criticism - would have meant nothing to her. Women's poetry, particularly, does not sit easily in these categories, produced within an academic tradition largely based until recently on the works of relatively few male poets. Our conceptions of the literature of this period are currently being revised as a result of the recuperation of lost women writers, and Mary's work, irrespective of its originality or 'quality' (whatever we perceive that to be), can make a contribution to that process and to our understanding of late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century literary forms and reading experience, particularly within women's cultural networks.

Finally, Mary's writings form a unique record of one woman's experience in a specific religious and cultural milieu at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that is valuable in itself. It is hoped that this edition will prove a valuable source, and resource, for those interested or involved in the fields of literature, history, religious and women's studies.

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Mary Birkett Card's life and work is examined in three parts. Part 1 offers, first, a biographical outline, highlighting key aspects that will be looked at in the course of the study, while its second chapter is contextual, creating a picture of the Dublin Quaker community in which Mary grew up and exploring her childhood poems as productions reflecting and internalising the values of that community. Part 2 explores her autobiography in three chapters. The first, the main introductory chapter theoretically, questions concepts of form and tradition in women's autobiography. Much scholarship in the field of women's spiritual autobiography has rested on the concept of a separate



female tradition that assumes a shared female perspective across periods and cultures. This concept is problematised in this chapter. The approach arrived at here to tradition, form, community and subjectivity (an approach which calls for specificity when defining literary traditions and particularity in uncovering 'female traditions' located within specific periods and cultural milieux, linked to mainstream paradigms) is central, and informs the rest of the thesis. Chapter 4 investigates a crucial episode in Mary's life as a young woman – her flirtation with deist thought, considering her experience against the community experience, and arguing that her 'deist' account is, essentially, a conversion narrative witnessing to tensions that are resolved by realignment with her community's prevailing orthodoxy. It also argues that one aspect – her negotiation between a desire for self-promotion and the requirement to sublimate the self – represented a formative strategy for her future. Chapter 5, with two sections, is concerned with Mary's later journal, which is expressive of anxieties and conflicts on several levels. Financially, these lie in efforts to reconcile the spiritual and material, necessity and desire, the emergence of modern capitalism in the form of speculation and Quaker probity. The chapter then moves, in its second section, to focus on issues of language and gender, on Mary's concern for a purity of language, a purity shown to be linked to restraint and subjection particularly in relation to women speaking, and looks at connections between visibility and voice. Essentially, the conflict here is between what she wants to be and what she must resign herself to being - the dutiful wife and mother. One disturbing strategy is her repeated covenant with God that seeks to purchase her children's welfare through binding herself to purity of speech and wifely obedience.

Part 3 concentrates on Mary as a poet, looking at her poetry, and letters (in some degree also outlets for poetic expression), as documents of sensibility inflected by Quaker ideals and values, artefacts produced within female cultural networks mainly (but by no means solely) for consumption by other women. It is concerned primarily with issues of form, tradition and function, engaging with current critical debates and highlighting the contrasts between Mary's writing as a young single woman in the 1790s and her post-1800 material. Overall, it argues that, embedded within these works as a whole, lies a struggle with her literary imagination, linked to a Quaker distrust of the creative imagination but also bound up with contemporary boundaries of acceptable femininity and, in all likelihood, the effects of the tragic loss of children. Part 3 is divided into three chapters. The first, Chapter 6, entitled 'The Voice of Friendship and the Muse's Song', is, in essence, introductory. It emphasises particularly the ways in which Mary's poetry and letters, in contrast to her



autobiography, 'reach out' to others. Chapter 7 is concerned with the earlier, 1790s poetry. It examines, first, *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* (1792), considering its adherence to, and new departures from, abolitionist poetic convention, its intertextuality, most notably its relationship to an anti-slave trade poem by the Quaker Thomas Wilkinson, and the ways in which it forges connections with a varied audience beside the primary one – her fellow women. A second section explores the proportion of Mary's verse originating in relationships, during the 1790s, with Hannah Wilson Forbes and Debby Watson, showing how her participation in the literary traditions of women's intimate friendship verse was empowering, particularly in enabling her to assume subject positions not readily allowed to women. Chapter 8 looks at the output of Mary's later years. It traces the changes in her writing while problematising any simplistic interpretation of these in terms of withdrawal from life or art, much less into any 'private sphere'. It centres, first, on poems of domesticity and philanthropy, while the final section points to ways in which her religious letters, seemingly representing a containment of art within sanctioned parameters, are also inescapably a means of artistic and self-expression.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Samuel Pole, Honorary Secretary, United Kingdom Alliance for the Total and Immediate Legislative Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, John Dalton Street, Manchester, also Notice, for general circulation notifying death of its Treasurer, Nathaniel Card. Attached minute of Special Executive Committee adopted 24 March 1856 states:

Owing its origin to his philanthropy, and much of its progress to his devoted and self-denying zeal, the ALLIANCE is itself a monument to Nathaniel Card.

His name will be historically associated with the great cause which he loved, while his true goodness and private worth, have embalmed his memory among his friends.

In 1853, after its foundation, the Alliance had 56 subscribers (all male), by 1864 this had risen to 1,338 (including 98 women) and by 1900, 2,410 (308 women) – see F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.235. For discussion of Friends and the temperance movement see Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.235–43, particularly pp.235–36, and pp.241–42 on the Alliance. The organisation still operates today and, interestingly, raises its funds partly through poetry competitions. A brief account of Nathaniel Card's life is given in *The Temperance Movement and its Workers*, ed. by P. T. Winskill, 4 vols (London: Blackie, 1891), II, 283, reproduced in this thesis as Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Press cutting (without newspaper publication details) in the possession of James Clarke.

<sup>3</sup> George H. Gorman, *Introducing Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1969; revised repr. 1981), pp.8–9.

<sup>4</sup> *Quaker Faith and Practice* (London: The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995), headnote before 19.33.

<sup>5</sup> Dinah Goff, 'Divine Protection' in Jane Marion Wakefield, *Six Generations in Ireland 1655–1890* (London: Edward Hicks Junior, 1893), p.89.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism, as taken from a view of the moral education, discipline, peculiar customs, religious principles, political and civil economy, and character, of the Society of Friends*, 3 vols, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Longman, 1807), III, 288–89 (see also p.293).

<sup>7</sup> Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p.107. Isichei is speaking of Victorian Quaker women, but the point is just as relevant to the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries.

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<sup>8</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 1992 [Hutchinson Education, 1987]), pp.139-40.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Fry, the prison reformer, was often criticised in this way. See, for instance, Janet Whitney, *Elizabeth Fry: Quaker Heroine* (London: G. Harrap, 1937; repr. 1938), p.259 which refers to criticism she received from Quaker elders and the press for supposed 'neglect of her family'.

<sup>10</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Sarah Hoare', 1806, p.394 (p.395).



# **INTRODUCTION**

**PART 1**

**THE LIFE**



## CHAPTER 1 BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

Mary Birkett was born on 28 December 1774, the daughter of William and Sarah Birkett of Liverpool, members of Hardshaw Monthly Quaker Meeting. She was their first child, born nine months after their marriage at Warrington on 17 March that year. Her father, William, was the son of Joseph and Catherine Birkett of Liverpool, deceased at the time of his marriage to Sarah Harrison, daughter of Edward Harrison and his wife, Sarah, of Kendal in Westmorland.<sup>1</sup> The Birketts and the Harrisons were families with long Quaker pedigrees, and the northern English name Birkett appears frequently in the registers for births, marriages and deaths covering Quaker monthly meetings at Lancaster, Swarthmore and Kendal from the seventeenth century on.<sup>2</sup> Some of these Birketts were farmers and yeomen. William Birkett's occupation is variously given in the registers as a 'soap boiler' or 'tallow chandler'.<sup>3</sup> Tallow chandling, or the making of candles from tallow (melted fat, usually from animals), was often linked with the production of soap which also used tallow as a base in its manufacturing process.<sup>4</sup>

The family backgrounds on both sides were modest. Mary's maternal grandfather, Edward Harrison, was a shoemaker in Kendal. But one relative of hers, George Harrison, discovered in the course of this study to have been her uncle, was already making his mark in the world. George Harrison was her mother's brother, born in 1747. Sent away to Gilbert Thompson's school at Penketh, his potential had been spotted by brothers Dr John Fothergill, a well-known London physician and scientist on friendly terms with many leading figures of the day including Benjamin Franklin, and Samuel Fothergill, a Quaker minister of outstanding reputation. They paid for his further education at their old school, Sedbergh Grammar, and the prestigious dissenting academy at Warrington. After three years spent as tutor to the son of Richard Reynolds, son-in-law of Abraham Darby II (the famous iron-master at Coalbrookdale in Shropshire), George had joined the merchant house of David Barclay in London.<sup>5</sup> Marriage in 1777 to Susannah Cookworthy, daughter of the Quaker chemist, William Cookworthy, who discovered china clay in Cornwall and thus founded the porcelain industry in England, had helped him make many new business contacts and the couple inherited a considerable sum of money on Cookworthy's death in 1780. By the early 1780s, George Harrison was an affluent businessman of high standing in London, very active within the Quaker community, and a persuasive speaker. In 1783 he commenced work in the cause he was to remain devoted to for

the rest of his life - the abolition of slavery - as one of the members of the Quaker committee asked to consider the issue. Some weeks later he and five others set up their own group to work, perhaps more freely outside of the main Quaker organisation, against the slave trade. It was this latter group that joined with Thomas Clarkson and others in 1787 to form the London Abolition Committee, the main organisation that worked with William Wilberforce to abolish the trade.<sup>6</sup> This family link with abolition would surely have exerted a powerful influence over the young Mary Birkett. We can imagine the family's pride in George Harrison's achievements and it is inconceivable that his anti-slavery work would not have been a regular topic of conversation in the Birkett household.

While they continued in Liverpool, several more children were born to William and Sarah. A daughter named Catherine died in 1777 aged fourteen months, Edward was born in 1779, Sarah in 1781 and Elizabeth in 1783.<sup>7</sup> Then in 1784 the family moved to Dublin.<sup>8</sup> Mary's mixed emotions about the move prompted her to write the first verse included in this collection. It expresses her apprehension about living in what she conceived to be a foreign, and more barbarous, country, but says nothing about the reasons for the family's removal.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps Dublin offered better business prospects, or William had heard good reports from his brother, Henry, who had moved to the city a few years earlier and married a Dublin girl, Mary Sharp, in 1780.<sup>10</sup> Henry had first been employed in the houses of two Dublin merchants, but then set up his own small earthenware business, while his wife was trained as a mantua-maker, or dressmaker.<sup>11</sup>

Once settled in Dublin, William and Sarah continued to have another child every one to two years: Hannah (1785), Susanna (1786), Jane Henrietta (1788), William (1790), George Harrison, named after his uncle (1792), a second Sarah (1793), and a second Edward (1795).<sup>12</sup> Even given the high mortality rates at the time, when parents could expect several of their children to die in infancy, the Birketts were unfortunate in losing so many of their children. Hannah, the first Sarah and the first Edward all died within a fortnight in March 1787, probably from scarlet fever. The poems their eldest sister wrote as each death occurred, when still only aged twelve herself, make particularly harrowing reading.<sup>13</sup> Other siblings followed. We discover from Mary's poem on her death that Susanna died of a wasting illness lasting seven months in 1792.<sup>14</sup> The second Sarah died in 1795, Jane Henrietta in 1801 (there is a monody on her death too) and the second Edward in 1803.<sup>15</sup>



Apart from these tragedies, the Birketts prospered in Dublin. Their address at 34 Jervis Street in the centre of the city, north of the River Liffey, although not prestigious, placed them firmly in the middle class.<sup>16</sup> Deeds in Dublin Land Registry show that William came to own other property both in and outside Dublin.<sup>17</sup> Certainly by 1817 he had acquired that much desired status symbol of a gentleman, a country house (the account of Mary Birkett Card's death by her brother, George Harrison Birkett, states that she died at her father's country house at Killester).<sup>18</sup> Dublin continued to develop, even after its fashionable heyday in the late eighteenth century was over, and William took advantage of this. In 1821, he made the vast sum of seven hundred pounds when he sold a relatively small house to the Wide Street Commissioners, an organisation set up by Act of Parliament to co-ordinate the widening of a number of main streets in the capital and to purchase land for this purpose.<sup>19</sup>

William Birkett was active in Dublin Quaker Meeting, and in its philanthropic work. His name crops up frequently in the minutes of Dublin Monthly Meeting's Committee of the Poor, which organised Quaker poor relief.<sup>20</sup> So do those of his eldest son, William Birkett Junior, and his sons-in-law, Robert Hudson and Nathaniel Card. One indication of a family's social and financial standing, as well as its values, is the amount members feel they can donate to charity. In 1823, the Birketts subscribed seventeen pounds towards a fund to aid Greek refugees, a substantial amount comparable to sums given by some leading, and wealthy, English Friends.<sup>21</sup>

Quakers generally placed a high value on education and a middle-class family like the Birketts, with a growing income, would have ensured all their children were educated well. There is no specific mention in Mary's writings of her schooling, but it is clear from her poems that she had a wide classical knowledge and was well read beyond the scriptural base usual for Quaker girls of her class. She may have attended a Quaker boarding school as did her younger cousins, Sarah and Catherine Birkett.<sup>22</sup> However, as most of the major Quaker schools were not founded until after 1779, and were therefore still very new at the time Mary could have attended, it is more likely that she was educated at home or at a small day-school.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, she was encouraged to write poetry from a very young age - many of her early poems appear to be exercises; acrostics, 'enigmas', odes to innocence and truth - but the large number that survive from her childhood (almost seventy in all before the age of sixteen) indicates that she turned to poetry frequently, and perhaps easily, as a form of artistic expression. She does seem to have been somewhat precocious, but writing verse



was by no means unusual. Poems written to close friends such as Hannah Forbes and, later, Debby Watson refer to lines they had written, which Mary modestly casts as superior to her own. The intimate friendships between these three as young women, in fact, not only provided an arena in which verse was produced, but also formed a basis for many of its themes. Her love for these friends was one of Mary's greatest sources of joy and empowerment, in life and text, and the impact of these relationships – how they constituted a female space that facilitated identity formation, literary expression and the sharing of mystical experience – thus forms the focus of a separate section in this study.

The years of Mary's youth spanned the 1790s - a decade of ferment and change. The French revolution of 1789 and its aftermath gave rise to increasing instability and tensions, particularly in Ireland where France was looked to as a revolutionary example by many radical Protestants as well as Catholics seeking Ireland's independence from Britain. Irish disaffection culminated in the Irish Rebellion of 1798 which was put down with great ferocity by the British. New and challenging ideas were circulating in the work of such thinkers as Thomas Paine and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and traditional beliefs were being questioned. Within Quakerism, this questioning took the form of a leaning towards deism, whereby a belief in God was maintained whilst scriptural revelation and the miraculous were rejected. Many Friends left the Society or were disowned owing to their supposedly deistical beliefs. It was in this decade, too, that the anti-slavery movement founded in the 1780s really captured the public imagination. Not surprisingly, then, these were the years in which Mary engaged most with issues and ideas that impinged on her and her Quaker community from without. Four very different pieces of writing either record, or show her response to, these events.

In 1792, at the age of 17, she published *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* in two parts, the second being, according to her preface, written in response to the good reception of the first.<sup>24</sup> (They appear to have coincided with the passage of William Wilberforce's abolition bill of that year through, first, the House of Commons in April and, second, the House of Lords in May/June.<sup>25</sup>) Such precocity was not that uncommon - a number of teenage girls succeeded in getting their work into print towards the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> However, it should also be noted that publications by women were still very few - in 1792 Mary's poem was one of only 18 new editions of poetry running to eight pages or more in length published by English-speaking women that year.<sup>27</sup> *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* was published in



Dublin, but some of the impetus for publication might have come either personally from Mary's uncle, George Harrison, in London - he was by this time experienced in the preparation, production and distribution of anti-slavery literature and so could have offered advice or direction, even assistance with publication - or through contact with him which kept Mary and her family aware of each stage of the anti-slave trade campaign.<sup>28</sup> There was certainly contact between the two families. Two years later, in May/June 1794, Mary stayed with the Harrisons in London for at least a couple of weeks, forming a friendship with George Harrison's teenage daughter, Lydia, but, disappointingly, the few poems surviving from this visit make no mention either of the abolition movement or of Mary's publication.<sup>29</sup> Mary's interest in the abolition cause was certainly not short-lived, however. Fourteen years later, in 1806, she was to make a poetic address to the Dublin County M.P., Hans Hamilton, requesting that he vote in favour of that year's abolition bill put forward by Wilberforce.<sup>30</sup>

In 1793 Mary responded to events in France through a poem entitled 'Soliloquy supposed to be written by Marie Antoniette [manuscript spelling] just before her separation from the Dauphin', visualising the condemned Queen incarcerated with the young Dauphin, fearing possible death by unknown means at any moment.<sup>31</sup> 1794 saw her commence her spiritual journal, on the visit to England that was to include her stay with the Harrisons. From 1796 to 1797 the journal charts a spiritual crisis that almost resulted in the loss of her faith. The nature of this crisis does not become clear until, in a narrative named 'Progress of Infidelity' (1798), she formally recants 'the odium of Deism' in favour of more traditional beliefs.<sup>32</sup> Although she produced no personal account of the Rebellion in Ireland, she wrote up 'Some Account of Remarkable deliverances experienced by friends during the disturbances of 1796 and 1798' which corroborates, and adds little snippets of information to, other existing accounts.<sup>33</sup>

In 1801 Mary married Nathaniel Card, a Dublin merchant.<sup>34</sup> She had probably known him from childhood as he was her second cousin - for this reason, they had to have a special dispensation from the Dublin Quaker Meeting to marry.<sup>35</sup> Nathaniel and Mary lost no time once they had the desired permission. They were married one month later, on 13 March 1801, at Sycamore Alley Meeting House.<sup>36</sup> The situation must have been complicated by the fact that Nathaniel Card was not born a Quaker. Quakers were required to marry within the Society - those who 'married out' were 'disowned' from membership, though many continued to attend Meeting. Nathaniel's parents, Nathaniel and Eleanor Card, lived in Dublin and the Family Bible shows that Cards



had lived there since at least the 1670s and possibly earlier. It is not known where they originated but Nathaniel and Eleanor were married at Witton in Cheshire, where her family, the Becketts, lived, and the Family Bible also mentions an earlier link with Chester – the birth there of a daughter to Samuel and Mary Card in 1689.<sup>37</sup> These links are not surprising as Chester was a maritime city and imports from Ireland, chiefly of linen, wood, feathers, butter and provisions, but also, perhaps significantly, of hides and tallow, formed a large part of its trade.<sup>38</sup> The family may have had Quaker leanings as some dates in the Family Bible are written in the Quaker fashion ('7<sup>th</sup> Month' etc). Nevertheless, all family members listed in the Bible during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, until Mary's husband Nathaniel, were members of the established church (at least officially) as the majority are recorded as being baptised by local priests and buried in the family vault at St Michael's Church in Dublin.<sup>39</sup>

It may well have been Nathaniel's love for Mary, then, and their courtship and desire to marry, that prompted his joining the Society. A note in the Family Bible says 'About the 23rd year of his age he was convinced of the religious principles of the Society of Friends, and was united to that body - in which profession he continued the remainder of his life'.<sup>40</sup> The first of her poems addressed to him is dated 19 January 1799 when he was twenty-two years old (he was born on 13 October 1776).<sup>41</sup> Monthly Meeting Minutes for 14 January 1800 first describe him seeking membership, while those for 12 August 1800 record his admission to the Society of Friends - well in time for the couple's marriage the following March.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that the young couple were cousins indicates a Quaker connection somewhere along the line, and the links between Cheshire and Ireland in the hides and tallow trades make it highly probable that the Cards and Birketts were connected by business ties as well as kinship.

Extensive research has not yet revealed the nature of Nathaniel's business, but some information has been gathered about other Cards showing family interests in wine and beer. There was a Ralph Card in business as a wine merchant at 10 Aungier Street, Dublin, while a Francis James Card was a wine cooper in the city.<sup>43</sup> Even more relevant is the fact that Eleanor Card, almost certainly Nathaniel's mother, made over a 'dwelling house and brew house' called, rather appropriately, Mount Brown, at 169 James's St, 'opposite the foundling hospital' with its 'keeves, coppers, mash Tubbs, Boilers, Coolers, mills, vats,' and all other equipment 'employed in and about the carrying on of the trade and Business of brewing' under a seventy year lease to Robert Shaw in 1806.<sup>44</sup> A few property deeds mention Nathaniel Card himself or his



immediate family. Though they are never specific about his occupation - he is always titled, simply, 'merchant' - they do tell us a bit about his and the family's dealings.<sup>45</sup> Most merely concern the selling or leasing of individual properties that could, at one time or another, have been their living accommodation, and the sums involved are quite modest.<sup>46</sup> But in 1802, Nathaniel's father paid Richard Bewley £696, a substantial sum at this time, for his portion of 470 acres of land in King's County.<sup>47</sup> (The Bewleys were a prominent family of Quaker merchants, many dealing in silk and coffee – coffee houses still operate under their name in Dublin today.) Again in 1802, a Nathaniel Card, either father or son, surrendered land to Hans Hamilton, probably the M.P. for Dublin County to whom Mary addressed her 1806 abolition poem.<sup>48</sup> Another relative, Captain Nathaniel Ligon Card, leased substantial property in Kildare with David La Touche of the Huguenot banking family, a Governor of the Bank of Ireland for many years.<sup>49</sup> The picture emerges of a family, if not exactly wealthy, certainly quite well-off with landed as well as urban interests and having connections, even if on the periphery, with leading political figures and businessmen.

Despite this fairly comfortable background, Mary's journal reveals that her husband was dogged by financial difficulties, and that these reached a crisis point in 1805. Mary herself tells us that her entries from 24th to 30th January that year 'were occasioned by a most afflicting & unexpected source of distress occasioned by unjust treatment' and that they were intended 'to record some of my feelings just as they arose' during this trial. But in fact, the crisis, whereby the Cards stood to lose almost all they had at the hands, it seems, of a business adversary, continued beyond January, through February to early March, with arbitrators being called to try to settle the dispute, until 15th March when 'A bright sun has broken out at the close of this dismal storm; which blessed be the Lord is now over!' On 4th April Mary, in counting the health of her family, loyal customers and the support of friends amongst her blessings, announces that there remain just 'some hundred pounds after paying all we owe'. Also, they had let off part of their house 'which more than defrays the rent of the whole'.<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately, and quite typically, the diary does not tell us what precipitated this crisis, of what the family's financial problems actually consisted or how they were resolved. Deeds for that year bearing the Card name do not enlighten us very much either, but they do reveal that something untoward was happening. The details are too complex to include here (an outline is attached as Appendix 2), but, briefly, deeds exist that record Nathaniel's mother, now a widow, purchasing land at Dame Street from him



and a bankrupt, William Cope, and his assignee, for the hefty sum of £3,000 in August 1805 and selling it on in October for £4,000 - a massive profit. Eleanor Card purchased the land at an auction decreed by the Court of Chancery, resulting from a 'cause' in which she was the plaintiff and her son, Nathaniel Card, along with William Cope *et al*, were the defendants. We can only speculate whether Nathaniel was implicated in the bankruptcy, or having to sell the land to raise money to pay creditors, whether he was quarrelling with his mother or party to a deal with her designed to make a quick profit. It is possible that the chancery case arose out of transactions following upon the death of Nathaniel's father, and involved the inheritance of his property. What we can say is there is a high probability that the family were enmeshed in a web of complex financial dealings that extended far beyond what these deeds convey.

Mary's journal is silent on these matters, as on so much else, and the diary entries from April and through the summer seem to reflect one of the most contented periods of her life, with family life, business and her own efforts to run a school all going well. On 31 May, for instance, she states, 'I think I never in my whole life enjoyed such a state of solid felicity & perfect peace as I now do' and 'we have enough of business & are at ease from the cumber of temporal engagements, so that business is rather a recreation to us than a load'. Little mention is then made of business matters until November and December, and then only in general terms regarding 'the anxiety of business' and oppression caused by 'the turmoils of outward affairs'.<sup>51</sup>

However, Nathaniel and Mary's financial problems were but temporarily resolved in 1805. They continued, with only brief spells of relative security, for the rest of their married life, with another major crisis occurring in 1814. The precarious state of the family's business is not merely a backdrop against which the diaries must be read, but a constant source of tension and conflict within them. 'The anxiety of business, the care attendant on our temporal concerns' (3 November 1805), and the constant desire for 'that pecuniary independance [sic] which I consider'd might free me therefrom' (27 December 1805) are threads running through the journal from the start of Mary's married life. It is significant that in the very first entry after her marriage (1801) she asks that God may help them 'fulfil every temporal engagement and to cast away all reproach from the lip of the censurer' - surely an indication, just by virtue of voicing concern, of a fear that they might not be able to fulfil such engagements. She also poses a fundamental question in this entry: 'Have I been too solicitous dearest Lord after the bread which perisheth or is it not that my soul mourneth in secret to perform



Equity and justice towards Men[?].<sup>52</sup> The complex dynamics between necessity and superfluity, between duty and desire, in both material and spiritual terms (epitomised to some extent in this question as to whether assiduous attention to business arises out of a selfish over-concern with material and therefore temporal security or from an intention to deal fairly with others as befits members of the Society of Friends) form continuous themes within Mary's journal that will be explored when looking at her autobiography.

It seems that Mary was not just a passive worrier, but an active participant in the business. One poem, for instance, describing how much the tranquil domestic pleasures of Saturday (Seventh Day) evening were relished after shutting up the warehouse until Monday morning, implies she helped in the enterprise.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps she served customers, checked goods or did other paperwork. And not only do her concerns about money as set down in her journal imply a familiarity with the family's financial position and state of their business, but on one occasion at least she conceived her own plan for extricating their affairs from difficulty. Yet again, though, she gives no details.<sup>54</sup>

Even after her marriage, Mary continued to travel, for instance when attending Quaker Quarterly Meetings outside Dublin. But writings are extant from only one further visit to England, in 1804, when she was the guest of the American Quaker whaling magnate, Benjamin Rotch, and his family at Milford Haven in South Wales. There is no indication of the purpose of the visit, or whether Nathaniel accompanied her. It seems likely that he did not, and her children also may have been left in the care of relatives or nursemaids in Dublin. At least twenty-eight poems were dashed off during her one month stay, and they reveal not only the lively social atmosphere of bonhomie and ready wit that existed at the Rotches', who played host to numerous guests from many walks of life at their home, Castle Hall, but how re-animated Mary could become once away from her cares and worries in Dublin.<sup>55</sup> The poems raise some interesting issues in relation to male mentorship of female texts - it is clear that Rotch not only encouraged but sanctioned Mary's writing – which will be looked at in the course of this study.

1804 and 1805 were, in fact, Mary's most prolific years as far as her writing was concerned. 1804 saw her produce thirty-six datable poems (mostly those written at Milford), and several other undated ones probably belong to that year, yet she only made two entries in her spiritual journal. The first extant letters (other than one dated

1799 and another possibly belonging to 1797), exhortatory in nature, as are all the letters that have been preserved, belong to the autumn of that year. In 1805, the situation was reversed, with a total of fifty-one dated journal entries and half a dozen letters, but far fewer poems. One strong possibility, that will also be explored further, is that this change resulted from the traumatic effects upon Mary of the first loss of a child. Her second son, Nathaniel, died in April 1804, after her return from Milford Haven. This supposition is lent further credence by the fact that after the second such loss, this time of her first daughter Sarah, aged thirteen months, on 14 September 1808, no more dated poems exist after one attempting to find meaning and purpose in the little girl's death ('To Hope', dated 16 November 1808), except for two philanthropic poems to the benefactress, Elizabeth Dawson.<sup>56</sup>

Mary must have been quite active in her Quaker meeting in Dublin as a young woman - her diary entry for 21 January 1799 records the calling she felt to become a minister and this would surely have arisen out of some experience, perhaps of speaking in Meeting, or of participation in church affairs.<sup>57</sup> Her second known publication, a poem on the death of venerated elder, Joseph Williams, in 1807, by showing her reverence for him and, by implication, his work as a guide and mainstay within Dublin Meeting at a time of much dissension and controversy, implies an intimacy with church organisation and relationships within it.<sup>58</sup> Achieving publication means, in all likelihood, that the poem was sanctioned and perhaps positively promoted by Dublin Meeting. Interestingly, the first mention found of her work in the Society also dates from 1807, when the Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting minutes for 15 December record her being deputed, with Rachel Maria Jackson, to draw up a certificate of removal for Isabella Waite and her family to Cumberland.<sup>59</sup> From then on her responsibilities, or participation, within that Meeting, could be traced over a number of years. A fuller picture of the work of women within the Quaker organisation, particularly in Ireland, and of what Mary's roles within her Meeting entailed, is given in Appendix 5. The intention here is simply to give a broad outline of how her responsibilities developed.

The minutes record her undertaking a range of tasks that varied from drawing up many more removal certificates, attending Preparative Meetings in other areas, such as Wicklow, and examining the Treasurer's accounts. In April 1810, she was appointed to the Committee responsible for the appointment of overseers. This was a joint committee of men and women Friends. In September 1811, she became a representative, with Elizabeth Bewley, to Quarterly Meeting at Moate and the following



month read out an account of the proceedings there.<sup>60</sup> December 1812 saw her appointed to the Committee of the Poor. In July 1813 she, and two other women, were appointed to the Committee of the Provincial School - this was the school at Mountmellick that her cousin attended. She was appointed writing clerk to Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting (the reading clerk was Elizabeth Robinson) in September 1813 and continued to hold the post of Clerk through 1814. Her name appears in the list of additions to the Select Meeting of Elders and Overseers for March 1815. In June of that year, she attended Quarterly Meeting at Enniscorthy with Elizabeth Bewley and came back with an account from it in July. Released from being clerk in February 1816, she was still appointed representative to Quarterly Meeting at Enniscorthy with her sister-in-law, Abigail Birkett in June. In the event, Mary attended but Abigail did not. July 1816 found her enquiring into the conduct of Ann Barrington who was not attending Meeting regularly, and on 13 August she and Jane Shannon were nominated to visit Ann with men Friends because Ann refused to attend Meeting and 'her conduct in other respects is not agreeable!' 1816, the year before her death, still found her assisting on the Committee of the Poor and, in September, being appointed, with fourteen others, to the Leinster Provincial School Committee. In February 1817 she was still an Overseer – being appointed to a Committee of Overseers set up to propose a new Clerk. And in June 1817, only four months before her death, she was nominated once again as representative to Quarterly Meeting. She was one of the representatives from Leinster to Women's Yearly Meeting every year from 1807 to 1811, and in 1813. Perhaps in 1814 and 1816 she was one of those not named but recorded as being unable to attend owing to 'family indisposition'.

Evidently, Mary was keen to take on many roles and tasks within her Meeting, from the routine over-seeing of accounts and drawing up of certificates to more responsible positions such as Overseer and Clerk, and to serve on its other Committees administering poor relief or managing Quaker schools. But there is no mention in the minutes of her being a minister, perhaps because she does not appear to have travelled in the ministry. Ministers were issued with a certificate when they received permission to travel, and this was recorded. However, the *Annual Monitor* (a Quaker obituary publication) states that she appeared in ministry only a few weeks before her death.<sup>61</sup> As this carries an implication that she spoke in the ministry fairly regularly, we can assume that she was regarded as a minister although, as yet, no record of the fact has been found. Perhaps she was a 'permitted' minister – in Ireland at this time, this was someone whose ministry was much valued but who was never formally recorded as a minister.<sup>62</sup>



Although Mary never describes her philanthropic endeavours in any detail, her journal and poems evidence some of the projects she supported: a free school for Dublin's poor (particularly Catholics barred from education by the Protestant penal laws), a school and repository scheme whereby girls received an elementary education and also used their needlework skills to produce goods for sale, an asylum (or home) for elderly female servants, and the North Strand Charter School, as well as obtaining charity for individual cases such as money to place a sick woman in the Incurable Hospital. Some information has been found about most of these, and details included in the headnotes or annotations to the writings concerned.<sup>63</sup> It should be borne in mind that even if Mary gives little indication of the level of her involvement, or how much of her time, effort or money was expended in these causes, one or two pieces of writing may represent a small part of a major commitment. With the asylum for female servants, for example, the fact that she prepared what seems to have been a proposal or advertisement for the project long before it got off the ground, perhaps for placing in the local press, could well mean that she was one of the initiators of the scheme or actively working with them. Philanthropy was an encouraged and acceptable activity for middle and upper-class women generally, in keeping with concepts of women as nurturers of both physical and moral well-being, but for Quaker women it was positively expected and, for many with time and ability, woven into the structure of their lives in the Quaker community. Someone as able and enthusiastic in good causes as Mary was likely, then, to have been part of a network of female philanthropists in charitable organisations operating, perhaps, across the religious spectrum.

All this Quaker and philanthropic work had to fit around supporting the family business, the needs of home and family, and continual childbearing. Nathaniel and Mary had eight children altogether: William (born 10 January 1802), Nathaniel (born 21 July 1803), a second Nathaniel (born 1 February 1805 - the first Nathaniel died the previous April), Sarah (born 24 August 1807), Mary (born 20 February 1809), a second Sarah (born 19 March 1810 - the first Sarah died in September 1808), Hannah (born 31 March 1812) and George (born 3 February 1815). The second daughter named Sarah also died, in April 1811, and baby George died too, in January 1816.<sup>64</sup> In her age at marriage, the number of children she had and the range of her childbearing years, Mary was highly representative but, like her parents, unfortunate though not outstanding in the level of mortality amongst her offspring. Most Quaker women married in their mid-twenties, and then produced a baby every one to two years until the menopause in their early to mid-forties. It was therefore common for Quaker



families to be very large, averaging six to twelve children (the Goffs of Horetown House had twenty-two) and also not that unusual for half of this number to die before reaching adulthood.<sup>65</sup>

But it should not be thought that childbirth necessarily became easier for a woman as time went on, or that the loss of children was accepted in a matter of fact way as a routine occurrence. One interesting feature of Mary's writings is the glimpses (only glimpses because, as ever, Mary gives no descriptive background) that they offer into attitudes towards childbirth and the deaths or sickness of infants. One poem encapsulates quite poignantly the attempt at resignation to the perceived will of God, conceived as the only appropriate response to the agonies and risk to a woman's life attendant upon every birth.<sup>66</sup> Journal entries reveal that a child's sickness or death could be seen as punishment for sin, and more specifically a 'sin' which only a woman could be 'guilty' of - disobedience to her husband - or of other 'sins' connected with giving voice that carry heavily gendered connotations: speaking ill of others, speaking too much, over-hastily, or out of turn, contradicting one's husband or voicing views in opposition to his.<sup>67</sup> This concern with 'sin' located in inappropriate speech is not an isolated phenomenon. It permeates Mary's journal, and is inscribed in some of her other writings, often linked to notions of purity and impurity in relation to language. In addition, there is circumstantial evidence (referred to above when highlighting changes in Mary's writing between 1804 and 1805) that the loss of children affected Mary's creativity and its expression, as well as her ideas as to the most appropriate form of that expression, so deeply that it led to her abandoning poetry after 1809. These issues will be explored in Chapter 5, and later chapters looking at Mary as a poet.

It is probably also significant that from 1810, beside seeming to write only prose mainly concerned with her religious life (her journal and letters), Mary shouldered ever more responsibilities within her Quaker meeting. This appears clearly in the outline of her activities taken from the Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting minutes above. Yet this ever-increasing activity took place despite failing health, and a sense of impending death. A letter to an uncle, dated 7 July 1812, speaks of them both as 'hastening to the [. . .] grave', and on 24 August she speaks of not knowing how 'this disease of my liver [might] terminate'.<sup>68</sup> She was only thirty-seven years old. She must have recovered to some extent, as she continued to travel to Quarterly Meetings outside Dublin, and bore one more child, George, in 1815. But by 1817 there was no room for doubt. On 19 March, she made her will and, on 16 August, completed her last extant piece of writing - a letter to her husband voicing her tender concern for his future (he



had fallen away from that sustaining faith he had found when first 'convinced') yet more than a little enigmatic in terms of their relationship and the problems Nathaniel was experiencing.<sup>69</sup> She died on Friday 24 October 1817, surrounded by family and friends, after a final illness of a fortnight's duration that the *Annual Monitor* described as 'apopleptic'.<sup>70</sup> An account of this illness, and the words she spoke during the course of it, was written up by her brother, George Harrison Birkett, as a record for her family.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>1</sup> London, Library of Society of Friends, Lancashire Quarterly Meeting Digest Register of Births, 1774, Birth of Mary Birkett. Lancashire Quarterly Meeting Digest Register of Marriages, 1774, Marriage of William Birkett and Sarah Harrison.

<sup>2</sup> Lancashire and Westmoreland Quarterly Meetings, Digest Registers of Births, Marriages and Burials. Many Birketts in the early eighteenth century are found living at Cartmell Fell, Newhouse, Ulverston, Mansriggs (Swarthmore Monthly Meeting), or at Lancaster, Moorhead in Wyersdale and, later at Wensdale (Lancaster Monthly Meeting), at Kendal and Crooke (Kendal Monthly Meeting) or Sedbergh (Sedbergh Monthly Meeting). For instance a Henry Birkett, son of John Birkett of Crook, married Elizabeth Grave at Kendal in 1689. Also an Alice Birkett of Kendal preached in Wales circa 1655 (William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955, first pub. 1912), p.207), while Swarthmore Women's Meeting Minutes record an Alice Birket receiving funds whilst imprisoned in Kendal's House of Correction (Isabel Ross, *Margaret Fell: Mother of Quakerism*, ed. by Edward H. Milligan and Malcolm J. Thomas, 2nd edn (York: Sessions, 1984 [London: Longmans, Green, 1949]), p.64), also an Ann Birket of Cartmel (Ross, p.293).

<sup>3</sup> Lancashire Quarterly Meeting Digest Registers of Births, Marriages and Burials, Marriage of William Birkett and Sarah Harrison, Birth of Mary Birkett, births and deaths of their other children as listed in note 7 below.

<sup>4</sup> This is probably why a descendant married into the Beakbane family which was engaged in the tanning of leather. The tanning business would involve similar contacts with wholesalers of animal products. Mary Birkett Card's granddaughter, Lucy Ann Card, married Liverpool tanner, Thomas Beakbane. For a history of the Beakbane family, see Renault Beakbane, *Beakbane of Lancaster: A Study of a Quaker Family* (Kidderminster: Ken Tomkinson, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> A letter to George Harrison from Richard Reynolds, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1772, contains a reference to Mary's maternal grandfather. Describing the visit he had just made to Kendal, Reynolds writes:

The next day thy father was so kind as to accompany us with Molly and Betsy Wilson, the three Masters and Thomas Crewdson, to Winander Water. We could scarcely have had a worse day. It rained very hard all the time we were there, and all the way back. The young women could not go upon the water. The Masters, Billy and I, went over to the island; and, as I expected to see the proprietor in London that day two weeks, I took of the soil and the produce with an intent to carry to him – for he has never seen either – but unluckily left it in Shropshire at last.

(*Letters of Richard Reynolds, with a Memoir of his Life by his Granddaughter, Hannah Mary Rathbone* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1852), p.119.)

<sup>6</sup> Information about George Harrison compiled from Judith Jennings, *The Business of Abolishing the British Slave Trade 1783-1807* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), Chapters 1, 2 and 3. See Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of The African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), 124-28 for work of the six member association founded in 1783, 255-58 for first meeting in May 1787 of the London Abolition Committee – see also 'map' or tree facing p.259.

<sup>7</sup> Lancashire Quarterly Meeting Digest Register of Burials (1777 - Death of Catherine Birkett) and Births (1779 - Birth of Edward Birkett, 1781 - Birth of Sarah Birkett, 1783 - Birth of Elizabeth Birkett).



<sup>8</sup> Dublin, Historical Library of Society of Friends, Certificate of Removal from Hardshaw Monthly Meeting to Dublin Monthly Meeting, 21 December 1784, for William and Sarah Birkett and children, Mary, Edward, Sarah and Elizabeth.

<sup>9</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Farewell to Old England', 1784, p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Dublin Meeting, Digest Register of Marriages, 1780, Marriage of Henry Birkett and Mary Sharp. Regarding William Birkett's business prospects, there is some evidence of increased activity in tallow-chandling and related trades prior to the Birketts' move to Dublin. Ireland imported hides and tallow, and exported tallow, candles and soap. There are no statistics for tallow in Edward Wakefield's statistical tables on Irish trade prior to 1786, but his tables do show a huge increase in the import of hides from 1782 to 1783 (408, value £204, to 2,197, value £1,098), although they went down again in 1784 (657, value £328). Similarly, candle exports increased dramatically from 1,827 cwt in 1779 (value £3,197) to 9,560 cwt (£17,846) by 1783, stood at 10,402 cwt in 1784 but then plummeted to 5,038 cwt (value £9,404) in 1785. Soap exports were fairly static in the latter 1770s, before climbing back up to 888 cwt by 1779, and then making huge leaps every year to reach 5,317 cwt (value £8,863) by 1784, only to drop the following year to 1,783 cwt (value £2,972) before rising again. Possibly, then, the Birketts moved to Dublin to take advantage of a trade boom, which subsided in the year after their arrival. It picked up again later, however. Wakefield's trading figures overall show large fluctuations while the volume of trade in these areas as a whole increased vastly over the period 1772-1811 (though soap took a down turn in 1811). (See Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland Statistical and Political*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1812), II, 40-57).

<sup>11</sup> Letter, James Forbes and John Dawson Coates, Dublin Monthly Meeting to 'Friends of Hartshaw Monthly Meeting', 14 August 1780. Membership of the Society of Friends was, and still is, with the local Monthly Meeting. When individuals moved area, they had to be recommended for membership of the new Meeting by a Certificate provided by their previous one confirming that they lived up to the standards required by the Society. Correspondence between Hardshaw and Dublin Monthly Meetings reveals that Dublin Meeting had queries regarding Henry Birkett's debts in England and his freedom to marry. A reply from Hardshaw states that he was a widower, with one child being taken care of by relatives in England, and that although he had become insolvent, 'he hath some property here not disposed of the proceeds of which his Parent expects with some addition she proposes making thereto will pay all that remains due to his Creditors'. Once these matters were cleared up, Henry became a member of Dublin Monthly Meeting. (Correspondence mentioned above and William Rathbone, Liverpool, to John Dawson Coates, Dublin, 20 September 1780 enclosing letter from John Routh, Clerk of Hardshaw Monthly Meeting, to 'Friends of the Mens Meeting in Dublin', 19 September 1780.) Over a year later, Henry and Mary Birkett wrote to Dublin Monthly Meeting expressing sorrow for a sin they had committed, seeking the Lord's forgiveness and hoping 'to lead a more Circumspect Life' and 'remove the Reproach we have occasion'd'. Unfortunately, no background is given. (Henry and Mary Birkett to Friends of Dublin Meeting, 3 December 1781.) But their first child, Israel Sharp Birkett, was born on 10 June 1781, only six and a half months after their marriage on 21 November 1780. It is possible, therefore, that their 'sin' was pre-marital intercourse.

<sup>12</sup> Dublin Meeting, Digest Register of Births: 1785 - Birth of Hannah Birkett, 1786 - Birth of Susanna Birkett, 1788 - Birth of Jane Henrietta Birkett, 1790 - Birth of William Birkett, 1792 - Birth of George Harrison Birkett, 1793 - Birth of Sarah Birkett, 1795 - Birth of Edward Birkett. Beside pointing to rises in fertility generally in the latter eighteenth century, Vann and Eversley comment on the high fertility rate of Irish Quakers - 'one of the most fertile populations known to historical demography'. See Richard T. Vann and David Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death: The British and Irish Quakers in the Demographic Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.240.

<sup>13</sup> Dublin Meeting Digest Register of Burials: 1787 - Deaths of Hannah, Sarah and Edward Birkett. See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'On the Death of my dear & only brother Edward Birkett Addressed to my Mother', 'On the Death of my dear Sister Hannah Birkett An Elegy' and 'On the Death of my dear Sister Sally Birkett', pp.17-20.

<sup>14</sup> Dublin Meeting Digest Register of Burials, 1792, Death of Susanna Birkett. See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To the Memory of her beloved sister Susanna Birkett', p.167.

<sup>15</sup> Dublin Meeting Digest Register of Burials: 1795 - Death of Sarah Birkett, 1801 - Death of Jane Henrietta Birkett, 1803 - Death of Edward Birkett. See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Monody to Memory - occasion'd by the death of her beloved sister - Jane Henrietta Birkett', p.312.



<sup>16</sup> *Dublin Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*, compiled by John Watson Stuart, 1800, lists William Birkett as a tallow chandler and soap boiler, address 34 Jervis Street. In 1821, Mary's brother George Harrison Birkett still lived there – Dublin Registry of Deeds, Memorial of Indented Deed of Assignment, 18 October 1821 (Deed no. 766 103 519638), recording his assignment of a lease on property in Cooke Street to Michael Daniel Lambe, scrivener, describes him as 'George Harrison Birkett, of Jervis Street', a 'tallow chandler'.

<sup>17</sup> Dublin Registry of Deeds, Memorial of Indented Deed of Settlement, 8 May 1806 (Deed no. 573 509 392576), records William Birkett, chandler, and Elizabeth Birkett, his daughter, as one party in conveyance of some sixty acres of land and two houses at Ballydonegan from the brothers, Samuel and Thomas Hudson, to the Dublin linen merchants, Thomas and Robert Fayle, the 'liberty' to run a road through it being retained by the owners. The fourth party was another Hudson brother, Robert, a Dublin sadler, whom Elizabeth Birkett married the following day - 9 May 1806. (Dublin Meeting Digest Register of Marriages gives date of Elizabeth Birkett's marriage to Robert Hudson, son of Samuel and Hannah Hudson of Cooladine in Wexford, as 9 May 1806.) The sale was, perhaps, connected with the marriage settlement. Deed no. 644 334 443607, dated 1812, now calling William Birkett a merchant rather than a tallow chandler, informs us that he conveyed land and buildings with a yard, backhouses and workshop on the north side of Temple Bar in Dublin, to Thomas Seagrove, a carpenter.

<sup>18</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, 'Geo Harrison Birkett's Account of the last illness and death of his sister Mary Card.', p.188, particularly note 31.

<sup>19</sup> Dublin Registry of Deeds, Memorial of an Indented Deed of Conveyance bearing date 14 December 1820, between William Birkett, chandler, and Frederick Darley, Thomas Ellis and Abraham Bradley King, Commissioners, 3 February 1821 (Deed no. 759 283 515618). The house had a frontage of a mere fourteen feet onto Fishamble Street.

<sup>20</sup> Dublin, Historical Library of the Society of Friends, Proceedings of the Committee of the Poor 1805-1826, Ref: MM II P<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>21</sup> Dublin, Historical Library of the Society of Friends, *Case of the Distressed Greeks*, Dublin, Second Month, 1823, Library Ref: PB20 (138). Dublin Friends had received a letter from Robert Forster, Clerk to a London Friends' Committee raising 'a Subscription for the Greek Refugees from the Isle of Scio', enclosing copies of this paper for circulation amongst Irish Friends. Dublin Friends decided 'to unite in the subscription' and set up their own Committee. Several thousand survivors had fled Scio where, according to estimates at the time, 40,000 of their fellow islanders had been massacred and 48,000 enslaved by the Turks, while of the 20,000 remaining many had died of hunger or exposure. These survivors, having lost all their means of livelihood, were eking out a desperate existence mainly dependent on the charity of other people of Greek origin in Europe. The names of several members of the Birkett family appear on the appended list of 'Subscriptions Already Entered': William and Sarah Birkett (presumably Mary's parents) each contributed five pounds and her brothers William Birkett Junior and George Harrison Birkett two pounds and five pounds respectively - seventeen pounds in all. William Birkett Junior also served on the Dublin Committee. The Hoares, a Quaker banking family in England, donated fifty pounds, Samuel Gurney twenty-five, and Robert Barclay and William Wilberforce M.P. ten pounds apiece.

<sup>22</sup> Sarah and Catherine were the daughters of Mary's uncle and aunt, Henry and Mary Birkett. Sarah was sent to Mountmellick School, and Catherine to Ackworth in Yorkshire. (Records of Mountmellick School, mentioned in letter Dublin Friends Library to Mrs Reed, 24 May 1960, state Sarah attended until 1802. Monthly Meeting Minutes record Sarah Sharpe Birkett's removal to Mountmellick in February 1805 - Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes 1795-1806, Ref: MM II A16.) A certificate was drawn up for Catherine's move to England on 13 June 1797 (Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes). She is recorded in the 1797 list of Ackworth scholars, and left the school in 1799. (Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, *List of Ackworth Scholars 1779-1879*, p.43.) Other Birketts also attended Ackworth: William Birkett of Wyersdale died there in 1800, Mary's nieces and nephew (Mary, Abigail and William Birkett, children of her brother William Birkett and his wife Abigail, née Knott, who returned to Liverpool) all attended in the 1830s, and Mary's own grandchildren (Charles, Mary Hannah and Lucy Ann, the children of her son Nathaniel, collector of her writings) attended in the 1850s. (*List of Ackworth Scholars 1779-1879*, pp.49,122,125,130,162,165.)

<sup>23</sup> Mountmellick School was set up 1784-1786 for children of poorer Quakers but some children from better-off families also attended. Other Quaker schools in Ireland included Sarah Grubb's



establishment at Suir Island near Clonmel, founded 1787. Ackworth, a co-educational Quaker boarding school in Yorkshire, was founded in 1779.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Birkett, Preface to published edition of Part II, *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* (Dublin: J Jones, 1792) – see Appendix 4 to this thesis.

<sup>25</sup> See headnotes to Parts I and II of *A Poem on the African Slave Trade*, Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.139 and 153.

<sup>26</sup> *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Lonsdale remarks on how better education and the ease with which current 'poetic styles' could be copied resulted in many precocious teenage writers. Examples include the Falconar sisters, Maria and Harriet (born c.1771 and c.1774 respectively) who published *Poems on Slavery and Poems* (both 1788), and *Poetic Laurels* (1791), and Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger who published *The Female Geniad* (1791) aged thirteen. (See Lonsdale's introduction, p. xxxvi, and p.451).

<sup>27</sup> J. R. de J. Jackson, *Romantic Poetry by Women: A Bibliography 1770-1835* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). Includes all poems, or volumes of poetry, amounting to eight pages or more, by English-speaking women in English and other languages, apart from some Celtic and oriental languages. The numbers for the years 1791-1793 are as follows: 1791 - first editions 22, all editions 31, 1792 - first editions 18, all editions 24, 1793 - first editions 20, all editions 31.

<sup>28</sup> In 1792, probably around May/June when that year's abolition bill went to the House of Lords (which successfully delayed progress by deciding to hold its own investigation and then not to continue this until the next session), George Harrison produced *An Address to the Right Reverend the Prelates of England and Wales* (London: J. Parsons and Ridgway). *A Second Address to the Right Reverend the Prelates of England and Wales on the Subject of the Slave Trade* followed in 1795. He published *Notices on the Slave Trade in Reference to the Present State of the British Isles* in 1804. Other, later publications unconnected with slavery include *Education respectfully Proposed and Recommended As the Surest Means Within the Power of Government to Diminish the Frequency of Crimes* (1803), *Some Remarks on a Letter on Joseph Lancaster's Plan for Education of the Lower Order of the Community in which Quakerism is Described as a disgusting Amalgama of Antichristian Heresies and Blasphemies* (1806), an edition of *Barclay's Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1815), and *A Brief Intimation Respecting the Attributes of the Divine Being* (1816) amongst others.

<sup>29</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Petition To my Cousin T. Harrison Queens College', 'An evening Thought address'd to her much admired cousin L Harrison', 'J- S- Journey from Esher to London', and 'To Lydia Harrison', 1794, pp.223-30.

<sup>30</sup> See *Ibid.*, 'An Address to Hans Hamilton M.P. On behalf of the Injured Africans', 1806, p.380.

<sup>31</sup> See *Ibid.*, 'Soliloquy supposed to be written by Marie Antoniette [sic] just before her separation from the Dauphin', 1793, p.209.

<sup>32</sup> See Vol.1, Prose, 'Progress of Infidelity', 1798, p.21 (p.23).

<sup>33</sup> See *Ibid.*, 'Some Account of Remarkable deliverances experienced by friends during the disturbances of 1796 and 1798', p.160.

<sup>34</sup> *Dublin Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*, 1800, p.25, lists Nathaniel Card as a merchant, address 16 Summer-hill, Dublin.

<sup>35</sup> Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes 1795-1806. Ref: MM II A16. At the Meeting on 14 October 1800, Thomas Fayle and Jonas Stott were appointed to see Nathaniel Card and Mary Birkett regarding their intention to marry, and offer advice, as 'the Society hath from time to time discouraged such marriages'. On 11 November, Jonas Stott, in his report back to the Meeting, mentioned that this had been necessary because the couple were second cousins. He said 'such advice was given them as the Friends under the appointment thought necessary, and were enabled to give - it is concluded not necessary to proceed any further, in this matter, at present'. A short time afterwards, on 10 February 1801, they were 'allowed to proceed to marry'.

<sup>36</sup> Dublin Meeting Digest Register of Marriages, 1801, Marriage of Nathaniel Card and Mary Birkett. Preparations for a Quaker marriage at this time were quite lengthy, involving several applications and appearances before, first, the Women's Meeting, and then the Men's. For their marriage to have taken place only one month after the Meeting's permission was given, Mary and Nathaniel must have made all their preparations while they awaited formal consent.

<sup>37</sup> Dublin Meeting Digest Register of Marriages, 1801, entry for Marriage of Nathaniel Card and Mary Birkett states that Nathaniel's parents were Nathaniel and Eleanor Card of the City of Dublin. The Card Family Bible now in the possession of descendant, James Clarke, carries a



partial genealogy of the family in several hands, commencing with that of the major contributor, Samuel Card (1649-1732), son of Ralph Card. It has the following entry: 'Nathaniel Son of Thos L.\* & Rebecca Card - Married to Eleanor Beckett. Cheshire' - entry made by William Card (1802-1867), son of Nathaniel and Mary Birkett Card, in a King James Bible (London: Moses Aaron, 1672), Sheet 6. \*This is actually an error, this Nathaniel's father was almost certainly not Thos L. but yet another Nathaniel Card – see note at bottom of Family Tree 2 in this thesis, p.xxii.

It has not proved possible to trace exactly how Nathaniel and Mary were cousins, but Nathaniel's mother Eleanor's maiden name - Beckett – is similar to Birkett. Given the erratic spelling of the period, Beckett (sometimes spelt without the final 't') and Birkett might in fact be the same surname. At least one Becket was in the same line of business as Mary's father – tallow chandling. Nathaniel's maternal grandfather, Stephen Becket, a surgeon and apothecary, had John Becket, probably a relative, stand surety with him for his marriage by licence to Eleanor Hurst at Middlewich in the diocese of Chester (1748). John Becket's occupation is listed on the licence as 'chandler'. (Applying to the bishop for a licence was a means toward speedy marriage, avoiding the need for banns to be read in church. Nathaniel's parents also married by licence.)

<sup>38</sup> Description of Chester in G. Cole and J. Roper, *The British Atlas: Comprising a Complete Set of County Maps, of England and Wales; with a General Map of Navigable Rivers and Canals; and the Plans of Cities and Principal Towns* (Vernor and Hood, 1801) included in Ashley Baynton-Williams, *Town and City Maps of the British Isles 1800-1855* (London: Studio Editions, 1992), pp.22-23.

<sup>39</sup> Some are baptised or buried elsewhere. Nathaniel's great-grandfather, also Nathaniel, was baptised at Clonmel in 1706 by his great uncle, the Reverend John Shaw, as was another brother, Samuel, while their sister Hannah was buried in Dublin in 1716. An aunt of these siblings, Hannah (1689-1742), is interred with her husband John Cuthbert (d.1763) in the vault near the communion table at Ballygall along with at least one of their children. Unfortunately, the St Michael's Parish Registers were destroyed as they were deposited with the Dublin Public Record Office and burnt in the fire there in 1922. However, some of the records (Baptisms 1749-1872, Marriages 1750-1852, Burials 1750-1802) survive through their publication in a periodical entitled *The Irish Builder* in its 1891 issues. It was hoped to fill in some gaps in the Family Bible genealogy, relating to the latter eighteenth century, from this source but only four burials were found: Samuel Card Esq. on 23 May 1754 and Joseph Card Esq. on 10 June 1754 (15 November 1891 issue), also Ann Card from Jervis Street on 20 November 1772 and Mary Card 'from the country' on 29 January 1793 (15 December 1891 issue). Relatives named Samuel and Joseph Card are recorded in the Family Bible as having died in 1755.

<sup>40</sup> Card Family Bible (hand uncertain - perhaps that of Hannah Card, née Binyon, wife of Mary's son, Nathaniel Card).

<sup>41</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Nathl. Card', 1799, p.255.

<sup>42</sup> Dublin, Historical Library of Society of Friends, Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes 1795-1806, Library Ref: MM II A16.

<sup>43</sup> *Dublin Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*, 1800, lists Ralph Card as a wine merchant at 10 Aungier Street. The exact relationship of this Ralph Card to Nathaniel is unknown, but generations of male Cards were called Ralph, if they were not called Nathaniel or Samuel, so it is safe to assume some kinship. Parts of Francis Card's estate were auctioned off to pay his debts in 1797, after his death. (Dublin Registry of Deeds, Dudley Ackland of Pembroke and others and Francis James Card of Dublin, wine cooper, deceased, 12 January 1797, Deed no. 508 53 327884.) That this Francis James Card was a relation is evidenced by a deed whereby another Francis James Card of York Street, perhaps his son, together with John Few, bought a lease on a 'brick dwelling-house' at the corner of Blessington Street in Upper Dorset Street from Eleanor Card, widow (possibly Nathaniel Card's mother) by request of John and Elizabeth Harricks for £150. (Elizabeth Harricks (1780-1844) was Nathaniel Card's niece, daughter of his brother, Thomas Ligon Card.) The deed was witnessed by John Thurloe Card, gentleman, noted as being Eleanor's son. (Dublin Registry of Deeds, Memorial of Indented Deed of Assignment, 22 November 1817, original deed of settlement dated 12 January 1816, Deed no. 724 187 494522.) The Card Family Bible also carries the following: 'On the fifth of May 1872 at the residence of Isabella Angela Card youngest daughter of the late Francis Card of York Street Dublin' [page cut].

<sup>44</sup> Dublin Registry of Deeds, Deed of Mortgage, 4 July 1806, between Eleanor Card and Robert



Shaw of Dublin, Deed no. 581 499 395031. Eleanor Card had not owned Mount Brown very long - the deed states that it was lately leased by former owner John Bradstreet to an Edward Redmond but gives no dates.

<sup>45</sup> Later, in 1837, at the marriage of his son in Manchester, Nathaniel's occupation was recorded as 'yeoman' (Marriage Certificate, Nathaniel Card the Younger and Hannah Binyon the Younger, 23 November 1837, now in the possession of James Clarke.)

<sup>46</sup> Dublin Registry of Deeds. In October 1800, Nathaniel let No. 16 Summer-hill, with its yard and stables, for a 980 year term to an attorney named John Norris for an annual rent of £80 (Deed no. 532 125 348371). In 1802, he and John Norris in turn leased it (now called 'a new house') to Thomas Smith (Deed no. 541 523 358374). In 1818, after Mary's death, Nathaniel sold No 57(now 54) Balton Street in the parish of St Mary's for £150 for the remainder of a 55 year term that had commenced on 1 May 1800, subject to a yearly rent of £50 (Memorial of Assignment dated 18 July 1818, Nathaniel Card, merchant, and James Twigg, linen factor, 24 July 1818, Deed no. 730 322 498257).

<sup>47</sup> Dublin Registry of Deeds, Deeds nos. 541 556 358450 and 545 179 359033. (That this Nathaniel Card was Mary's father-in-law, not husband, is indicated by mention that he had held this land under mortgage in trust for Ephraim Hutchison from 1787 - Mary's husband would have been only twelve years old at that time.)

<sup>48</sup> Dublin Registry of Deeds, Deed of Surrender, Nathaniel Card and Hans Hamilton of Sheepwell, re. land at Hackettstown, 1 February 1802, Deed no. 546 544 361322. The yearly rent was £30.

<sup>49</sup> Dublin Registry of Deeds, Captain Nathaniel Ligon Card and the Right Honourable David La Touche, 30 October 1799, Deed no. 518 296 341760. The yearly rent for the property, Grange Melton in Kildare, was £222. (One of Nathaniel's ancestors had married a Rebecca Ligon, daughter of Captain Ligon, in 1734, and thereafter some family members were called Ligon Card, including Nathaniel's own brother Thomas Ligon Card. Later, a Nathaniel Ligon Card sold on mortgaged land to an Elizabeth Madden (Deed no. 677 68 465913). The Madden name crops up in the Card Family Bible.)

<sup>50</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, journal entries '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 24<sup>th</sup> 1805' to '4<sup>th</sup> Mo 4<sup>th</sup> 1805', pp.40-51.

<sup>51</sup> See Ibid., journal entries '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 31<sup>st</sup> 1805', '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1805', '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 27<sup>th</sup> 1805', pp.56-57, 64 (p.65), 66.

<sup>52</sup> See Ibid., journal entries '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 18<sup>th</sup> 1814', '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1805', '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 27<sup>th</sup> 1805', '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 21 1801', pp. 93, 64, 66, 32.

<sup>53</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'Seventh Day Night', undated, p.432.

<sup>54</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 28<sup>th</sup> 1806', p.67.

<sup>55</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.323-62.

<sup>56</sup> See Ibid., 'To Hope Written after the death of my beloved Daughter', 1808, p.416; 'To E. Dawson On behalf of the Aged & Infirm Female Servants', 1809, p.420; 'To the Same - for a friend.', 1809, p.422.

<sup>57</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 21 1799', p.30.

<sup>58</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'Lines to the memory of our late esteemed and justly valued Friend Joseph Williams', 1807, p.400.

<sup>59</sup> Dublin, Historical Library of Society of Friends, Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 15 December 1807. Mary's activities outlined in the following paragraph, and in Appendix 5, are taken from the Minute books of this Meeting from this date to 1817.

<sup>60</sup> For explanation of Preparative, Monthly and Quarterly Meetings, and of roles such as that of overseer, see the 'Glossary of Quaker Terms' in the prefatory material to this thesis. There were three Quarterly Meetings in Ireland: Leinster, Munster and Ulster.

<sup>61</sup> *The Annual Monitor, [ . . . ] or obituary of the Members of the Society of Friends for 1819* (York and London), p.14.

<sup>62</sup> See Appendix 5, section on the ministry.

<sup>63</sup> See Vol.2, Poetry, p.375 (General Daily Free School), p.439 (School and Repository), pp.420-22 - also Vol. 1, Prose, p.182 (Asylum for Elderly Female Servants), p.216 (North Strand Charter School), p.384 (Incurable Hospital).

<sup>64</sup> Dublin Meeting Digest Registers of Births (1802 - Birth of William Card, 1803 - Birth of Nathaniel Card, 1805 - Birth Nathaniel Card (2), 1807 - Birth of Sarah Card, 1809 - Birth of Mary Card, 1810 - Birth of Sarah Card (2), 1812 - Birth of Hannah Card, 1815 - Birth of George Card) and Deaths (1804 - Death of Nathaniel Card (1), 1808 - Death of Sarah Card (1), 1811 - Death of Sarah Card (2), 1816 - Death of George Card).

<sup>65</sup> Quakers usually married rather later than the general population, many Quaker women being twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. This was owing to an emphasis on what Vann and Eversley call 'prudent marriage' (p.243): efforts to ensure the couple were suited and sufficiently secure financially, and the fact that all proposed marriages were subject to the approval of Monthly Meeting. The latter part of the eighteenth century witnessed a rise in fertility generally, and a decline in child mortality partly owing to better sanitation and medicine. In London, infant mortality fell by half over the century. Patterns for Ireland were similar, though with a higher fertility rate than in England. But fertility rose and mortality decreased even more quickly amongst Quakers, the lower mortality levels perhaps owing to 'class, income, lifestyle, and practical knowledge' factors (p.254) – sensible living, good diet, medical knowledge and attitudes, for example, a lack of religious scruples about inoculation. Irish Quakers actually had a lower level of infant mortality than English Friends, and lower than the general Irish population. See Vann and Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death*, pp.240-55.

<sup>66</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'Written two days after the birth of my second son', 1803, p.319.

<sup>67</sup> See particularly Vol. 1, Prose, journal entries '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 11 1804', '6 Mo 13 - 1804', '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 4<sup>th</sup> 1805', '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 10<sup>th</sup> 1805', '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 5<sup>th</sup> 1806', '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 8<sup>th</sup> 1806', '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 28<sup>th</sup> 1806', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1806', pp.37, 61, 62, 66, 67, 68.

<sup>68</sup> See *ibid.*, Letter 22, to an uncle, '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 7<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.127 (p.128) and journal entry '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 24<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.81.

<sup>69</sup> See *ibid.*, 'Mary Card[']s Will', '3d Mo 19<sup>th</sup> 1817', p.186 and Letter 43, 'To . . .', '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 16<sup>th</sup> 1817', p.154.

<sup>70</sup> *Annual Monitor*, 1819, p.14.

<sup>71</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, 'Geo Harrison Birkett's Account of the last illness and death of his sister Mary Card.', 1817, p.188.



## CHAPTER 2 A DUBLIN QUAKER GIRLHOOD

Like many eighteenth-century visitors before him, what most struck one tourist at the beginning of the nineteenth century was Dublin's 'extraordinary contrast of poverty and magnificence'. Nearing the city through 'suburbs' of turf-roofed 'hovels', around which 'dirty children are huddled – not one half [. . .] decently clad', the houses improved until:

on reaching Sackville-street, you imagine yourself in one of the most elegant cities in Europe. In walking over the city, the Irish Parliament House, (now the Bank,) the Exchange, the quay along the Liffey, and several of the public squares, excite the stranger's admiration. There is no part of London which can compare with the centre of Dublin in beauty and magnificence. But, in turning the eye from the architectural splendour which surrounds him, upon the crowds which flow along the streets, the stranger will be struck with the motley nature of the throng. Here is a lass almost buoyant with satin and feathers; there is a trembling girl of eighteen, [. . .] drawing around her the poor rags which, with all her care, scarce cover her body; here is an *exquisite*, perfuming the air as he passes, with rings on his fingers, [. . .] and a gemmed quizzing-glass at his side; there is an honest fellow [. . .] whose feet, summer or winter, know not the luxury of shoe or stocking, [. . .] and, [. . .] while the Lieutenant dashes by in a coach and four, the stranger gazes at the gallant and costly pageant, while he empties his pocket to satisfy the throng of beggars who pray him, in the name of God, to give them a penny.<sup>1</sup>

Remarking in 1799 on these same 'extremes' – 'streets [. . .] crowded with craving wretches, whose distresses are shocking to humanity' and public buildings and squares 'magnificent beyond measure' – another visitor, George Cooper, had bewailed Dublin's lack of 'moderately dimensioned houses, inhabited by the middling classes of people'. He asserted that in Ireland there was only 'rich and poor' without 'any intermediate class'.<sup>2</sup> In fact, of course, beside a numerous class of wealthy merchants Dublin was home to vast numbers of lesser merchants, tradesmen and professionals. The decades of Mary Birkett's girlhood and youth in Dublin saw not only the heyday of Irish Protestant self-government, before the 1798 Rebellion and subsequent union with Britain in 1801, but a huge expansion in trade and the eventual replacement of an aristocratic elite by a commercial one. As L. M. Cullen has shown, Quakers played a significant part quite disproportionate to their small numbers.<sup>3</sup>

The years of Henry Grattan's Parliament, often termed the Protestant Ascendancy, from 1782 to 1800 were in many ways the most prosperous Ireland had yet known.<sup>4</sup> The century had seen population increase dramatically as well as trade, and Dublin had become a grand capital city of over 180,000 people, its port with its spacious

quays second only to London, noted for its Palladian architecture such as Trinity College Library (1710), the Parliament House (1727) and Leinster House (1745).<sup>5</sup> Building reached its zenith in the last decades of the century, and Mary would have seen the laying out of many of Dublin's elegant Georgian terraces and squares and the erection of impressive public buildings like the Custom House (1791) and the Four Courts (1790s, completed 1802), captured beautifully in James Malton's famous aquatints first produced in 1797.<sup>6</sup> The winter was Dublin's 'fashionable season', when Parliament sat and its Members, along with other nobility and gentry, were in residence. Entertainment was lavish with balls, plays, concerts and public displays like fireworks so that 'the gaiety of Dublin [. . .] exceeds all description'.<sup>7</sup> Young 'bloods' gambled recklessly in the gentlemen's clubs, the smart set strolled along the Beaux Walk, St Stephen's Green, and grand carriages paraded round the North Circular Road with its fine views of the city and its bay. In the summer, when the nobility returned to their country estates, and the professional or commercial families who could afford it to their seaside villas, the city assumed a quieter aspect. Nevertheless, the bustle of commerce (50% of Ireland's foreign trade passed through Dublin), its busy shopping malls, numerous coffee-houses and beautiful public gardens ensured the city remained a vibrant metropolis.<sup>8</sup>

Yet many of these same streets were the haunt of robbers, drunks and prostitutes, even in daylight. Riots and vicious fights like those between the Liberty-boys (weavers from the Liberties district) and the Ormond-boys (butchers' lads from Ormond-market, near the Birketts' home on Jervis Street), often with Trinity students joining in, were not infrequent. In May 1790, one battle lasted all Saturday along Ormond-Quay and, being unresolved, continued on the Monday, the city authorities too afraid to intervene.<sup>9</sup> Sanitary conditions were appalling and overcrowding rife in the parishes of the old city where industry concentrated as the fashionable areas spread south-east and north. St Michael's, where Mary's cousins the Cards lived, in the heart of the Liberties, was one of the 'most crowded' according to one contemporary estimate with 439 people per acre (almost sixteen to a house) compared to the average 153.<sup>10</sup> Most trades had their own areas – brewing, distilling and sugar refining near the port, other trades including weaving and candle manufacture in the Liberties – where noxious fumes and pollution were constant hazards. Despite economic expansion, trade depressions could throw hundreds out of work while the Rebellion and the war with France led to fluctuations in the latter 1790s.<sup>11</sup> This, combined with low wages for those in work and exorbitant rents, resulted in unimaginable poverty and misery, often exacerbated by recourse to alcohol.<sup>12</sup> One English visitor bemoaned the dearth of



good inns,<sup>13</sup> but there was no shortage of inferior establishments where the poor could attempt to drown their sorrows. The Quaker Dr Ruddy, writing mid-century, counted '2000 alehouses, 300 taverns, and 1200 brandy shops', while in 1782 sights of intoxication were so commonplace that when a woman knocked herself unconscious falling from a window, she lay unassisted all night as passers-by just assumed she was drunk.<sup>14</sup>

Quakers formed an endogamous, tight-knit, and ordered community within this contrasting picture, marked apart by their plain dress (usually grey without embellishment, though not all Friends adhered strictly to this), their archaic speech, sober habits and serious industriousness. Quaker minister Thomas Shillitoe informed Edward Wakefield that Friends in Ireland by 1812 numbered about 6000, against 22,000 in England.<sup>15</sup> Other estimates put their population even lower – perhaps 5000 or under, up to 750 households.<sup>16</sup> After Mountmellick and Cork, Dublin held the largest Quaker community, mostly merchants, traders and manufacturers.<sup>17</sup> The majority lived in the Liberties – the old trading area already mentioned, to the west of the Castle and St Patrick's Cathedral – worshipping there at Meath Street Meeting House or at Sycamore Alley (where Mary was married), on the south bank of the Liffey nearby. Despite such hectic and unsalubrious surroundings, the Quaker way of life and their status in the larger community tended to endow Quaker children with a strong sense of identity and relative security, particularly if they belonged to families of position amongst Friends. As Maurice Wigham points out: 'If your grandfather had been imprisoned' for his faith, 'your aunt' was a minister, 'and your father' a respected Friend and businessman, 'you could not feel yourself a nobody'.<sup>18</sup> The Quaker family was itself a cohesive and supportive unit, at its best creating an environment where each member was cherished. One visitor to a Quaker merchant's home in 1818 found that: 'The impression left on my memory of these visits was the love and harmony that characterized the family; there was nothing of lightness and frivolity, but a happy cheerfulness that contributed to the enjoyment of all who were present'.<sup>19</sup>

Another side to this, however, was a keen sense of difference that could give rise to insecurity, heightened by being more vulnerable and permanently alien than English Friends. Quakers in Ireland retained their English identification, maintaining links with and often marrying Friends from across the water and, given the much greater tensions between Catholic and Protestant in Ireland, were in a more ambiguous position – seeing themselves as anti-papist while sympathising with the Catholic poor, and not fully part of the Protestant hegemony.<sup>20</sup> This insecurity was perhaps why Irish

Quakerism tended to be more rigid than its English counterpart in its efforts to maintain itself. From the late seventeenth century, there was more emphasis on minutiae with streams of directives issuing from Meetings for Discipline aimed at preserving simplicity in the home, business, dress, and manners. In 1703 even bells on children's whistles were disallowed.<sup>21</sup> As the eighteenth century wore on, many left the Society while those who stayed varied greatly in their adherence to these regulations. As in England, by the end of the century those who followed the rules strictly were called 'plain' while those who did not were 'gay'. The experience of a Quaker childhood could thus vary greatly between families even if some values, and experience such as attendance at Meeting, were shared. All Quaker children were expected to sit quiet and immobile through a two or three hour Meeting for Worship on Sundays, but devout families might attend twice and again on a weekday. These meetings were often entirely silent. In 1770, Dr Ruddy recorded 'twenty-two successive meetings with only one break for spoken ministry'.<sup>22</sup> In a plain household, many common leisure pursuits – music, drama, painting, games of chance (even children's card games) and many sports - were anathema. Girls, as in other families, were set to sewing as a useful craft that developed self-discipline, but decorative work might be limited to embroidering samplers with religious platitudes. Reading was usually confined to the Bible, pious texts and general knowledge provided it contained nothing to 'pollute' the mind, while novels were banned completely. Meals would be uncomplicated, the house devoid of 'superfluous' ornament (an oft-quoted saying was that the only pictures found in strict Quaker homes were either of a slave ship or Ackworth School), and plain dress could become an obsession, even to the size of buttons or style of stitching.<sup>23</sup>

In most homes, however, varying degrees of this simplicity obtained, and the domestic lives of some 'gay' friends differed little from families of similar social standing in society generally. A significant proportion of Irish Friends were very wealthy indeed and keen to display it. Quaker travelling minister William Savery, visiting Ireland in 1797-98, wrote:

Friends in Ireland seem to live like princes of the earth more than in any country I have seen – their gardens, horses, carriages, and various conveniences, with the abundance of their tables, appeared to me to call for much more gratitude and humility than in some instances, it is to be feared, is the case.<sup>24</sup>

Sarah Greer came from a well-off and influential Irish Quaker family. Her autobiography was written expressly to discredit Quakerism, after she effectually



rejected it in middle-age and was disowned, but its account of her childhood illustrates both a sense of pride (superiority) and feelings of shame (inferiority) that were probably experienced by many Friends' children. Her happy early years, 'surrounded with every conceivable comfort and luxury', were first shadowed when she 'became aware of [her family's] Quakerism'. Overhearing an orange-seller, calling at the house, explain to her companion why the children's dress was 'ugly' despite the family's wealth, Sarah was upset and puzzled because their dress was the best in Meeting:

Our first day frocks were made of beautifully fine cambric, with rows of herringbone, exquisitely worked, over each of the six tucks. Our Friends' bonnets were of the richest and most delicate drab silk; and our silk tippets, to match, had a row of stitching over the broad hem, instead of the plain running.

Failing to understand her father's explanation, 'that "plainness of speech, behaviour and apparel," was a cross which Friends were given to bear in the sight of the world, as a testimony against the vain fashions and vanities of life', she nevertheless felt comforted and 'rather elevated, at the idea of superiority over the rest of the world, and proud of having a cross to bear'. Travelling for the first time to a non-Quaker day school, however, her 'elat[ion] when mounted on a well appointed donkey, and attended by the old coachman, carrying my books' was soon deflated by the humiliating jeers of peasant boys: 'Oh! look! there is a little "thee and thou" on a donkey!', 'what a bonnet!', 'Thee and Thou the Quaker's cow'. In the face of more gentle mocking by her classmates, and her own desire for their acceptance, she gradually relinquished distinctive Quakerisms with the collusion of a mother already doubtful of their validity, so that only on going to Meeting did she have 'to put on the cold, stiff badge of the Society'.<sup>25</sup>

How much more complex must have been Mary's sense of identity, that of a child transplanted from a country she would always regard as home to one that she initially conceived as a place of 'tumultous folly' and 'dire discord', even if, a little later, she could welcome a cousin back to an Ireland 'where plenty, honour[,] Peace, combine'.<sup>26</sup> Her childhood poems tell us little specific about her family circumstances. Yet we can build a picture through what she says about her friends' homes, the ideals she expresses, her wishes for the future and occasionally the communication of felt emotion as on her arrival in Dublin. She too highlights its contrasts - its 'towers & grandeur [. . .] please the taste & mind' yet 'here the thief & robber oft alarms' - and she longs for England, constructing it as an ideal site of 'quietness & rest', of 'virtue, peace & usefulness', all those qualities she had learned to value most. Rather

poignantly, she compares her sensations to that of a caged songbird deprived 'while young' of its freedom in the forest.<sup>27</sup> And though her surviving writings are essentially an Anglo-Irish collection, commenced on arrival in Ireland and written thereafter from an Irish location or a perspective formed by that location, Ireland - the geographical space from which she wrote – would remain forever other, her relationship to it ambivalent. However much she later espoused the cause of Irish manufacture, addressed the 'Hibernian fair' as her sisters when urging them to reject slave-produced goods or took pride in Ireland's non-participation in the slave trade, England was always her beloved 'natal shore' and the source of patriotic feeling.<sup>28</sup>

Mary's early poems evidence that within a couple of years of settling in Dublin, the Birketts developed friendships with the Pikes (a family of wool merchants, linen drapers and bankers) and the Forbes (also merchants and leading Friends). Mary was particularly close to sisters Debby and Betsy Pike, and began a long friendship with Hannah Wilson Forbes ('HWF' in the poems). Her family mixed socially, then, with some of Dublin's prominent Quaker families and a glimpse into their lifestyle is afforded by the first of Mary's poems to Hannah (1787).<sup>29</sup> Visual art was certainly not anathema in the Forbes home where current fashionable taste found expression in the erection of a substantial summerhouse, a 'retreat by bounty all array'd', in which the pictures hung included, above the door, *Andromache and Hecuba Weeping over the Ashes of Hector* by the popular artist, Angelica Kauffman. As remarked in the headnote to this poem, ownership of such a picture (first published as a print in 1772) represented a considerable outlay and signified a sense of taste and fashion. Mary's poem manifests her recognition of this in singling the painting out for praise, and describing its subject. In the 1790s we find her thanking Hannah for some paintings Hannah had herself produced, in a stylised manner, of natural and rural scenes: one depicts a little girl holding a hay rake, only 'for diversion rural[,], out of play'.<sup>30</sup> Not only, then, were contemporary works of art an admired feature of the Forbes home, but painting as a feminine accomplishment was actively encouraged. Other poems too show Mary's friends acquiring those accomplishments that would both ensure a girl was seen as a young lady and enhance her marriageability: music, singing, and fancy needlework (in a word-puzzle simply entitled 'Enigma', a needle (the answer) announces 'I join my art to form th'accomplished maid').<sup>31</sup> French is not mentioned, but Mary certainly had some as French phrases appear occasionally in her later verse.<sup>32</sup> Just as in society at large, these accomplishments were not ends in themselves, but for display.<sup>33</sup> In verses addressed to the Forbes and another friend, Debby Watson, the qualities attributed to Hannah's brother James can be conferred



upon others – generosity, justice, freedom of manners - while those for which Hannah earns praise mainly give delight or cause her to be gazed upon. 'Charming in the graces three' (gracefulness, beauty and joy), she has 'polish'd manners', and 'elegance refined', 'join'd to a form of natures fairest mould' so that she 'Charm'd all who saw & every bosom fired'. 'Thus shone Lucillia' - a pseudonym given her because, 'meekness' being another desirable characteristic, Hannah 'shuns' praise, yet probably chosen for its association with Lucina, the goddess of light. As for Debby (pseudonym Miranda):

[. . .] each accomplish'd art, our sex's pride  
Was hers – her pencil with Lucilias vied  
And when historic lore inspired her tongue  
Unnumber'd graces on her accents hung.

The mention of 'historic lore' shows that academic learning was not to be neglected, and Hannah also had a 'cultivated mind' and 'transendant[sic] sense', while 'conscious innocence [. . .] crown'd the whole'.<sup>34</sup> Concern with feminine elegance and show was not to lead to vanity, affectation or other forms of impurity. This was where girls from such families (and we can include Mary as it is clear she moved in the same social milieu), poised between the worlds of Quaker values and middle class aspirations to gentility, had to negotiate quite complex tensions in their social consciousness. Writing 'On true Beauty', Mary warns against trusting outward attractiveness - 'Tis not a fair and snowy skin/Can prove that virtue dwells within'. 'True Beauty', the genuine 'all accomplish'd fair', is 'known to few' and dwells with 'inoffensive virtues' – implicitly, then, she does not draw attention to herself. Yet the 'receipt', or recipe, given to achieve true beauty emphasises the visual to such a degree that the whole external woman, or at least those external aspects over which she can exercise control – dress, manner, emotional expression and action – become emblematic of some of the internalised values that informed construction of a Quaker femininity:

First let in all your dress – your mien  
A Modest neatness still be seen  
In broils or quarrels ne[']er engage  
Let love be seen instead of rage  
In all your acts let truth appear  
And innocence be ever near.

Then 'let decency your features guide' and 'modest charity be seen', so 'will be still display'd/A beauteous fair and all accomplished maid' (my underlining).<sup>35</sup> If we just consider one paradox here - the joining of modesty, denoting humility and retirement, with the necessity that it be seen, exemplified publicly in neatness and charity – we



catch a glimpse of the contradictions inherent in the careful path these girls had to tread in presenting themselves to view while simultaneously demonstrating a Quakerly diffidence.

Neatness was a key characteristic - no ostentation or frippery, but order, balance, cleanliness, an aesthetic of purity in which everything had its allotted purpose or place. And women had to be useful, not just charming. In 'A Wish', Mary, aged thirteen, outlines her ideal future in what is, effectively, a prayer. Her vision of 'a peaceful cot' retired from 'the giddy world', of moderate but comfortable living ('just enough, contented & to spare') reverberates with this concept of 'neatness' but is also coupled with purposeful activity – teaching and aiding the poor. Two features, however, stand out: specific mention of the income she would need (fifty pounds a year after rent) and no mention of husband or children. It is not envisaged where the income might come from (though her arrival at this figure indicates money was discussed at home, and this quite moderate sum bandied about as sufficient), but the emphasis is definitely towards independence and the tense always first person singular.<sup>36</sup> We must be careful not to read too much into this, yet it certainly shows a desire for autonomous yet serviceable living in which the authority of God figures (this is the life she wishes to have, but only if God wills) but that of a husband does not.

A dual stress on self-government and service was present in the Quaker promotion of 'usefulness'. 'A Dialogue between Charlotte & Maria on Poverty & Riches' contrasts the day of a young lady of fashion (Maria) with that of Charlotte, a girl from a 'poor' family (or rather more moderate means) in which simplicity, industry and religious devotion govern all aspects of daily life.<sup>37</sup> The first lifestyle leads to ennui and emptiness, the second to happiness and self-worth. Attitudes to charity are also contrasted. Attempting a definition of 'true charity', Charlotte asserts that alms-giving is simply not enough - genuine compassion must be felt and all in one's power done for the poor 'to promote their interest'. Action, then, must be based on feeling and expressed in authentic service. Quite clearly, however, though Charlotte calls her own family 'poor' to distance them from the affluence of Maria's, the 'poor' qualifying for this charity are at a much further remove. Poverty as a concept, therefore, is relative and can be deployed to serve different ends. And though Mary shows a familiarity with the way young women in 'society' lived (her picture is stereotypical and may have been based on hearsay but she could have known girls whose lives followed this pattern), one feels that she may in Charlotte's temperate, middle-income lifestyle and routine be replicating aspects of the Birkett household (though it may represent an ideal).



Charlotte rises early, takes a bracing walk before breakfast followed by Bible reading, spends the morning engaged in tasks about the house or self-improvement through 'the useful arts of writing[,] reading[,] sewing' before a 'wholesome' dinner, family worship in the evening and another Bible reading before bed. The grouping together of writing, reading and sewing under one umbrella as 'useful arts' is significant.

Mary calls her first poem to 'HWF' a 'little task of care' and asks Hannah to 'excuse the muse who strives to please'.<sup>38</sup> And her juvenilia is best understood as a collection of such tasks - care in production (learning the art of versifying) and care not only in pleasing, but comforting, encouraging, exhorting, thanking, sharing – in short performing a service. With few exceptions, they can be categorised into three groupings which nevertheless overlap and intersect with one another: religious verse – hymns, prayers, and reflections, occasional verse composed upon a specific event such as a death, wishing someone a safe journey or receiving a gift, and verse with a moral purpose either directed toward her siblings and friends or extolling Quakerly virtues like truth, innocence or simple living idealised in rural retirement.

Each type has a clear social function, occasional poems most obviously, but religious reflections too would probably have been shown to teachers, parents or shared within the family, while moral verse works to reinforce desired behaviour and attitudes.

Siblings and other children are exhorted to be dutiful toward their parents, avoid bad company and vice, be wary of flattery, subjugate the will, and keep the prospect of eternity ever in view. Today, when children are encouraged to express their emotions, voice their own opinions and assert themselves in competition with others from an early age, the sheer degree of self-suppression or negation involved in these unrelenting injunctions to obedience, control of the passions, self-denial, humility and resignation as well as the essential passivity of the qualities to be cultivated – mildness, gentleness, detachment, serenity, docility – are disconcerting and alien. Eliza Woodward, for instance, is urged to grow like the willow, bending toward 'truth and virtue' as the tree does to water.<sup>39</sup> The weeping willow is also an appropriate image because poetry was a key component in resignatory strategies for coping with the suffering and death ever present, even in childrens' lives, to a degree difficult to comprehend today. Often written to her mother on the death of a brother or sister, or the parent of a lost friend, as a form of mutual condolence, Mary's poems of mourning usually follow a ritualistic, tripartite framework of comfort (the loved one is now with God in a far better place), memorialisation (through idealising the deceased in line with desirable qualities) and message (the constancy of God's love or the brevity of all

human life, the need to trust Providence and prepare so that we too may receive a heavenly reward).<sup>40</sup>

Like stitching the samplers on which Quaker girls spent so much of their time, poetry, then, was created according to patterns to internalise and send particular, but usually familiar, messages that reinforced frameworks of value and belief. In other words, it constituted a process of cultural inscription. And poetry as a useful art could be learned, its techniques, ideas and themes absorbed, through reading and emulation. Before considering Mary's reading, we need to touch on how the verse forms in which Mary participated worked. To appreciate what they aimed to achieve we must discard the criterion we tend to use immediately today in judging a poem's worth – originality – and replace it (at the risk of over-simplification) with communality. Essentially, poetry was not supposed to surprise its readers by showing them something they were previously unaware of, far less challenge or disturb them. Rather it was to evoke a shared response by drawing on sensitivities assumed to exist in all people, embodying what was evident to, or intuitively sensed by, anyone with properly formed taste and understanding, and affirming commonly held values. This, of course, reflected neo-classical theories of art predominant in the eighteenth century, promoted by Joshua Reynolds in painting and Samuel Johnson in literature, which envisaged that everyone responded to art similarly, demanded it should conform to agreed rules, and saw the highest role of the artist as imitative not of his own individual experience but of a shared and generalised reality.<sup>41</sup> This is as true of the poetry of sensibility as of neo-classical forms. Thus Mary's verse, like much eighteenth-century poetry, including the sentimental, invites recognition by deployment of stock imagery, diction, characterisation and classical or Biblical allusions and traditional verse metre or structure – features that marked poetry off from prose but were also immediately understood and appreciated by all those versed, even moderately, in literature. Indeed, much pleasure in reading poetry arose from recognising these, thereby also confirming the reader's own sense of taste, and a writer, far from being thought guilty of plagiarism or affectation, gained credit from drawing on the work of famous authors. These practices essentially constituted, for both writer and readers, participation in a literary community.<sup>42</sup> Hence, we find Mary, even as a very young child, trying her hand at verse forms such as the ode or the pastoral and using phrases gleaned from well-known authors like Pope, Milton and James Thomson.<sup>43</sup>

She had much material to choose from, for her reading was quite wide and also highly representative of the eighteenth century. She was steeped in the Bible, not only the



gospels and parts of the Old Testament that would have been familiar to most children who had received any sort of education - Eve as the source of death in the curse she brought upon mankind through her disobedience, Esau and Jacob's quarrel, the friendship of David and Jonathan, the sufferings of Job – but particular psalms and more obscure texts like the Book of Revelation and the story of Rahab who sheltered Israelite spies before the taking of Jericho.<sup>44</sup> She sometimes follows the actual biblical text closely in her poems, effectively transposing sections into verse – perhaps something she was encouraged to do in the schoolroom.<sup>45</sup> Early accustomed to the use of classical mythology (the north wind is Boreas, the sea Neptune even in her most juvenile verse), she undoubtedly read a great deal of contemporary poetry that gave her ideas, forms to copy and stylised names to use like Damon, Flavilla, and Vernold.<sup>46</sup> Very influential was the poetry of nature, melancholia or sensibility represented in Young's hugely popular *Night Thoughts* (1742-45), the Gaelic bardic verse popularised by James Macpherson as the poems of Ossian in the 1760s and 70s, Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* (1770) and Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-46). Other early reading included Shakespeare (despite the Quaker disapproval of drama), almost certainly Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs* (1720) (far more acceptable), Pope and Milton.<sup>47</sup> In the poetry of her late teens and early twenties, in the 1790s, the vastly increased range of references to classical mythology, knowledge of the contents of a classical education (such as Plato's 'good rules'), quotes or echoes from, again Thomson's *The Seasons* and Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, Thomas Gray (*Elegy in a Country Churchyard*), Alexander Pope (*The Dunciad*, *Essay on Man*, *The Rape of the Lock*), and possibly Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (*A Receipt to Cure the Vapours*) evidence not only the extension of her reading but the foundations that must have been laid down earlier in her education and at home.<sup>48</sup>

Such clear references in poems produced for family and social consumption surely mean that this reading was not only allowed but encouraged. It sits, too, with the evidence of feminine accomplishments, to situate Mary's family as 'gay' or liberal Friends. The enjoyment and practice of poetry was not necessarily unquakerly – it was generally considered acceptable, even praiseworthy, amongst many Friends. Indeed, some of Mary's relatives subscribed to editions of verse, interestingly by women.<sup>49</sup> Yet it was not entirely exempt from Quaker objections to the arts: detraction from religious or serious pursuits, dubious content that could tend to immorality, encouragement of self-aggrandisement or self-absorption. It could also stand accused of artificiality in its elevated diction and, like drama, of insincerity if it expressed emotions not actually felt. These objections could only be overcome if it was

contained within parameters that avoided these risks, served solely moral purposes and, most importantly, represented sincerity of feeling. In effect, it had to be subservient to contemporary Quaker ideology. This ideology, as exhibited in Mary's verses, shared with other 'serious Christians' (to borrow a term from Davidoff and Hall) a view of this life as preparation for the next, a battlefield on which humanity engages with vice and virtue in a struggle to gain the final victory – salvation or, more specifically, a place in heaven, the site of eternal peace. This is certainly much longed for as in this world there is nothing but 'sorrow, sin and woe'. But the concept of peace had particular connotations and complications in a pacifist sect that had rejected, and withdrawn in some ways from, 'the world'. If we take the values, attitudes and desired human qualities exhibited in Mary's childhood poems as a whole, the overall imperative is toward peace expressed in terms of harmony, unity, fullness or plenitude and contentment, and the avoidance of their opposite – discord. (This dichotomy is present from the depiction of England as a site of peace and virtue and Ireland of folly and discord in the first two poems and continues through her writing.) Peace is the supreme goal and value in this world as much as the next. As an ideological construct, it not only informs moral codes and behaviour but is also often linked with 'plenty' and therefore material comfort. Peace as an end in itself is certainly positive – most of us find peace preferable to friction and would wish to work towards it. Yet the kind of peace promulgated is often negative, characterised by absence (of conflict, of desire, even, ideally, of care) and retreat (to domesticity or the rural, away from all strife). Its enemies are all possible sources of division: pride, ambition, jealousy, envy, aggression, rebellion, even presumption or giving cause for offence. Mary's friends are sometimes delineated as 'patterns of virtue', or urged to become so - models that embody 'inoffensive virtues' like 'mildness', devoid of all traces of divisive or assertive 'vice'.<sup>50</sup> Her verse, like other forms of reading and writing, therefore played a key role in the inculcation of cultural codes.<sup>51</sup>

Reading, however, could become a site of temptation as much as permitted instruction. Reading as diversion, or enjoyable pastime, was sanctioned if also 'improving', but it always carried the risk of diversion, or deviation, from the authorised path. Novels were never really considered admissible.<sup>52</sup> Yet, at seventeen, Mary prefaced her published anti-slavery poem with a quotation from Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, a novel regarded by a large section of society generally as risqué and therefore inappropriate for modest young ladies.<sup>53</sup> The quotation does not mean she read the whole book – it is from the caged bird scene that became very well-known – and its inclusion in her published work would seem to show that the



quotation in itself carried no social stigma, yet it raises questions about the exact nature of her reading. Certainly in later life one of her keenest regrets is for what she came to regard as the transgressive reading of her youth, not only radical religious or philosophical works but works of the imagination which she held responsible for leading her from the path of 'rectitude'.<sup>54</sup> Mary's poem on the slave trade will be considered fully later, when looking at her late adolescent and adult verse, but a factor to note at this point is that the quotation from Sterne was probably legitimised by the anti-slavery sentiment it carried, its familiarity in association with the cause, and therefore the emotional chord it could strike in readers well versed in sensibility.

Such an appeal to feeling would also have been in keeping, because the Quaker concern with truth made sincerity of feeling all-important. In the practice of poetry, this often meant no division between the author and the speaker, or voice, in a poem (to take on a voice other than one's own would be too much like the drama). It is not surprising, then, that the majority of Mary's poetry, like the majority of her prose work, is in some sense autobiographical. And the verge of womanhood, her sixteenth birthday (28 December 1790), finds her interrogating her conscience over the previous year. After querying whether she had succumbed to vicious appetites, envy, malice, discord, covetousness, pride, or passion (paralleling most of the seven deadly sins), she continues with far greater emphasis:

Did e'er my hasty tongue from Reason stray  
 To our weak sex that dreadful fault they lay  
 Ah, hapless sex! what evils dost thou know  
 Tho' form'd a blessing, oft a curse below  
 For where the tongue usurps its hateful sway  
 Truth Reason Justice Virtue all give way  
 Look back my soull survey thy deeds again  
 And never let that little member reign.<sup>55</sup>

In a poem 'On Eve', Mary had queried why Eve should be blameable. She reasoned that the Fall enabled Christ's salvation - we can still be saved 'if we are good' - and our tribulations owing to our banishment from Eden will only make the joys of Heaven greater. Eve's actions were understandable in circumstances where all human beings would fall to temptation and, in any case, it was partly the fault of her guardian angel for leaving her unprotected.<sup>56</sup> Yet, at sixteen, Mary articulates the traditional view of the weakness of this foremother of all women who, lacking good sense, fell prey to the Serpent's wiles and brought evil and death into the world by tempting Adam. Despite Quaker insistence on spiritual equality, then, on women's ability to teach and preach, and Mary's own reasoning skills, her construction of herself as an emergent woman is

informed by this archetypal Eve, defective and irrational. And the weight she attaches to the overriding need to govern her tongue marks the centrality of this archetype for the expression, in speech or writing, of her female self.

It is appropriate for us, then, having explored the early influences that shaped her writing, to look more closely at processes of 'writing the self' by turning next to the section of his mother's work that her son attached priority to by placing it first in his collection – her spiritual autobiography.

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<sup>1</sup> From *Ancient & Modern Dublin* by William Curry, in *Dublin: A Traveller's Companion*, selected and introduced by Thomas and Valerie Pakenham (London; Constable, 1988), pp.321-22.

<sup>2</sup> See George Cooper, *Letters on the Irish Nation: written during a Visit to that Kingdom, in the Autumn of the Year 1799*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: J. White, 1801), pp.106-09. Cooper compares Ireland unfavourably with England where, in London, moderate houses for the middle classes 'compose the far greater part'. This aids his depiction of England as a site of equilibrium and social justice, as opposed to Ireland where a wealthy few tyrannize 'the great mass of the people'.

<sup>3</sup> See L. M. Cullen *Princes and Pirates, the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, 1783-1983* (Dublin: Dublin Chamber of Commerce, 1983) on the struggle between middle class merchants and manufacturers and the 'landed classes' or aristocracy for hegemony in Dublin in the latter eighteenth century. Cullen stresses the high level of Quaker and Catholic representation in the Chamber, and its predecessor, the Committee of Merchants (pp.35-36), the radicalism of this group in the 1780s/very early 1790s, and their tussles with parliament in protecting the mercantile interest, before merchants, like many other sections of society, tended to abandon radicalism in the wake of the French Revolution (pp.45-54). See also his discussion of the struggle between landed and commercial interests for 'control of banking' (pp.20-22).

<sup>4</sup> Constantia Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges 1714-1830* (Dublin: G. Harrap, 1936) still provides an excellent general social and economic history. The value of Irish exports, she tells us, increased from £572,000 in 1703 to over £3,000,000 by 1788 (p.74). Although Ireland's wool and cattle industries were decimated by trading systems set up in Britain's favour, new provision and linen industries developed successfully. Useful primary sources include Thomas and Valerie Pakenham's collection in *A Traveller's Companion* (see note 1 above); J. Warburton, J. Whitelaw, R. Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin from the earliest Accounts to the Present Time*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1818); Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland Statistical and Political*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1812). Though Dublin's zenith passed with the Union, it remained a vital trading centre, and the change, in many ways, empowered the commercial classes. Maxwell describes how Dublin became less fashionable but the commercial interest more prominent after the loss of the Irish Parliament and the nobility's decamp to London, quoting Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee* (1812):

Immediately, in Dublin, commerce rose into the vacated seats of rank; wealth rose into the place of birth. [. . .] Those of former times - of hereditary pretensions and high-bred minds and manners – were scandalised at all this; and they complained with justice, that the whole *tone* of society was altered; that the decorum, elegance, polish and charm of society was gone. (p.97)

In the words of the Pakenhams, after the Union Dublin 'lost its pride', becoming 'as ordinary as an English commercial town' (p.44). Yet Edward Wakefield felt at the time that:

The removal of the parliament has been favourable to society in this metropolis; for the attention of gentlemen is not now so exclusively directed to political discussions. The houses in the city are all occupied, and are increasing in every direction; so that the



vacancy occasioned by absentees, since the Union, is supplied by a class of people, less valuable, perhaps, in some respects, yet, who fill up their place as to number.  
(II, 784)

<sup>5</sup> Warburton, Whitelaw, Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin*, I, 454-55, estimate the population of Dublin in 1798 was 182,370. Modern estimates concur with this. Cullen, *Princes and Pirates*, p.13, states that it rose from 60,000 in 1700 to 180,000 in 1800.

<sup>6</sup> See the modern edition - James Malton, *A Picturesque & Descriptive View of the City of Dublin*, reproduced from the edition of 1799 (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Wakefield, *Ireland Statistical and Political*, II, 788.

<sup>8</sup> See Cullen, *Princes and Pirates*, p.16 on volume of trade in Dublin. See Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges*, pp.95-97, also pp.75, 257, 270 on Dublin's entertainment.

<sup>9</sup> J. E. Walsh, *Ireland Sixty Years Ago*, in Pakenham, *Dublin: A Traveller's Companion*, pp.316-18. On these occasions, shopkeepers in the affected areas closed down their businesses, and fearful residents kept indoors, as affected streets became impassable.

<sup>10</sup> Warburton, Whitelaw, Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin*, I, pp.455-56, estimate average population per acre in Dublin in 1798 at 153. The city was:

found to be most crowded within the walls of the ancient city, comprehending the parishes of St. Werburgh, St. John, St. Michael, St. Nicholas within, the eastern part of St. Audeon, and the deanery of Christ-church. This space, containing an area of nearly forty-five acres English, had in 1682, according to Sir William Petty, 1145 houses, and in 1798, 1179 houses, and 15,683 inhabitants, which give an average of 349 souls nearly to an acre, and 13.3 to a house. The density of population however varies within this space, for in the parish of St. Michael it amounts to 439 souls to an acre, and almost 16 to a house.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Cullen, *Princes and Pirates*, pp.17-19 on trading areas and hazards (also Warburton, Whitelaw, Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin*, I, 446) and Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges*, pp.235-36 on trade fluctuations.

<sup>12</sup> See Warburton, Whitelaw, Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin*, I, 443-46 for a description of the truly appalling poverty existing in the Liberties:

Of these streets a few are the residence of shop-keepers or others engaged in trade, but a far greater proportion of them, with their numerous lanes, and alleys, are occupied by working manufacturers, by petty shop-keepers, the labouring poor, and beggars, crowded together, to a degree distressing to humanity (p.443).

See also Wakefield, *Ireland Statistical and Political*, II, 789-91 (p.789).

<sup>13</sup> George Cooper, *Letters to the Irish Nation*, pp.112-13.

<sup>14</sup> Dr Ratty, and *The Hibernian Magazine* for September 1782, quoted in Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges*, pp.119-20.

<sup>15</sup> Wakefield, *Ireland Statistical and Political*, II, 809. Wakefield's subsequent comment – 'What a body of morality, benevolence, wealth, and useful citizens' – is an interesting contemporary perception of Friends as models of a virtue in which wealth was a significant component.

<sup>16</sup> Estimate by Grubb cited in Vann and Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death*, p.39.

<sup>17</sup> Vann and Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death*, particularly pp.49-50, 56-57.

<sup>18</sup> Maurice J. Wigham, *The Irish Quakers: A Short History of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland* (Dublin: Historical Committee of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, 1992), p.46.

<sup>19</sup> H. M. Wigham, 'Memoir of Richard Allen' (1886), quoted in Isabel Grubb, *Quakers in Ireland 1654-1900* (London: Swarthmore Press, 1927), p.124.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Vann and Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death*, pp.50-52.

<sup>21</sup> Directive from 1703 Women's Yearly Meeting, cited in Grubb, *Quakers in Ireland*, p.87. See pp.81-88 on rigidity of the discipline.

<sup>22</sup> John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1984; repr. 1991), p.129.

<sup>23</sup> See Grubb, *Quakers in Ireland*, pp.81-93 on plainness amongst Irish Friends, education and recreation; Wigham, *The Irish Quakers*, p.48 on Quaker childhood; Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, Chapter 6, on 'Creation of a Quaker Culture', particularly p.131. Punshon actually cites three pictures as being acceptable:

It was said that there only three pictures you might encounter if you moved among Friends, Benjamin West's engraving of William Penn's treaty with the Indians, the



Interior of a Slave Ship, and the Plan of the Building of Ackworth [Quaker] School. You often saw one. You sometimes saw two. You never saw three. And novels were out.

<sup>24</sup> Grubb, *Quakers in Ireland*, p.110.

<sup>25</sup> [Sarah Greer], *Quakerism; or The Story of my Life. By a Lady, who for Forty Years was a Member of the Society of Friends* (Dublin: Samuel B. Oldham, 1851), pp.5-12.

<sup>26</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Farewell to Old England', 1784, p.3 and 'To my Cousin Ann Card on her return', undated, p.72.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 'On Entering into Dublin', 1784, p.4.

<sup>28</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, untitled piece on Ireland, 1798, p.158 (supporting the Irish economy). In Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, 1792, commencing p.139, Mary asks the 'Hibernian fair' not to dismiss 'a younger sister[']s artless lay' pleading with them to join a sugar boycott (p.146). In Part II, commencing p.153, she praises Ireland for taking no part in the slave trade but in the same section abhors the taint participation brings upon 'Albion', the 'dear paternal plain' she will always love (p.154). In the first entry of her journal (Vol. 1, Prose, '8<sup>th</sup> of 5<sup>th</sup> Mo 1794', p.3), made on arrival at Park Gate on a visit to England, she exclaims: 'How have I desired as an outward blessing to behold my native land'. Admiration for the country of her birth is also apparent in, for instance, Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Lydia Harrison', 1794, p.229, and a keen patriotism in *ibid.*, 'On seeing the Ship "Hannah & Eliza" Set sail', 1804, p.328.

<sup>29</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.31, 33, 35, 50 (Pikes), and 'To H W Forbes', 1787, p.37.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 'On being Presented with some Paintings By H.W.F.', undated, p.114.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 'Enigma', undated, p.128.

<sup>32</sup> See for instance, *ibid.*, 'To [. . .] with a gilt Jug - Plein des oeufs', 1808, p.409.

<sup>33</sup> Wakefield, *Ireland Statistical and Political*, II, 796-802, has a section on female education. He has this to say about accomplishments and their purpose:

When a young lady has completed her education, that is to say, when she can dance well, can play enchantingly on the piano-forte, has read all the modern French novels which could be imported, and is ready to "come out," as it is termed, then the harvest is to be reaped; and if she be never proposed *for*, it not being customary ever to propose *to*, she is brought to Dublin, introduced at the castle, and exhibited, during the winter, at every ball and assembly. (p.797.)

<sup>34</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Anne, H-W & E Forbes & D Watson', 1793, commencing p.188. See particularly p.189 (Lucillia) and p.192 (Miranda).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 'On true Beauty', undated, p.115.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 'A Wish', 1788, p.53.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 'A Dialogue between Charlotte & Maria on Poverty & Riches', 1788, p.56.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 'To H W Forbes', 1787, p.37.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 'A Poem to Eliza Woodward', undated, p.75. Images of the child as a growing plant, or, alternatively, as wax capable of impression (childhood friends are often praised for being as 'ductile as wax'), abound in Mary's verse. See Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.11 for discussion of these as by far the most frequently found models for childhood in the literature of the period. The wax image is part of 'the most common paradigm', the 'environmentalist view', as social historian Lawrence Stone terms it, derived from the psychology of Locke and Hartley, of the child as a 'blank slate', or *tabula rasa*, to be 'inscribed' or moulded, 'by experience'. This is closely followed by the 'organic paradigm', 'first fully articulated in Rousseau's *Emile*', whereby the child, viewed as 'invested with organic principles of growth that can either be fostered or distorted by socialization', 'may be compared to a member of a "primitive" society [. . .] or to a growing plant'.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, *ibid.*, poems written on deaths of her brother and two sisters, 1787, pp.17-20, and 'On the Death of our much esteemed & well beloved friend Deborah Pike addressed to her Mother', 1788, p.50.

<sup>41</sup> A good introduction is still James Sutherland's *A Preface to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), although it does not take full account of the poetry of sensibility. Samuel Johnson disliked the metaphysical poets because 'they cannot be said to have imitated any thing' ('wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment, which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and the pleasure of other minds') yet also commended originality (James Thomson 'is entitled to one praise of the highest kind: his mode of thinking and of expressing his thoughts is



original'). This may appear contradictory, but what counted in judging the success of a poem was the degree to which it appealed to feelings and perceptions thought common to all, even if dormant, and this is often most evident when Johnson is discussing poetry of sensibility. 'The reader of *The Seasons* wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shews him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses.' Hence Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* earns praise both for its universality (it 'abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo'), and an originality grounded in communality ('I have never seen the notions in any other place; yet he that reads them here persuades himself that he has always felt them'). See Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, 3 vols, ed. by George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905; 1968 repr.), on the metaphysical poets in 'Cowley', I, 1-69 (pp.19, 20), 'Thomson', III, 281-301 (pp.298, 299), and 'Gray', III, 421-45 (pp.441, 442).

<sup>42</sup> Samuel Johnson's defence of classical quotation as 'a good thing; there is a community of mind in it. Classical quotation is the *parole* of literary men all over the world', was equally valid for other forms of literary quotation in which women, even if denied a full education in the classics, could also participate. See James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ed. by R. W. Chapman, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, rev. by J. D. Fleeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953; repr. 1980, intro. by Pat Rogers), p.1143.

<sup>43</sup> For example, in Vol.2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the Last Day', undated, p.85, Mary uses the term 'adamantine chains' found both in Pope (*The Messiah*) and Milton (*Paradise Lost*). See note 11 to the poem.

<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, *ibid.*, 'On the Power & Goodness of God' (which draws on Psalm 86), 1787, p.26; 'On Death' (Genesis story of Eve and Book of Revelation), 1787, p.42; 'A Poem on The Last Day', undated, p.85, and 'Come Lord Jesus = Revelations [sic] 22.20', undated, p.94; 'A Summers Morning in the Country' (story of Rahab and the taking of Jericho), undated, p.101. See also 'On the Pleasures of a Good Conscience' (Esau and Jacob), 1787, p.39; 'On Friendship' (David and Jonathan), undated, p.92, 'On Eve', undated, p.91; 'To William Pike on his affliction' (Job), 1787, p.35.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.*, 'The Good Samaritan transcribed', undated, p.117; 'A Poem on The Last Day', undated, p.85; 'A Summers Morning in the Country', undated, p.101. Also in 'To My Sister Sarah Birkett', c.1786/87, p.15, Mary mentions how she had transposed a moral tale from prose into verse.

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, *ibid.*, 'A Poem to J Lancashire' (Boreas – see note 3), 1787, p.43; 'To my Cousin Anne Card on her return' (Neptune – see note 3), undated, p.72; 'On the Death of a Favorite Turtle Dove' (Damon), undated, p.79; 'Flavilla and Vernold a Poem', undated, p.76.

<sup>47</sup> See *ibid.*, 'On being presented with a pocket book by J Lancashire' (Young's *Night Thoughts*), 1787, p.44; 'The Philosophers Death' (imitation of Ossianic verse), undated, p.120; 'A Wish' (Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*), 1788, p.53; 'A Summers Morning in the Country' (Thomson's *The Seasons*), undated, p.101; 'Written in the Ruins of Kendal Castle' (note 4 - Shakespeare's *King Lear*), probably 1789, p.66; 'Welcome to a Summers Morning' (Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs*), undated, p.73; 'A Poem on The Last Day' (note 11 - Pope/Milton), undated, p.85. The last day was a subject also treated by Watts.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.*, 'A Petition To my Cousin T. Harrison Queens College' (Plato's 'good rules'), 1794, p.224; 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade' (Thomson's *The Seasons*), 1792, p.139; 'A Contemplative view of Nature' (Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* and Pope's *Essay on Man*), undated, p.286; 'A Satire' (Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*), undated, p.275; 'To a Friend', undated, p.294 and 'On Wit', undated, p.268 (Pope's *The Dunciad*); 'All hallows Eve' (*The Rape of the Lock*), undated, p.271; 'A Recipe to cure Love' (Wortley Montagu's *A Receipt to Cure the Vapours*), undated, p.269.

<sup>49</sup> A Mrs Birkett of Poulton-in-the-Field and a Miss Birkett of Whitehaven, also a Mr and Mrs Beakbane of Liverpool, are listed as subscribers to Eliza Daye's *Poems, on Various Subjects* (Liverpool, Lancaster, London: Subscription Library, Lancaster, and for various booksellers in Liverpool and London, 1798). Numerous other Quaker names such as Dockray and Dilworth also appear. The list of subscribers for Isabella Lickbarrow's *Poetical Effusions* (Kendal: M. Branthwaite, 1814), which includes 'W. Wordsworth, Esq. Rydal Mount', also includes a Mrs Birkett of Kendal and a Mr G. Birkett of London. I would like to thank my cousin, James Clarke, for drawing my attention to these lists.

<sup>50</sup> See, for instance, Vol.2, Poetry, 'A Poem to my dear & much esteemed friend Eliza Pike', 1787, p.33 and 'On the Death of our much esteemed & well beloved friend Deborah Pike addressed to her Mother', probably 1788, p.50.

<sup>51</sup> See Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, pp.127-66, for discussion of children's reading and writing in this period as processes of cultural inscription. Writers of children's books, for instance, adopted 'fictional strategies' (p.133) based on a 'reconceptualisation of the child as a kind of text' (p.128) drawn from Hartley's associationist psychology and Lockean ideas of the child's mind as 'white Paper' to be inscribed upon.

These strategies include encouraging the child to take its place in a discursive universe through thematizing the act of reading; training the child to participate in its own textualization by writing about itself; and instilling a sense in the child of its own legibility, its status as a text open to the perusal of its parents and (ultimately) to the all-seeing eye of God. (p.133.)

<sup>52</sup> Even here, however, Quaker homes could vary. Novels with a moral content might be allowed in some families, certainly at a slightly later date. Louisa Hooper Stewart, for instance, remembered two favourite texts of her childhood being *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe*. See *Louisa: Memories of a Quaker Childhood*, ed. by Evelyn Roberts (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1970). Evelyn compiled the recollections of her grandmother before her death in 1918 aged 99. The result is a fascinating, first-hand description of a Quaker childhood and of 1820s London which, because written from a 1918 perspective for 1918 readers, describes aspects of daily life not often recorded.

<sup>53</sup> See headnote to Vol.2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, 1792, commencing p.139 (p.140).

<sup>54</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.85. Mary refers to the 'snare' she felt 'vain & foolish books' had been for her. The genres she urges her own children to avoid are probably a good guide to those she herself indulged in. By 1812, not only 'novels & idle tales', but 'lying poems' had become highly suspect.

<sup>55</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'Written on the day when I was sixteen', 1790, p.134 (pp.134-35).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 'On Eve, undated, p.91.



## **PART 2**

# **EXPLORING THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

## CHAPTER 3 QUESTIONING A FEMALE TRADITION

The entry in Mary's spiritual journal for 26th November 1816, tells how she was 'comforted by a dream the preceding night'. 'I thought I was in a religious meeting - & heard a voice say "come up hither".' 'I obeyed & went forward, ascending very high, to the uppermost form which appeared filled with Ministers & Elders.' Passing them, she sat in 'a vacant seat', 'at the end', whereupon she found that there was 'no ceiling' to the meeting house, just a 'canopy of sky', and that her 'form', or bench, and the one below 'ascended a very great height'. Though her 'seat' and 'foot board' were 'firm', 'there was no arm to the end' and looking down she realised that if she fell, she would 'be dashed in pieces irretrievably [sic]'. Even worse, when she 'leaned back', a voice from someone behind warned her that 'the back of the form' was not reliable and, turning, she saw that it was indeed 'crack'd [. . .] above the seat'. The voice urged that she link her right arm with the Friend next to her and on doing so she 'felt no fear, no dismay but perfect peace & confidence - tho' still ascending & in a most perilous situation'. Giving her own interpretation of the dream – that it was of divine origin and purpose - Mary says 'this dream was permitted to strengthen me & it comforts me a little in this hour of great anxiety & trial.'<sup>1</sup>

The cause of her anxiety was fear of financial ruin. The previous Saturday, her husband had only just managed to pay an extended loan, or 'bill'. Default would have been disastrous. She says:

it has been for many years sealed on my mind that we never ought to extend our payments in that way & now I am [. . .] convinced of the truth of that intimation which if attended to would have prevented many a secret pang) yet did I retain a confidence in our unfailing helper.<sup>2</sup>

We can interpret the dream, then, as affirming that her confidence was not misplaced - it reassured her that her faith in God and fellowship within the Society of Friends would continue to support her if she trusted in them, however dangerous the situation in which she found herself. It is significant, too, that the footboard as well as her seat was 'firm' - thus her foundation was secure - and that the form was ascending. Her choice was whether to trust the ascent or whether, through fear, face destruction. It is of equal significance, however, that the form was cracked and it was only when she obeyed the voice, her guide, by joining her arm with a Friend that her fear finally disappeared. It would seem, then, that it is not sufficient to trust to structures merely –



complete support is to be found only through openness, even submission, to guidance and, most importantly, connection with others.

However, closer examination of Mary's journal entry allows other nuances to come to the fore. First, there is a component of guilt on her part. She and Nathaniel had extended deadlines for payment despite the 'intimation' 'for many years sealed on [her] mind' that they should never do this. This was not, then, just her own judgement - the description of it as an 'intimation' which should have been 'attended to' means that inner guidance, felt to be of spiritual origin, had been ignored. She is 'convinced of the truth' of this by the calamity that has almost befallen them. Yet she had agonised over this dilemma for a long time in secret. It seems then, that she had not shared it with Nathaniel, and perhaps was only able, even now, to confide it to her diary. Is there a note of reproach directed at her husband? Was it rather that he had not listened when she expressed reservations about delaying payments? Or did she not express them at all because she felt she must defer to his judgement? Such scenarios are rendered probable by the ambivalent relationship with her husband revealed elsewhere in her journal - veiled references to quarrels, specific mention of her attempts to suppress opposition to him, despite her own strongly held opinions.<sup>3</sup> The dream episode as recounted in her diary, then, like so many of her writings, tells us much through its spaces and silences – what it does not, or cannot, say.

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It is interesting that in her dream, Mary should find support through the occupation of a space within a form – 'a vacant seat' reserved, as it were, for her, on 'the uppermost form' of the ministers and elders. The act of autobiography, writing the life of the self, involves the occupation of space within a form, obviously in a literal sense - the empty page in the volume - but also by making a contribution within the chosen genre of autobiography, in this case the Quaker journal with its distinctive patterning. The adoption of such an autobiographical form, with familiar key elements, supports expression of the self by providing a ready means for its articulation, but it can also be constraining - the resulting self in the text is created within a limited framework. This chapter introduces Mary's journal, demonstrating how it is representative of Quaker autobiography as a genre. It looks at it in relation to work in the fields of women's autobiography and spiritual writings, especially some recently published eighteenth-century Quaker women's journals, showing how the notion of a separate female tradition has underpinned much of this work. While recognising that this has been a springboard for many valuable contributions in fields connected with women's writing,

it points up how it can result in a biased history or perspective and argues instead for an approach grounded in specificity, in particular 'traditions' rather than 'a tradition', firmly located within historical community, time and place.

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In his study of Quaker journals (1972), Quaker historian Howard Brinton shows how, when looked at 'collectively', it can be seen that they share many characteristics 'despite individual differences' in style. He devotes a chapter to the spiritual importance of dreams.<sup>4</sup> Following biblical precedent, it was believed that God could communicate through dreams and there was a consciousness of their inner meaning and symbolism. There might be a shining light, a voice or guide offering assistance, a sense of awe or dread, an 'other worldly' atmosphere. But dreams thought to be 'of divine origin' were so special that they happened rarely - perhaps 'only once in a lifetime', often at a crisis point.<sup>5</sup> Their purpose then was to provide an answer or way forward in symbolic terms, a meaning only understood subsequently and interpreted in the journal. One example Brinton offers is that of the minister Thomas Shillitoe who dreamt he was guided safely 'up a narrow path on the edge of a precipice' where the huge space below was filled with people passing earth from one hand to another. Shillitoe interpreted this as guidance that he was to devote more time to religion and less to labouring for earthly gain.<sup>6</sup> Mary's dream replicates many of these features, and though it related to a different dilemma, it arose out of a concern similar to Shillitoe's that figures largely in her journal – the balance between laying up treasure on earth and developing the spiritual life.

In other ways too, her spiritual diary typifies Quaker journals as Brinton describes them. A key feature is the omission of any personal experience that does not have religious significance. Love and marriage, family relationships and everyday events are not mentioned unless they have some bearing on the spiritual life. This lack of personal detail or narrative renders Mary's journal, like many other Quaker diaries of the period, difficult for us to appreciate today. But it was considered important to maintain simplicity, to be truthful and humble, and keep references to the self to a minimum.<sup>7</sup> Brinton also claims the journals often follow comparative lines of development.<sup>8</sup> First, there may be a special intimation of the divine in childhood. Mary twice mentions such an experience at the age of five.<sup>9</sup> Then there is a period of frivolity, idleness or wasted time that is regretted. Mary especially regrets the time spent in her youth 'reading vain & foolish books'.<sup>10</sup> This is followed by an experience of what Brinton terms 'a divided self', a conflict between God and what



eighteenth/nineteenth-century Quakers called the 'creature' (human will, desire and need for self-gratification). Expression of inner conflict is recurrent in Mary's journal and she often wishes to suppress love of 'the creature'. Then there may be 'milestones' on the journey - perhaps the adoption of 'plain' Quaker dress, abandoning 'superfluities' (unnecessary luxuries), or first speaking in ministry - but finally, according to Brinton, a new, more whole, self emerges.<sup>11</sup> Mary displays similar concerns, desiring God's help to avoid 'superfluity' even of words or sleep, and urging others to 'plainness'.<sup>12</sup> Although her journal has no ultimate resolution in the way Brinton describes, because it is a diary chronicling her spiritual experience until near the end of her life, one episode - an account of her reversion to a more traditional faith - does constitute a form of conversion narrative that adheres to aspects of this formula.<sup>13</sup>

Brinton's analysis is most helpful in aiding our understanding of Quaker journals solely or mainly concerned with the spiritual life, such as that of Mary Birkett Card. Investigation of a proportion of such diaries, both published and unpublished, available at Quaker libraries confirmed the substance of his findings. Nevertheless, individuals vary more in their range of content than the outline given above might indicate, most notably in the degree of personal experience and topics connected with everyday life or world events thought fit to include.<sup>14</sup> Some journalists, such as Sarah Fox, née Champion (1741-1811), for instance, discuss life events, family relationships and friendships, and their own opinions with a free use of anecdote and the personal pronoun – quite unlike Mary Birkett Card.<sup>15</sup> Then, Brinton's work is problematic in some respects. His concern to separate Quakers from Puritans leads him to underestimate the guilt and strong sense of sin displayed by some Quaker journalists,<sup>16</sup> and his omission of nineteenth-century 'Evangelistic Friends' because 'Their experience was quite different from that of the founders of the Society of Friends' means that a large proportion of Quaker autobiography is ignored.<sup>17</sup> Most significant for this study is his lack of any differentiation between women's and men's journals (not surprising as he was writing in 1972 before feminism made its full impact in religious or literary studies), but considerable feminist scholarship has been undertaken during the last three decades, both in women's autobiography as a whole and in Quaker women's autobiography specifically.

Estelle Jelinek, in her introduction to *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, provides an overview of work on gender differences in autobiography as a discrete genre up to the date of writing (1980). Despite the commonly held idea that

autobiography is a revelation of inner experience, both sexes leave much unsaid or pretend a 'detachment' they do not have - a strategy most apparent when 'intense feelings', particularly of a sexual or deeply psychological nature, are involved.<sup>18</sup> But, 'critics are drawing similar conclusions about the form and content of women's autobiography, substantiating our contention that there is a literary tradition in which women write autobiography that is different from that by men', most notably by adopting more 'discontinuous forms' and 'emphasis[ing] the personal over the professional'.<sup>19</sup> Mary's journal exemplifies some of the characteristics of women's autobiographies that Jelinek isolates: it displays ambivalence about the assertion of the self, is designed primarily for private consumption, is fragmentary and episodic both in the writing itself and the choice of form (the diary), and is embedded in relationships with family and friends. Similar points can be made about many of the other Quaker women's journals of the period looked at when researching this study.<sup>20</sup> These features stand in sharp contrast to autobiographies by men which, according to Jelinek, stress their achievements in society and project 'a self-image of confidence', often depicting themselves as the 'hero' in a structured narrative.<sup>21</sup>

Such broad generalisations run the risk of stereotype and cannot do justice to the range of writing by individual men and women. Amongst Quaker journalists exceptions abound – as we have seen, male Quakers are also reticent when speaking about themselves owing to their desire to suppress the 'self'. Nevertheless, many of the ideas Jelinek summarises can be accepted. The process of writing autobiography necessarily involves the shaping of a plenitude of experience into a condensed form that, inevitably, can only be a very partial representation of that experience. And, as the worlds of women and men have been different in many ways, it is not surprising that their writings about themselves should reflect this. It is to be expected, too, that men, able to participate more fully in public arenas, would write more for public circulation, while women, largely (though by no means entirely) confined to private or domestic spheres, would tend more often to choose the private forms of diary or letters. The concept of a separate women's tradition is more contentious, but it has continued to inform much scholarship in literary, historical and religious studies through the 1980s and 90s. Within the field of feminist theology, for instance, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has sought to recover a female heritage by powerfully reconstructing the parts played by women in the primitive church, while Rosemary Radford Ruether has advocated empowering today's women by resurrecting texts that can form an alternative to the patriarchal canon, and by looking for a female tradition previously ignored within mainstream Christianity.<sup>22</sup> Quaker women, owing to the



more equal status accorded them within the movement in comparison with any other denomination and the sheer volume of written records they have left us, have been studied by scholars from different disciplines as well as Quaker historians.<sup>23</sup> Most attention has been devoted to the seventeenth century when women, amid the fervour of the new movement, preached publicly, prophesied, and produced tracts, sometimes suffering imprisonment or cruel punishment as a consequence.<sup>24</sup>

But the perceived need for a female tradition, for role models or 'foremothers' to provide inspiration and against whom women can read their own experience, has also fuelled recent publications of eighteenth-century Quaker women's autobiographies. For instance, Rachel Labouchere has woven the journals of her ancestors, Abiah and Deborah Darby of the Quaker iron manufacturing family of Coalbrookdale in Shropshire, into cohesive narratives giving keen insights into their lives and ministries. Though devoid of overt feminist consciousness, the aim is to depict both women as influential leaders and sources of strength, positions in which they, like Elizabeth Fry, are considered to 'exemplify the many roles of Quaker women.'<sup>25</sup> The recovery of 'lost' female texts also aims to rectify the imbalance in the availability of women's writing compared to men's. Margaret Hope Bacon has edited the journals of three American Quaker women ministers because, as 'fewer [. . .] women's journals were published', 'contemporary Quaker writers draw heavily on the male experience, or scramble for female quotes' and to enable 'non-Quaker young women in divinity schools to learn more about their earlier female counterparts'.<sup>26</sup> She makes no attempt at a gendered analysis however.

Unlike Mary's autobiography, all these recently published journals are accounts of journeys in the ministry. They are detailed travel narratives that describe the dangers faced, such as shipwreck or attack *en route* and other hazards, the Meetings visited and religious experience engendered. Hence they form powerful testimonies to the strength, courage, religious conviction and abilities of these women ministers, and of their active participation in history. As their home Meeting granted them certificates to travel and often funded the trip, ministers were expected to keep a record to show that this trust was justified. Their journals were often compiled later from diaries kept during the journey. Like Brinton, Bacon highlights the formulaic nature of the journals she examined, explaining it by two factors: the authors' attempts to efface 'the self', its wills and desires, in order 'to become an instrument of the will of the Holy Spirit' (also responsible for an element of 'circumlocution') and, secondly, alterations made when copied by descendants, or before publication, to eliminate anything too personal or

contentious.<sup>27</sup> Although Mary Birkett Card's journal was, as far as we know, a private document not intended for publication, or circulation in the Meeting, the second point may still apply as much as the first as her son may have omitted material or made changes when copying her work.<sup>28</sup>

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It cannot be denied that the concept of a female tradition, whether in actual life experience or the experience of that life in writing, and the desire to recover it, has provided the inspiration and impetus for much impressive research. The works mentioned above testify to this. Yet the concept is fraught with difficulty. The essential problems are three-fold. First, it presupposes a shared female perspective existing in all women at all times independently of race, class, era, sexual orientation or cultural context. This assumption is present in Ursula King's statement in the prologue to her study of *Women and Spirituality* that 'much of the experience of contemporary women is similar to that of countless women in ages gone by'.<sup>29</sup> The flaws in such blanket assertions are apparent as soon as we look at a few pages of Mary's journal. What strikes us is the difference between her experience and that of many modern women. To read it with understanding, we must first learn much about the particular world she, and her peers, lived in. The second problem is that the view of women as subjects tends to be one-sided because only those qualities exciting admiration or respect are concentrated on, and hagiographic assertions are sometimes made. Elizabeth Potts Brown and Susan Mosher Stuard, for instance, say their 'volume finds a general and widespread greatness among Quaker women over the centuries.'<sup>30</sup> Such statements are polemical rather than historical. Finally, major problems arise from the fact that feminist efforts to uncover a female tradition also involve creating it. Lavinia Byrne wishes to allow women to 'see themselves as part of a long, if hidden, tradition' by anthologising texts by women who 'have been writing authoritatively about their experience of God and of organized religion for centuries'.<sup>31</sup> This is surely in the line of creating women's authority and therefore the tradition. Others are more explicit. Radford Ruether, as we have seen, advocates the formation of 'a new canon', and Schüssler Fiorenza, speaking of feminist analyses of patriarchy, touches on how women's intellectual heritage has continually to be recreated in order to combat the way that patriarchy works to erase it.<sup>32</sup> Risks in such important projects are not only that the 'tradition' may be artificially created rather than genuinely 'found', but that the subjects studied, whether women's lives or the texts they produced, may be limited to those that support the desired hypotheses. In this way, the desire for a female tradition may shape our recovery of it in accordance with our own purposes.



One way out of these difficulties is to discard the concept altogether. Feminist theologian Daphne Hampson rejects the whole notion of continuity along the lines of the first problem mentioned above. Doubtful about the projects embarked on by Radford Ruether and Schüssler Fiorenza to recover the lives of female prophetesses or first-century churchwomen, she argues that differences between the lives of modern women and those of the Biblical or early Christian eras are so great as to render any comparison irrelevant and thus denies that their 'heritage' can be a source of 'power' for women today. Seeing creation of a women's tradition over the centuries as 'separatist', and Christianity as so essentially patriarchal that all attempts to rehabilitate it to accommodate modern feminism are doomed to failure, she positively advocates 'discontinuity' – the creation of a new post-Christian paradigm based not on tradition (or revelation) but experience.<sup>33</sup> Yet even in the context of her own work, such a complete rejection of female tradition is not tenable. She grants that 'our religion will be shaped by our western heritage' (this surely includes the place women occupied within it), cedes that women's 'struggles' in the past can be inspirational, and, in defining her own approach to God, draws on Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich, mystics whose works are only readily available because they have been resurrected by 'traditionalists'.<sup>34</sup> (It is also anachronistic that the title for her break with the past – 'post-Christianity' – situates the new paradigm in a continuum with that past.)

This study of Mary Birkett Card's work is informed by an alternative approach – one that does not reject ideas of tradition, but utilises them more specifically. Its essential premises are first that, to be productive in the analysis of women's lives and texts, what we mean by 'tradition' has to be far more clearly defined and second, that we have to link it more carefully with the actuality of lives as lived in particular cultural milieux. It asserts that although a proportion of women's autobiographies may share attributes such as discontinuous forms or concentration on the personal, these arise primarily out of the nature of women's more private lives rather than their 'femaleness'. Hence they are mainly socially constructed and will vary as women's roles in society change. These attributes are also far too vague and general to constitute a tradition in any meaningful unified sense. If we continue to confine ourselves for a moment to thinking of a 'literary tradition', we can specify that to qualify as such it must be invested with a number of shared cultural values, ideologies or concerns that are expressed and reflected, consciously or unconsciously, in certain forms and structures of feeling.<sup>35</sup> These forms and structures may be found in diction and imagery, word



patterns, narrative structure, ideas and sensations to be evoked in the reader, the human qualities that are praised or denigrated, what is considered important, what should be said and what cannot be said – though, of course, not necessarily all of these. Quaker autobiography as a whole from its inception in the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century qualifies as a literary tradition in this way, as indeed do literary movements such as eighteenth-century 'sensibility' or Romanticism, however much their lineaments are subject to debate. Yet such traditions are not singular and rigid, but dynamic and complex entities that contain elements of previous forms (older traditions feed into new ones as sensibility does into Romanticism) and develop in tandem with changes in culture, ideology, gender relations and literary function, sometimes specific to community or place. As Phyllis Mack points out, texts written by early female Quakers 'are often indistinguishable from those written by men' whereas those of a generation later are recognisably different, reflecting the change from visionary prophet to bourgeois wife and mother.<sup>36</sup> Thus traditions can be split into further traditions related to gender, class or period and interconnect with each other in diverse and complex ways.

Human subjects are born into particular communities, are immersed in the traditions available to them within those communities and cannot help but live their lives in relation to them, whatever aspects they try to accept or reject. The community necessarily forms part of larger cultures (national, religious, economic), and forms its own traditions against, or within, those of this broader spectrum. (Quaker communities are no exception, despite their separateness.) This is just as true of literary traditions which are only made available to individuals through cultural reproduction. As individual subjectivity is gendered from birth, inescapably produced in accordance with the structures of sexual difference pertaining in the individual's particular society or community at that point in time, it follows that access to, and use of, literary form is also influenced by these structures in specific, and varying, ways. Women therefore often follow conventions that mark their work off from that of men. However, these structures are not static but are constantly being revised as societies change. We find that women participate in this process through negotiation, sometimes subversion, of established norms. The search for one overall 'female tradition' is seen to be altogether too simple, too naively all-encompassing, and is replaced instead by multiplicity – an uncovering of particularised 'female traditions' contingent upon specific time, place, culture and community, that do not exist in isolation but are part of or connected with mainstream paradigms. The important task in hand, then, is a 're-mapping' of major or recognised literary traditions to take account of women's



contributions and experience, and the recovery of specific female traditions embedded within them.

This approach accepts that our responses to life today, shaped by our own times, are vastly different to those of women in earlier centuries, formed by completely different values and circumstances. Instead of stressing solely what we share, it draws attention to those different values and circumstances. Hence it anchors Mary Birkett's Card's work specifically within her own cultural milieu. Yet it realises that the present situations of women and the ways they perceive the world have necessarily developed from the roles they have played through history. Therefore it accepts that modern women can, despite many differences, share a sense of identity with women in the past and gain strength from what they achieved, but seeks to avoid the artificial elevation of women that occurs when discussion is confined only to those qualities that are considered admirable today.

Finally, it sees the most real danger in the 'foremothers' approach to be the creation of a skewed history as the texts chosen for recovery are usually those which can serve as sources of inspiration today, or which exhibit ideals we can share. The writings of the past then become merely a cache from which we unearth the texts that suit us, leaving buried those that do not, either because they seem unremarkable or because they do not fit into our pre-designed framework. Although we cannot escape the fact that our response to the past is formulated through our purposes in investigating it, as well as our own cultural perspectives, values and interests, a more complete understanding of women's lives and writings can only be obtained through engagement with material which disturbs or challenges our assumptions as well as works with which we can readily empathise or identify. To construct a more authentic history we need to look at as many sources as possible and be open to what these varied women's writings have to tell us. Mary's work is one such source.

A view of Quaker women as enjoying exceptional freedom and status, for instance, is common currency. Talking of the seventeenth century, Hilary Hinds says, 'Popular feminist wisdom has it that early Quaker women have a kind of charmed place in history', preaching and travelling 'when other women were increasingly confined to the home', and queries how far this is 'retrospective romanticisation'.<sup>37</sup> The same could be said of eighteenth-century Quaker women. Mary's journal challenges assumptions about Quaker women's autonomy and has other elements that may be unpalatable to those with an idealised view of the Society at this time. Its revelations of personal



experience include guilt about disobedience to her husband, business worries and underlying fears of disownment from the Society of Friends. Her struggle to be an obedient wife reveals that Quaker women, despite their much extolled equality, could be as confined by some contemporary ideologies of femininity as women in society at large. Her writing also reveals a pre-occupation with language: its power, appropriation of that power, and guilt about what is conceived as the inappropriate use of language. Notions of sin are often associated with 'lack of circumspection' in speaking (connected with transgressing 'feminine' boundaries), she regrets over-freedom in the use of her tongue, yet finds silence and subjection alien to her.<sup>38</sup> She yearns for 'a pure language', yet displays a fascination with words themselves - her style is extravagant, even bombastic at times - quite at variance with Quaker injunctions to simplicity.<sup>39</sup>

This excess in language creates an appearance of spontaneity. Words seem to spill out, as it were, onto the page without forethought, expressing feelings and emotions - an effect heightened by the lack of full stops and proliferation of exclamation marks.<sup>40</sup> Mary herself, prefacing some 'memorandums' of a business crisis, says she aims 'to record some of my feelings just as they arose'.<sup>41</sup> The writing style is, of course, very much part of the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility, which be looked at more closely later in relation to Mary's poetry and letters. But such a wish was in keeping not only with the nature of a diary which forms a record of daily experience as it occurs, unlike an autobiography written in retrospect, but also the Quaker desire to become a channel for the Holy Spirit - to write, as one would speak in Meeting, words that are given, not planned or forced. However, when examined closely, her journal entries reveal themselves to be not so much spontaneous outpourings of the self but highly stylised pieces, executed with much care and thought. The first entry, for example, though originating in a particular day's experience (thankfulness to God for allowing her once more to see her 'native land'), is a meditation thematically and intricately centred around the Lord's Prayer, particularly the line, 'Give us this day our daily bread' - the spiritual 'bread which is needful for us'. 'Thy Kingdom come' becomes an expression of yearning for the realisation of God's Kingdom within herself - to receive 'the manna' for which her soul hungers - and by 'thy will be done' she seeks the resignation to accept this gift. Interestingly, too, this start to her journal consciously forms a new beginning in her relationship to God, seeking baptism with His 'holy spirit' and a new dispensation from Him: 'Grant that henceforth I may live only unto thee [. . .] walk as in thy presence and do nothing contrary to thine holy will'. The entry then, is a carefully crafted act, perhaps designed as the opening statement for her journal.<sup>42</sup>



The word 'act' is important. What Mary creates in the pages of her journal is a theatre where the dramatis personae - God, in His many manifestations, her soul and herself often cast in relationship to Him (handmaid, lover, spouse, creature, even His sinful 'worm') - are also the primary audience, present and future, even if descendants or others also figure in the equation.<sup>43</sup> Characters within the limitations of a play speak a text designed for them, revealing aspects of themselves from which the audience develops a fuller picture. Similarly, the self in autobiography, as character in and author of the drama for itself, may reveal and create that self through the confines of a pre-existing text - here the formulas and traditions of Quaker autobiography and the expectations of culture and community. The self created may at first seem to resemble a 'stock type' in drama - rather one-dimensional, only made according to expectation - yet this 'icon' is not 'seamless'.<sup>44</sup> Through preoccupations (what burdens the mind and demands expression), recurrent motifs and ruptures in the image, a greater complexity emerges from which we can gain deeper insights into the life of Mary Birkett Card and the values that informed the community in which she lived. As her dream suggests through her linkage of her arm with a Friend, integration with that community was pre-eminent for her, and the re-negotiation of her membership of it as a young woman forms the underlying theme of the first section of her autobiography to which we now turn.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1816', p.96.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., (pp.96-97).

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, ibid., journal entries '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 4<sup>th</sup> 1805', '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 10<sup>th</sup> 1805', '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1805', pp.61-63.

<sup>4</sup> Howard H. Brinton, *Quaker Journals: Varieties of Religious Experience Among Friends* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1972), pp.93-107.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.94. It was considered that the inclusion of many dreams might detract from their significance or the possibility of their divine origin. For this reason, editors might later remove some of them. This happened, for instance, in the earliest editions of the journals of George Fox and John Woolman.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.99.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.1. Brinton tells us, for instance, that John Woolman revised his journal three times to reduce the use of the pronoun 'I'. It must also be stressed that the omission of personal experience unrelated to the author's spiritual journey was an established feature of spiritual autobiography generally. Phebe Davidson, for instance, analysing *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1438), highlights how, 'in leaving this [personal] information out of her narrative, Kempe [an English visionary] continues a practice already common in the narratives of continental female mystics'. See Phebe Davidson, *Religious Impulse in Selected Autobiographies of American Women (c. 1630-1893): Uses of the Spirit*, Studies in Women and Religion, XXXIII (Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1993), p.28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp.4-5.

<sup>9</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, journal entries '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 15<sup>th</sup> 1806', p.71, and '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.89.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1812', pp.85-88 (p.86). In this epistle to her children Mary tells them how she was led astray when young by a fondness for 'reading vain & foolish books' and the lure of an 'attractive tale', and warns them against such snares. Brinton points out how 'minor' such youthful transgressions can seem to us today, quoting Quaker journalist Hannah Taylor (1774-



1812): 'I felt thankful that I had been preserved from gross sins in the days of my youth, but I was convicted of much lightness and emptiness from having given way to the natural liveliness of my disposition'. (Brinton, *Quaker Journals*, pp.14-15.)

<sup>11</sup> This reflects Brinton's lack of difficulty with 'the self' as a concept. He sees the self uncontroversially as a discrete entity that can become 'divided' (seemingly an uncomfortable experience) and then more 'whole' (an improvement). In the early twenty-first century, *post* dissemination of the work of Lacan, Derrida and Foucault, our ideas about 'self' have been so altered and problematised that it is no longer possible to conceive of 'a whole self' in this finite way. Without going further into theories of 'the self' in this footnote, suffice it to say that we cannot escape an awareness of 'self' as fragmentary (and so always divided), complex, and continually in the process of construction in the world it inhabits, even in the act of writing.

<sup>12</sup> See Vol.1, Prose, journal entry '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 21<sup>st</sup> 1797', p.12 regarding 'superfluity'. One of Mary's 'meditations' is devoted to the justification of Quaker 'plainness' in dress (Vol. 1, Prose, undated piece, p.175) and a letter to wayward cousin, Catherine Birkett, urges that she conform 'with that self denying plainness, which ever did & ever must be one of the exterior badges or marks of the disciples of Jesus Christ' (Vol.1, Prose, Letter 6, 'To C B', 1805, p.108).

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, journal entries and 'Progress of Infidelity' narrative relating to Mary's encounter with deistic thought, pp.6-30.

<sup>14</sup> Olive C. Goodbody, 'Irish Quaker Diaries', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 5 (1962-64) 51-64, illustrates this. It gives details of twenty-four Irish Quaker manuscript or typescript journals kept in the Dublin Quaker library. Thirteen are from the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. Several clearly adhere to aspects of the typical journal schema as outlined by Brinton. The diary of James Abell (1751-1818) 'is introspective, and conveys a sense of his [. . .] own inadequacy', that of Jane Abell (1787-1852) consists solely of spiritual 'memoranda' omitting anything not pertinent to her spiritual journey, while George Newsom (1745-1790) titles his diary 'A memorandum of occurrences at Glenville' yet never mentions his three children born at Glenville, nor 'a grave mishap to a ship owned by him'. The narrative of Elizabeth Ashbridge (1713-1755) is one of doubt and eventual conversion in the course of a life plagued with difficulty as an indentured servant in America and then in an unhappy marriage. Others simply chronicle journeys in the ministry - Joseph Gill (1674 -1741) - or to London Yearly Meeting; Richard Abell (1750-1801), John Lecky (1764-1839), Joshua Newsom (1789-1833). Yet individual interests can emerge in these quite strongly, often in a tendency towards cataloguing or recording. George Newsom had a predilection for listing plants sown and land improvements, Joshua Wight (1678-1758) was obsessed with recording the weather but also made insightful comments on current affairs, Richard Abell meticulously noted the route and mileage on his trip to England and commented on personalities he met, Joshua Newsom's 1813 trip to England was also in the furtherance of his Waterford butter trade. Others describe events or daily life rather more vividly. Robert Goodbody (1781-1860) includes an account of the 1798 Irish Rebellion, Elizabeth (Grubb) Clibborn (1780-1861) refers to visits by Friends such as Elizabeth Fry and 'national happenings' though she concentrates on family life, while Margaret (Boyle) Harvey (1786-1832) records her stay in Ireland 1809-1812 after her marriage and 'her astonishment at the elegance, style and formal etiquette' amongst Friends in Cork. Then there are the diaries of Mary (Shackleton) Leadbeater (1758-1826), contained in *The Leadbeater Papers*, 2 vols (London: Bell and Daldy, 1862), describing the life of her family and the ordinary people of the village of Ballitore, which do not constitute a spiritual journal as such though they are permeated by her Quaker beliefs.

<sup>15</sup> Extracts from the manuscript diary (1745-1802) of Sarah Fox, née Champion (1741-1811), at Friends' Library, Woodbrooke, copied by Theodore Naish in 1872 from a compilation made by John Frank, from the original, 'for general use of Friends in Bristol'. Sarah Fox is an ideal example as she tells the story of her life from childhood and her journey into devout Quakerism in a way that largely conforms to the familiar pattern while maintaining a style that still manages to tell us quite a lot about herself and the people she knew. She remembers a 'season' in her youth when she was 'willing to resign all for faith' (letters, p.10) but tells how she grew 'more and more dissipated', her favourite reading being novels so that she became 'romantic to excess' and 'the very name of a quaker [. . .] became burdensome' (diary, p.9). On a visit to stay with her father in London, she was disturbed by the neglect of religion there and the emptiness of its amusements (even the theatre despite, one feels, some pull towards it as she could not help admiring Garrick who 'alone seemed to resemble nature' among many 'painted puppets'), and eventually re-found her faith. But she also describes past events in her life, daily happenings, characters, and her own opinions in a forthright way.



<sup>16</sup> Brinton often contrasts what he sees as the inner peace and freedom from anxiety experienced by Quakers with the fearful self-scrutiny of the Puritan, seeking tangible evidence of grace and salvation.

<sup>17</sup> Brinton, *Quaker Journals*, Preface, p.xiv.

<sup>18</sup> *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Estelle C. Jelinek (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1980; UMI repr.), p.13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface, pp.xi-xii.

<sup>20</sup> The introduction to *A Short Account of the early part of the Life of Mary Mitchell, late of Nantucket, deceased, written by herself, With Selections from some other of her Writing; and Two Testimonies of Monthly Meetings of Friends on Rhode-Island and Nantucket, concerning her* (New Bedford: printed for Abraham Shearman, 1812) is worth quoting as an example of great diffidence. It stresses how she had not been 'accustomed to commit to writing' anything other than 'pious reflections, ejaculations and fervent supplications' for her own use. Further, she states that it is only:

to fill up some void spaces in several pages in this book, I feel a freedom to enter some remarks on the state of my mind, with breathings of soul that I have committed to writing at several times, hoping it may tend a little to encourage some who may have the perusal of them, when my head may be laid in the silent grave. (pp.35-36).

The references to 'ejaculations' and 'supplications' are also indicative of the fragmentary quality in her writing. *The Memoranda relating to the late Sarah Littleboy of Boxwells, Great Berkhamstead [1795-1870] with selections from her Poetry and Manuscripts* (London: R Barrett, 1873) were originally intended for private circulation only. *A Diary of The Religious Experience of Mary Waring, daughter of Elijah and Sarah Waring: late of Godalming* (London: William Phillips, 1809) has an introduction highlighting its rarity as the diary of an 'obscure person' who does not recount a conversion or work in the ministry, though its aim is still 'to exalt Christ'. Although there is a religious purpose for each entry, it still forms a record of private life and social relationships, as does the journal of Elizabeth Young (1765-1842) – see *The Christian Experience of Elizabeth Young, A Member of the Society of Friends, written by herself* (London: Harvey and Dutton, 1853). See also the *Memoir of Mary Ann Gilpin, of Bristol [b.1813]; consisting chiefly of Extracts from her Diary and Letters* (London: E. Fry, 1840), the *Memoranda of Rachel Maria Jackson: with Extracts from some of her Letters, compiled by Martha Wright* (Dublin: Robert Chapman, 1854), *Extracts from Letters and other Pieces, written by Margaret Jackson, During her Last Illness* (Dublin: printed by Bentham and Gardiner, sold in London by Harvey and Dutton, 1824), the writings of Lucy Jesup, Maria Jesup and her sister Marianne King - *Extracts from the Papers and Letters of Lucy Jesup* (Sudbury: Wright and Gilbert, 1858), *Extracts from the Memoranda and Letters of Maria Jesup, late of Halstead in Essex; with a Short Account of her Last Illness and Death: also a few extracts from the papers of her younger sister, Marianne King* (York: W. Alexander, [n.d.]) and the pious *Memoirs of the Life of Caroline Elizabeth Smelt who died on the 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1817, in the city of Augusta, Georgia, in the 17<sup>th</sup> year of her age, compiled from authentic papers, furnished by her friends, and published at their request by Moses Wadel D D* (New York: printed Dublin; repr. C. Bentham, 50 Stephen Street, 1819).

<sup>21</sup> Jelinek, *Women's Autobiography*, pp.14-17. Jelinek draws on examples from individual autobiographies to illustrate her points, such as St Augustine's dramatisation of his sins in youth in order to highlight his conversion and the emotional interruptions in the spiritual outpourings of the fifteenth-century mystic Marjorie Kempe.

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1983). See particularly the introduction, p.xiv, where Schüssler Fiorenza states that her goals are to 'restore women's stories' and 'reclaim' early Christian history as the history of both genders. Rosemary Radford Ruether, in *Womanguides: Readings Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), a collection of texts from many different religious traditions, seeks a female tradition in the 'Foremothers of WomanChurch': the lives of prophetesses such as Miriam and Huldah, the roles played by Mary Magdalene and female apostles, and female leadership in the early church (see pp.175-93). She also advocates re-examining patriarchal texts from a feminist viewpoint.

<sup>23</sup> Patricia Crawford, 'Women's published writings 1600-1700' (Table 7.3) in *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, ed. by Mary Prior (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.211-82, shows that almost half of all women's writing between 1651 and 1660 was by Quakers, and they accounted for the largest single genre of women's writing in the seventeenth century.



<sup>24</sup> See careers of early Quaker women preachers in Janet Scott, 'Women in the Society of Friends', in *A Quaker Miscellany for Edward H. Milligan*, ed. by David Blamires, Jeremy Greenwood and Alex Kerr (Ashford, Kent: Headley Brothers, Invicta, 1985), pp.125-31 (Elizabeth Hooton's travels to Massachusetts and Jamaica, Mary Fisher's visit to Turkey). Also accounts by Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers of their encounter with the Inquisition in Malta, and Joan Vokins's account of her visit to the Caribbean in *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, ed. by Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby, Helen Wilcox (London: Routledge, 1989). Studies include Mabel R. Brailsford, *Quaker Women 1650-1690* (London: Duckworth, 1915), Isabel Ross, *Margaret Fell, Mother of Quakerism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (York: Sessions, 1984 [London: Longmans, Green, 1949]), Christine Trevett, *Women and Quakerism in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (York: Sessions, 1991; repr. 1995) and Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1992). (See bibliographies of the works by Trevett and Mack for guidance to numerous journal articles and essays, also work on early American Quaker women.)

<sup>25</sup> Hugh Barbour's foreword to Rachel Labouchere, *Abiah Darby, 1716-1793, of Coalbrookdale, Wife of Abraham Darby II* (York: William Sessions, 1988), p.x. See also Labouchere's *Deborah Darby of Coalbrookdale, 1754-1810* (York: William Sessions, 1993) which is based on Deborah Darby's diaries concerning her ministerial travels in the British Isles, including Ireland, and America. Deborah was the wife of Samuel Darby, and daughter-in-law to Abiah and Abraham Darby II. She preached at Sycamore Alley, Mary Birkett Card's meeting house in Dublin, also at Meath Street, several times (see Labouchere, pp.236, 241, 319-21), and prayed for her on a family visit on one occasion - see postscript to Mary Birkett Card's 1799 'Elegy' on the death of Hannah Wilson Forbes in Vol. 2, Poetry, p.258 (p.260).

<sup>26</sup> *Wilt Thou Go On My Errand? Three 18th Century Journals of Quaker Women Ministers: Susanna Morris 1682-1755, Elizabeth Hudson 1722-1783, Ann Moore 1710-1783*, ed. by Margaret Hope Bacon (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1994), p.16. (Only the journal of Elizabeth Hudson is in the author's own hand entirely, but it is probably copied from an original and was possibly edited in the course of this. Elizabeth Hudson and Susanna Morris seem to have written up their journals when elderly from notes made on their journeys. The original of Ann Moore's journal is kept by a descendant's widow, but Bacon worked from a copy made by Moore's daughter, and one separate section in Moore's own hand.)

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.14-15.

<sup>28</sup> Some of Mary's pieces are indicative of a future audience – see footnote 43 below.

<sup>29</sup> Ursula King, *Women and Spirituality: Voices of Protest & Promise* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.1. King does go on to say that the experience of contemporary women is different in many ways from those in the past, but describes this difference in terms of the questions she believes women now ask as a result of modern feminism: 'Women ask themselves in a new way who they are, how they relate to others, and what they can do for the world to ensure its survival'.

<sup>30</sup> *Witnesses for Change: Quaker Women over Three Centuries*, ed. by Elisabeth Potts Brown and Susan Mosher Stuard (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), Preface, p.vii.

<sup>31</sup> *The Hidden Tradition: Women's Spiritual Writings Rediscovered*, ed. by Lavinia Byrne (London: SPCK, 1991), p.1.

<sup>32</sup> See introduction to Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (London: SCM, 1993), p.4, and Radford Ruether, *Womanguides*, p.ix.

<sup>33</sup> Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990). See particularly pp.32-41. 'Our heritage is our power' is a statement of Judy Chicago's often quoted by Schüssler Fiorenza. It is interesting to note that Hampson dedicates her book to her Quaker friends at St Andrews in whose meeting she 'found a source of inspiration and strength which has allowed me to move into a new world the other side of leaving the church and Christianity'. (Preface, p.x.) Her previous background was Presbyterian and Anglican.

It is relevant here to point out that some other scholars today go further than asserting the impossibility of a shared female experience through history, to cast doubt even on the existence of a definitive subject - 'woman' - who could have such experience. During the course of the feminist movement, questions have abounded as to what we mean by the term 'woman' - whether she is born or made, how many attributes we think of as feminine are due to



biology and how much to culture - but the sexing of the human body, as a physical entity, has been considered irrefutable. Yet Judith Butler, for example, queries how far the assignment of a child to a sex at birth is subject to cultural interpretation and how this then governs the actual emergence of sexual identity. She asks, 'Through what regulatory norms is sex itself materialized? And how is it that treating the materiality of sex as a given presupposes and consolidates the normative conditions of its own emergence?' (Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p.10, quoted in *Psychoanalysis and Woman: a reader*, ed. by Shelley Saguro, p.3, full publication details below.) Detailed discussion of such questions is outside the scope of this study, but they do direct our attention on to the way in which the gender codes pertaining in particular cultures are internalised, and consequently fulfilled in individuals, or imposed. Hence we cannot assume a gendered unity, either 'man' or 'woman', existing across different times and cultures even on the basis of physical difference. This is not as outlandish as it first appears. The advent of cosmetic surgery, hormonal treatments, and sex change operations, for example, have increased our awareness of the complexities of the relationship between the mental and physical aspects of sex – it is now possible for human subjects to re-make themselves in the gender they feel they are, or wish to be – and this highlights how the outward evidence of sex cannot be assumed to be indicative of the inward experience of gender. See introduction to *Psychoanalysis and Woman: a reader*, ed. by Shelley Saguro (Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, pp.2, 37 (Hampson admits that she 'might, in working for a different future, find the struggle of women politically inspiring' but questions how this can be of value religiously), and 169. Catherine of Siena and Julian of Norwich both feature in Lavinia Byrne's anthology, for instance.

<sup>35</sup> The term 'structures of feeling', developed by cultural critic Raymond Williams, eludes precise or easy definition. Yet it captures succinctly the complexity of relationship in the varied components of experience, particularly combinations of emotion, attitude and perspective, prevalent at particular moments in time and manifested in cultural forms expressive of cultural values. For a comprehensive introduction to the work of Raymond Williams, see *Raymond Williams: Making connections*, ed. by John Eldridge and Lizzie Eldridge (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women*, p.10.

<sup>37</sup> Hilary Hinds, 'Seventeenth-century Quaker women: out on their own?', *Journal of Woodbrooke College* (Conference Special Issue sub-titled *Our Quaker Foremothers*), 6 (Winter 1994/5), 28-34 (p.28).

<sup>38</sup> In Vol. 1, Prose, the first of two entries dated '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 24<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.81, Mary desires to 'glorify' God 'in every action of [her] life'. Amongst a list of daily activities, she includes 'dutiful conduct towards my husband' and 'bridling my tongue'. For ideas of sin in connection with speech, see also journal entries dated '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 19<sup>th</sup> 1796' ('my tongue is prone to a lie'), '6<sup>th</sup> Mo 13 – 1804', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1805', '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 8<sup>th</sup> 1806', '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 28<sup>th</sup> 1806', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1806', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 12<sup>th</sup> 1810', '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 15<sup>th</sup> 1810', '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1816', pp.8-9 (p.9), 37, 46, 67, 68, 77, 80, 96. In an entry dated '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1805', p.63, she describes how 'hard' she finds 'this lesson of obedience' – 'it is very repugnant to my nature [. . .] I loath subjection'.

<sup>39</sup> In *ibid.*, two journal entries dated '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.83, Mary asks God to grant her 'a pure language'. Mary's 'Progress of Infidelity' narrative, p.21, is perhaps most abundant in examples of extravagant language – see particularly the opening paragraph.

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, *ibid.*, the first entry for '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.83, seeking the gift of 'a pure language' – it contains no punctuation other than commas and exclamation marks except for one final period. Another outstanding example is the first paragraph in the entry for '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.89, which runs to well over four hundred words without a single full stop until near the end (although, unusually, it only has a couple of exclamation marks).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, see preface to journal entries made at the end of January 1805, p.40.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, journal entry 'Parkgate 8<sup>th</sup> of 5<sup>th</sup> Mo 1794', p.3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, Mary's 'Progress of Infidelity' narrative addresses a possible future reader, p.21 (p.25), and journal entry dated '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.85, contains an epistle to her children.

<sup>44</sup> Phyllis Mack, 'In a Female Voice: Preaching and Politics in Eighteenth-Century British Quakerism' in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), p.254, uses this term, speaking of 'the self-perception of [. . .] women ministers' as being 'far more complex [. . .] than the seamless feminine icon their audiences admired'.



## CHAPTER 4 PROGRESS OF INFIDELITY

The greatest challenge to the cohesiveness of Mary's Quaker community was posed by the current of religious ideas known as deism. As early as 1739 and 1740 London Yearly Meeting had issued epistles warning Friends to guard their families against 'reading "vile books" which rejected "the divine authority of Holy Scripture in favour of Deism, atheism, and all manner of infidelity"'.<sup>1</sup> But it was at the end of the eighteenth century that a crisis was reached, particularly in Ireland, where it resulted in what became known as the Irish Separation - the first such division in the Quaker movement. Mary's journal for 1796-97 (when she was twenty-one to twenty-two years of age) charts her own passage through a spiritual crisis, but it is not clear that this was caused by deistic notions that threatened to undermine her traditional beliefs until, in an account written in August 1798 entitled 'Progress of Infidelity', she specifically rejects 'Deistical sentiments' and 'the odium of Deism'. This section of her journal (Vol. 1, Prose, pp.4-26) forms a singular record, as Irish Quaker journalists say little about this divisive period, and historians have found that surviving documents have 'been tampered with' or had pages removed.<sup>2</sup> However, we should bear in mind that Mary's writings may well have been altered, by herself or others, after initial composition, to ensure they represented her struggle with deism and recantation of it in the 'correct' light. In all likelihood, some were destroyed. For instance, her account mentions letters she wrote at the time to her 'mentor', but these do not survive. It is also somewhat odd that after her first two journal entries made in May 1794, no further pieces appear until July 1796.

In her 'Progress of Infidelity' account, Mary describes how she was hoping to become a minister and was establishing a school, and thus was keen to discuss the latest ideas on education as well as much else with 'a certain individual' who remains unnamed. This person appeared to warrant her trust for he was 'respected as a father, an elder and teacher', but, ultimately in her view, he was responsible for leading her into the 'labyrinth' of deistic thought. This brief description would seem to fit Abraham Shackleton, a revered elder and headmaster of the school at Ballitore, County Kildare, run first by his grandfather, Abraham, and then his father, Richard (who had been educated there with the famous statesman Edmund Burke) and it is highly probable that he was the individual concerned, although we cannot be certain of this.<sup>3</sup> Abraham was a leading figure in the deist debate amongst Friends, and was eventually disowned for his refusal to conform to conventional beliefs. Whatever the



identity of this individual, however, Mary's intellectual appetite was whetted by their discussions, and she read eagerly the works of influential thinkers like Rousseau, the French *philosophe* Helvétius, the radical Thomas Paine, and Henry St John Bolingbroke. All were writers who, beside their other major philosophical or radical concerns, wished to remove religion in the traditional sense of a system of belief based on authority and revelation from its foundational position in society's ethics, and replace it with deism.<sup>4</sup>

The course of deism is often referred to as 'the deist controversy', a term that will be retained here as appropriate for the form it took in a particular dispute amongst Irish Friends at the end of the century, but rather misleading when speaking of deism as a whole which was not a unified movement or a single debate, but rather a series of engagements with Enlightenment ideas as they impacted on traditional religious faith. These ideas included the rise of belief in a natural order in the universe which could be comprehended through reason, the development of empirical science and a corresponding belief in progress, in human capacity to control the environment and improve society, a stress on individualism and a questioning of beliefs based on blind faith or prejudice. The debates spanned well over a century, from their trigger in England by Locke's promotion of a rational, essential faith in *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), to the persuasive populism of Paine's total rejection of religious revelation in *The Age of Reason* (1794) and ensuing 'controversies' over the next two to three decades.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, we can define deism, in its purest form, as asserting that the order in the universe implies a Creator (the idea, most associated with William Paley, that a watch implies a watchmaker) whilst accepting that the world nevertheless operates under natural laws accessible to human reason.<sup>6</sup> It follows that, if God interfered in His creation, He would be breaking His own laws. Accordingly, miracles become regarded as mere superstition and Christ Himself is usually seen as a great teacher, rather than literally the Son of God. The deist, by stressing that religious knowledge, like any other, can be acquired by each person purely through the exercise of reason, also laid emphasis on individual judgement.

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Mary's journal concentrates on her own emotions and tells us little about actual events. In order to understand its context it is therefore necessary to outline the course of the deist controversy in Ireland which, in the words of one near contemporary, Thomas Greer, was 'of such magnitude as to threaten the downfall of Quakerism' there.<sup>7</sup> Events were complex, but can be told fairly simply through the

parts played by three of the key individuals involved: Abraham Shackleton and two other leaders that Mary knew. These were Joseph Williams, a revered elder on whose death in 1807 she was to publish a commemorative poem, and David Sands, an American travelling minister to whom she was to write in 1815 informing him of the death of a mutual friend, the minister Susanna Hill.<sup>8</sup>

In the early 1790s, there was concern within the Society about its 'low' state - a general laxity or falling away from 'discipline' and lack of religious commitment or conviction - and Meetings thought to have such problems received pastoral visits from the Quaker hierarchy.<sup>9</sup> Joseph Williams was deputed by Half Yearly Meeting to visit Cork in this way in 1794. Shackleton also, as an active member of the leadership, was amongst those who were trying to regenerate the Society. But whereas Williams and the hierarchy sought to codify doctrine and establish a stricter discipline, Shackleton disagreed with this, considering it to be against the nature of Quakerism which had always stressed the 'inner light' of the 'spirit' in every man over the 'letter' of scriptural revelation, formal doctrine or rules. Other Friends at his Meeting in Carlow also became concerned that the Society was placing too much value on scripture and regulations to the detriment of the traditional primacy of the Inner Light. In March 1797, Abraham Shackleton as Clerk to the Ministers and Elders Meeting at Carlow refused to read some Advices from Yearly Meeting, claiming they attempted to regulate ministry when it should come freely from the Spirit. Then Carlow Meeting objected to the use of the word 'Holy' to describe the scriptures in a Query sent to encourage Bible reading in families, and omitted it in their answer, because, although they believed scripture was 'excellent and instructive', to call it 'Holy' exalted it 'as highly as the spirit of truth itself'. Many other Friends were deeply upset by this challenging of a traditional term - if their ancestors had called the scriptures 'Holy', that was sufficient in their view and anyone who thought otherwise 'was out of unity with the body'.<sup>10</sup>

Here, in this disagreement over just one word, lies the crux of the differences that were to divide Friends in Ireland irrevocably in the next few years, splitting families, meetings and whole communities. We can delineate the opposing factions as liberals and conservatives, although this division is not always straightforward. Both could quote in support the classic seventeenth-century Quaker text, Robert Barclay's *Apology*, stating that the scriptures are not 'the principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manners' but 'a secondary rule, subordinate to the spirit from whence they have all their excellence and



certainty.'<sup>11</sup> The essential difference was that liberals emphasised the secondary nature of scripture, while conservatives emphasised its 'excellence and certainty'. Both could thus accuse the other of departing from the traditions of early Friends: liberals asserted conservatives were raising scripture to a 'primary rule', conservatives asserted liberals were denigrating the Bible. In their attitude to the Bible, the conservatives were moving closer to the evangelicalism that was to become the dominant tradition of the nineteenth century.

Shackleton and the 'liberal' wing tended to come from the quietist, mystical strain of Quakerism which became widespread in the eighteenth century, after the translation of European Quietist writings into English. Quietism urged the suspension of conscious thought in direct, inner communion with God, and stressed strongly that words spoken in ministry should only be under direct inspiration. It must not be forgotten that quietism could be a deeply conservative force. It was, after all, the dominant Quaker tradition of the eighteenth century and many quietists fought hard to maintain traditions, for instance in dress and speech, that separated Quakers from the rest of the world. But its dislike of dogma and emphasis on personal experience as the source of spiritual verification could make it a ready ground for openness to new ideas. Abraham, influenced by eighteenth-century rationalism and anticipating much modern Biblical scholarship, found a literal interpretation of the Bible untenable: it often represents God anthropomorphically as a jealous, tyrannical being (Shackleton could not believe that a just God could have perpetrated some of the unjustly cruel acts he is credited with in the Old Testament, such as visiting plagues on the Egyptians), parts of it are inconsistent with one another, translations of it vary. He began to see it, not as the literal Word of God and a source of unerring guidance, but as a series of historical documents produced from the cultural perspectives and spiritual insights of individuals at particular points in time. It was therefore no more 'holy' than other such documents - in fact, parts of it were decidedly 'unholy'. (It is worth mentioning at this point that he also rejected classical education, particularly the emphasis on war in classical poetry, as 'inimical to the cultivation of that meekness and gentleness he saw at the heart of Christianity'.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, his school, which had been attended by many non-Quakers requiring a classical training as preparation for University, closed owing to a consequent lack of pupils.<sup>13</sup>)

It can be seen that Shackleton's outlook had much in common with the deist position. If reason dictates that a loving God cannot act in a way inconsistent with that love, scripture that says otherwise is more likely to be the fallible work of man than divine



revelation. It is not surprising that Quakers of a Quietist disposition should, when trying to adjust to new thinking and an increasingly empirical contemporary world-view, embrace aspects of deism. Quietists always regarded scripture and tradition as secondary to experience, and stressed each man's own responsibility for his spiritual condition guided by his Inner Light, which the Deist would think of as Reason. However, the two are really antithetical: deism involves an exaltation of the self - the only arbiter of truth is the reasoning capacity of the human mind - and denies emotional involvement with a God who stands removed from Creation, whereas quietism advocates absorption of self and reason in order to achieve communion with God in profoundly altered emotional states. Nevertheless, the similarities provided sufficient ammunition for Shackleton's opponents to label him and others sharing his views as 'deist', and thus to see them as guilty of 'infidelity' – a betrayal of the traditional Quaker faith.

Mary's journal will be examined in depth in the next section, but it is worth pausing at this point briefly to consider what her own religious outlook was prior to her engagement with 'deism'. Her journal entry for 12 July 1796 reveals definite 'quietist' practice. She refers to waiting for 'divine direction in an external duty' and to 'the day of the Lord[']s Sabbath' that 'whensoever he pleaseth he can create in the dedicated heart'.<sup>14</sup> European mystics, such as St Francis de Sales, whose practical guides to religious devotion were much circulated amongst quietists, advocated seeking moments of spiritual surrender, communion and guidance even when engaged in mundane daily tasks – what Mary calls 'external dut[ies]'. Seeing the Sabbath metaphorically as a spiritual state of mind is also indicative of quietist experience. In mid-1796, she would have been in her 'deist' phase, but it is clear that she was already familiar with the works of European quietist authors and was following their guidance. This quietist outlook would mean that she shared much ground with Shackleton and other like-minded Friends.

Once begun, events in the controversy gathered their own momentum. Later in 1797, Abraham Shackleton argued in correspondence with another more orthodox elder, Samuel Woodcock, about the status and literal truth of scripture. The nature of their debate became public resulting in the involvement of their Quarterly Meeting and both were censured - Shackleton for his views, Woodcock for his animosity. Following discussions at Leinster Select Quarterly Meetings in December 1797 and March 1798, where many were found to share Shackleton's ideas, the issue passed to the National Select Meeting at Yearly Meeting in April 1798 which appointed a Committee 'to



enquire into the state of the Society', the 'disposition to undervalue the scriptures, and to produce schism'. On its report back, the tendency to schism was deplored and, harking back once more to Barclay's *Apology*, it was stated that:

without desiring to point out these writings [i.e. scripture], as being more than a secondary rule subordinate to the spirit of truth, from whence they have all their excellency and certainty, we think it right that a standard should be lifted up against this spirit of speculation and unbelief.<sup>15</sup>

This wording, designed to try to bridge both points of view, actually encapsulated the problem. Friends were to regard the scriptures as secondary to the truth revealed through the Inward Light, and yet were still to accept them without question as 'certainty' and actively oppose dissent. Those who thought differently were to be 'laboured with in love' but disowned if this proved unsuccessful. Joseph Williams was appointed, along with others, to visit Meetings and encourage conformity, although many felt that this would actually have the opposite effect.<sup>16</sup> The next year, 1799, this group reported on the visits and there was much heated debate, but the decisions made the previous year were reiterated and it was decided to re-publish and circulate Barclay's *Apology* as an 'antidote' to the spread of 'dangerous' ideas, as well as to undertake visits to Ulster where dissent was rife.<sup>17</sup>

How would Mary have experienced these events within her own community in Dublin? Even if she had severed all contact with Abraham Shackleton, if it existed, she would have been keenly aware of religious divisions expressed in the actions and behaviour of some Friends during a visit by the American David Sands, a strong evangelical, in 1797-98. Mary does not mention him in her journal at this time, but her letter to him in October 1815 attests to the powerful effect his ministry had upon her.<sup>18</sup> So she heard him preach, and would have witnessed the furore caused. The following anecdote is possibly biased as it is recounted by William Rathbone in his document defending the Irish radicals.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless it well illustrates the dynamics and heightened feelings operating in the Dublin Quaker community.

It was customary for a minister to remove his hat and kneel to speak while others present stood up to listen, the men also removing their hats. Mary Stephens supported others who, unhappy with Sands's preaching and his literal stance regarding scripture, remained seated when he ministered. A meeting was arranged between the parties at Joseph Williams's house. David Sands, at first 'conciliatory', asked Mary Stephens what she had 'against him'. She replied 'she had not any thing against him as a man', but she feared 'he was not a gospel minister'. Enraged by this,



he asked who was she, 'a young woman', to judge of such matters, and called her at one point 'a boggled woman'. Despite the best efforts of Joseph Williams, and his admonishment of Sands, the meeting dissolved acrimoniously. Mary Stephens sat when Sands spoke, and, as a result, was barred from service in the 'discipline' (i.e. taking up any position of service in the Society). She then chose to resign her Society membership publicly, but to make its point the Society still disowned her. Other resignations followed in sympathy. David Sands had succeeded in upsetting many other people beside Mary Stephens. Though regarded by many in the Quaker hierarchy as religiously orthodox, he held some views quite antipathetic to long-cherished Quaker customs and testimonies that reveal his innate political conservatism. He endorsed capital punishment, did not appreciate why some Friends should not wish to pay taxes that would fund wars, and felt they should relinquish some customs that challenged established authority such as refusing to swear oaths in court, at least for criminal cases. As many as twenty ministers and elders objected to giving him a certificate for further ministry on leaving Ireland, although he was a very powerful speaker much admired by many others.<sup>20</sup>

As the situation escalated, many liberals across the country stopped attending Meetings and, in line with policy, disownments increased dramatically from 1799-1801.<sup>21</sup> Another American minister, Hannah Barnard from New York, holding views of scripture diametrically opposed to those of Sands, became a controversial figure in Dublin. Again, Mary, as a regular attender at Sycamore Alley Meeting House, would almost certainly have heard her preach.<sup>22</sup> If not, she could not have escaped being party to the arguments for and against Hannah's opinions. At first recommended by Ireland Yearly Meeting in 1800, which granted her a certificate to return to London, Hannah's application there for permission to minister in Europe was refused on the grounds that her views were not in keeping with those of the Society - mainly as a result of action by Joseph Williams who had travelled to London deliberately to undermine her, and David Sands. Returning to Dublin Yearly Meeting to complain of this inconsistency, she found support no longer existed amongst many Friends there either. When she ministered at Sycamore Alley in April 1801, Joseph Williams stood up to accuse her of being 'out of unity' with the Society. Abraham Shackleton, with whom, unsurprisingly, she found much in common, and John Bewley went back to London with her to support her cause. Her appeal became in effect a 'trial' at London Yearly Meeting in May 1801 despite a chivalric plea on her behalf from George Harrison (presumably Mary's uncle) before he and another Friend introduced her. Following a supplication made by David Sands for 'divine assistance', George



'reminded' everyone that:

the Appellant was about to appear among us, as a stricken dear [sic] - a stranger in a foreign land – a female, three thousand miles from home; far from her natural protector, and from all that was near, and dear in social life, abandoned, and deserted by those whom she came to visit, let us [. . .] treat her with complacency, with tenderness, and with that decency which is due to her sex, and station.

His plea, however, fell largely on deaf ears.<sup>23</sup> Hannah was formally rejected, returned to New York and later left the Society.

Back in Ireland, Leinster Select Quarterly Meeting (Dublin was part of Leinster) ceased to convene for some time, but the situation was most acute in Ulster where the major separation took place. After the resignation and subsequent disownment in 1800 of John Hancock, the most prominent figure amongst the liberals in Ulster, whole families and communities left amid criticism of the Society's outmoded and complex forms, and its narrowing views.<sup>24</sup> In 1800-01, Ministers and Elders there disbanded their Select Meetings.<sup>25</sup> Yearly Meeting's reaction was to organise yet more exhortatory visits to Ulster meetings and families while continuing to disown those who openly broke the rules or expressed radical opinions.<sup>26</sup> Eventually, only two Monthly Meetings in the whole of Ulster remained linked to Ireland Yearly Meeting and there was only one recorded minister.<sup>27</sup> The separation had long-reaching consequences, as those who left were permanently estranged and the effect upon the Society in Ireland as a whole, and the headquarters of the Quaker movement in Dublin, was traumatic.

Meanwhile in Carlow, Abraham Shackleton had given up being an elder in 1799. Following unsuccessful discussions with leading ministers of an evangelistic persuasion, he resigned his membership and was disowned by his Meeting in 1801. The Meeting refused to read out his resignation letter, but a section of it is worth quoting here because it shows how, perhaps as a result of the controversy, Shackleton had come to reject not only biblical authority, but the authority wielded within any religious organisation:

First, I do not disown the society, nor any society of men, nor any man; [. . .]

Secondly, though I disown not men, I disown the principle of congregated societies, of religion housed up, which has a tendency to separate the affections of man from man, operating like political distinctions in civil society, and very much tending to lay waste those brotherly sympathies, by which all the sons of men are, or ought to be, united in common interests.<sup>28</sup>

As the Quaker historian Mollie Grubb says:

**[One issue] this letter raises is the threat postulated by Shackleton's views not only to the existence of the Society of Friends and the Christian church, but to the whole social structure. He pleaded almost for a kind of universal religious commonwealth, ruled by God alone, in which all men and women would worship as equals, free from any kind of organization or ritual, even the minimum which George Fox found necessary to preserve Quakerism and which the disciples found to be essential for the spread and preservation of the early church.**

Deeply sympathetic to Shackleton, she still queries whether this could ever be a genuine possibility:

**Can the ideal of the man or woman alone before his or her Maker be held together through the generations without some form of structure, or 'congregated society' to enfold and preserve it? The whole history of religious thought and practice, from their earliest beginnings, bears witness to the need men have felt to organize their experience into more, or less, hierarchical structures, resting on a received and experienced body of religious belief.<sup>29</sup>**

The plea for men and women worshipping as equals was, of course, nothing new. Quakerism, more perhaps than all other Christian denominations, was founded on concepts of equality which governed social as well as religious life – each individual to commune with God directly without intermediary, no formal priesthood, no distinction in forms of address, titles or marks of respect. The anomaly was that it was also in some respects the most separatist, and most keenly so in the eighteenth century. No other denomination adopted such distinctive forms of dress or speech, and though many other groups, both Catholic and Protestant, discountenanced marriage outside their own faiths, none formed such a cohesive community set apart so completely by intermarriage and particular forms of social life. Marked from its origins by the absence of ritual in the formal sense of planned outward worship following set patterns of words and actions, Quakerism had become, in itself, ritualistic in the archaic forms still adhered to in daily life. And it was maintained through the carefully structured organisation of Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings established by George Fox, which, however necessary to preserve the sect through seventeenth-century persecution and afterwards, was distinctly hierarchical. It can be seen, then, that for Friends living through the deist controversy in Ireland, much more was at stake than mere forms and words, or even the status of the Bible. Petty and intolerant as much of the internal squabbling seems, its roots lay in fear. Conservatives like Joseph Williams feared with justification that their faith, community and power base would disintegrate if formal beliefs, observance and authority were questioned. Liberals like



Shackleton feared that the Society was imposing ever more rigid forms and beliefs amounting to dogma, in place of the religion of the heart they felt Quakerism essentially was – hence their provocative behaviour and insensitivity in deleting the word 'Holy' from a Query. William Rathbone intended to criticise the establishment when he turned the language of orthodoxy against itself, stating that it was 'ALIENATION, PERSECUTION, UNCHARITABLENESS' that 'sharpen, cruelly barb, and fatally envenom the shafts of IRRELIGION and INFIDELITY'.<sup>30</sup> But there was uncharitableness on both sides and the Society's efforts to stem the tide of dissent only intensified the situation. What many ordinary Friends must have feared was the loss of a whole way of life, and the sense of identity and security that came with it.

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Mary's journal from 1796-98 offers us an invaluable opportunity to juxtapose an individual woman's account against the background of the overall community experience as just outlined. It allows us to see at first hand the impact of the new rationalism in the life of an individual woman and witness the inner struggle that ensued. Elements of her experience must have been similar to that of many other young Quaker women disturbed by the influx of new ideas and the consequent divisions in the Society, and some of her reading, too, surely mirrored that of many others. (*Paine's Rights of Man* was by then achieving huge sales in a low-priced edition.) Yet in other respects she was somewhat exceptional. She belonged to a fairly prominent family amongst Friends in Dublin, was highly intelligent and educated beyond what was customary for girls even amongst Quakers, had gained recognition, possibly even admiration as a youthful prodigy, through publication of her poem on the slave trade, and had strong ministerial and teaching ambitions. (All factors, incidentally, that may have meant she was uniquely placed to develop a relationship with Shackleton.) This contrast – the way in which she was both representative and unrepresentative - is brought out if we look at how this section of her diary also bears witness to the tension between the individual and the community, and an attempted resolution of this conflict. Like the rest of her journal, it is cast in language and expressive of ideas she had internalised as appropriate for spiritual autobiography, but it also constitutes in effect another specific form – a 'conversion narrative'. This term is usually used to describe a document recording the embrace of a new faith, but Mary's experience was also a conversion – from doubt to recovery of belief. As such, it is not surprising that her record of it bears some similarity to other Protestant women's 'conversion narratives' from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so much so that it clearly belongs within that tradition whereby the experience of



individual conversion is expressed in accordance with sets of conventions pertaining to the religious group. (A tradition that could be said to sub-divide into other traditions within different affiliations - Puritans, Methodists, Quakers - as well as being subject to variations over time.) Recent scholarship has shown how these were often written to obtain entry to, or acceptance within, the group. It will be argued that Mary's narrative, rather similarly, was a formal act of reconciliation with her community and its emergent orthodoxy. Indeed, it was thought that the 'Progress of Infidelity' piece in particular, which must replicate and encapsulate the experience of a number of Quaker women in Ireland in the 1790s who were 'led astray' by the new thinking but returned to 'the fold', was probably one of a collection of similar accounts. However, to date no other 'Infidelity' narratives (by men or women) have been found. Of course, some may be languishing in attics, others lost or destroyed. Nevertheless it would seem that Mary's account is at least unusual if not unique.

One consequence of the status of this part of her diary as a conversion narrative is that the entries preceding 'Progress of Infidelity' may not so much represent her 'deist' experience at the time, but that experience in retrospect – from the vantagepoint of her rediscovered faith in 1798. This might account for there being no entries between May 1794 and July 1796, a period (at least the latter part) when she would almost certainly have been exchanging letters with her 'mentor' and exploring radical texts.<sup>31</sup> Would such a deeply religious young woman, believing she was growing spiritually under the guidance of an elder much revered by her at that time, not have confided some of her 'progress' to her journal? The gap could be the result of later editing by her son, but it is quite likely that she deleted entries herself, and adjusted those remaining. This would also explain how entries from mid 1796 onwards come to illustrate a spiritual struggle without naming its cause or the nature of the enemy. Perhaps, just as her false 'mentor' could not even be named by the time she wrote 'Progress of Infidelity', neither could the details of the experience he engendered (experience which must have been novel and exciting at the time) be made explicit, or left extant in any way that could be interpreted positively later. Yet, once we know that deism was 'the enemy', the cloaked references to it – as a 'cobweb system' or 'speculation' for instance – become quite clear.<sup>32</sup> This carries implications for our reading of her journal. We need to be aware that sections have almost certainly been revised, endowed with meanings they did not have at the time. Consequently, we are not always given access to a self at the moment of writing, but rather a self that has been processed, to some extent, for viewing. There are definite gestures in the 'Progress of Infidelity' narrative itself towards a readership other than the self. Inclusion of



autobiographical detail as if telling for others, an address to the Reader who may be herself 'at a more advanced age' but could be 'any other' after her death, show that Mary was writing partly for an audience whether or not the document was circulated at the time. This highlights, too, how autobiography looks to the future as well as the past. Mary's encounter with 'deism' was the formative phase in her early spiritual life, and the base for the rest of her autobiography. One of the strategies adopted then – the negotiation between a desire for self-promotion and the requirement to sublimate the self, to remain 'obscure' – was foundational for her future.

One strategy we can adopt to gain more insight into the journal is to look, once again, at what it omits to tell us. Beside saying nothing about the background to the schism, Mary makes no reference to the lead-up and outbreak of the 1798 Irish Rebellion (though the tragic situation in Ireland is the subject of two other pieces of her writing). Not only is the personal dimension in terms of Mary's relationship with her 'mentor' almost completely eradicated, but there is no mention of her own role, or relationship to the controversy.<sup>33</sup> We are given, in effect, a drama without a setting – either context or characters. In the absence of further evidence we can but speculate on the personal issues. As a young woman cherishing a desire to become a minister, was Mary involved in the disputes? Did she openly range herself first with those who shared Shackleton's beliefs? This seems unlikely because, on 9 January 1798, she speaks of the oppression of 'a secret consciousness [. . .] of deviating from the perfect standard of Divine & Moral Rectitude' and of how 'being safe from the researches of fellow-mortals [cannot] [. . .] ameliorate the pang of retrospection!'<sup>34</sup> Was she a member of a group of young Quaker women in Dublin reading radical authors like Paine and the French *philosophes* in the mid-1790s, or did she explore these texts in solitude, prompted by her 'mentor'? What did her family feel about her friendship with him, or her reading, and did they array themselves on one side or the other? Nothing has been found to indicate their sympathies, although later her father, brother, brother-in-law, husband and other relatives (as members of the Men's Monthly Meeting) all signed the testimony drawn up in tribute to the life of Joseph Williams in November 1807.<sup>35</sup>

Then with regard to Mary's 'mentor' (possibly Shackleton), what was the nature of their relationship? Did it consist only of correspondence after they first met at a social event at her home, or were there other contacts? Did it extend over months or years? Did they collaborate, for instance on education and schools, or simply exchange ideas? Yet, even though details of his personality are erased (perhaps because of the



attraction it had once held for her as much as the ignominy into which, as a deist, he had fallen), her justification for succumbing to his theories is preserved – his status as an elder and teacher, ‘one as I thought looked up to by most’.<sup>36</sup> By mentioning he was also a father and a husband she exonerates herself from any accusation of an association outside the bounds of propriety. It is also pertinent that, despite the constraints placed upon young women, Mary seems to have enjoyed considerable personal freedom, being able, for instance, to make visits unaccompanied - a freedom she herself saw as contributing to her downfall. On 16 March 1797, she deplors the ‘spiritually impure’ conversation (probably of ‘deistic’ content) she had indulged in on a visit her mother had allowed her to make the previous day, while revealing how much her empathy with others and love of social converse led her into such difficulties, ‘How is it that I cannot resist the allurements of pressing invitation & rather expose my self to these trials than offend those who are piercing my soul thro & thro[?]’.<sup>37</sup> This freedom, and the fact that her ‘mentor’ was a respected individual, married and presumably considerably older than Mary, may have meant that they could correspond and meet occasionally without attracting any scandal or reproach. (It is of note that Shackleton (1752-1818) was then in his mid-forties and had married Lydia Mellor in 1779.) But she also speaks, rather precisely, of how ‘sanctioned less highly[,] self love wants [. . .] prompted me to exchange sentiments & communicate and receive ideas with and from him’.<sup>38</sup> We should realise that although facets of her own personality as revealed in her writings – enthusiasm, a yearning to teach, minister and work in the world, curiosity and a love of reading – would make her receptive to new ideas (and she might later interpret such a hunger as ‘self love wants’), her upbringing and situation would also render her susceptible to the influence of those she had been taught to revere, especially men occupying positions of authority and trust (and who, incidentally, might be able to assist her in her ambitions to become a minister or teacher). Beside offering intellectual stimulus and a degree of reciprocity, her ‘mentor’ fulfilled her need for support, authority and guidance. ‘Infidelity’ was thus a ‘poison’ imbibed through following, rather than straying from, her society’s expectations and values. And the ‘poison’ did not consist, perhaps, solely of ideas and doubts but of a feeding of the ego, a desire for achievement and recognition that constituted another form of infidelity – a love of self before love of God – a form of unfaithfulness all the more censurable in a woman whose sphere of activity was supposed to reside mainly in the private domain.

We can be less speculative, however, about the background to the journal regarding the Irish situation. The unrest in Ireland, from the attempted invasion by a French fleet



in December 1796, prompted by United Irish leader Wolfe Tone, to the 1798 Rebellion in which 30,000 people died and its aftermath, forms an ever-present backdrop of instability and tension against which Mary's journal during this period should be read. In the summer of 1798 Dublin 'assumed [. . .] something of a siege mentality' with barricades and business halted and, though the Rebellion was effectively crushed at the Battle of Vinegar Hill on 21 June, the result was uncertain for some time even if by mid-August, the British commander 'could report temporarily that the county now had "a quiet and settled appearance"'.<sup>39</sup> 'Progress of Infidelity' was written on 25 August. The re-established social order would still have seemed very fragile and Mary's family, like others of the Anglo-Irish middle class, would still be fearful, as they had been for several years, not only of violence but of the possible loss of their property and position - especially in view of the connections between the United Irishmen and the revolutionary French government.<sup>40</sup> Mary's reading had political as well as religious connotations. She states, Helvétius 'treated on the equality of Man and asserts that education only makes the difference', and again, 'I was taught that we should have all things in common'. And, a little earlier in the same paragraph, she announces that 'Paine crowned the whole'.<sup>41</sup> Thomas Paine was, of course, one of the most influential political radicals of the period. Although not a Quaker himself, his father was a Friend and Paine acknowledged the influence of Quaker ideals.<sup>42</sup> Free thinking in religion often goes hand in hand with political radicalism – both question or challenge received beliefs and existing hierarchies. It is therefore not surprising that the Quaker 'liberals' in the deist controversy tended also to be politically liberal. The conservatively inclined Quaker diarist James Jenkins pointed out what he perceived as the anachronistic behaviour of Hannah Barnard in this respect, in terms that reveal how liberal preachers transgressed accepted norms by promoting the dissolution of class boundaries:

[Hannah was] a public, and frequent declaimer against all war: [. . .] and yet rejoicing at every account announced by the public prints, of Republican victories. The writings of the French republicans had filled her head with their political nonsense about Liberty and Equality, and these notions were reduced to practice when, in Ireland; at her public meetings, she frequently disturbed the arrangements made by friends of the place, by calling to the upper end of the meeting, and there mingling up, rich, and poor, clean, and dirty promiscuously together, and in visiting families at Bristol and other places refusing to visit such as objected to sit with their own servants, [. . .].<sup>43</sup>

Entertaining radical ideas thus constituted a betrayal of the class to which Mary belonged, and threatened her own identity as a member of that class. It is no coincidence that 'Progress of Infidelity' was written when it was – it must be seen as



an act of reconciliation with her social and economic, as much as her religious, group.

Irish Friends have sometimes been accused of devoting disproportional space in their writings to internal Quaker matters, to the extent of being oblivious to the suffering of much of the population in the Rebellion.<sup>44</sup> It is certainly true that Quaker accounts tend to concentrate on the sufferings of Friends, or rather, their miraculous escapes from suffering as a result, it was believed, of faithfulness to the peace testimony. Mary's other writings include such an account, intended to commemorate Quaker endurance and promote pacifism, with little mention of non-Quakers other than Friends' servants.<sup>45</sup> But they also include some reflections made in March 1798, before rebellion broke out, addressed to those 'whose bosoms have felt the sacred fire of Philanthropy'. These urge them to help stave off war by supporting Irish industry instead of buying luxury foreign goods, and are suspicious of a 'fashionable patriotism', of those who defend Liberty but are really motivated by a 'Love of Power' (typically, personal ambition is seen as a poisonous influence). Combining the eighteenth-century cults of 'reason' and 'sensibility', they ask that people be governed instead by a blend of 'reason' and empathic emotion dictated by 'Nature': 'actions the product of Reason', 'sentiments warm from the heart'. 'Yielding to this [i.e. the dictate of Nature] we can never oppress because we involuntarily exchange situations with those around us'.<sup>46</sup> And Mary certainly heard of, and may have seen, some of the suffering at first hand. In her 1815 letter to David Sands in America, she tells how she and the now deceased Susanna Hill often spoke of him and 'of that perilous journey to Enniscorthy in which [his] faith was predominant & saw to the end of it, which she at that time was not able to do'.<sup>47</sup> Susanna, then, was with Sands when he led a small group of Quakers across dangerous terrain to attend the Leinster Quarterly Meeting at Enniscorthy just after the Battle of Vinegar Hill. Much of the country was desolate, with many local people in a pitiful state, and littered with bodies – at one point some of these had to be removed to clear the road.<sup>48</sup>

This letter to Sands is a key to Mary's experience of the deist controversy. It reveals her admiration of Sands and shows how much his ministry and personality must have been instrumental in her change of heart. Addressing him as 'my honor'd and often remember'd friend', she assures him of her 'continued grateful regard' as 'one by whom [his] labours in this land of Ire are not forgotten' and hopes that he may still remember her, 'for sure thou must remember the baptizing seasons which we were permitted to partake of, when thy lot was cast in Dublin – seasons which will I think be



precious to me while reason retains its seat'. She also thinks of him as having been helpful 'as a Father' – again, then, someone exerting both authority and guidance – and refers to a simile he used that had since been often in her mind - 'being behind hand with the work of the day' she says, 'how often with regard to myself have I had cause to advert to thy simile of a boiling pot for ever pouring forth the scum'. Somewhat astonished at her own temerity in so addressing a man she held in such high estimation, she adds that should he ever return to Dublin he would be most welcome to stay with the Cards 'but that would be a favour almost beyond our expectations'. Finally, her request that he remember her to two other evangelical American ministers who had visited Ireland – Jesse Kersey and Henry Hull – and the designation of her letter as a 'sincere tho' late testimonial' to the 'grateful love' she and Nathaniel bore Sands, leave us in no doubt that the powerful evangelicalism of the pro-scripture party had played a significant part in her spiritual transformation. Mary's friendship with Susanna Hill is also illustrative of her re-aligned sympathies with the orthodox wing of the Society. Susanna and Abigail Knott (mother of Mary's future sister-in-law) were both appointed by Women's Yearly Meeting in April 1801 to a joint committee of women and men Friends set up to investigate the disaffection in Ulster, and Susanna was further 'appointed to unite with men friends in a visit to Ulster and other parts of the nation'.<sup>49</sup> Susanna later travelled in the ministry with the evangelical Mary Dudley.

If we plot Mary's journal entries against the course of the schism, some interesting facts emerge. We find that a turning point occurs in the spring of 1797, just when Shackleton's refusal to read the Advices and deletion of the word 'Holy' began to make the differences between Friends public upon discussion at Leinster Quarterly Meeting (25 and 27 March). Her winter of 'torment', evidenced (though not consistently) by entries between September 1796 and 16 March 1797, comes to an end in the second entry for 16 March – where she describes the 'anguish' of being subjected to 'impure conversation'.<sup>50</sup> The next entry (5 April), expresses complete surrender to the holy spirit and a fresh confidence that her 'Redeemer' can 'create anew', and, without analysing them in depth at this point, we can say that ensuing entries until the 'Progress of Infidelity' narrative are imbued with this new attitude and free of the despairing oscillations of the 1796-97 winter. It seems then, that even though Shackleton was still respected at this point (being appointed with Joseph Williams by Yearly Meeting to monitor problems in discipline, for instance), Mary abandoned 'deist' opinions as soon as they attracted controversy. On 13 July 1798, after the April Yearly Meeting which appointed an inquiry and desired 'that a standard should be lifted up



against [. . .] speculation and unbelief', she confirms that God is 'closing the eye of speculation' within and goes on, in August, to write 'Progress of Infidelity'. Could it have been designed specifically to raise 'a standard' as Yearly Meeting required? Entries afterwards continue to look back with horror on the time of conflict and ask God to 'cleanse' his 'sorely polluted Church'.<sup>51</sup> Curiously, there is a sixteen month gap in the journal between September 1799 and February 1801, during which time Hannah Barnard made her first visit to Ireland and was followed to London by Joseph Williams, followed by another gap of ten months until December 1801 – the year of Hannah Barnard's return to Ireland to plead her case and subsequent 'trial' in London. There may be no connection at all with the controversy - the gaps may simply be due to Mary's being very involved in her courtship of Nathaniel Card (1799/1800) and the lead-up to her marriage in March 1801 – but it is odd that the February 1801 entry should refer to 'Backsliding' and 'anguish', and plead to be allowed to renew her 'broken covenant'.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps her earlier break with 'deism' was not as final as it appears.

What Mary's autobiography does make explicit, however, is the dislocating effect of the new ideas she had imbibed. The journal entries over the winter of 1796-97 are expressive of an acute sense of loss, of estrangement from God and thus from life's meaning and purpose, an imprisonment within a lonely tormented self to whose suffering God alone is witness, a suffering the more terrible for being conceived as self-inflicted: 'When the bars of the earth surround me! bars which I have brought upon myself'.<sup>53</sup> The consequent burden of self-loathing, a sense of being 'putrified' with 'iniquity', means she is locked in a 'labyrinth of guilt'.<sup>54</sup> Hers is a self divided, under attack from within, 'from inward enemies, which seek my ruin'.<sup>55</sup> Such dislocation was highly disruptive of Mary's individual identity and security (she herself says in 'Progress of Infidelity' - 'Thus the hedge which surrounded my little Garden was broken down').<sup>56</sup> By suffocating the well-springs of emotion within, it severed a means of connection to her inner self. The 'Infidelity' narrative shows how the influence of enlightenment thought led her rational conscious mind to intervene continually, to inhibit the previously almost instinctive spiritual response with doubts and questions; feeling was shut out, in her words 'the avenues to my heart closed insensibly'.<sup>57</sup> Here the thought of William Blake, who in his poetry decried how empiricism denied the feeling imagination, is apposite. His mythical character Urizen (Your reason), embodying aspects of eighteenth-century rationalism that Blake despised, reduces the world to one without feeling, which can be encompassed by human knowledge and thus controlled: 'Times and times he divided, & measur'd/Space by space in his



ninefold darkness'.<sup>58</sup> Again, Blake has Milton say of 'the Reasoning Power in Man' that 'This is a false Body: an Incrustation over my Immortal/Spirit; a Selfhood, which must be put off & annihilated alway'.<sup>59</sup> For Blake this selfhood is just a top layer, a barrier which gets in the way of essential spiritual reality. Addressing himself to deists specifically as 'the Enemies of the Human Race', he asserts that they, by teaching that 'Man is Righteous' (essentially good) deny the continual need for 'New Selfhood' that alone can combat evil.<sup>60</sup> Mary expresses constantly a desire for self-annihilation in her journals which is a feature of much female spiritual autobiography (though paradoxically self-examination, concern with guilt and the very act of voicing the 'I' in the text leads to preoccupation with and affirmation of the separateness of self).<sup>61</sup> But it is the gap opened up by the new rationalism between reason and feeling Blake refers to that explains the fragmenting effects of deism on Mary Birkett; 'my resource within was closed up, the streams of Gospel Ministry - ceased to flow or when they did I could not receive them nor understand them because I judged them'.<sup>62</sup> Deism denied such emotional response, not least because by denying providence it refuted direct interaction between God and the self.

Furthermore, 'deism' and its associated radicalism posed challenges to Mary's identity by threatening to dissolve boundaries on several other levels: on that of class, as we have seen, but also those of religious demarcation and gendered subjectivity. Not only were disagreements between quietists, deists and evangelicals seriously weakening the Society of Friends (a power struggle that the evangelicals were to win) but, by substituting a universal religion for a 'peculiar' one, the radicals or free-thinkers sought to break down boundaries between Quakers and the rest of the world. Many discarded traditional forms and discipline such as the structures of Meetings, Advices and Queries or broke the marriage rules – some even worked on First Days (Sundays).<sup>63</sup> But the dangers for women were particularly acute. Hannah Barnard's abilities won admiration even from those suspicious of her doctrines, but one telling exchange reveals how, to others, these abilities appeared to cross gender boundaries. On first meeting her, James Jenkins remarked to his friend, 'this is an extraordinary woman', whereupon the friend, agreeing, pronounced, 'Yes, [. . .] indeed is she - - she is a clever, very clever fellow.'<sup>64</sup> This risk of defeminisation was no less real for those women not in the public eye. Elizabeth Fry's daughters, after referring to the educational achievements of women in the latter eighteenth century which 'proved to the world the possibility of high literary attainments existing with every feminine grace and virtue', go on to say:



Infidelity was making slow, though sure advances upon the Continent. Rousseau and Voltaire were but types of the state of feeling and principles in France. The effects gradually extended to our own country, and England has to blush for the perversion of female talent, the evil influence of which, was only counteracted by shewing as a beacon light, to warn others from shipwreck. Science and philosophy, so called, advanced and flourished, but by their side flourished also the Upas tree of infidelity, poisoning with its noxious breath the flowers and the fruits, otherwise so pleasant to the eye, and so good for the use of man.<sup>65</sup>

'Infidelity', then, was a term that carried particular resonance when applied to the supposedly detrimental influence of enlightenment ideas on women. Entertaining the notions of Rousseau or Voltaire was constructed as deviant, a betrayal of true or ideal female identity - a 'perversion of female talent'. The reference to counteraction by 'shewing a beacon light' implies concerted efforts by some women to warn others and this could well have been Mary's purpose in her 'Narrative'. Significantly, she says, 'Beware of the tree of knowledge, its Growth is indeed in the Garden of God, hard by the tree of life, but its fruit thou art forbidden to taste. Death is the assured consequence thereof', in this familiar biblical echo from Genesis troping aspects of rational knowledge as a poisonous tree as do the Fry sisters.<sup>66</sup>

This warning imperative returns us to the concept of a 'conversion narrative' that functions, in Mary's case, as a confessional act through which she negotiates her entry into the new orthodoxy and places signposts, or markers, for others. Seventeenth-century women's conversion narratives have been subject to readings along these lines. Graham, Hinds, Hobby and Wilcox, for instance, describe how, within radical sects, such narratives were not purely histories of personal experience but formed 'public account[s]' written so as to gain entry or acceptance into the religious community. They provided evidence of experience qualifying the individual as one of 'the elect', and so exhibit specific patterns that replicate group conventions: 'a specific pattern of doubt, false security, renewed (often agonizing) doubt, and eventual true assurance characterizes' many of them. This is not to say the pattern was followed or adopted consciously or slavishly. Rather, 'the sinner could not be sure she was saved unless her experiences paralleled to a large degree those of her peers, and she would be pre-disposed to recognize the popular pattern of emotions and compulsive actions'. Moreover, these conventions were as facilitating as they were limiting, because they 'also provided an author with a framework through which to assess and find important the things she did and felt' so that 'the emotions and incidents' in the narratives 'are not wholly reducible to the framework that permitted their composition'.<sup>67</sup> Carol Edkins, comparing Quaker and Puritan women's narratives in eighteenth-century



America, finds such patterns. In both religious groups the written account was, for the woman, a 'symbolic confirmation of her bond with her respective group' and thus 'echoed [. . .] the religious and spiritual experience of the community'.<sup>68</sup> However, while for Puritans attesting to one's conversion, either orally or in writing, was prerequisite to admission as one of the 'saints', Quakers often wrote an autobiography after first speaking in meeting (almost like a second rite of passage). The stages of the conversion process also differed, and it is worth outlining these here before comparing Mary's autobiography. Edkins found Puritans displayed the following stages: perception of own sin and despair of salvation, repentance, then the actual conversion through divine grace followed by renewed doubt. Quakers, on the other hand, seem to have been more complex, with six stages toward not just conversion but 'spiritual [. . .] harmony': an inner 'questioning', examination of various religious 'teachings', discovery of Quakerism, inner struggle against 'surrender', submission, and finally entry into the Society. Submission (both to God and the Quaker community), and the need to dissolve the confines of the everyday self in surrender to the Inner Light, was central. These Quaker narratives constitute, for Edkins, a curious 'hybrid' exemplifying the 'tension' between individual and community expression – produced in line with 'group experience' but struggling to express personality despite the formula. And, indeed, looking at the stages Edkins outlines, we can see that the Quaker convert engaged in a personal and intellectual search that led, in a sense, to a certain surrender of intellect, and of personality as represented in individual will or desire.<sup>69</sup>

When we examine the whole period of the 'deist' episode in Mary's journal closely, parallels emerge. In isolating these, it is not meant to suggest that Mary consciously created a 'conversion narrative' following earlier models she had read. Rather, it is thought that by internalising modes of expression and stages of experience common to such narratives of spiritual transformation (and here not only Quaker journals but her reading of Catholic mystics such as Miguel de Molinos and St Francis de Sales may have played a part, particularly in relation to what is commonly termed 'the dark night of the soul'), she lived and cast her own experience in their terms in a double sense.<sup>70</sup> First, in what is preserved of her writing before and during the course of her deist encounter (1796-97) she voices alternate phases of elation and spiritual 'dryness' or despondency, some of the latter no doubt triggered by the doubt attendant upon 'deism' although references to this as the cause are omitted or erased. Such phases were expected as part of the spiritual journey regardless of any relationship to a specific 'conversion'. Then, possibly at the time or after her recantation of 'deism' in



'Progress of Infidelity', her previous journal was re-cast not only to adjust or omit material relating to deism itself (now become the unnamable) but also to convey a progressive picture leading to the recovery of a lost 'true' faith. This re-discovery of faith inevitably mirrored aspects of an initial discovery and so was necessarily expressed in forms 'standard' for the writing of conversion experience. If this was done, as in all likelihood it was, by Mary herself, it does not lay her open to a charge of falsification as, for her, the new version, created in line with her re-found beliefs, may well have represented the 'truer' account.

There are twenty-five entries in all in Mary's surviving journal from its commencement in 1794 until the 'Progress of Infidelity' narrative in August 1798. Many seem alike, the most common theme being the overriding desire to annihilate all workings of the self, or 'creature', coupled with a delineation of this self as worthless or corrupt. Yet it is noticeable that the first three entries (two in 1794 and one in July 1796) are devoid of this in any explicit sense. They express a yearning for spiritual succour, particularly on finding an emptiness in the failure of anticipated pleasures both in the worldly sense (on visiting England) and the spiritual (attending Meeting in London), but are hopeful, confident not only that this yearning will be fulfilled but that spiritual growth will reveal the way forward to designated work in the world: 'thus growing in the Will and Wisdom of the father we shall at length know the proper portion of labour which is intended for us and of which in our infant state we were altogether incapable.'<sup>71</sup> Then we come to the tormenting winter of 1796-97 – a period of doubt and consequent spiritual struggle. A change is immediately apparent in the entry made aboard a canal packet boat on 23 September. Mary speaks of her 'miserable estate', of how 'an host opposeth me and I[,] [whither] but to thee my sole refuge shall I fly?', of 'deep distress' and 'divers temptations'. The baptism with God's spirit sought in her very first entry has become a 'deep and trying', even 'crucifying', 'dispensation' under which her 'bones seemed all dislocated by reason of my sin and my heart groaned under the weight [. . .] of my past abominations'.<sup>72</sup> There is a period corresponding to the stage of false security. First, in November she trusts in God's power to guide her to safety and 'close for ever that evil eye which like the Basilisks poisons where it glances', despite the fact that she has long been 'sick of soul', if she will but be 'obedient'.<sup>73</sup> Then, on 1 December, there is joy that God had 'deigned to manifest himself' to her soul so that His 'voice as formerly - stills every tempest & infuses an ineffable calm', and the next entry hopes this 'loving kindness' will 'continue' while realising eternal life can only be 'purchased with the loss of all that I pos[s]ess, [. . .] in self'.<sup>74</sup> But this confidence proves transient and is followed by the stage of renewed misery and doubt. On 21 February she 'groan[s]



being in bondage' and asks that 'superfluity' be driven away so as to sink into 'profound annihilation of self', on the 26<sup>th</sup> of the same month she speaks of 'horrors' and an 'anguish of privation'. In March, though on the 12<sup>th</sup> she seeks the annihilation of the 'man of sin' which now feels 'cold & lifeless' within her, on the 16<sup>th</sup> (first entry of this date) there is a sense of once again being outcast from God's presence. On 5 April she is more confident that the self can be 'utterly slain', and entries thereafter, despite another 'day of unutterable misery' on 1 August, mark a reflective process leading to spiritual recovery (true assurance) when she has 'thrown away every cobweb system' and 'broken from systematic knowledge'.<sup>75</sup> Within these stages, we can also see parallels with Edkins's findings. Mary's alienation and doubt are products of her inner questioning of tradition and scripture and examination of different religious philosophies. Her struggle is, in essence, between her reasoning self and surrender to a God beyond self and reason, and to a community formulating a new witness to this. Submission is the key requisite for re-entry, or re-alignment with, that community.

In reality, however, complete subjection of either the intellectual, or the desiring, self is not possible. Nor can the tension between the individual and the community be eradicated, once and for all, in this way. Submission cannot be entire, or a one-off act. Rather it represents a new level of negotiation of the boundaries marking self, community, class and gender. The imagery in which Mary casts her deist experience is interesting in this respect. It is at once a 'wilderness' (a wild space without perceived boundaries) and 'bondage' (containment where free movement is denied).<sup>76</sup> What she must do to emerge from it is to negotiate, or recreate, the boundaries. Such negotiation can be empowering on the one hand (resulting in redefinitions that provide security and reassurance, a clearer basis for action and the interpretation of experience) and constraining on the other (limiting the range of that action and interpretation). And these new boundaries are not static, but constantly require reaffirmation or renegotiation.

Tensions exist in the early part of Mary's journal on many levels - between the pleasure of exploration (here reading, new ideas) and the security of the received and familiar, between the urge to please others or achieve social acceptance and the need to cut out temptations to indulge in 'impure conversation' - but most significantly in areas connected with the desire to affirm selfhood by expanding its boundaries and the requirement to curtail its activity within prescribed limits. The young Mary Birkett had a wish to be heard, partly originating in the human need to be valued and recognised, but also a yearning to reach others beyond the confines of her community

in Dublin and make a real difference in the world. After her deist phase, wanting to prevent others falling to the wiles of 'serpentine wisdom', she states, 'Oh that I had power and a voice to reach from the centre to the circumference of the Globe to proclaim in the ears of my fellow men the immutable truths which lie hidden within them'.<sup>77</sup> Her linking of power and voice is crucial because it is precisely in the use of language that authority lies. Herein lay a problem that would loom large in her later autobiography – how could a woman, denied authority by virtue of her gender, assume the power of language? The result would be an ambivalent relationship with language itself, a constant balancing act between the urge to speak and injunctions to silence, and the connection of speech with sin. For now, the essential conflict resided more in resolving the direction her life should take. She feared the 'ardent desire' to minister could arise out of 'selfishness' (2 November 1796), wanting to be regarded in the world, and described herself as 'grievously torn by contending passions [. . .] and a desire to leave this valley of obscurity in which my dwelling is & hath been' (26 February 1797).<sup>78</sup> The path out of this dilemma was complete surrender to God's will, so that his spirit would cleanse her of such 'ruinous & corrupt desires' – then, should ministry be His plan for her, she would be merely His instrument, free of the taint of personal ambition. Of course, both men and women wished to assure themselves that a sense of vocation came from God, not a desire for self-promotion. But for a woman this was more complex. A confirmed vocation allowed her a public role beyond that usually prescribed for her sex while absolving her, within her own eyes as much as the world's, of the guilt attendant upon responsibility for it – she was doing God's will, not her own, in raising herself from obscurity.

Later, in one of the last entries in her diary as a single woman (21 January 1799), Mary dedicates herself entirely to her 'Lord of hosts' through the declaration of a 'Marriage covenant' with Him, in the firm belief that His 'life giving Word' will be entrusted to her.<sup>79</sup> Yet in a real sense this service as the vessel through which the Word and its gift of life is transmitted to others, would also be her own passage to life – to spiritual and temporal fulfillment, to finding a voice. In promising to speak or be silent as He ordains, and to minister wholly according to the light He shall be pleased to give, she vanquishes 'the self' yet claims the authority to speak on His behalf. To be heard, however, also requires an audience, and the audience in the Society of Friends was changing. The radical 'new lights' were departing or, like Hannah Barnard, being denied opportunities to minister. Mary, one feels, was never such a determined radical, willing to risk being vilified or derided. She cared for the Society deeply and wanted to belong, to have a role in it – therefore to conform. (This was



perhaps why she abandoned deistic sentiments as soon as they attracted criticism.) It was the radicals' lack of regard for ministry in its traditional sense that had presented great personal difficulties for her in her 'deist' phase. Betraying a note of that personal ambition she sought to suppress, she describes in 'Progress of Infidelity' how, 'all preaching was deemed useless & our Ministers little valued, this last cost me much for I was unwilling to give up the idea of being a preacher'.<sup>80</sup> If she was to find a voice within the Society she loved, identifying herself with its prevailing voice was essential.

Ironically, the Song of Solomon that empowered Mary by providing the lover imagery in which to cast her relationship to God, and some of the mystical language she joyed in, was also the source for the image denoting the tighter boundary, the place of safety that was to be reinstated and thus replace the 'wilderness' and 'bondage' of deism - the 'garden enclosed', a garden surrounded by the Quaker 'hedge'.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Neville H. Newhouse, 'Seeking God's Will: A Monthly Meeting at Work in 1804', *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, 56 (1990-93), 227-43 (p.227).

<sup>2</sup> Newhouse states that: 'The records for these difficult years are incomplete, most Irish Quaker Journals being silent about the late 1790's and early 1800's'. See Neville H. Newhouse, 'The Irish Separation of 1800: A Lesson for 1971?', Part II, *The Friends Quarterly* (1971), 169-80 (p.173). He points to the journal of John Conran as an example of one that has had pages removed - the section concerned dealt with the resignation of Elders in Ulster during the controversy. Mollie Grubb begins her article on the Irish Separation by highlighting the problems caused by 'the scarcity of contemporary evidence', and the destruction or mutilation of letters and journals, even press cuttings. She cites a minute of the National Meeting of Ministers and Elders, Dublin, 1798, supporting that 'the policy of silence was deliberate'. See Mollie Grubb, 'Abraham Shackleton and the Irish Separation of 1797-1803', *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, 56/4 (1993), 261-71 (p.261).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Birkett certainly knew Abraham Shackleton's sister, Mary Leadbeater - see Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.

<sup>4</sup> Bolingbroke's 'philosophic works set forth a non sectarian "natural religion" called deism' and 'the chief purpose of both his political and philosophic writings was to remove religion from politics'. Claude-Adrien Helvétius's *De l'Esprit* (1758) 'was a statement of materialist and utilitarian doctrine which attacked all forms of morality based on religion. Denounced by the Sorbonne, the book was ordered to be burned in public'. Rousseau put forward the view that man was essentially good and extolled the virtues of the natural man, or native. Seeing man as having been corrupted by society, it follows that by changing our society for the better, man can once again become good. Paine defended the French Revolution and 'political equality' in *The Rights of Man* (1791), but also in *The Age of Reason* (1794), questioned Christian orthodoxy and 'applied to religion the principles of natural reason, developing a system of deism based on science and abstract morality'. See Jack Babuscio and Richard Minta Dunn, *European Political Facts 1648-1789* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp.152-53, 161, 169.

<sup>5</sup> The most comprehensive account of deism is still to be found in the first volume of Leslie Stephen's *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols (New York: Peter Smith, 1949).

<sup>6</sup> See Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought*, I, 405-20 on William Paley. Though most associated with Paley, the watchmaker metaphor had been used by many previous writers, Bolingbroke, Blackmore and Clarke amongst them (p.409).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Newhouse, 'Irish Separation', Part I, p.123, and 'Seeking God's Will', p.228, from the Greer Papers, Belfast Public Record Office, 1044/1B.



<sup>8</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'Lines to the memory of our late esteemed and justly valued Friend Joseph Williams', 1807, p.400 and Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 38, 'My honor'd & often remember'd friend D Sandys', '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 20<sup>th</sup> 1815', p.148.

<sup>9</sup> In the latter half of the eighteenth century, there had certainly been a general falling off of the enthusiasm that had marked Quaker beginnings a century before, a not unusual phenomenon amongst later generations of any enthusiast sect. Nevertheless, Irish Quakerism was noted for its 'rigidity of discipline and enforcement of minute regulations' from the late seventeenth century. See Isabel Grubb, *Quakers in Ireland 1654-1900*, p.81. And many members of the Society were highly active in their religious community as well as philanthropy and the anti-slavery movement.

<sup>10</sup> William Rathbone. *A Narrative of Events, that have lately taken place in Ireland among the Society called Quakers; with Corresponding Documents, and Occasional Observations* (London: J. Johnson, 1804), pp.40-45. Rathbone tells us that Carlow was not alone in refusing to read Advices – Moate and Mountmellick also did so, without being aware of Carlow's action, so events in Carlow were indicative of what was happening elsewhere. Knowledge of this came to the Select Quarterly Meeting for Leinster on 25 March 1797, where some were angry but nothing was done at first as Shackleton was an 'approved' minister. Then, at the General Quarterly Meeting for Leinster on 27 March, Carlow's answer to Query 4 asking whether Friends trained their children and servants in 'a religious life' that included the reading of 'Holy Scripture' and 'plainness' deliberately omitted the word 'Holy'. As well as elevating scripture to the same level as 'the spirit of truth', Carlow asserted parts of scripture 'cannot with propriety be regarded as either authentic, or instructive to the general class of readers', some parts did not 'reconcile' 'with others', God acts as if under 'passions and imperfections', and is represented degradingly. Rathbone does not stress how much these statements must have constituted a deliberate challenge to the *status quo*, made in the knowledge that debate would be set in motion.

<sup>11</sup> Proposition III in Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (1676), quoted in Rathbone, *A Narrative*, p.100.

<sup>12</sup> Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p.155.

<sup>13</sup> Entry to university was denied to Friends because they refused to take an oath.

<sup>14</sup> See Vol. I, journal entry '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 12<sup>th</sup> 1796', p.5.

<sup>15</sup> See Rathbone, *A Narrative*, pp.50-53 and Newhouse, 'Irish Separation', Part II, p.170.

<sup>16</sup> See Newhouse, 'Irish Separation, Part II, p.171 (on the 'confusion' in the Committee's minute) and Rathbone, *A Narrative*, p.54.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.90-100.

<sup>18</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 38, 'My honor'd & often remember'd friend D Sandys', '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 20<sup>th</sup> 1815', p.148.

<sup>19</sup> Rathbone's *Narrative*, which he compiled at the request of some English Friends who felt the radicals had been treated unfairly and sympathised with their views, attracted the wrath of the Quaker establishment. It was seen as a direct challenge and as bringing the Society into public disrepute. When Rathbone continued to defend it after being visited by overseers, his 'case' was deliberated upon by Hardshaw Monthly Meeting for six months (1804-05), at the end of which he was disowned. David Sands, in particular, was angry about the way Rathbone had portrayed him in the *Narrative*. Neville Newhouse's article, 'Seeking God's Will', explores Rathbone's 'trial'.

<sup>20</sup> Rathbone, *A Narrative*, pp.73-89. After their meeting, Mary Stephens did stand up when Sands ministered for a while, until he spoke of his own humility, asserting that 'if even a child reproved him in a right spirit, he would accept it'. She felt this was so 'inconsistent' with his behaviour that she then remained seated (p.77).

<sup>21</sup> The exact number of disownments is not known, though Newhouse says an estimation for Ulster could be arrived at by 'some future and patient Quaker historian' sifting through the Meeting minutes in the Quaker records at Lisburn. (Newhouse, 'Irish Separation', Part II, p.173.)

<sup>22</sup> At one point in the deist controversy, Sycamore Alley Meeting House was closed down owing to the dissension.

<sup>23</sup> *The Records and Recollections of James Jenkins Respecting Himself and Others from 1761 to 1821*, ed. by J. William Frost. Texts and Studies in Religion Series, XIII (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), pp.371-72. Jenkins tells us that George Harrison's advice was 'little attended to' by John Gurney Bevan of the evangelical wing, who 'treated her with [. . .] roughness', as did some others. Jenkins gives a full, and fascinating, account of Hannah



Barnard's trial. Though critical of the radicals, he is also sympathetic to her. (Jenkins also mentions Joseph Williams accusing Hannah Barnard at Sycamore Alley Meeting House in Dublin. After she ministered, he rose to state that her ministry was unauthorised by the Society – p.362.)

<sup>24</sup> Hancock had criticised Friends for their hypocrisy in living, not 'in the life' but according to rigid, outworn practices and beliefs. He afterwards wrote a pamphlet entitled 'Reasons for Withdrawing from Society with the People called Quakers'.

<sup>25</sup> 8 December 1800, Ulster Quarterly Meeting minuted that they wished to abolish their Select Meeting as 'it did not tend "to our edification or satisfaction, or to the advantage of the Society at large"'. (Quoted in Newhouse, 'Irish Separation', Part I, p.123.)

<sup>26</sup> One of the forms that attracted criticism and caused many resignations was the complicated marriage procedure. Originally, the couple had to state their intentions formally twenty times in all before their marriage could take place, and even after some simplifications in the 1790s and 1801 the process was still lengthy. George Thompson, a schoolmaster at Lisburn, was disowned for allowing a marriage against the rules to take place in his school, along with all the adults who attended the wedding. (Rathbone, *A Narrative*, pp.110-14 -marriage rules. See also Newhouse, 'Irish Separation', Part II, pp.172-73.)

<sup>27</sup> In Ulster, John Conran was 'for twelve years the only recorded Minister'. (Newhouse, 'Irish Separation', Part II, p.177.)

<sup>28</sup> Quote obtained from Rathbone, *A Narrative*, pp.162-65. See also Mollie Grubb, 'Abraham Shackleton and the Irish Separation', p.268. The wide circulation and importance attached to this letter at the time is illustrated by it being quoted at length by contemporary Quaker journalist James Jenkins (*Recollections*, pp.305-06). The letter goes on more provocatively, and ends on a note of threat somewhat at variance with Shackleton's avowed 'brotherly sympathies': 'Thirdly, [. . .] as no distinct society ought to exist, so neither ought there to exist any book, having particular dogmas of belief, by which that society is to be distinguished; the absurdities contained in your bibles, being a sufficient indication to any unprejudiced mind for their annihilation', and 'Fourthly, as you profess kindness for me, so my friendship for you suggests a warning to you, that you be very cautious of attempting to withstand the work of omnipotence: which if ye do, ye will receive injury in your several individual states, as he who attempts to stop the flowing of the ocean'.

<sup>29</sup> Mollie Grubb, 'Abraham Shackleton and the Irish Separation', pp.269-70.

<sup>30</sup> Rathbone, *A Narrative*, pp.213-14.

<sup>31</sup> It must be noted, however, that there are other lengthy gaps between journal entries – there is another gap of two years from February 1807 to March 1809.

<sup>32</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entries '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 19 1797' ('cobweb system') and '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 13 - 1798' ('speculation'), pp.19, 20.

<sup>33</sup> There is little information available on women's roles in the schism but they were active on both sides. The first committee set up to look into the lack of zeal and discipline was a joint one of women and men Friends (Spring 1796). It was thought that although separate meetings were needed for some subjects, on this matter they should help each other through 'combined wisdom', but the idea was abandoned as 'too novel' to proceed with at that time. (See Rathbone, *A Narrative*, pp.37-38.) A joint group was later sent to visit the troubled Friends in Ulster, however, in April 1801, in which Mary's friend Susanna Hill participated (*Proceedings of Women's Yearly Meeting 1785-1840* (A46)). Nancy Hewitt has written about the activity of women on both sides in the American Separation (1827-28) and later splits there in the 1840s. She argues that the divisions had a 'positive' side with regard to women's roles and traces links with later feminist activism. See Nancy A. Hewitt, 'The Fragmentation of Friends: The Consequences for Quaker Women in Antebellum America' in *Witnesses for Change: Quaker Women over Three Centuries*, ed. by Elizabeth Potts Brown and Susan Mosher Stuard (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), pp.93-119. As an aside, it is interesting to note that Eliza Rotch Junior (later Elizabeth Farrar), daughter of Mary's friend Benjamin Rotch at Milford Haven, became one of the American 'New Lights' – see Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.

<sup>34</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 9<sup>th</sup> 1798', p.20.

<sup>35</sup> 'Testimony to Joseph Williams', 10 November 1807, *Ireland Yearly Meeting Testimonies from 1681* (A19).

<sup>36</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, 'Progress of Infidelity', 1798, p.21 (p.22).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, second journal entry dated '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 16<sup>th</sup> 1797', p.14 (p.15).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Progress of Infidelity', p.21 (p.22).



- <sup>39</sup> Robert Kee, *The Green Flag*, 3 vols (London: Quartet Books, 1976), I, 'The Most Distressful Country', pp.108, 127. Kee quotes from British commander Cornwallis's letters (Charles Ross (ed.), *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis of Cornwallis*, 3 vols (London: 1859), II, 387).
- <sup>40</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.19, speaking of England, comment on how 'in the 1790s, the growth of a native revolutionary movement and the campaign for political reform, together with the excesses in France, produced a backlash which drew all property owners together'. The situation must have been even more acute in Ireland, at a time of actual rebellion.
- <sup>41</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, 'Progress of Infidelity', 1798, p.21 (p.24).
- <sup>42</sup> Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1921), I, 256.
- <sup>43</sup> *Records and Recollections of James Jenkins*, pp.340-41.
- <sup>44</sup> See, for instance, Newhouse, 'Irish Separation', Part II, p.175.
- <sup>45</sup> See Vol.1, Prose, 'Some Account of Remarkable deliverances experienced by friends during the disturbances of 1796 and 1798', p.160.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, untitled reflections on the Irish situation dated '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 23<sup>rd</sup> 1798', pp.158-59.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter 38, 'My honor'd & often remember'd friend D Sandys', '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 20<sup>th</sup> 1815', p.148.
- <sup>48</sup> *Journal of the Life and Gospel Labours of David Sands with Extracts from his Correspondence* (London: Charles Gilpin and Edward Marsh, 1848), pp.177-79.
- <sup>49</sup> *Proceedings of Women's Yearly Meeting 1785-1840* (A46), April 1801.
- <sup>50</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, second journal entry dated '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 16<sup>th</sup> 1797', p.14. See also preceding entries from p.6.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.28-29/30 – particularly journal entry '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 15 1799'.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, journal entry '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 2 1801', p.31.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, journal entry made on board a canal packet boat '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 23 1796', p.6.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, journal entry '11 Mo 21 1796', p.9.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, journal entry '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 11<sup>th</sup> 1796', p.11 (p.12).
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Progress of Infidelity', p.21 (p.24).
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, (p.23).
- <sup>58</sup> William Blake, 'The [FIRST] Book of Urizen' (1794), in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. by David V. Erdman, rev. edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982 [1965]), pp.70-83 (chap. I. stanza 2. 8-9).
- <sup>59</sup> Blake, 'Milton: a Poem in 2 Books' (1804), in Erdman, pp.95-144 (II. Plate 40[46]. 34-36).
- <sup>60</sup> Blake, 'Jerusalem' (1804), in Erdman, pp.144-259 (p.200).
- <sup>61</sup> See Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp.87-88, on how 'self-abnegation was contradictory' and self-denial in relation to women's dependence. See also Davidson, *Religious Impulse in Selected Autobiographies of American Women*, p.30, who points up how, 'For [. . .] declaredly self-effacing women, the autobiographical act constitutes an assertion of self diametrically opposed to their stated spiritual posture; an assertion that challenges the preeminence of the male in the social order'.
- <sup>62</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, 'Progress of Infidelity', p.21 (p.23).
- <sup>63</sup> *Records and Recollections of James Jenkins*, pp.306-07.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.341.
- <sup>65</sup> *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry, with Extracts from her Journal and Letters, edited by two of her daughters* [Katherine Fry and Rachel Cresswell], 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 2 vols (London: John Hatchard, 1848), I, 12-13. The Upas tree was a Javanese tree with sap that could be used as arrow poison but an account in *The London Magazine*, 1783, gave credence to the idea that it could poison all life within fifteen miles - see Paul Harvey, ed. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 4th edn, rev. Dorothy Eagle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967; repr. 1978 [1932]).
- <sup>66</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, 'Progress of Infidelity', p.21 (p.25).
- <sup>67</sup> *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, eds. Graham, Hinds, Hobby and Wilcox, pp.3-4. This encapsulates points made fully in Elaine Hobby's earlier study – *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writings 1649-88* (London: Virago, 1988). See her chapter on 'Religious Poetry, Meditations and Conversion Narratives', pp.54-75.
- <sup>68</sup> Carol Edkins, 'Quest for Community: Spiritual Autobiographies of Eighteenth-Century Quaker and Puritan Women in America', in *Womens Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Estelle C. Jelinek (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1980; UMI repr.), pp.39-52 (p.40). Edkins found Quaker narratives to be 'fuller', more flexible and 'detailed', than those of Puritans. She highlights essential paradoxes in Quaker women's journals, arising from



Quakerism's teaching on the Inner Light which led to a dual emphasis on individuality and on complete surrender to the spirit of God, as opposed to Puritan ones. Tensions exist in these early journals between individuality and total submission to the will of God, and between the individual and the community. The greater autonomy of Quaker women gave rise to more complexity and ambiguity in this regard than was the case for Puritan women. Mary's journal, and her letters, show that these tensions were just as acute in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries.

<sup>69</sup> See also Phebe Davidson's perceptive study, *Religious Impulse in Selected Autobiographies of American Women*, pp.33-62, for an exploration, drawing on Edkins's work, of the relation between individual and community in Puritan women's autobiographies. She also offers in-depth analysis of *To My Dear Children* (pub. 1867) by Anne Bradstreet (d.1672), and of the narrative of eighteenth-century Quaker minister Elizabeth Ashbridge, linked to the patterns found in earlier conversion narratives.

<sup>70</sup> Mary copied excerpts from St Francis de Sales and Miguel de Molinos, along with earlier mystics St Aelred of Rivaulx and Macarius the Great, into her journal – see Vol. 1, Prose, pp.168-72. Although it seems this was some time after her struggle with deism, she could have been reading such authors at an earlier date.

<sup>71</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 12<sup>th</sup> 1796', p.5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., journal entries '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 23 1796', '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 2<sup>nd</sup> 1796', pp.6-8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., journal entry '11 Mo 21 1796', p.9.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., journal entry '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 1<sup>st</sup> 1796', 12<sup>th</sup> Mo 11<sup>th</sup> 1796', pp.10-12.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., journal entries, pp.12-21. (Journal entries '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 19 1797 and '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 13 - 1798' refer to 'cobweb system' and 'systematic knowledge' respectively.)

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, ibid., journal entries '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 11<sup>th</sup> 1796 ('deliver me out of the Wilderness state') and '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 21<sup>st</sup> 1797' ('I groan being in bondage'), pp.11, 12.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., journal entry '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 5 1798', p.29.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., journal entry '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 2<sup>nd</sup> 1796', p.7, and '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 26 1797', p.13.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., journal entry '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 21 1799', p.30.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 'Progress of Infidelity', p.21 (p.23).

<sup>81</sup> See ibid., 'Progress of Infidelity', p.21 (p.24), where Mary, describing her 'deist experience', says 'Thus the hedge which surrounded my little Garden was broken down and become subject to the inroads of every intruder'. The 'hedge' was a much-used Quaker term for the protection and separation from the world afforded by particular Quaker habits, beliefs and customs. Mary frequently draws on the Song of Solomon to speak of her spiritual relationship to God as lover. See, for instance, journal entry dated '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 25 1796' (p.7) made at Edenderry Meeting which speaks of the absence of God's presence as 'A Spring shut up a fountain sealed is my beloved unto me'. She is quoting from Song 4:12, which is also an example of the 'garden' imagery so often found in the Song of Solomon: 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed'.



## CHAPTER 5 JERUSALEM: A QUIET HABITATION

The 'hedge' was a much-used Quaker term for the protection afforded by particular Quaker habits, beliefs and customs that served to separate Friends from 'the world' and its temptations, and as a concept it encompassed not only distinctive forms of dress and speech but frameworks of belief and practice. Hedges, however, are not impervious or even structures. Gaps exist, especially at the base, where small creatures can still squeeze through, and some areas are weaker than others – they can be broken down or even tunnelled under. Hence the garden, or vineyard, they enclose is subject to incursions by invaders, and its fruit easily spoilt. In imagery much beloved by Quakers of this period (drawn once again from the Song of Solomon and used by Mary in some of her letters), the garden must be guarded against 'the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.'<sup>1</sup> Therefore the hedge boundary had constantly to be watched, its structure maintained, its gaps and fissures closed. It was shown when looking at the values exhibited in Mary's childhood poetry that the over-riding goal to which she learned to aspire ideologically, the ultimate aim of all endeavour in both spiritual and temporal terms, was peace – in this world a tranquillity of the inner spirit and a tranquil outer life that freed the mind to concentrate on 'things of God', and then perfect peace in the hereafter. It is not surprising, then, that a biblical text she sometimes draws upon in her letters to describe the spiritual rewards discovered in acquiescence to God's will or within the fold of the Quaker church is one that visualises the Holy City in terms of peace, or at least the absence of all strife - Isaiah 33:20, 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation'.<sup>2</sup> Yet peace is often achieved or sought through defence, and Jerusalem, the walled city, forms another powerful metaphor not only for the Quaker body, separated from 'the world', or its faith which must be preserved intact from those who would betray it, but for the 'self' – a citadel around which walls must also be built, ever higher and ever stronger, to prevent the foxes' entry. In a diary entry made in 1812, Mary describes how:

The Book of Nehemiah is a little open'd to my understanding – the wall of my Jerusalem is building – thou Lord dost prosper the work, it is growing stronger and stronger soon the foxes shall not leap over it, neither may the enemies push it down; the gates shall be set up, & all the breaches repaired so that my soul shall repose in safety -<sup>3</sup>

The 'little foxes' are often construed as those things that threatened the Quaker hedge from outside, the 'ways of the world', often particularly tempting to young people. The



Quaker historian Rufus Jones, for instance, defines the 'little foxes' as 'the ideas and attitudes prevailing in the world outside [which] were always penetrating through the Quaker hedges and affecting the susceptible youth of the Society'.<sup>4</sup> But 'the little foxes' came from within too – those creatures of the mind or imagination forever disrupting the attempted tranquillity of the inner garden or citadel, not only doubts and temptations but the preoccupations, even obsessions, with which the mind will occupy itself despite all efforts at control or suppression. The fox is a particularly apt metaphor for these internal enemies. Foxes, as portrayed in much folk tale and mythology (Aesop's *Fables* being perhaps the best example), are cunning, devious and cruel. They take on deceptive guises, appear plausible, slip in when least expected and take pleasure in preying on their victims without sympathy or remorse. The battle to outwit them or keep them at bay requires constant vigilance and skill. Thus, if the 'foxes' take the form of undesirable preoccupations, there is an essential paradox – instead of being reduced they often multiply, or become intensified, by conscious efforts to control them because such efforts only result in their being thought about the more. All too easily then, the battle to win control can become a form of enslavement, from which the mind is unable to find relief or escape.

After her marriage to Nathaniel Card on 13 March 1801, two such preoccupations loom large in Mary's journal – preoccupations that she herself constructed in terms of enslavement and that were to continue through the rest of her diary. The first, apparent in the next entry made after her marriage and continuing unabated until the last entry before her death, is with money – a constant worry about her family's financial situation and consequent attempts to reconcile this with Quaker injunctions not to be overly concerned with the 'bread which perisheth', but to concentrate on things eternal, the treasure that never decays.<sup>5</sup> This worry, with its attendant tensions, was so intrusive that Mary actually names it as a 'slavery' from which she asks God to set them free:

why should we be in captivity to the prince of this world, why should our minds be oppressed with a continual care & anxiety, that things honest may be by us provided for all with whom we have dealings – liberate us according to thy holy will from this great slavery.<sup>6</sup>

This request shows that her fear was not just of poverty, but of letting others down by defaulting on debts or not fulfilling 'engagements', and thus failing to meet the high standards of probity operating within the Society of Friends. Debt or financial irregularities could also lead to the penalty of disownment – a terrifying prospect for someone whose whole life was rooted in the Society.<sup>7</sup> The second, sometimes

evident in her concern with money, is a preoccupation with language, a preoccupation that often masks another, less overt because more suppressed, complex and difficult to articulate but nevertheless clearly cast in some entries as 'subjection'. This is a conflict with the gender codes that governed her life as a woman – codes that required her to obey her husband, to control her own high spirits, strong will and propensity for vocal expression, in order to conform to an ideal of submissive womanhood, both inwardly and outwardly. Although she claims, during a rare period of happiness and equilibrium in the summer of 1805 when her family are all well, their business thriving and her school prospering, that previous sorrows are forgotten within the security of her re-found faith ('Religion is a great comfort, it doth mightily bless & exhilarate[sic] the heart – how dreadful then is Deism, which taketh away all these comforts and giveth us in lieu thereof doubts, confusion, misery, anxiety & grief<sup>8</sup>), the old anxieties and insecurities are merely replaced by new ones, and attempting to live according to the standards required of a Quaker 'within the fold', and moreover of a dutiful wife and mother, meant that her new 'habitation' was often far from being either 'quiet' or comforting.

### THE THRALLS OF MAMMON

From quite early in the Quaker movement the financial acumen of many Friends had resulted in an anxiety about the dangers of directing too much thought to business and the accumulation of wealth. Not only could this become, in Quaker parlance, an 'encumbrance', burdening the individual and inhibiting the spiritual life, but it was also constructed by some as 'slavery' because it could chain all thought and energy to the worldly or material.

Eight days before his death in 1691, Fox had confronted the question of Quaker material success among those 'who embrace the present world and encumber themselves with their own businesses and neglect the Lord's and so are good for nothing'. In 1680, Stephen Crisp of Colchester had complained of the 'too eager and greedy pursuit after the things of this world. Diligence in their outward callings had been turned into slavery to them'.<sup>9</sup>

Again and again in her journal Mary describes the need to make money, and the concern with it, as an 'encumbrance' that gets in the way of giving one's prime attention to God. On 10 September 1802 for instance, she tells how the light had shown her that:

a true Christian must preserve his mind from anxiety such as I am immersed in, bowed down beneath the pressure of heavy engagements, [. . .] his blessing



which alone gladdens the heart will not rest with us when under such cumbering difficulties.

Worry about business not only takes up mental space that should be devoted to God but chasing after material security (a form of infidelity because it seeks the fulfilment of desire in 'the world' instead of the divinity) results in a withholding of the divine blessing, and therefore of spiritual security. As the quotes from Fox and Crisp show, in this, and her delineation of concern with money as 'slavery', Mary was on highly conventional ground. Many Quaker journalists record their attempts to reconcile the need to earn a living with the primary requisite of devotion to God. Howard Brinton, in his study of Quaker journals, found that almost all referred to the need to limit business activity so as to leave time for spiritual growth. Eighteenth-century minister John Woolman, for instance, wrote that 'Truth required me to live more free from outward cumber[s]'.<sup>10</sup> Yet, from the degree to which the business and financial worries feature in Mary's journal (over half of the entries made from her marriage to Nathaniel Card in March 1801 until her death in 1817 mention these in some form) and the levels of anxiety expressed, one feels that her use of the word 'slavery' is far from merely formulaic. On the contrary, the 'slavery' seems very real for her. Its entanglements threaten to be all-consuming at times, even when voiced in an assertion of trust in God's power to provide:

most assuredly, he who encreased[sic] the barley loaves & the few small fishes, will ['bless and increase our little store'] if we move in the right line, sanctified by entire dedication & earnestly breathing to be freed from these fetters which have gathered round our feet & ascending by swift progression are chaining down our souls into captivity to Mammon. (My underlining.)

What was required was 'to shut the avenues to anxiety', to close the gaps through which the 'little foxes' might creep, but this Mary never seems able to do.<sup>11</sup> In fact, it seems the more she tried to do so, the more insistent the 'foxes' became and the deeper her enthrallment. 'Temporal concerns' even intruded in Meeting for Worship, preventing her 'gathering to the precious gift' despite 'frequent petition[s] [for] deliverance'; sometimes she felt they were 'sapping' her very 'existence'.<sup>12</sup>

To uncover the nature and causes of this 'slavery', we need first to understand some of the background to the special relationship between Quakers and business. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Friends exerted a considerable influence in the development of modern industry and capitalism despite their small numbers, often through the formation of major Quaker dynasties – the Darby and Reynolds families of Coalbrookdale, who first smelted iron ore with coke and thus spurred the Industrial



Revolution, being an outstanding example. Their contribution is still evidenced today in the continued existence of companies with names very familiar to us, albeit mainly divorced from their Quaker roots and often subsumed into modern conglomerates: Barclay's and Lloyd's in banking, Fry's, Rowntree's and Cadbury's in confectionery, Huntley and Palmer's, and Carr's in biscuits, Jacobs' crackers, Clarkes' shoes, Bryant and May matches, Reckitt and Coleman, and Lever Brothers which, though not a Quaker firm itself, incorporated the Quaker soap and chemical giant, Crosfields, in 1919. The course of these achievements, the possible reasons for Quakers' economic success and the moral dilemmas it posed for them have been explored by historians, most recently by James Walvin in *Quakers: Money and Morals* - a thought-provoking study which has been drawn on extensively in this chapter.<sup>13</sup> The reasons historians propound are many: the simple way of life Quakers adopted (meaning they did not spend their profits on luxuries or expensive forms of recreation and were able to save money), their reputation for honesty (so that customers trusted them), a strong form of the 'Protestant work ethic' and an association of idleness with sin, self-reliance coupled with an organisational system that helped members in financial trouble and provided an excellent support network (forged at the beginning of the movement in the need for mutual assistance at a time of severe persecution), their origins amongst sections of hard-working yeoman farmers, tradesmen or artisans who already tended (even in the mid-seventeenth century) to be literate to an unusual degree, a propensity for recording information and associated tendencies to be meticulous and thorough, and a Quaker culture that placed much emphasis on education and on writing.<sup>14</sup> These features interacted in a number of ways arising, as they did, out of the characteristics of the movement's founding members and the class groups from which they came, the ideals and principles of Friends, the way the Society developed and the way Quakers came to be regarded by society at large. Yet although all these factors form a powerful combination that goes a large way towards explaining Quaker business success, they do not completely explain the Quaker concern with money – quite why it assumed such significance in their lives, what initiated and fuelled the drive to make and save it and the anxieties about how it should be spent, always running in tandem with stated aims to shed such temporal preoccupations – to the extent that some contemporaries regarded them, on occasion, as hypocrites.<sup>15</sup>

Acknowledging that much 'has been written [. . .] about the religious culture' of Quakers 'and the rise of modern capitalism', James Walvin's focus is rather 'the distinctive role and influence that groups of Quakers came to exercise in particular



areas of economic and cultural life in England [. . .] between the emergence of the Society of Friends and the onset of the First World War'. Looking at the careers of Friends and their businesses, he sees 'the crucial link' as being 'not that between Quaker business and a particular theology, so much as Quaker membership of a powerful organisation and the culture it created'. Exploring this culture, he examines the role of Quakerism in Friends' business lives and the roles of Friends in effecting 'cultural change'.<sup>16</sup> Like other historians, he points to the difficulties many Friends had in trying 'to adhere to Quaker culture while enjoying the rewards of economic success'.<sup>17</sup> It could be just as difficult, however, perhaps even more so, to fulfil Quaker ideals if one was unfortunate enough to suffer either commercial failure or the continual threat of it. Mary Birkett Card is an example of the latter. Of course, it is difficult to gauge how serious the problems were as she gives so little detail, but she does indicate that on two occasions at least (in 1805 and 1814) the Cards were very lucky to emerge from financial crisis scathed but still solvent, thus avoiding bankruptcy – the scourge most dreaded because it meant not only possible destitution but certain disownment. Her journal reveals the influence, not so much of Quakerism on commercial life, but of the vagaries of commerce on an inner Quaker life and, moreover, from a woman's perspective rather than that of a man for whom participation in trade was the norm.

The series of entries made during the course of the 1805 crisis are not only typical in many respects as they contain most of the essential elements, themes and ideas that characterise Mary's preoccupation with money, but are also interesting in the glimpses they provide into the workings and effects of Quaker business culture as actually experienced at this time. The sequence of events, as far as it can be ascertained, given in the first chapter of this thesis, need not be repeated here except to say that between January and March 1805 the Cards were the 'victims', if we take Mary at her word, of a deep plot seemingly laid by a commercial adversary called John Helton to destroy, or at least greatly damage, their business.<sup>18</sup> Arbitrators, in all probability sent from the Quaker Monthly Meeting, visited the Cards' home several times to settle the dispute. Mary's purposes in recording this episode are not only to ventilate her own feelings (acute fear, worry and great anger at the injustice suffered), but to commemorate the extension of God's grace as disaster was averted despite all the devious 'machinations' of the 'enemy'. The entries are thus a testimony to faith, to the dependence on God which she believed had seen them through. Rather disconcertingly, and not in keeping with the way Christ urged his followers to forgive their enemies, she gains comfort from opening her Bible on Psalm 37, which urges



'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers [. . .] they shall soon be cut down like the grass' while the righteous who trust the Lord 'shall inherit the earth'.<sup>19</sup> (Even when, in more charitable fashion a few days later, she is 'enabled to utter a prayer for our enemy', hoping that he may repent while there is yet time, a note of smug self-congratulation is detectable.)<sup>20</sup> God's justice, then, would ensure that evil did not finally triumph and, one cannot help feeling, take the revenge in the next world that the Cards were unable to exact in this. As for the here and now, she tries to reassure herself that all cannot but end well if they remain faithful – 'hovering desolation will change into comfort, the poverty into a competent[sic] sufficiency of the good things of this life'.<sup>21</sup>

This expression - 'a competent[sic] sufficiency' - is key. It meant an income sufficient to meet essential needs with enough capital to trade on to ensure this - plus a little more, enough to provide a reasonably comfortable life-style free of the endless worry about where the next penny was coming from, so as to be able to worship God wholly, in freedom and peace. All striving in business was only to this end, supposedly, because struggling either to avoid penury or to accumulate superfluous wealth locked you fast in the trappings of this world - both were polluting, working to muddy, dissipate or undermine the purity of God's people. But how did you decide what was sufficient, what was essential? If financial disaster threatened, how could you not direct the majority of your thoughts and efforts towards avoiding it? If, on the other hand, you began to make money, how could you keep this within bounds, and how did you separate what was wholesome or useful ('the good things') from what was superfluous and therefore waste? The ideal 'competency' envisaged by many was to earn enough to be free of business altogether. Davidoff and Hall point out how, 'faced with the contradictory demands of public work and private spiritual life', one 'strategy for [middle-class] men was to retire from business as soon as a "modest competency" had been achieved'. They cite a Quaker draper from Ipswich as an example.<sup>22</sup> This goal of retreat to domestic life, preferably in a rural setting, free from the sordid world of trade, is very much evident in Mary's poetry. But dilemmas abounded. As colonial expansion and industrial growth fuelled and altered patterns of consumption, imported goods once regarded as great luxuries such as tea, coffee and sugar became more commonplace while new demands were constantly created. Patterns for the operation of business were also changing dramatically with the development of modern capitalism – it was becoming ever more necessary to take risks, or to borrow, to ensure the continuation and expansion of a business.<sup>23</sup> Quakers often found themselves in moral difficulty not only when taking advantage of the new trading



opportunities presented (reconciling plainness and simplicity with producing or importing goods that could be regarded as luxuries) and in decisions about their own consumption, but also in trying not to compromise the principles of 'plain dealing' on which their reputation and success in business were originally based.

Mary was burdened by quandaries about the right use of the money 'entrusted to her' (what these funds were, she does not say). She must 'not covetously retain more than I bought in bargaining or buying, neither foolishly waste what might be better disposed of' nor buy 'vain things, either in dress or furniture, that I may not follow the fashion of a perishing world'.<sup>24</sup> There is an obvious dilemma here - if profits were made, and she could not spend it on luxuries or waste it, how could she avoid hoarding it and thus being guilty of covetousness? One of her greatest fears, however, was of bringing the Society of Friends into disrepute, of being guilty of behaviour not in keeping with that of 'the saints' who were to set an example to the world in all they said or did. She yearns that in running their business:

every word & every action might savour of the sweet smelling ointment of Divine Grace that we might sustain our Stations with dignity, as members of a religious society, professing to be led & guided by the unerring spirit of God & which holds up a light to the world, as a City set upon an Hill, as a Candle placed upon a Candlestick which illuminates the whole room.

She then cherishes the hope that her husband will always 'act consistantly[sic] as becometh our profession'.<sup>25</sup> Beside deceit or fraud, the form of inconsistency most decried was to be in debt, and delaying payment in any way was seen as a form of indebtedness. Hence Mary's fear, often expressed in her journal, of 'passing' or delaying bills.<sup>26</sup> Such behaviour was perceived as breaking one's word, a breach of integrity regarded severely by Quakers for whom truth and plain-speaking were vitally important. To take on more obligations than could reasonably be met was regarded in the same way. It brought shame not only on the individual but the Society. As James Walvin puts it:

Whatever their capacity, Quakers viewed themselves as representatives of their Society; ambassadors not only of a particular faith but also of a way of life. Their faith was not put on hold the moment they left the meeting house, but entailed a consistent style of personal and social behaviour. And where failings or shortcomings became apparent, the local meeting was on hand to step in, advise and correct. Or to exclude.<sup>27</sup>

Mary never mentions disownment, but the dread of it lurks beneath the surface of her text. Somewhat paradoxically, although eager pursuit of material gain was deplored, it



was financial collapse – the failure to make money – that brought ignominy and disgrace. But the Quaker discipline, embodied in *Advices and Queries*, provided strict guidance on business as well as all other aspects of life, and Friends were expected to adhere to it.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of disownment was not, in principle, to punish, but to disassociate the Society from reprehensible behaviour.<sup>29</sup> Then the Society had a system of internal scrutiny that worked to resolve business differences between Friends, to assist or advise those in financial difficulty and, when necessary, implement punitive measures. Friends in difficulty were expected to seek, and often received, help. This bureaucracy subjected Friends to forms of monitoring that did not exist for other business people, contributing to a public perception that they could be trusted – a factor that stimulated business. It was therefore imperative that the system was seen to be effective. When irregularities, problems or bankruptcy came to the attention of the Monthly Meeting, members with suitable experience would be sent to visit the individuals concerned. They would investigate, arbitrate between parties if appropriate, and report back to the Monthly Meeting. Ideally a settlement would then be made, but frequently, particularly as commercial issues became more complicated, the process dragged on ‘with decisions bounced back and forth, overturned or reinstated, through the various tiers of Quaker hierarchy’.<sup>30</sup> Members found to have offended could be asked to sell goods or property to pay debts, required to make other forms of restitution or, in the last resort, disowned. (Though disownment by a Monthly Meeting could be contested by appeal to Quarterly Meeting, and it was possible to apply for reinstatement later by proving reform, these processes were not easy. A successful example is that of William Birkett, Mary’s brother, who operated a soap-boiling and candle-making business in Manchester in the 1840s - see Appendix 3.) With such high stakes, it is not surprising that in cases of quarrel, some Friends should bring all their efforts to bear to gain the result they wanted, perhaps even use arbitration as a means of undermining a rival’s enterprise, so that the ‘peace-making’ process could sometimes turn into a battle.

It is not so surprising either, then, that Mary’s framing of her narrative, the picture she paints of her family’s struggle with the ‘enemy’, has a resonance of battle – it is as if they, being in the right, are the Holy ‘City set upon an Hill’ under siege. At one point, before a meeting of the arbitrators on 14 March, she herself states ‘the battle rages’. Her feelings oscillate dramatically between despair and hope, sometimes with acute pathos. The day after being ‘delivered of another son’, she hoped ‘resignation’ and ‘faith’ would ‘keep [her] quiet’, yet sinks ‘into a flood of tears’ upon hearing ‘fresh intelligence, almost beyond what my nature can bear’.<sup>31</sup> At another point, she is



'agonized in mind & body, writhing like a worm on the hook'.<sup>32</sup> She depicts herself and Nathaniel supporting one another, trying to exercise forbearance or cultivate equanimity under great pressure - herself at one point centred in 'quiet' amidst the 'tumult', Nathaniel dealing calmly with their powerful assailants whose chief weapons, it seems, lie in the manipulative use of language to bully or cajole, and to mount a campaign against them. She speaks of not returning abuse, not being frightened by 'threats', or persuaded by 'flattery'.<sup>33</sup> The Cards, on the other hand, find their own, already more limited, powers of language diminished by this persecution. Mary writes that one afternoon 'The extreme of mental agony so overcame me [. . .] that I cannot find language to depict what I felt'.<sup>34</sup> By mid-February their anguish is so great they are no longer able to communicate their feelings to each other. Efforts to do so end in failure and, significantly, it is Mary's use of language that is at fault. 'Grievous sufferings' are only 'deplorably enhanced by [her] own vile tongue', so that her 'prayer is for the tongue of a little child, that can only cry for its food & its necessary wants'.<sup>35</sup> To combat their enemies effectively, however, it is Nathaniel's male voice that must be suffused with divine aid – 'Oh! may he [God] be to him [Nathaniel] a mouth & wisdom, tongue & utterance'.<sup>36</sup> It is a curious irony that while Quakerism laid great emphasis on simplicity in language, as in all other things (using many words was associated with deceit and guile so that Friends were constantly urged to make sure their words in 'dealing' were plain and few),<sup>37</sup> Quakers often had a particular facility for language - and, as in society at large, the more articulate were able to wield the greater power.

The arbitrators visited at least three times in March (4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>). The whole exercise is viewed like a trial, and its judgement anticipated as binding.<sup>38</sup> But in the opposing languages of prosecution and defence, the balance of power definitely lies with the prosecution. Before the first meeting, Mary asks God, once again, to inspire the heart and mouth of Nathaniel so 'that he may with dignity & nobility clear himself from the unjust accusations of the wicked'.<sup>39</sup> It is vital that the Cards maintain face, that they are not seen to sink under oppression despite being 'little, weak, mean, contemptible[sic] & poor', unable to plead their own cause against 'powerful' enemies who are 'fluent of speech'.<sup>40</sup> It seems, then, that in addition to poverty of language, lack of money or status placed the Cards at a further disadvantage in fighting their case. To be poor and lowly was contemptible – perhaps in the Cards' own eyes as much as the eyes of those judging them. But to achieve manifestation of the truth or light – the Cards' own innocence – it is not enough just to suffer with dignity. The assistance of the Almighty is invoked. Sounding a battlecry note, Mary announces that God enables them 'to lift up a Standard against our adversary, surely for the sake

of his truth he doth it! That the reputation thereof may not suffer thro' us its professors!'<sup>41</sup> (This was somewhat contradictory as their chief enemy, John Helton, was a Friend and therefore also a 'professor', whose downfall, if a case were found against him, would surely be equally damaging to the Society.) Despite this, the arbitrators' first findings were equivocal. Mary admits that a 'shade' had passed over them 'thro' my N[athaniel]'s inadvertance[sic]'<sup>42</sup> – an odd phrasing which seems like a veiled admission of some guilt with mitigation. A further meeting was called. Again language is insufficient to describe her feelings and the atmosphere of high drama intensifies to a climax. 'Completely unhinged in business', they search desperately for some sort of 'settlement', while their son, William, falls 'violently ill'.<sup>43</sup> Yet the following day she declaims that 'Prospects open wonderfully', and their 'plan seems realiz'd.'<sup>44</sup> Tantalisingly, we are not told what these are but it seems that the Cards had been vindicated. Despite efforts by their enemies to 'impeach' Nathaniel 'by falsehood & false witnesses', they were delivered with their chief asset - an 'unstained character' - intact.<sup>45</sup>

Afterwards, however, when the first flush of gratitude for survival is replaced by a sense of the reality of their 'blasted prospects', and amid trying to count their blessings (health, the comfort of friends who had proved loyal, the fact that they could pay all their creditors), Mary reflects on how they were betrayed by 'false friends' who privately 'attracted the overflowings of our unsuspecting hearts, & in public before many not only betrayed us but added thereto shameful exaggeration[sic] & falsehood'.<sup>46</sup> Another period of 'agony' is prompted by the realisation of the depth of their adversary's plan – a realisation so terrible that she wonders how she can continue to 'nurse' her 'sucking child'.<sup>47</sup> In all this, as ever, her diary is cryptic. It is never clear what the accusations against the Cards consisted of, or why several people should have joined in what seems to have been a concerted attack on them. Yet it can be surmised that the story is one of financial squabbles and bad dealing between Friends, who were using the arbitration process as a means not of resolving problems but of waging war against one another. Although the Cards were finally exonerated, it seems they had engaged in some activities that bordered on illegitimacy, even if this was only through 'inadvertence'.

A few other points are worth making here. First, Mary's prayer during the crisis for the voice of a mere child did not mean she had no part in decision-making. On the contrary, it is clear that she was very much involved in seeking a way out - she speaks of being 'wearied with thinking, toiling myself with future plans' and subsequently of



'our plan' being 'realiz'd'.<sup>48</sup> Later comments - her enumeration of their remaining assets after the crisis, a fret one day about 'sales' being 'trifling'<sup>49</sup> - indicate an intimate knowledge of the family finances and state of the business, so either Nathaniel shared such information with her or she shared in the management of the enterprise. The latter is more likely. And what was required, what she really wanted, was not the voice of an innocent, helpless child but the subtle voice of a mature woman. The arbitrators' resolution provided but temporary respite. By 1806 Mary was casting herself in a role like the biblical Judith's, formulating her own plan to extricate her family from difficulty, to regain what rightfully belonged to them, the Lord's people:

please thee Oh! Lord that I by subtlety [like Judith's], may this day restrain the hand of the uncircumcised & wrest that outward property which in thy goodness thou hast given us, out of the hands of him who seeked to retain it.

As with earlier plans we are not told what it entails, nor the result, but its success rests on her own skill in the use of the spoken word, her ability to fight 'cunning' not with words plain or few but with 'subtlety', God willing – 'let the words of my mouth prevail, that the device of cunning may be broken & we escape as out of the net'.<sup>50</sup> Words have power, they form the key that can release from entrapment – but (and this is the second point) the trap was intricate and complex. Earlier, she had portrayed Nathaniel as a blameless victim of Machiavellian-like plotting resembling a spider's web ('tho' my NC appear like an innocent fly which has been inadvertantly[sic] entangled in the web of a Spider').<sup>51</sup> Mary had described 'deism', with its tentacles of rationality, as a 'cobweb system', yet this term could just as easily be applied to the complexities she now found herself within – the web of commerce with its dealings, scheming and competition, the network of the Quaker organisation that spread into every area of business life, both becoming ever more entangled as Friends grappled with the new practices and moral dilemmas arising from the evolution of modern capitalism.

One danger of 'deistic' thought had been its tendency to 'speculation', the way it undermined traditional faith by questioning scriptural authority and revelation. Coincidentally, the same word entered into Quaker business vocabulary. Friends were supposed to avoid financial 'speculation'. It was thought akin to gambling which was forbidden not only because it was regarded as an idle pastime, and could lead to gain without hard work, but also because it fuelled avarice:

In 1788, the Yearly Meeting declared itself 'deeply affected' by the actions of Friends who 'through an evil covetness, have engaged in illegal dealings in the public stocks, or government securities; which is a species of gaming, and altogether inconsistent with our religious principles'.<sup>52</sup>



Speculation in religion and speculation in commerce were not without parallels. Both involved taking risks, weighing up probabilities, and in Mary's life it was ironic that, having closed the door to religious 'speculation', financial 'speculation' should then enter via her marriage. One undated entry warns against entering into 'speculations irrelevant to our calling, inconvenient to our property & strongly attractive of the strength of our minds' but what constituted 'speculation'?<sup>53</sup> In 1814 she records their narrow escape from a venture in which many failed. It had 'open'd cheeringly as a channel of moderate profit, an agency in which it was represented there was no risk' but 'the chief spoke in the wheel gave way – the great were crushed & we who appear least of all & were as in the center liable to every crush, we escape with our lives for a prey'.<sup>54</sup> Initially this project had seemed to fulfil the required criteria – no risk or excessive profit – yet it proved to be very dangerous indeed. One problem was that Quaker principles made no allowance for economic change - increasing capitalisation, the growing complexity of the money markets and the changing nature of risk-taking.

Thirdly, one thing Mary learned from the Cards' first brush with disaster was to reject the simplistic belief that material security or wealth were bestowed on the righteous while poverty or misfortune were forms of divine retribution for evil-doing. Like other forms of suffering, however, pecuniary distress still served a purpose in the providential plan. It was one of God's ways of refining and preparing the soul for Heaven, and therefore needed to be embraced, even welcomed as a divine instrument - 'let us be perfected'.<sup>55</sup> Thus the notion of punishment was not abandoned, simply displaced into a form of control. When, in April 1805, Mary finds they can still 'live comfortably', she is ashamed that she continues irritable and discontented. The reason can only be that she is 'wicked still', 'unrefined' although she has been 'washed & rinsed', and 'put into the furnace'.<sup>56</sup> Throughout the journal periods of financial distress or uncertainty are seen as visitations sent by God to chastise or correct, to prevent our placing trust in this world so that we can develop instead a 'total dependence' on Him and resignation to His will.<sup>57</sup> Even if they are signs of God's care, however, her earnest prayer is that such chastisements 'be secret & not public'.<sup>58</sup> The fear of public censure or disgrace was always a great source of anxiety. And anxiety was, for Mary, the quintessential problem. It showed a lack of resignation, constituted a betrayal of trust in God and was evidence of straying, yet it also functioned as part of the hedge set up for our protection and guidance:

The anxiety of business, the care attendant on our temporal concerns [. . .] feel like thorns in our sides, [but] If I be amoung[sic] thorns – surely my dwelling is not in the centre of the peaceful fold – for thorns are in the hedges round



about, set for the preservation of the flock – that when they feel wounded, they may turn again to the only safe & quiet habitation.<sup>59</sup>

The companion of anxiety is desire, because with every anxious thought comes a wish that the worry will prove needless, or that events will turn out as we hope or not take the turn we fear. Looking into her heart and 'its cravings', in an entry probably made in April 1805, she sees that:

we cannot live without desire, every action tends to something[,] there is a secret spring which impels us forward – life itself is a state of desire [. . .] whatever then is my desire, that is my life – whatever I breathe after shews me clearly as in a glass my real state.<sup>60</sup>

To seek her desires, then, was also to seek the truth about herself. Her recognition that desire is an inescapable imperative behind all we do, and the idea that its analysis will aid an understanding of her 'self', have a surprisingly modern ring. Concentration on desire analysis certainly seems to run counter to Quietist directives to annihilate all desires or workings of the 'creature', yet it could be argued that to dismiss desires one must first discover what they are. Inherent in this objectification of her 'self' is a confidence that the psyche can be mapped, that her desires will prove transparent and reflect a view of her 'real' condition as in a mirror if she only looks long and hard enough. In a sense, despite awareness today of the 'self' as fragmentary and only ever partially accessible, this is still how we actually experience the world – as if we are autonomous agents able to ascertain consciously our own inner goals, intentions and motivations. Yet Mary's ensuing confession of her desires appears to be not so much the result of a deep inner search, the discovery of her own secret longings, but a mechanistic list reflecting a set of conventional, culturally determined priorities. First, the continuation of 'present blessings [. . .] as long as consistent with the Divine Will', second, to be more 'dedicated' to God's 'service', third 'to be indulged in the sweet luxury of administering to the necessities of others'. A digression in the formula, however, is telling. To the second priority she adds in carefully weighed detail:

for which purpose [dedication to God's service] I would that our minds were more disencumber'd of worldly cares & that we were more without heavy anxiety as to the fulfilling [of] our engagements, therefore I desire the increase of our business, so far beyond food & raiment as to settle us in a capital on which we may trade without passing bills or going into debt which causes uneasiness, solicitude & distraction of thought from the heavenly principle.<sup>61</sup>

Leaving aside the crude, and perhaps unfair, interpretation we could put on her list (it seems like saying, 'please God, can we keep what we've got, and preferably have a

bit more but only so we can pay more attention to you - then as an optional extra could we have a bit more still so we can enjoy ourselves giving some away to good causes'), it is apparent that there are two levels of expression. One, a sanctioned discourse representing what she feels in terms of what she should feel, and another that slips through, revealing the issues of most concern, or other emotions, in ways that are not so clearly sanctioned. Here, although nothing in the digression specifically departs from Quaker principle, the space given to it and the careful balancing of words sounding like a justification indicate that this was the area where difficulty lay.

This slippage is present in a pre-eminence sometimes attached to temporal concerns while supposedly prioritising the spiritual, such as when she prays first that she 'may never make an unsavory[sic] appearance in meetings – running, while I am not sent' (giving ministry when un-inspired), and then that they may 'never fail in the payment of [their] debts', but admits that the 'last especially lies heavy on my mind'.<sup>62</sup> But it is most evident in the continual intrusion of concerns with money, even in periods of financial security. On occasion there is an acknowledgment of this obsession, and the hold it has over her, a questioning of her motivation, even an insight that renegade desires might masquerade as sanctioned ones – for instance that the urge to accumulate wealth might disguise itself as the desire simply for a 'competency'. A further insight is that even this sanctioned desire could be a form of covetousness - a 'competency' was God's to give not hers to command, and her constant yearning for it showed a lack of trust in Him. For example, no sooner was the 1805 crisis over than Mary's fear of poverty was replaced for a while by a fear of wealth. She recognises even at this early stage that stifling the 'Divine life' by blurring 'the distinction between using & abusing the traffick[sic] which promotes our sustenance & comfort [. . .] is an avenue, I fear an ever open avenue, into which I am perpetually[sic] liable to stray'.<sup>63</sup> In 1812, she queries why she gets 'so depressed when the business is insufficient for our expenses'. Quoting the commandment 'Thou shalt not covet', she bemoans her 'coveting' of an 'outward sufficiency' which she can never shake off – 'how it sticks to me, O! that it might die the death!' She knows there is a condition beyond this, 'a state of total dependence on him' but 'there is that within me which would (as it were) demand outward sufficiency, [. . .] My Father it is too strong for me, I cannot conquer it! But thou Oh my Father art able to do all things.'<sup>64</sup> This avowal of trust was to no avail. Later that year, with even keener insight, she questions whether:

This secret coveting of daily bread, this dread of beggary, is it not a snare of the enemy[?] I think it is & yet its appearance is so plausible, that it has taken root in my heart & has drawn me [. . .] near to the grave.<sup>65</sup>



Sometimes justified and sometimes not, but always plausible because seemingly well-founded (in requirements to act fairly by others, to maintain the reputation of Friends, to be free to worship God), these 'secret' desires and anxieties continued cruel and relentless, becoming a preoccupation that enveloped her life.

## ENACTING A PURE LANGUAGE

Specific forms, or concepts, of language formed essential components in the Quaker 'hedge'. Honest, plain speaking in business followed from witnesses to truth and to a simplicity that had to be evidenced in words as well as actions. Adherence to the plain speech, the archaic 'thee' and 'thou', was a public witness that differentiated the speaker from those of 'the world'. Using too many words, flowery language, or exaggeration were all forms of 'superfluity' but, like giving way to wrath, speaking ill of another, evasion or lying (and exaggeration is, in a sense, lying), they were also deviations, a misuse of God's gift of speech, and therefore impure. A prayer of Mary's, uttered on 14 September 1812, defines the 'purity' in language she wished God to help her attain:

I beseech thee turn to me "a pure language"! let mine heart be pure, let my words be pure, [. . .] let no equivocation or exaggeration[sic] proceed from my mouth, let not the lurking venom of jealousy or enmity or vanity go forth from the door of my lips, but do thou who judgest by our words & by our words condemnest [. . .] be pleased to bind my words in thy covenant of life, let me not use an unsavoury expression, let me not utter an unguarded thought, let my words proceed straight from my heart without crookedness, let me use no evasions which militate against purity!<sup>66</sup>

Pure words issued 'straight' from a pure heart – the unmediated expression, then, of truth and genuine feeling or care, the true province of the heart. Impure language was 'unsavoury' to God, an unacceptable offering (elsewhere Mary speaks of pure words or actions giving a 'sweet-smelling savour'). Note too the mention of words being bound, or restricted, in a covenant, or bargain, with God and that, here, it is primarily by our words that we stand to be judged.

The voice, which should be the expression of, or emanation from, the Light within, had always to be closely guarded. Pronouncing judgement on others was profoundly transgressive. It denied 'the heart', and moreover usurped a prerogative that belonged to God alone. In a letter to a Friend (1811), Mary asks:

art thou careful not to be hasty in uttering thy judgment of others? [. . .] Alas when we censure, when we condemn, are we qualified to bear the burthens of the feeble minded? & to fulfil the law of love? I am persuaded that as we yield to the influence of Divine truth, our minds will partake of his heavenly benignity & we shall diligently watch our lips, lest any unsavory expression escape us.<sup>67</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that Mary should feel guilt about her 'bitterness' toward their business adversary John Helton<sup>68</sup> – expressed in words not only spoken in anger, that judged and condemned,<sup>69</sup> that treated him ill even if they were not spoken in his presence and there was some justification - but words that broke a solemn covenant with God made only a few months before that she would 'set a watch to [her] tongue that [she] speak no evil'.<sup>70</sup>

It can be seen that 'purity of language' depended upon restraint – not succumbing to anger, to spite, to desires to boast or depict oneself in a false light, or paint things other than as they are, not returning abuse, not indulging in sarcasm, unnecessary criticism, meaningless chatter or gossip (which could be both frivolous and unkind). Some of these, particularly the last, were considered faults to which women were particularly prone.<sup>71</sup> Very often, restraint in practice meant not speaking, and so it is not surprising to find 'silence & subjection' linked together. For instance, in July 1809 Mary hopes that her children will develop 'industrious habits, moderate learning & a deep rooted practice of silence & subjection - (I believe best learned by a close and diligent attention to religious meetings)'.<sup>72</sup> Learning to be silent was of course prerequisite to developing a faculty of inner listening, of waiting upon God, but Mary's words make it clear that attendance at Meeting was in itself a form of training that cultivated obedience and subjection of wayward parts of the self. Again, such training was especially important for girls whose future lay in subjection not only to God but to their husbands and in the sublimation of their own goals in the service of their families or others. As Christine Trevett points out, despite the 'opportunities' Quakerism presented for women's 'action in the sphere of religion', early Friends did not try

to undermine the doctrine that a husband, in likeness to Christ's relation to the Church, was 'head' of his wife (*Ephesians* 5:23 seq.). This was a view Friends held also, as is shown in Fox's writing of 1656 on *The Woman Learning in Silence* (p.2).<sup>73</sup>

These links – between purity, restraint, silence, obedience and subjection – and their particular application to women help us to understand how, in Mary's life and writing, the use of words (both thought and spoken), control of her feelings and actions, and fulfillment of her role as a Quaker wife and mother came to be intertwined. All three



involved a subjugation of herself, and varying degrees of limitation, that were in many respects alien to her character. To deny herself the pleasures of much reading and lively conversation she had previously enjoyed, to forgive her enemy (John Helton) to the extent of not even entertaining derogatory thoughts of him, to obey her husband – these were some of the tasks she set herself but found extremely difficult. Often she did not succeed. It is probably no coincidence that sometimes such areas of difficulty appear together, as when, in July 1805, some success in her role 'as the faithful helpmete[sic] of [her] beloved partner', praying for his peace of mind, is coupled with being able to pray for John Helton:

Oh! enable me my heavenly Father to fulfil my duty of a wife, make me to help my husband in every way spiritually & temporal[sic] – thou dost - & bless thy name for it. I am thankful that I feel openings to supplicate for our worst enemy.<sup>74</sup>

It is then not so surprising, either, that notions of sin come to be connected primarily with speech, with its perceived misuse, with requirements to contain or curtail it, and located in the organ of speech – the tongue. To sin with the tongue is to sin with the body, and in the context of a view of suffering as either God's punishment for sin or a process of refinement, it would be understandable if such sins were thought to be punished by some form of physical affliction. And Mary does indeed fear this, yet she believes that retribution is to be visited not on her own body, but on the bodies of those dearest to her – her children. Her transgressions result in their pain, even death. We cannot be certain exactly how or why Mary arrived at such a belief, and further research needs to be done before we can say how representative it was of Quaker women in the early nineteenth century. Certainly in the seventeenth century it was commonplace. Phyllis Mack describes how 'the death of an infant might well be spiritually catastrophic, because the exhausted mother was instructed to interpret the death as punishment for her own sinfulness'. The Countess of Warwick confided to her diary in 1667 that when contemplating 'the sickness and death' of her child she 'began to consider what sins I had committed that should cause God to call them to remembrance and slay my son'.<sup>75</sup> What can be said from Mary's diary is that she – a well-educated, highly intelligent Quaker woman – seems to have no reservations about such a view of divine justice and this suggests that such ideas were still considered acceptable and may have been quite prevalent among Quaker families at this time. However, we must also consider how her own life events could have contributed to such a view, and here an exploration of some of her poetry, particularly a collection written while on a visit to Milford Haven in South Wales, offers some insights.

Before embarking on this, however, we need to bear in mind Mary's own definitions of the ideals to which she aspired. She refers several times, in typical Quaker vernacular, to her longing to 'become a pillar in the temple of God & go no more out'.<sup>76</sup> A pillar, beside being a means of support, is ornamental – as a common metaphor it surely stood for someone who could be relied on and who was a credit to the Society. It is, of course, straight, not deviant or crooked, and stationary – a pillar is incapable of 'going out'. But it is also highly visible and, if elegant, something to be admired. When describing the conduct she aims at, however, though she speaks of the influence she may wield with or on behalf of others, her focus is on, not exactly the private sphere, but an inner watchfulness that governs her behaviour in ways largely unseen. On 24 August 1812, in acute pain and aware of the possibility of death, she speaks very fully of wanting to glorify God in 'every action of [her daily] life' ('eating', 'drinking', 'lying down' and 'rising') and:

in my attention to business & in my dutiful conduct towards my husband, in bridling my tongue, in bearing patiently the rebukes of others, in watching over my words & my actions, in taking every opportunity to advocate the cause of humanity, in using my influence with others, to lessen the sufferings of my fellow creatures & of animals, in bearing my testimony faithfully to the plain language, to using stamp receipts, [. . .] above all in employing every moment that I can reasonably extract myself from necessary cares & acts in secret worship presenting myself many, many times in the day, before the door of his inward habitation & waiting.<sup>77</sup>

The business, obedience to her husband, limiting her speech – these are at the head of the list, even though the practice of religious devotion is paramount.

Yet reflecting a little later on another's perception of her – not as the elegant pillar on display, but rather as the supportive stake within the building – she reveals her struggle in trying to come to terms with a life that, despite desire for public recognition, remains not exactly invisible but certainly less visible than she wished. On 16 November 1814 she refers to how a 'friend in a religious opportunity':

had been considering the different parts of a building & that which much dwelt with her was a stake to which she evidently compared me, now a stake is not for ornament or beauty, & the more hidden, the more obscure perhaps the better – if it be pressed down & retain its soundness, its firmness, its strength, then is its value known to the master builder & it is sufficient that he estimate it rightly, if a stake could desire as I have desired to come forward to be seen & noticed, would not its worth & its usefulness be diminished[?]<sup>78</sup>

This conflict, between what she wants to be and what she must resign herself to being, is evident elsewhere. On 6 July 1803, two years after her marriage, with her eldest



son William aged eighteen months, and only two weeks before the birth of her second child (the first to be named Nathaniel), she writes, 'A painful feeling of my own worthlessness[,] a certainty that I cumber the ground attends me'. She asks God to grant that she 'might be acceptable in His Most Holy sight' and for the 'ability to fill [her] station while here', yet feels she is 'a good for nothing worm':

why am I retained in existence, Whom do I succour or bless, who is there that is cheered by my Labour, none – none I am sunk in supineness. I am indolent if not from choice Yet as feeling the puerility of every thing that I can do and aiming at nobler employments I earn not the Bread I eat.

Acknowledging she has all the blessings she could wish for, she feels that this very lack of 'anxiety' or 'care [. . .] has given me to feel more of my own emptiness than I heretofore experienced. While Occupied temporally or spiritually I knew not the burthen of myself which now weighs me down'.<sup>79</sup> This seems an odd entry to make so near a birth when, one would think, some rest could be justified. Then there could be no doubt that her children stood in need of her tender care, especially given a prevailing ideology that idealised motherhood, and cast it as the married woman's primary role. There is more here than that empty feeling of one who has been used to being very active and suddenly finds, as a result of indisposition, nothing to do. Mary sees her field of labour as encompassing a wider arena, beyond her family, and feels she must in some way earn her living – not necessarily in the literal sense of paid employment, but certainly in terms of making a contribution within that wider world. She does not choose idleness, yet all that she is able, or allowed, to do is of little account when she would like to do greater things. There is a guilt component too in that, although she has everything a woman should ask for, she still wants something more – hence her prayer that she be enabled to fulfill the duties of the 'station' in which she has been placed.

Perhaps an awareness of this struggle was behind the advice given her as a young single woman by the well-known Quaker travelling minister, Thomas Scattergood, in a letter to her friend Hannah Wilson Forbes:

tell her, that is equally true respecting the female as the other sex "That a faithful man shall abound with blessings" [. . .] tell her to remember where the emphasis lay on these expressions "Well done good & faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things – its not in knowing much or having an enlarged understanding, but doing the will in the present little openings of duty [. . .]".<sup>80</sup>

Scattergood's words encompassed both sexes - both were to concentrate, not on acquiring great learning or seeking individual prominence, but on working out God's will in their daily lives, fulfilling the obligations laid on them in the situations in which they were placed. Here lay the crux, however. Those situations, and therefore the 'little openings of duty', were very different for each sex – and for a woman they were considerably narrower. One cannot help feeling that Scattergood's words were, to some degree, admonitory. So was the young Mary overstepping the bounds of her sex in her desire for knowledge and recognition, or holding some of the more routine 'feminine' duties enjoined upon her in low regard? Sadly, she was to discover that many of the increasing responsibilities assumed in the course of a woman's life (marriage, child-bearing and motherhood) also called for increasing degrees of resignation.

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In January and February of 1804, Mary went on a trip to Milford Haven in South Wales, staying as the guest of a wealthy American Quaker whaling magnate, Benjamin Rotch. A brief description of how the Rotches came to join other Nantucket Quaker whaling families, like the Starbucks, already settled at Milford and some information about them is given as an introduction to Mary's 'Milford' poems.<sup>81</sup> The intention here is to explore the reasons for the dramatic effect the company and environment at Milford had on Mary's writing, and thus the impact this respite from her business worries and domestic cares in Dublin may have had on her life. It is not known why Mary went to Milford. It may have been in connection with either her husband's or her father's business (William Birkett would have used whale oil in his candle manufacture) or, as Rotch had previously visited Ireland in 1797, he may have met Mary there and invited her specifically. A person with keen literary interests himself, who had met controversial and well-known writers of the day such as Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft while on the continent, he may have been interested in Mary as someone who shared a fascination with the written word. On her part, Rotch may have rekindled her desires to read widely and write more poetry. She had written very little since her marriage, and those few poems were mainly, though not exclusively, religious in content, such as 'The Flies' (October 1802) – a dreadful moralistic tale designed for her son, William, then aged nine months, and a poem seeking resignation to God's will in the suffering borne during and after the birth of her second son, Nathaniel, in July 1803.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, she may have been stopping off at Milford on her way to visit English relatives, as did many Irish Friends who took the Waterford/Milford crossing – most stayed at the Rotches. There is no



evidence as to whether she was accompanied or not. We can see, however, that her writing flourished while at Milford. At least twenty-eight poems were dashed off in the few weeks of her stay, and although much of their form and structure is similar to the rest of her verse, there are new departures in range, content and treatment.

The majority comes into the category of occasional verse and, like other poetry written while staying with friends, performs a dual function – thanking her hosts for their kindness and rewarding them with compliments. The sentiments expressed are often in her usual conventions too, conveying a trite or familiar moral within a personalised message. The first and last poems serve as examples. The first, written on 11 January a few days after the birth of the Rotches' sixth child, Caroline, welcomes this 'Lovely babe, unfolded treasure!' to a world where she will be blessed by all earthly comforts and the protective 'hedge' afforded by wise parents who will ensure that her mind - that 'spacious garden' - will bloom 'serene & pure within'. Caroline herself, though, must yield to virtue, that 'solid treasure' which never fades and is only found 'low in humble resignation', 'its glories' 'obscure'.<sup>83</sup> Bidding adieu to Milford on 16 February, Mary addresses Rotch's wife Elizabeth, expressing sorrow that the pangs of separation inevitably follow the pleasures of friendship and enumerating the virtues of each member of the Rotch family in turn.<sup>84</sup> But there are two new types of poem: poems to do with love affairs, or rather flirtations, occurring within the Milford circle, and a form of comic verse with an acerbic edge to it quite lacking elsewhere. There is a new wit and sarcasm, a fresh ingenuity in some of the word play (like the punning on virgin lamps and Jesus's parable of the wise and foolish virgins in 'On the Whalefishery'), and sometimes a competitive edge – Rotch's guests were vying with one another in producing verses for amusement at the dinner table. Though she had often written word-game poems before, in 'A Rebus' the object is not to set a puzzle so much as to criticise the behaviour of a fellow guest whose peremptory manner is poor return for the hospitality she has received. And there is a new dimension to the 'occasionality' whereby some poems take their origin in the observed emotion of the human subject – their anger, tears, or discomfiture ('To Ruth in Tears', lines beginning 'A furious temper in thy face I see').<sup>85</sup>

One reason for these changes must lie in the different lifestyle she was participating in at the Rotches', a far cry from that of her home in Dublin. Even if the Cards were middle-class rather than poor and enjoyed a reasonably good social life, their lives would not have borne much resemblance to that of this wealthy, cultured and influential family. It would not be too fanciful to say that Mary had entered in effect a



new sphere, a sphere over which Benjamin Rotch presided with genial and magnanimous sway. Well-travelled, sophisticated, and talented, as well as immensely rich (the cargo of a whaling ship might be valued at between £7,000 and £9,000),<sup>86</sup> he enjoyed entertaining and the company of witty, amusing or clever people. He and his wife had been friendly with intellectuals and artists in London, including the American painter Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy, and they were not rigid about Quaker customs in dress or manners.<sup>87</sup> Mary may have stayed initially in the Rotches' town-house, either the accommodation they first rented or the house they were having built in Front Street, now 25 Hamilton Terrace, near the Lord Nelson Hotel, so named after Lord Nelson's visit and speech there in 1802. (Rotch and his wife Elizabeth met Lord Nelson and Lord and Lady Hamilton.)<sup>88</sup> If the Rotches ever did live in this house, it was only for a short while as an opportunity to buy that more coveted asset, a British country estate, then presented itself. Mary's visit probably coincided with the family's move from the centre of Milford to Castle Hall, a mansion with ornamental gardens in an estate of about one hundred and eighty acres near the town.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps she assisted in the move. Soon afterwards, Rotch commenced a major programme of 'improvements', praised in Fenton's *Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire* in 1811.<sup>90</sup> He landscaped the gardens, constructed glass and iron orangeries and pineries (for growing pineapples – rare at this time) and established an arboretum with foreign trees brought in his ships. His daughter, Eliza, wrote in her memoirs:

All these improvements, with the high cultivation of English gardening, not usually practised in Wales, made Castle Hall a show-place. The orangery and the pinery were a great novelty in Pembrokeshire, and I remember being very tired of showing them to our visitors.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, he re-designed the house, adding two new wings. Lady Cawdor laid the cornerstone attended by local gentry and the celebratory dinner menu has survived:

[. . .] boiled salmon, with fried whittings laid round the dish. [. . .] Lobster and anchova soup in tureens; after which Tongue and Boiled Fowls, with oyster sauce, Roast Beef, Partridges, with vegetables. The desert consisted of raspberry tarts, jellies and syllabubs, rice pudding, damson pye, cheesecakes, with rich gravy and currant jelly 'in boats'. The whole topped off with 'the desert sent us as a present from a gentleman in the neighbourhood, consisting of apples, pears, figs fresh from the tree, nectarines, filberts, & American nuts'.<sup>92</sup>

Although this was a special occasion, it does show the standards that guests - friends from America, London and Ireland, naval and military officers, whaling captains, local gentry and fellow Quakers - could expect at the Rotches' table.



Learning in 1806 of the extent of the 'improvements' to Castle Hall, Mary dedicated a poem to this house – the repository of many happy memories, a place of solace, which had provided space for her 'muse':

There oft I'd seek at early dawn  
 Th'enamell'd mead the verdant lawn  
 List to the songsters on the spray  
 And tune my notes as blithe as they  
 Or when Phoebus' rays opprest[sic]  
 My limbs beneath thy shades might rest  
 While the free thought in Classic lore  
 Accumulates her mental store.

She yearns:

O for a Cot beneath thy shade  
 Far from these toiling haunts of trade  
 Where keenness with dishonest art  
 Entraps the unsuspecting heart

and 'varied cares' 'repel the Muse[']s native glow'.

Mary looked back on her time at Milford, then, as idyllic. Divorced from routine and the 'sordid' realities of trade, the cobweb-like encroachments of despondency, anxious care and 'speculation' were swept away. Rotch's wife 'Eliza' proved a great friend. It was she whose 'polish'd wit' had 'chas'd sorrow', and 'wak'd the Muse in numbers gay/When my lov'd home was far away', and her comforting words which had 'bade the mental shadows fly'.<sup>93</sup> The director of this idyll, however, the orchestrator of proceedings, was definitely Benjamin himself. Their daughter's recollections show that Elizabeth often found the constant entertaining a strain, but Benjamin revelled in his role as host, and was never happier than when at the centre of a lively social and intellectual circle. It is likely that, just as Mary had earlier been influenced by her deist mentor (probably Shackleton), she now found herself susceptible to the charismatic personality of Rotch who, in the words of her acquaintance Mary Leadbeater, 'unit[ed] [. . .] the Quaker and the gentleman'.<sup>94</sup> There are several examples of his chivalric attitude toward women, and his personal charm.<sup>95</sup> The non-Quaker Leach sisters from Milford whom he took to see London spoke of the journey with him as 'charming', describing him 'as the best possible leader and provider'.<sup>96</sup> While in Paris, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, according to a story told by his daughter, he was asked by the imprisoned English author Helen Maria Williams, 'as an American, to claim her as his wife and so procure her liberty'. Not willing, as a Quaker, to make a

'false claim', he was nonetheless persuaded not to deny her assertion 'unless directly questioned'. The ruse, supposedly, succeeded.<sup>97</sup> Yet another anecdote asserts that when Elizabeth Gurney at first refused Joseph Fry's proposal of marriage, he spoke to 'Betsy' on Fry's behalf, asking:

what message he might carry to her suitor. 'Tell him,' she said, 'that he has no hope but in the fickleness of woman.' 'Then,' replied [Benjamin], 'I shall tell him he has every hope.' This he did. Joseph Fry straightway went down to Earham, and was accepted.<sup>98</sup>

Elizabeth herself was certainly susceptible to Benjamin, whose reputation travelled before him. On a visit to London in her late teens, she wrote: 'The Roaches [sic] were there, who I admire, particularly Benjamin [sic] who reminded me of William Savery. I think I felt rather too flirty with him, partly because I was told he was a flirt'.<sup>99</sup>

Rotch's encouragement and appreciation, even guidance, were perhaps the most influential factors in Mary's re-discovery of the joys of language and composition. One brief verse of Mary's, untitled, is revealing on this quality of mentorship:

I envy not th'applause of fame  
 Domestic pleasure is my aim  
 Nor thought to wear a poet[']s bays  
 Till Rotch approv'd my simple lays  
 Would he repress th'exuberance wild  
 Of fancy's vague untutor'd child  
 Or clip the wings that soar away  
 How would my judgment own his sway.<sup>100</sup>

In one sense, this verse represents a strategy whereby Mary simultaneously disclaims any unfeminine ambition, or even any pretensions to the status of authorship, by asserting her poems are now, as much as in the past, merely intended for private, domestic consumption, while still intimating their worth and the possibility, even desirability, of more public recognition. Yet thoughts of such accolades are only made possible by Rotch's male sanction. The self-effacing disclaimer does not ring quite true – after all, Mary had already published a poem, albeit justified by the anti-slavery cause. Moreover, the description of her 'lays' is rather contradictory – they are 'simple', yet 'exuberant' and 'wild'. The products, not of profound imagination, but of that lesser quality 'fancy', they require both the enhancement of greater learning and clipping back, or moderation. The verse is perhaps not so much an acknowledgement of Rotch's existing mentorship, although one suspects that some changes in the style and subject matter of her poems were due to his influence, as a flattering gesture to



her host – to his superior (and male) discernment – and a plea for his further guidance. There is also a sense, then, in which she is placing herself under his tutelage.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Milford poems is their revelation of the creative, jovial and yet competitive atmosphere within the Rotch circle. The sheer volume of poems Mary produced – virtually one a day – suggest that composition was, if not extempore, at least without a great deal of forethought or preparation. It seems poems were read aloud, sometimes over dinner, and reflected competitive banter between Rotch and his guests. Mary's verse entitled 'Ruth to -' deprecates the witticisms of H. Leach (presumably Henry Leach, a local Justice of the Peace) as mere 'bubbles' before Rotch's 'fire' which 'Would make a thousand such as thou/Evaporate in steam'. Poor Leach comes in for more teasing in 'B Rotch to H. Leach.' and 'The Shew-man'.<sup>101</sup> But the host is not exempt. He could obviously be short-tempered at times. In 'Ruth's Petition to B. Rotch.', the speakers, Ruth and Eliza, beg him to avoid 'pig-meat' (possibly referring to Thomas Spence's radical journal *Pigs' Meaf*) as it gives him the bile – a euphemism for bad temper.<sup>102</sup> It is clear too that Mary and Leach are competing for Rotch's approval and affection, rather like children before an omnipotent parent. In 'The Monkey to the Magpie', where Mary at one point actually calls Leach her 'brother', she cleverly retaliates against his accusation of plagiarism, admitting that although she may be a mere mimic, or 'ape', his empty chattering vacuity makes him no more than a 'magpie'. She is quite equal to his forays – 'apes may bite' – and lays down a clear challenge, 'And why so fierce thy blinking eye/Children, not me, twould terrify'. Moreover, their host is really on her side even though Leach invokes him as his 'second' – Rotch says 'my thoughts are sound and true/And thy own image fair thou drew'. The value of this 'sparring', however, is then undercut. Both their efforts are but counterfeit, 'shallow gleanings' making 'tinsel pass for gold', with the same aim in view – to earn their own keep and entertainment by amusing the company:

Alike we credit our friends table  
And eat & drink while we are able  
(As our encreasing size bespeaks  
Our surface sleek, our ruddy cheeks)  
Talk sense or nonsense – so it pass  
And seldom fail to drink our glass.<sup>103</sup>

Mary's treatment of 'affairs of the heart' has the same note of realism. 'On the "Squeeze of the Hand"' warns Alice to be wary of outward shows of affection that may

have no genuine counterpart within. 'Maria when applied for by an old Miser [. . .]' advises Maria to ensure she makes a good marriage settlement.<sup>104</sup> Most remarkable is 'E.L... to G.S...'. 'E.L' (probably Eliza Leach), the speaker, is an older non-Quaker woman in love with a smart young Friend, rather appropriately named Gayer Starbuck. She accuses him of being a coquet, adopting fashionable dress just to woo her and, in the languages of facial expression and touch as much as words, enticing her to fall in love with him. The poem adopts a tone of reproach and demands that he make his intentions clear, yet the amusing self-deprecation of the speaker, of her own 'antiquated charms', and the framing of the question - 'Say if thou deign'st to wear my ancient chain' – show that she has never believed marriage to be a genuine possibility. The poem thus has a bitter-sweet quality - the hurt is unmistakable and yet is also rendered a source of amusement.<sup>105</sup>

The poems convey an impression of a social milieu in which women and men spent much time together, sharing conversation and their writing. One surmises it was not a society where the women retired after dinner while the men smoked and talked politics. Rotch after all was an American Quaker, however much he was trying to take on the part of an English country gentleman. And Mary seems to have found her element in this environment. She found a forum for her talents, an arena for the display of prowess in language, one in which she could compete with men of status and some ability like Leach. Even if, as a woman, she had to ensure her reputation for, as she warned Eliza Rotch Junior, our 'sex are like porcelain transparent & clear/We admit of no flaw, nor a fall can retrieve',<sup>106</sup> Castle Hall was still a relatively 'safe' environment – a semi-private domain subject to Rotch's oversight – where she could explore her own abilities in the knowledge that his influence might well lead to more public recognition, perhaps to wider contacts and greater circulation of her verse.

It is certainly Rotch's influence that she is most concerned to praise on watching one of his ships, *The Hannah and Eliza*, set sail for the recently discovered New Zealand whaling grounds. Her 'tribute' illustrates numerous paradoxes in her attitudes to trade, wealth and power – paradoxes very much representative of economic discourses operating at the time, though there is only space here to highlight some of the idiosyncrasies. One section apostrophises Commerce:

Commerce! Dear bond, that cements human kind  
Refines our manners & expands our mind  
From pole to pole the social link extends  
Binds man to man & makes all merchants friends.<sup>107</sup>



In 1798, in the run-up to the Irish Rebellion, she had advocated promotion of Irish prosperity through encouragement of Ireland's own 'manufactures' and repression of 'foreign Luxuries' – 'the enervating produce of India'.<sup>108</sup> Foreign commerce was seen as a threat, its products as debilitating. Now it is of benefit to all and improves both minds and manners. In her journal, preoccupation with money becomes bondage, financial speculation a web of entrapment. Here commerce is a bond that joins all peoples together in a world-wide web of social friendship. Both concepts of colonial commerce and resultant consumption – as corrosive peril or unifying, strengthening force - already had a long history. Two early eighteenth-century examples spring to mind: the aura of corruption surrounding luxurious Eastern goods on Belinda's dressing-table in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712-1714) where one 'Casket *India's* glowing Gems unlocks,' while 'all *Arabia* breathes from yonder Box', and Addison's depiction in *The Spectator* (1711) of merchants as the most 'useful Members in a Commonwealth [. . .] [because] They knit mankind together in a mutual Intercourse of good Offices [. . .]'.<sup>109</sup> Mary's image in this poem of commerce as a beneficent, connective entity is unsurprisingly cast as feminine, yet its activity as Rotch's handmaiden is rapacious and it strives for Rotch alone: 'From distant lands [she] culls every varied sweet/And pours them at her fav'rite Rotch's feet'. (Resonant of Pope, where Belinda's maid, her 'inferior Priestess', 'culls with curious Toil' among 'the various Off'rings of the World' to deck her 'Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil'.)<sup>110</sup> Similar paradoxes abound in the poem. Rotch is the 'great Philanthropist', friend to all men, whose brotherly love transcends nationalism, yet the whole human race is reduced to a mere 'reservoir' for his bounty and his commercial move to Milford, conceived as France and America's loss and Britain's gain, is proof that 'Britain rules the main'. *The Hannah and Eliza*, belonging to pacifist Quakers, has no connection with such empire-building – it is 'hostile to none'. Except whales, of course, a fact Mary is seemingly unconscious of despite the Quaker concern for animals exhibited in another Milford poem, 'To Sally Starbuck [. . .]', where the little girl is persuaded to listen to 'reason' and not deprive a goldfinch of its liberty.<sup>111</sup> Wealth and power are supposedly valued far less than virtue and philanthropy (Rotch's children 'promise [fair?]/T'inherit less [his] wealth than virtues rare', Rotch has the mind more than power to 'relieve mankind' - p.330), but the whole poem is a eulogy to Rotch's affluence and prestige and furthermore envisions other gains to be had from benevolence – 'homage' from the grateful recipients of his bounty and an eternal reward. The final incongruity is Mary's avowal that as a 'good' and 'just' man, Rotch eschews praise. If its fulsome praise were not acceptable, her poem would surely not have been written.



Was Mary aware of these contradictions? Possibly. But she may not have viewed some as contradictory at all. Another influence was almost certainly the final section of Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713) (lines 385-434), where, as the Twickenham edition explains, 'The trees of Windsor Forest, turned into ships, will carry British power and commerce all over the world'.<sup>112</sup> What Pope attempts, however, is a reconciliation whereby British gains (riches and glory, seen as rightful reward for endeavour) converge with benefits supposedly accruing to all mankind through British influence – peace and order, justice, freedom, even autonomy for native peoples – in a halcyon future of 'Albion's Golden Days' (line 424). The Thames, in the voice of its river-god, is formulated as a conduit along which the world's treasures flow for its (Britain's national and personal) interests - 'For me the Balm shall bleed, and Amber flow,/The Coral redden, and the Ruby glow,' – yet through which all nations will connect and reap benefits:

The Time shall come, when free as Seas or Wind  
Unbounded *Thames* shall flow for all Mankind,  
Whole Nations enter with each swelling Tyde,  
And Seas but join the Regions they divide.<sup>113</sup>

Rather similarly, Rotch in Mary's poem is likened to a 'majestic' river, whose wide course 'enrich[es] the valleys', 'gild[s] the mountains', 'And gives new verdure to th'enamell'd meads' (p.330). Just as for the Thames river-god, serving his own interests is seen as quite compatible with serving those of all humankind. In fact, advantages to all are consequent upon such self-interest on the part of one who, like the Thames representing the British nation, is thought to have so much of value to bestow.

Another apparent contradiction - Mary's unsympathetic view of whales – is also open to other explanations. She may well have considered whales, for instance, to be mere fish and, if so, her attitude could have resembled that of Bernard Mandeville who asserted in *The Fable of the Bees* (1711) that only 'Tyranny' of 'Custom' could inure men to the cruel slaughter of animals for their own use, but 'I would not wonder how Men should so little commiserate such imperfect Creatures as [. . .] all Fish in general'.<sup>114</sup> Yet it is also possible to interpret her description of Rotch's whaling ship - 'unarm'd and only skill'd/The whale destroying harpoon oft to wield' (p.329) (my underlining) – as intentionally ironic, though surreptitiously so. Whale oil, after all, was a necessary commodity, not a luxury, and she would have no wish to ruffle the waves around the Arcadian site of Milford.



Even Rotch's idyll, however, eventually proved insecure. Although Mary envisaged Castle Hall as a haven free from the 'toils of trade' and 'speculation', it was of course a testament to Rotch's commercial success which, ironically, he was to lose through over-speculation. In the English/French war he deliberately amassed huge quantities of sperm oil, asking his agent in London only to sell when it reached the grand price of £120 a ton. The agent, however, imagining it would rise higher still, decided to wait. When the war ended abruptly and oil poured in again from abroad, the price fell to £60 and Rotch afterwards went bankrupt. He was forced to sell Castle Hall in 1819, and all his whaling ships bar one, to pay creditors. By this time he had resigned from the Society of Friends over the Quaker refusal to pay tithes, having (in 1813) come to the conclusion that breaking the law by not paying them was a worse crime than supporting the established church.<sup>115</sup>

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Soon after Mary's return to Dublin in February, her baby Nathaniel died in April 1804 aged only nine months. On 11 May she writes:

As I do believe that the sufferings allotted us are intended for our Chastisement [. . .] so I do believe that the sore affliction[,] the deeply excruciating pang of seperation[sic] which pierced my heart 4 Mo 16 1804 in the loss of my little son Nathaniel was intended a just punishment for my inattention. Oh God If I had not earned this I had not received these wages at thy hands.<sup>116</sup>

Another month passes before she confides the nature of her 'inattention' – the breaking of the covenant she had made with God that she would 'speak no evil':

I must watch diligently to all the avenues at which sin doth enter, my lips lest I be (as indeed to my shame I record that I am) soiled by the guilt of exaggeration – of untruths of too much conversation of light talk – my thoughts lest I murmur at any thing that befalls[sic] me. [. . .] Oh Lord God I pray thee [. . .] that thou give unto me the simplicity, the sweetness, the gentleness of that lovely infant whom it pleased thee to lend me and for my unworthiness to take from me again, [. . .] neither wouldst thou grant me my intercessions for his life because that tho I readily made a covenant with thee – yet I as readily broke thro it. I have said I will set a watch to my tongue that I speak no evil and Lo my words have witnessed against me [. . .], so thou took from me my darling & my sorrowing heart was troubled. And now I do entirely desire henceforth to live sinless Guileless void of anger pride or resentment, to speak truth strictly to act simply and to exercise benevolence and tenderness towards all.<sup>117</sup>

The lost child is emblematic of those qualities, so much desired but so difficult to attain, that she must cultivate in herself – qualities that, in a woman, must sublimate anger, guile, pride and resentment (all of which can be embodied in speech). Simple,



sweet, gentle, like an innocent child who, as Mary remarks elsewhere, has no voice but to 'cry for its [essential] wants'<sup>118</sup> – a construction that combines Quaker ideals and contemporary conceptions of compliant, self-effacing womanhood. Little Nathaniel was but a loan from God – a short-term one, the withdrawal of which was purposeful, compelling her to realise her failings and then to renew and augment her bargain with Him.

Her own behaviour, then, her ability to live up to the standards required as evidenced in her words, is constantly being tested, watched by God like a performance – it is a form of work with wages paid in a currency of her child's suffering or well-being. In what way had she failed the test before April 1804? She does not reveal how she had sinned in speech. Could there be some connection in her mind between the Milford Haven visit and the health of her child? If she left her baby in the care of a nursemaid or others in Dublin, perhaps she attributed his subsequent sickness to her own neglect in some way. Even more significantly, could the happiness she enjoyed at Milford - happiness that arose in freedom from domesticity (and maybe from her husband), in self-indulgence, above all in the joys of language (conversation, writing and recognition) - have led to enormous guilt? (Particularly when much of that writing could be conceived as frivolous, judgmental or unkind, and feeding her desires to rise from 'obscurity'.) This is, of course, speculation but it is not unsupported. Thereafter she not only reverted to writing little poetry but confined it increasingly to serious or philanthropic topics (an obituary for elder Joseph Williams, seeking funds for the children at the Daily Free School, appealing to her Member of Parliament to vote against slavery, pious moralistic verse) while turning more to her journal (there are over fifty entries in the following year – 1805) and commencing her religious epistles in earnest (only two letters appear to predate 1804). Furthermore it will be shown that the pattern of relinquishing poetry in favour of serious prose was repeated after the death of her first daughter in 1808, reinforcing the contention that a link existed between the deaths of her children and her seeming eventual abandonment of verse.<sup>119</sup> As far as 1804 is concerned, the tendency to seriousness must have been remarked on as in September Mary wrote 'To a Friend':

And dost thou blame my sober muse  
That chiefly gravest themes would chuse[sic]  
On Joys Immortal love to dwell  
And leave untouched the comic shell.

Accepting the criticism, she agrees that the joys the natural world has to offer should be treasured – 'Tis wisdom to enjoy each hour/And cull the sweet of every flower' –



even if transient, and the joys of 'Friendship', that 'true perennial', even more, but only in order to inspire gratitude to Him from whom such blessings flow.<sup>120</sup> The joys of 'converse' in friendship are extolled in another verse, but they must not originate in falseness or any desire to hurt: 'How pleasant is harmony social unfeign'd/With candour that ne'er may offend'.<sup>121</sup> Poetry, it seems, has become justifiable only if it serves a religious, philanthropic or didactic purpose.

The business crisis accounts for the majority of diary entries made in 1805, but the summer of that year was a period of relative contentment. Mary writes, 'I know that my endeavours are accepted of him – the School prospers, the children improve, my own domestic affairs are center'd in faith, we have enough of business & are at ease from the cumber of temporal engagements'.<sup>122</sup> This is perceived as evidence of divine approval, but her words also carry another huge implication. The success of school and business, the children's progress, the faith of her household - all are dependent upon her endeavours (spiritual as much as temporal) finding acceptance. In this context of responsibility, her covenant with God takes on awesome dimensions. The welfare of her family is purchased by its fulfillment, her offering of 'a pure language' and, we soon discover, her subservience to a superior voice – that of her husband. In August 1805 when another child falls ill, either her first-born William or the second Nathaniel born that February, she beseeches:

remit unto me the punishment due to my transgressions forgive me mine iniquities & heal my child, for because of disobedience to the voice of my husband am I now sorely afflicted with the sickness of my child. Oh! Lord, thou has deigned to shew unto me the cause thereof, seeing I repent & am humbly bowed down as in sackcloth & ashes, [. . .] unto thee Oh thou who hast afflicted me do I apply for thou only canst relieve me – give me - yea thou givest me the life of my child.

Even now he revives, he is given to me – he will recover – he will not now die – his sickness is for the Glory of God – for the punishment of my disobedience & his healing is according to thy mercy Oh! Lord. In my self will I acted & its consequence was disobedience to the will of my husband – the fruit thereof is bitterer than death – even as wormwood mingled with gall – the sickness of my child – resulting from my own conduct which I ought to have avoided by patient humility, obedience & care – if thou O Father forgivest me this time, I will I trust be more careful in future how I disobey.<sup>123</sup>

It is interesting to trace the dramatic interaction with God within this prayer, a petition that is apparently answered in the course of its articulation, or rather in the act of writing. We cannot know how it was actually composed, but it is as if she is writing to God while watching her dangerously sick child whose life is then actually delivered in response to prayer. A three-fold strategy makes God respond in this way: her



acknowledgement and formal enunciation of the sin of marital disobedience (but not how she disobeyed – some things, as ever, cannot be said), the view of her abject penitence and a flattering appeal to His omnipotent power. His gift of the child's recovery is not so freely given, however, that nothing more is required. On the contrary, not only must she announce that this miracle functions to glorify God and is due to His mercy, but she must reiterate her own sin and responsibility for the infant's suffering three times more: it is 'the punishment of *my* disobedience', 'In *my* self will I acted & its consequence was disobedience', it resulted 'from *my* own conduct'. This multiple confession, one would think, is surely unnecessary. God cannot need to be told again and again – after all, He showed her that her disobedience was responsible in the first place and is, in any case, all-knowing. Yet His intimation of her sin was in itself an act of mercy. He, as divine patriarchal voice within, 'deigned' to reveal it to her, seemingly vouchsafing this understanding when she, already repentant, was ready to receive His message that it was her failure to submit to the earthly authority of her husband's voice that posed a threat to her child's life. Mary's repeated and seemingly self-flagellatory confession is surely compelled, then, by the need to acknowledge this intimation and render it explicit, not least as a base for future action. Full awareness of her sin allows her to negotiate a fresh bargain with God - she will take greater care from now on if He will forgive her just this once – and this, in a curiously paradoxical way, is empowering, granting her, she believes, some control over external events through the moulding of herself to the prescribed pattern.

Her promise, however, is short-lived. Less than a week later, she devotes an entire entry to confession of just one 'great sin' - 'hastiness of expression in opposition to my dear husband', a confession made the same day in the hope, perhaps, of propitiating God and thus preventing harm to her children.<sup>124</sup> In September, after a near sleepless night, she wonders when she will ever achieve 'the meekness of wisdom, the obedience of a child' because:

I find this lesson of obedience a hard one, for it is very repugnant to my nature, which abhors it, I loath subjection, I would assey[sic] my own dignity – this is pride! but it is a deeply rooted pride early engrafted into my mind, nourished & cherished by education[,] by habit, by example.<sup>125</sup>

The sheer vehemence of this statement shows how degrading she found unquestioning obedience, how much it was a denial of her sense of self. It even seems to have gone against inclinations instilled culturally through what was, perhaps, a fairly liberal Quaker girlhood. In demanding it of herself she was possibly creating more rigid boundaries than those erected by some of her contemporaries. It is



probably no co-incidence that the following entry reports John and Elizabeth Hoyland's remarks on 'the absolute necessity of subjecting early the wills of children'.<sup>126</sup> Near the end of her journal, Mary regrets a perceived lack of proper guidance in her own youth. It is likely that in embracing her orthodox post-deist faith, she simultaneously embraced a more traditional concept of a woman's place. However that may be, the impossibility of attaining the ideals of obedience and purity of speech meant backsliding, repeated confession, renewals of her covenant, and the adoption of similar strategies. The next year, little Nathaniel sick once more, she promises never to speak bitterly of 'the man who hath evilly treated us' (John Helton). In the following entry, she brings God 'an offering' in return for her child's restoration to health – 'the promise of purity of lips, thro' thee I will henceforth speak evil of no one [. . .] I bind myself to this'.<sup>127</sup> Yet again, the covenant appears to be broken soon afterwards, and she compares her 'efforts' to that 'of a child [learning] to walk', hoping that 'my sad breach [. . .] may not altogether separate[sic] me from the Divine help'. And again it is by her words of acknowledgement, coming from an awareness of the damage done, that she hopes to 'prevail' with God.<sup>128</sup>

These repetitive cycles, the interleaving of vocal sin associated with femininity (frivolous conversation) or transgression of feminine boundaries (expression of anger toward an enemy, opposition to her husband), the consequent bargaining with God – together they amount to an enslaving preoccupation with speech control in attempts to conform to prescribed gender roles. Enslavement does not lie solely in the standards demanded, most notably marital obedience, but in the efforts to live them which assume increasing preeminence, at once regulating existence and providing a means of interpreting or managing it, as well as being a constant source of conflict. And this conflict was especially acute for an intelligent, essentially ambitious, woman whose own special abilities lay in the field of language. The injunction to obedience was a particularly heavy sentence too because the standards of integrity she adhered to would, one feels, have forbade some of the compromises resorted to by other women. It was quite possible to subscribe outwardly to codes of obedience but in practice rule a husband through flattery, manipulation and subterfuge. The Anglo-Irish writer Maria Edgeworth, in her witty *An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification* (1795), ironically advises women on the management of 'that common enemy, a husband'. She humorously advocates studying 'the weak part' of his character in order to contrive a host of stratagems to control him, vocal and non-vocal: such as becoming 'mistress of the petulant, the peevish, and the sullen tone', practicing 'the continual monotony which by setting your adversary to sleep effectually precludes reply', even



using silence constructively - 'the ornament of your sex' wherein at times 'if there be not wisdom, there is safety'. Female stereotypes too can be turned to advantage. All basis for rational argument, for instance, is successfully demolished by combating a husband's 'Now, my dear, only listen to reason' with 'No, my dear, you know I do not pretend to reason; I only say that's my opinion'.<sup>129</sup> Such ruses, one feels, could not easily form part of Mary's repertoire. Believing her faith demanded wifely obedience, it is unlikely she would consider deliberately circumventing it. Then to sink to masquerade, to reduce her marital relationship to a form of mutual puppetry, would be beneath that sense of dignity she tried to suppress when construed as 'pride' – in asserting herself before her husband - but here would be in keeping with Quaker witness to truth and sincerity. To do so would be akin to acting, and thus that divorce of speech and action from principle and feeling that lay behind Friends' rejection of drama.

As we saw when looking at Mary's childhood poetry, this split also lay at the heart of Friends' reservations about poetry and the creative imagination. These could be overcome, partially, by adopting a moral stance and representing sincerity of feeling. In practice this often meant no division between the author of a poem and the speaker, or voice, within it. This is what Mary attempted in the main, except when led astray, as at the Rotches. Yet poetry, more than other kinds of writing, necessarily mediates experience through literary forms that transform that experience into something other than itself – a contrived work of art. Its methods involve submitting and giving rein to imaginative processes, the sometimes almost unconscious formulation of word patterns and images. These difficulties – that poetic truth is illusive because poetry can never be anything other than art, its creative process both enthrallment and indulgence – were particularly problematic for a female Quaker poet.

On 16 November 1808, two months after the loss of twelve-month-old Sarah, her first and only daughter at that time, Mary addressed a poem 'To Hope' which reproduces on the page that most acute of sufferings, helplessly watching a precious child lingeringly suffer and die, hoping against hope she may still recover.<sup>130</sup> Interesting in relation to her creativity, however, is the poem's casting of hope as an enslaving 'voice', a cruel 'delusive power' from which Mary must break free if she is to achieve 'the prize Immortal' (see first and final verses). Her journal does not tell us she believed this awful stroke of Providence due to some crime she had committed (there is a gap in her journal from February 1807 to March 1809), but the poem expresses most forcibly that her sin was to have hoped and trusted too much in a future that lay,



after all, only in the precarious realm of her own imagination. The delight she had taken in Sarah's developing form, the shape of the future it contained, was to anticipate not only the little girl's prospects but the fruition of her own visions and desires: 'Oft would my ardent fancy trace/The harvest of my ripen'd treasure' (v. 4). The child's loss demonstrates not just that a true foundation must lie in 'an anchor sure/Beyond the reach of hope' (v. 12, p.418) but that the imaginative path is strewn with pitfalls. Hopes are destined to be dashed, fancy and imagination are false companions that deceive and divert attention from 'the one thing needful' – cultivation of faith and resignation. And this may help us to understand why Mary seems to have virtually abandoned writing poetry after 'To Hope' (only two poems are dated subsequently).<sup>131</sup>

The impact of the loss of children on women's poetic creativity has received scant critical attention, but Pamela Hammons has recently explored how some seventeenth-century women negotiated the 'paradoxical' situation whereby a child's death provided a rare 'culturally sanctioned opportunity to write a poem' in which they had nevertheless 'to renounce or disprove any seemingly improper attempt at creative intellectual agency'. One aspect she identifies in the 'cultural context' giving rise to this, through an 'association' of women's physical and intellectual creativity, is a view of the female imagination as 'suspect'. She cites Phyllis Mack on how a deformed child was sometimes explained as the result of 'a woman's volatile imagination, infused by evil forces' and Milton's description of Satan's 'attempt to manipulate Eve's "fancy"; [hoping] to "raise [in her] [. . .] inordinate desires/Blown up with high conceits engendering pride"'. Hammons identifies themes in child loss poems by both men and women that share much with those found in Mary's autobiographical record (the parents must be resigned, the child was but a 'temporary gift' from God, its death the result of their sin), but finds women more 'intense', particularly regarding their own sin.<sup>132</sup> Further, the concept of the female imagination as liable to 'misconceive' leads, she believes, to reluctance by bereaved mothers to display 'poetic prowess' and their adoption of a 'maternal plain style' with fewer 'poetic figures'. (Another possible reason she ignores is that overt, competitive demonstration of poetic artistry might seem inappropriate - either unfeeling or as if capitalising on the death of your own child.) She finds bereaved mothers generally eschew common metaphors of the child as flower (emphasising life's brevity) or jewel (stressing great value) used by other poets on child loss. Mary, however, foregrounds these very metaphors, deploying them specifically to portray the child in terms of her own artistry: in Sarah 'Death hath pluck'd my loveliest flower', her full development is imagined as 'my ripen'd treasure'



(v. 1, 4). Links between the child as creation and creative art are supported by the way Sarah's physical presence is described in terms of beauty, form and structure, the object of both care and aesthetic pleasure. In life Mary watched 'o[']er her form/That form in which my soul delighted', while her own 'fancy' would 'Enhance each smile[,] each opening grace' (v. 3, 4). In death, she sees 'her lovely fabric fall' (v.9).

The renunciation of poetry on the death of an infant and links between artistic and biological progeny were not without precedent. Hammons cites Ben Jonson's delineation of his son in his elegiac poem as 'his best piece of poetry' and Katherine Philips's offering of her poem to her son's tomb as 'The last of thy unhappy Mother's Verse'. Interestingly, too, Jonson's offence is similar to Mary's - 'investing too much hope in his beloved son', thus 'loving the creature more than the Creator'.<sup>133</sup>

However, Mary's poem, and her reasons, perhaps, for abandoning poetry, can be anchored more closely within her own period. Hope, and its limitations, was a popular theme. Some of the conventions in which she participates are also demonstrated by other women writers, most notably in Felicia Hemans's heart-rending portrait of maternal loss in 'The Domestic Affections' (1812).<sup>134</sup> There too, a mother, tortuously watching her child's life ebb away, is offered a cruel lesson, herself, in how to die. And, depicting her grief over the child's 'bier', the poem asks whether 'Visions of hope! In loveliest hues array'd,/ Fair scenes of bliss! By Fancy's hand portray'd;' were but 'doom'd, with false, illusive smile,/With flatt'ring promise, to enchant awhile?' The answer, however, is a resounding 'no', for, in Hemans' poem, hope's visions do not, ultimately, prove false – they will be realised when mother and child are reunited in heaven. And in Eliza Daye's 'Ode to Hope' (1798) too, though hope again is 'illusive', it is, finally, positive if accessed appropriately for cheer or comfort, its extravagance moderated by reason.<sup>135</sup> Mary's delineation of hope as delusive shares more with Cowper's description, in *The Task* (1785), of men as 'wand'ers, gone astray/Each in his own delusions; [. . .] lost/In chase of fancied happiness, still woo'd/And never won'. 'The total of their hopes and fears' are but 'empty dreams'.<sup>136</sup> Or, more materially, there is Dr Johnson's reference to 'hope's delusive mine' in his lines 'On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet' (1783).<sup>137</sup> Like Johnson, Mary casts hope as enslaving. One concern of Johnson's was the mind's tendency to avoid engaging with life as it actually is by indulging in imaginative activity, creating pictures, of past or future, which are ultimately false, mere wish fulfillment. Hope is particularly delusive, partly because its visions are rarely realised, but chiefly because it holds us in thrall, divorcing us from reality, our work within it, and the true foundation of religious faith – awareness of our mortality and the need to work toward salvation.<sup>138</sup> For Mary too, hope not only leads



to disappointment ('joys unsolid - sorrows real', v.10) – a common convention - but constitutes a deceptive, enthralling, imaginative process. Whereas Johnson eschews expression of personal sorrow, writing, as T. F. Wharton points out, a seemingly detached poem praising his deceased friend's virtues, Mary's poem is acutely personal not only in voicing her suffering, but almost certainly in enacting change in her own life.<sup>139</sup> For the accompaniment to the (attempted) banishment of hope was probably the suppression of her creative imagination. Ironically, though, her poem is still, in a sense, a hopeful one. While Johnson has us all condemned to toil in 'hope's delusive mine' (he recognises that hope is part of the human condition – indeed, hope and imagination are necessary in the work toward salvation), Mary appears to assert that a life free of hope is actually possible. Yet her poem simultaneously denies this possibility. For it expresses one particular hope, the lesson of her daughter's death - that Mary will not, in her own last moments, 'Embrace a shade; and miss the blessing' (v. 16 – penultimate verse). Surely her fear is of sabotaging her own salvation at the last by falling prey, even momentarily, to the hope and imagination she has renounced, either by entertaining hopes of recovery (incomplete acceptance of God's will) or, perhaps, assuming she is saved (the sin of pride).

Many of the later entries in Mary's journal are full of regrets - for 'having set out wrong' in choosing 'the flowery, the imaginative way, by which a door was opened to many seducements', for the youthful curiosity that led to the 'errors' of deism (though the word itself is never mentioned). As early as 1812, her recollection of 'past [. . .] sins & a vast burthen of corruptions' is so severe that her 'life seems to have been an entangled thread which only the Divine power can unravel'.<sup>140</sup> Other regrets cannot be voiced except through displacement. In an address to her children, contained within her journal, she longs for their 'abiding within the enclosed walls of the new & heavenly Jerusalem' and speaks of the follies of her own youth, particularly 'reading vain & foolish books which awaken'd [. . .] most hurtful ideas', but her main topic is 'the grand subject of marriage'.<sup>141</sup> She warns against those who 'go to [Quaker] meetings for an husband or a wife' and 'wear the semblance of Religion – but who know nothing of its work in the heart'. Particularly, they must guard against being 'made useful either by ministry or by wisdom to any individual' if affection develops as a result, for when 'the precious visitation is over', 'the old inclinations' and 'habits which lay dormant' may return with great 'force' – 'I know what I write it is not merely from the letter, but from experience' (my underlining). This emphasis on her own experience, the ensuing portrayal of the 'secret pangs' endured by spouses of such unequal partners in their own lonely journey to Zion, of the difficulties in marrying someone who may have



kindred outside the Lord's people (we should remember that her husband's family were not Quakers), the reference to her own 'dreary, weary pilgrimage' – all inevitably lead to the conclusion that she must really be speaking about herself.

We must be wary, however, of picturing her simply as an increasingly sad and lonely woman who cultivated an ever more dour Quakerism in reaction to her life's disappointments. Paradoxically, it is often through the primacy attached to sins in speech and her attempted suppression of her own volubility that we can form an idea of her persona in life. Even in her latter years, confession is sometimes coupled with references to her own energy and vivacity - 'the high flow of natural spirits (which is often my torment)' – and which must be kept in check.<sup>142</sup> 'Natural' and 'youthful', these spirits are nevertheless construed as unbalanced, even lunatic, like 'a fever in which the delirious patient is incapable of sober reflection', a fever intensified whenever she drank alcohol, consumption of which must therefore be reduced: 'I know & feel that declining the use of wine etc. assists me in this great work'. The most telling glimpse of her as an animated, lively woman is given in a remark that was surely never intended to amuse a future reader but cannot help but raise a smile today.

Sometimes, when she had a drink, 'the fumes have so added strength to nature that I could not at all curb myself, indeed without it, there are times when the effervescence of nature is very hard to be kept down'.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Song 2:15.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 10, 'To CB', [to niece Catherine Birkett], '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 27<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.112 (p.113), '[. . .] as thou art faithful & obedient, thou shalt experience deliverance from thy present & future troubles, for "Jerusalem is a quiet habitation" but "there is no peace to the wicked" they are like the troubled sea.' Also Letter 18, 'My dear SH' [Sarah Hoare], '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 25<sup>th</sup> 1810', p.123 – 'how often have I coveted rest for thee my dear friend, rest from the various vexations and unquiet occurrences[sic] which troubled thee, rest in that quiet habitation & place of safety which the Lord designs his church shall be'.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., journal entry '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 12<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.84.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, I, 275.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. I, Prose, journal entry '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 21 1801', p.32:

Have I been too solicitous dearest Lord after the bread which perisheth or is it not that my soul mourneth in secret to perform Equity and justice towards Men, Oh may we be enabled to fulfil every temporal engagement and to cast away all reproach from the lip of the censurer for the rest my spirit clings intimately to thee [. . .] give unto me a portion incorruptible & which fadeth not away.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., journal entry '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 11<sup>th</sup> 1809', p.75.

<sup>7</sup> Disownment was not necessarily permanent – it was possible to apply for reinstatement of membership at a later date, but there had to be sufficient evidence of reform. Disownment was feared because of the public disgrace it brought (the names of those disowned were announced at Meeting) and the inability afterwards to participate in the life of the Society by holding any position within it or influencing decision-making. This was especially acute for those belonging to respected Quaker families, and there was certainly a degree of ostracism. But a disowned person could still attend Meetings for Worship, and regular attendance stood them in good stead in any application for reinstatement. A good example is that of Sarah Ann



Duncan who sought reinstatement at Manchester Meeting in 1852. Hardshaw East Women's Monthly Meeting minutes for 8 July that year record a report made by two members (Hannah Harrison and Phebe Davison) appointed to visit Sarah:

She expressed regret at having broken the rules of our Discipline and acknowledges the [?] rightness of the Monthly Meeting's decision in her case. She also appeared sensible of the loss she had sustained in the forfeiture of her membership and of the privilege of being united in religious fellowship with Friends. Since the report of her separation about six years ago, she has been regular in the attendance of our meetings for worship and we believe her conduct to be consistent with the principles we profess.

<sup>8</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 31<sup>st</sup> 1805', p.56 (p.57).

<sup>9</sup> James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London: John Murray, 1997), p.57, citing William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (York: William Sessions, 1979 [1919]), pp.437 and 327.

<sup>10</sup> Brinton, *Quaker Journals*, pp.69-70.

<sup>11</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 9 1802', p.33.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, journal entries '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 5<sup>th</sup> 1807', p.73 (intrusion of unwanted thoughts in meeting, and hope that God will 'answer [her] frequent petition of deliverance from an inward subjection to earthly cumbers' which she 'abhor[s]' while they 'oppress' her) and '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 29<sup>th</sup> 1813', p.91 ('feelings on account of outward things, so deep & so heavy the secret stings which are sapping my existence').

<sup>13</sup> James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London: John Murray, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Raistrick, *Quakers in Science and Industry: being an Account of the Quaker Contributions to Science and Industry during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Newton Abbot, Devon: David and Charles (Holdings), 1968; [London: Bannisdale Press, 1950]) remains seminal. Raistrick locates the key to Quaker industrial achievement in a combination of Quaker beliefs and structures, and Friends' unitary view of secular and religious life. See also Paul H. Emden, *Quakers in Commerce: A Record of Business Achievement* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1939), David Burns Windsor, *The Quaker Enterprise: Friends in Business* (London: Frederick Muller, 1980), Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, pp.106-15 and, with particular reference to Ireland, Wigham, *The Irish Quakers*, pp.44-45 and Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, pp.499-510.

<sup>15</sup> In his novel *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville humourously draws attention to the hypocrisy some Quakers could exhibit and yet apparently remain unaware of, in an exchange between the Quaker owners of the whaling ship, *The Pequod*, and the young protagonist and narrator of the novel, Ishmael, who seeks a place aboard as a seaman. The major owners of the ship, Captains Peleg and Bildad, are redoubtable, sea-worn Quakers from Nantucket, where the population, nearly all Friends, depended for their livelihood on whaling. (Some of these families moved to Milford Haven, where Mary met many of them, including the Starbucks – the family from whom Melville took his name for the chief mate of *The Pequod*.) See Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988 [1851]), pp.71-82.

<sup>16</sup> Walvin, *The Quakers*, pp.3, 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>18</sup> A Quaker named John Helton was engaged in the tanning trade and it is thought he was the individual concerned. Like soap-boiling and candlemaking, tanning used tallow from cow hides in its production processes so there were links between these trades. He was later disowned from Friends for evasion of a debt, in 1807. See note 1. to Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 23<sup>rd</sup> 1805', p.49.

<sup>19</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, '26<sup>th</sup> [January 1805], p.41.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 30<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.43.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 27<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.41.

<sup>22</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> A detailed discussion of the origins and development of modern capitalism is outside the scope of this thesis, but it is worth pointing out, at the risk of over-simplification, that debt – lending, borrowing, risk-taking – was its essential dynamic. Jonathan's Coffee House, originally a meeting place for money dealers, came to be called the Stock Exchange in 1773 and the language of speculation in the money markets, of 'jobbers' (traders in shares or stock) and 'brokers' (buyers and sellers of stock on behalf of clients), of 'bulls' (dealers who purchase stock and sell it on at a higher value before paying for it) and 'bears' (who agree to sell stock



they have not yet bought), had also developed by this time. This speculative activity was regarded unfavourably by many – it appeared to smack of dishonesty and was based on participants owing each other money, yet it provided the impetus and flexibility for financial growth. Then the money markets as a whole mainly originated in the Government's need to fund its ever-growing debts, incurred largely through wars, by the issue of stock. According to John Rule, it was able to borrow:

because its reputation for efficient tax gathering allowed anticipated revenues to provide the security for its present borrowings. This was the principle of the funded debt, which was the basis of a credit system in which, in response to government's borrowing needs, banking and stock and security exchanging developed into a mechanism capable of serving the needs of the developing economy as well as the state (p.277).

It was war too, and resultant borrowing, that spurred reliance on Bank of England notes (with their promise to 'pay the bearer', also a form of debt) as opposed to gold. The costs of the war with France, declared in 1793, hugely increased the national debt, already inflated from the American War (1775-1783). Servicing it placed stress on gold reserves and fear of a French invasion triggered withdrawal of gold from the banks. The appearance of a French fleet near the Irish coast in 1797 prompted the Government to request from the Bank of England a loan of £1,500,000 to the Irish Government, whereupon the 'gold drain' became so severe that the British Government stopped the Bank of England issuing gold coin, and notes had increasingly to be used instead. Restrictions continued until 1821. Small enterprises, as much as larger companies, were affected by these changes in business culture, whereby debt and risk-taking were becoming part and parcel of business life, even paths to growth, rather than pitfalls to be avoided. For an in-depth discussion of 'Money Matters: Debt, Taxes and Currency', from which the majority of the above facts have been drawn, see John Rule, *The Vital Century: England's Developing Economy 1714-1815* (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 275-307, particularly pp.276-77, 283, 285-86.

<sup>24</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 13<sup>th</sup> 1810', p.78 (p.79).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 27<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.41 (p.42).

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, ibid., journal entry '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 13<sup>th</sup> 1810', p.78 (p.79) – 'I covet to possess a sufficiency to trade on, without making any engagements by passing bills'. This refers to bills of exchange, a much-used method of making payments between traders. An idea of how these worked helps us understand the situation Mary and her family faced. At a time when cheques were still relatively new, and many banks only operated on a local basis, issuing their own notes, the Bill of Exchange offered flexibility and more security than coin or a bank note. The effort involved, however, meant that bills were not usually drawn up for amounts of less than £5. They operated in the following way. A trader wishing to pay another for goods or services asked the other to draw a bill on him for the required amount to be paid on a certain date, and then assented to this by signing the document, at which point he became legally liable. Once signed, and kept by the creditor, that creditor could endorse the bill on the back and either claim the amount when due or use the bill to pay one of his own creditors. That creditor would then endorse it and either keep it or use it in his turn, and so on. Thus bills could function, in effect, as a form of currency. Not only the original acceptor, but all later endorsers were legally liable and their financial standing was a strong factor in deciding whether or not to accept a bill in payment of a debt. Using bills received from others to pay debts had several advantages. It saved having to draw up a new bill, with its attendant stamp duty. (This cost three pence, and was a form of tax much avoided. Mary sometimes speaks of not paying stamp duty as a form of 'equivocation' that Quakers must not succumb to – perhaps the Cards were guilty of this on occasion.) Traders could keep a supply of bills and use them as need arose, according to their amounts and due dates, to pay other traders, drawing up new bills or adding cash to make up the required amounts. The value of bills had usually increased by the time they were drawn, but they could also be discounted for cash (at a lower value) by a banker, who would then collect from the person on whom the bill was drawn at the end of its term. If wished, they could be lodged with the bank and credited to the trader's own account – the banker could then present them on the due date on his behalf and/or manage the trader's payments for him from all the funds in his account (whether paid in as bills, cheques, notes or coin). Bills could also act as a form of credit, as often goods were received before payment on



the bill's due date. When that due date came, the bill was presented to the acceptor for payment which could be in coin, promissory note or bank draft.

Problems occurred if the acceptor, or drawee, tried to put off payment (this appears to be what Nathaniel Card did on occasion), or was unable to pay (what Mary dreaded might happen in their case). Such difficulties were not uncommon. The bill might be cancelled and another drawn up for a later date, if the creditor was agreeable. If not, it might be sent to another endorser – the drawee himself might do this, as all endorsers carried a legal responsibility. If all failed, legal action could be taken. The bill could be 'noted' (whereby a notary was asked to re-present the bill and a note with reasons for non-payment was attached) or 'protested' (claiming for loss or damage). In periods of economic difficulty, a degree of panic could be caused by a number of traders defaulting, and then there would be pressure for due dates on new bills to become shorter, for bills to be accepted or endorsed correctly (oddly, some bills seem to have circulated even if not formally accepted), and for more payments to be made in cash. This is a summary drawn from a very detailed account in T. S. Ashton, *An Eighteenth-Century Industrialist: Peter Stubs of Warrington 1756-1806* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1939), pp.102-23. Ashton found that evidence of trade depression was most acute in 1793, 1797, and 1799-1800. Nevertheless:

from the opening of the new century to the end of the period with which we are concerned [1806] individual complaints were [still] frequent; failures to obtain remittances from abroad led to failures to make payment at home; and the oscillation from war to peace and peace to war brought loss and bankruptcy to particular concerns.

He quotes J. J. Bing of London who wrote to a creditor on 3 November 1805:

Your draft 2 Mo. for £30 has not appeared but comes due at a very awkward time of Year, and the present embarrassed state of matters on the Continent stops all Commerce and Remittance as you must naturally Indulge, if you would withdraw said Draft and make the same become due in February will be much oblig'd to you. (p.123.)

<sup>27</sup> Walvin, *The Quakers*, p.56.

<sup>28</sup> Walvin, *The Quakers*, p.32, quotes *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London* (London: 1802, 195):

As early as 1688 members were told that none should 'launch into trading and worldly business beyond what they can manage honourably and with reputation; so that they may keep their words with all men'. From the outset the dangers of debt was a stern refrain in Quaker missives [ . . . ].

<sup>29</sup> The wording of a certificate of disownment for bankrupt Thomas Neale was phrased 'to clear our Society from the reproach brought thereon by his Misconduct, We can do no other than testify our Disunity with him, until he shall make such Satisfaction as becomes this meeting to receive'. (Walvin, *The Quakers*, p.73 from Presnell, *Country Banking*, p.243.) That the disassociation was with the conduct not the individual is clear in the standard formula reproduced in the certificate for Nathaniel Card's eventual disownment, not for business failure but for 'drinking to excess', some years after Mary's death: 'Now in order to testify our disunity, with such conduct, we do hereby disown him, the said Nathaniel Card, to be a member of our Society.' (Certificate of Disownment for Nathaniel Card, Dublin Monthly Meeting, 11 April 1826.)

<sup>30</sup> Walvin, *The Quakers*, p.76. See pp.74-79 on Quaker internal regulation of Friends' business affairs and how this contributed to business success.

<sup>31</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 2<sup>nd</sup> 1805', p.44.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., '1<sup>st</sup>[2<sup>nd</sup>?] Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.44.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 28<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.42.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 8<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.45.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.46.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., '14<sup>th</sup> [of 2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 1805], p.45 – this entry also refers to how 'we are low and can scarcely communicate our sentiments to one another'.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 19<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.48 – Mary's 'earnest desire' is that:



[their] future Steppings may be guided by the Most High that in the business which we may undertake for the sustenance & comfort of these perishing bodies, we may carefully attend to the pointings of truth, that our language to our customers may be strict truth & that we may use as few words as possible in dealing.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 4<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.46 - Mary writes that the arbitrators were to meet at 7.00 that evening 'to decide this trying affair'.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 12<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.47.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> mo 6<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.46 (p.47).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 7<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.47.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.47 (pp.47-48).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 15<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.48.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 19<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.48.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 23<sup>rd</sup> 1805', p.49.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., '1<sup>st</sup>[2<sup>nd</sup>?] Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.44, and '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 15<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.48.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., '4<sup>th</sup> Mo 20<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.53.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 28<sup>th</sup> 1806', p.67.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 29<sup>th</sup> [1805]', p.43. Entanglement of a fly in a spider's web is an image Mary draws on quite frequently in both her prose and poetry, usually in connection with worldly temptations or 'entanglements'.

<sup>52</sup> Walvin, *The Quakers*, pp.51-52.

<sup>53</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, undated entry, following '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 11<sup>th</sup> 1809', p.76.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 18<sup>th</sup> 1814', p.93.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 8<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.45.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., '4<sup>th</sup> Mo 4<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.49.

<sup>57</sup> See, for instance, *ibid.*, '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 2<sup>nd</sup> 1812', p.84.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., undated entry, following '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 11<sup>th</sup> 1809', p.76.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1805', p.64 (p.65).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., undated entry, following '4<sup>th</sup> Mo 17<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.53.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 9<sup>th</sup> 1809', p.75.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., '6<sup>th</sup> Mo 11<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.57.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 2<sup>nd</sup> 1812', p.84.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.85 (p.86).

<sup>66</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1812', first entry for this date, p.83.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Letter 20, 'My dear Friend', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 20<sup>th</sup> 1811', p.125 (pp.125-26).

<sup>68</sup> See *ibid.*, journal entry '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 8<sup>th</sup> 1806', p.67, where she refers to her promise that she will 'never mention' his name 'with bitterness'.

<sup>69</sup> For example, in *ibid.*, journal entry '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 23<sup>rd</sup> 1805' (p.49) she calls Helton 'our wicked, unjust & cruel adversary'.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., journal entry '6 Mo 13 - 1804', p.37.

<sup>71</sup> Hannah More, in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) advocates serious reading for young women to strengthen their minds in order to cope better with the vicissitudes of life and help 'qualify [them] for religious pursuits'. She also asserts that such reading 'corrects that spirit of trifling which [they] naturally [contract] from the frivolous turn of female conversation, and the petty nature of female employments'. She recognises, however, that 'it is peculiarly hard to turn at once from the indolent repose of light reading, [. . .] the frivolousness of chit chat;' which soften the female mind. See More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education with a View of the Principles and Conduct prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1799; repr. Oxford and New York: Woodstock Books, 1995), I, 180, 182.

<sup>72</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 11<sup>th</sup> 1809', p.75 (p.76).

<sup>73</sup> Christine Trevett, *Women and Quakerism in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, p.14.

<sup>74</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 29<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.61.

<sup>75</sup> Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp.37, 38.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '6<sup>th</sup> Mo 17<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.58.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., journal entry '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 24<sup>th</sup> 1812', first entry for this date, p.81.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., journal entry '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 16<sup>th</sup> 1814', p.94.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., journal entry '7 Mo 6 1803', p.36.



<sup>80</sup> Ibid., extract from letter Thomas Scattergood to Hannah Wilson Forbes, '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 24<sup>th</sup> 1797', p.168.

<sup>81</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, p.323.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 'The Flies – a Fable', 1802, p.315; 'Written two days after the birth of my second son', 1803, p.319.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 'On the birth of Caroline Rotch', 1804, p.324 (pp.324, 325).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 'An Adieu to my friends at Milford.', 1804, p.360.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., See 'On the Whalefishery', p.351; 'A Rebus.', p.358; 'To Ruth in Tears', p.357; beginning 'A furious temper in thy face I see', p.357, all 1804.

<sup>86</sup> Ken McKay, *The Rotches of Castle Hall* (Milford Haven: Gulf Oil, 1996), p.54.

<sup>87</sup> Rotch's face was the model for the possessed man's father in Benjamin West's painting of *Christ Healing the Sick*.

<sup>88</sup> Her daughter Eliza, later Farrar, recounts that Elizabeth Rotch, disapproving of the *ménage à trois* (Lady Hamilton was Nelson's mistress, with the tacit agreement of her husband), tried to avoid Emma Hamilton at a function in London. When the three came to Milford (part of Hamilton's Pembrokeshire estates) in 1802, to see how the town was being developed by Hamilton's nephew Charles Greville (Nelson's presence, on the anniversary of his Nile victory, was partly for publicity purposes), she pleaded her 'confinement' as reason for not seeing them. Not to be snubbed by Mrs Rotch, however:

one very warm day, when all our doors and windows stood open, she walked into our drawing-room, where my mother and I were sitting, and greeted us very familiarly. Though I was but a child, I was struck with the coldness of my mother's reception, and wondered that she was not more cordial to such a lovely and fascinating guest.

No such blame attached to Nelson for sleeping with his friend's wife, who was welcome:

He was proud of the loss of his arm, and always wore his coat-sleeve empty. When I was one day standing by him, at our house, with my eyes fixed on that empty sleeve, he said, "Look at it well, and then you will always remember me by my one arm."

On Nelson's visit, an annual yacht race was inaugurated at Milford, which Rotch's yacht won several times. See Mrs John Farrar (Eliza Rotch), *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866), pp.50-51. The Emma Hamilton episode is also mentioned in "Memorials of the Life of Elizabeth (Barker) Rotch" (Wife of Benjamin Rotch) being the "Recollections of a Mother", by her daughter, Eliza Farrar' (Springfield: [n. pub.], 1861), reproduced in John M. Bullard, *The Rotches* (New Bedford: [n.pub.], 1947), p.342.

<sup>89</sup> Haverford West Public Record Office. The conveyance of Castle Hall to Benjamin Rotch is dated 17 February 1804, though perhaps the Rotches moved in before this date. The cost of the property was £3,700.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Fenton, *A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire* (Brecknock: Davies, 1903; [London: 1811]), pp.107-08. The text reads:

The Quakers from the Island of Nantucket, who accepted of Mr Greville's invitation to come and settle there, were a valuable accession to his new colony, and every thing like commerce and enterprise that has discovered itself at Milford may be dated from their arrival. They are a most industrious well-disposed people, with the dignified simplicity of manners and strong understanding that their sect is generally distinguished for.

Mr. Rotch, the principal of the new settlement from America, is a gentleman of great commercial knowledge, connexions, and property, and first fixed himself and family in the town of Milford, having begun there on the terrace a house on a very large scale to suit his handsome establishment; but before he had near finished it, an opportunity offered of purchasing a beautiful villa within a short distance of the town just on the other side of the eastern Pill, called Castle Hall, built and inhabited for some years by the late Governor Holwell, one of the survivors of the diabolical imprisonment [the Black Hole] at Calcutta, who has left in print a most circumstantial account of this scene of horror. [. . .] It was afterwards purchased by an eminent wine merchant at Havorfordwest, who sold it to Mr. Rotch, where he now resides, having enlarged and



beautified the house, grounds, and gardens, and raised very extensive hot-houses, conservatories and other necessary appendages of fashionable luxury and taste. On part of the demesne just above the shore of the finest expanse of the haven a belvidere was erected by Governor Holwell, to command a view never seen without the rich accompaniment of ship scenery, as it takes in the principal roadsteads for men of war and vessels of large burthen; but vessels of every size and description are perpetually plying in some direction or another, interspersed with yachts, skiffs, and fishing-boats in unceasing action. Though it has the command of this open and extensive prospect from part of its grounds, yet the site of the house is sheltered and retired, and the slopes round it charmingly wooded. In short [. . .] it is a most desirable residence.

<sup>91</sup> Mrs John Farrar (Eliza Rotch), *Recollections of Seventy Years*, p.53.

<sup>92</sup> Address Rev. Alfred Rodman Hussey to Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford, 3 October 1945, reproduced in Bullard, *The Rotches*, pp.140-50 (p.147). The menu was enclosed with a letter from Rotch's wife, Elizabeth, to an American relative, Eliza Rodman. The date is given as 18 November 1801, but this is odd as the Rotches did not purchase Castle Hall until 1804. The Rotches' daughter Eliza also mentions that Lady Cawdor laid the cornerstone at Castle Hall but gives no date (Bullard, *The Rotches*, p.118).

<sup>93</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Castle Hall, near Milford-Haven the Seat of Benjamin Rotch', 1806, p.390 (pp.391, 392).

<sup>94</sup> Mary Leadbeater, 'Annals of Ballitore', *Leadbeater Papers*, I, 217.

<sup>95</sup> Some Quaker women ministers remember the assistance provided by the men of the Rotch family particularly. When Martha Routh visited America in 1794, Benjamin's parents, William and Elizabeth Rotch in New Bedford, consented to their daughter Lydia becoming her companion and William Junior, accompanying them on part of the journey, had 'care' of them. *Memoir of the Life, Travels, and Religious Experience, of Martha Routh, Written by Herself, or Compiled from her own Narrative* (York: W. Alexander, 1824), pp.72-74, 92. Mary Dudley (with whom Mary's friend Susanna Hill later travelled in the ministry) and her companion/s stayed with the family at Dunkirk. With them on return to England, Benjamin took charge when transport became difficult, obtaining a 'conveyance' by pleading the ladies' exhaustion and 'offering generous payment'. They then proceeded 'under' his 'kind care' to Poole. *The Life of Mary Dudley, including an Account of her Religious Engagements and Extracts from her Letters with an Appendix, containing some account of the Illness and Death of her Daughter Hannah Dudley* (London: printed for the editor, sold by J. and A. Arch, Harvey and Dutton, Hatchard, Seeley, Bagster and other booksellers, 1825), pp.130-31.

<sup>96</sup> "Memorials of the Life of Elizabeth (Barker) Rotch" in Bullard, *The Rotches*, p.340.

<sup>97</sup> Mrs John Farrar (Eliza Rotch), *Recollections of Seventy Years*, pp.15-16. No other corroboration has been found for this story. Benjamin Rotch was living in France, at Dunkirk, at this time and he did visit Paris in the latter part of 1793 to present a petition to the French National Convention on behalf of American merchants against an embargo placed on their ships unloading in French ports. He had first to show the petition to Robespierre who prevented its being heard by the Convention, diverting it to his Committee of Public Safety founded earlier that year. (McKay, *The Rotches of Castle Hall*, p.41). Helen Maria Williams was arrested and imprisoned in October 1793, in the Luxembourg prison with her mother and sister. Gary Kelly, in *Women, Writing, and Revolution 1790-1827* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.55-56, states that 'according to Samuel Rogers only an "oversight" prevented her from being "carried with [Girondist] leaders to the guillotine". But through the intervention of her sister's brother-in-law, M. Coquerel, and Jean Debry, a member of the National Convention, Williams and her family were transferred to an English convent and then house arrest in November'. Her friend or lover, the radical John Hurford Stone, was also arrested in October 1793 and April 1794. In July 1794, fearing re-arrest, he and the Williams family went to Switzerland, not returning to France until after Robespierre's downfall in late summer 1794. Eliza Rotch's story assumes Helen Maria Williams returned to England after her release from the Luxembourg, but in fact she never came back to Britain after 1792.

<sup>98</sup> Address by Rev. Hussey in Bullard, *The Rotches*, p.142. See also Mrs John Farrar (Eliza Rotch), *Recollections of Seventy Years*, p.34.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Janet Whitney, *Elizabeth Fry: Quaker Heroine*, p.80. Whitney is quoting from Fry's journal in manuscript, entry for 'Sixth Day Evening. London. March 22<sup>nd</sup>', 1798.

<sup>100</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, untitled, 1804, p.356.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Ruth to', p.340, 'B Rotch to H. Leach.', p.339 and 'The Shew-man.', p.349, all 1804.



- <sup>102</sup> Ibid., 'Ruth's Petition to B. Rotch', 1804, p.352.
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid., 'The Monkey to the Magpie', 1804, p.354.
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid., 'Maria when applied for by an old Miser [. . .]', 1804, p.348 .
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid., 'E.L... to G.S... ', 1804, p.341 (pp.342, 343).
- <sup>106</sup> Ibid., 'To Eliza Rotch Junr', 1804, p.335.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid., 'On Seeing the Ship "Hannah & Eliza" Set sail', 1804, p.328 (p.329).
- <sup>108</sup> Vol.1, Prose, untitled, '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 23<sup>rd</sup> 1798', p.158 (p.159).
- <sup>109</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto I, 133-34 in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, one-volume edition of the Twickenham Text, ed. by John Butt (London: Methuen, 1963), pp.217-42 and Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 69, Saturday, May 19, 1711 in *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I, 292-96 (p.296). Liz Bellamy has traced fears of 'foreign trifles' back to the sixteenth century. See Liz Bellamy, *Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.15-16. She cites a 'sixteenth-century tract' that 'contains a complaint against foreign "trifles", [a theme] which was to recur in economic writings of the next two centuries' so that 'for many writers on commerce the word *luxury* came to be associated with imported goods'. 'British goods are described as fundamentally wholesome, in contrast to the decadence and effeminacy of foreign products.' She also draws attention to Belinda's toilet in *The Rape of the Lock*. Bellamy's book is concerned with the development of the novel against the opposing ethical discourses of emergent economic writings (which she posits as a separate genre celebrating rather than denigrating commercial values) and traditions of anti-commercial morality such as the 'rhetoric of civic humanism' derived from classical thought. But her introductory analysis setting 'The Economic Context' provides an overview that is also relevant to other eighteenth-century literary forms.
- <sup>110</sup> Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, Canto I, 127-32.
- <sup>111</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Sally Starbuck – an acrostic[:] The Goldfinch', 1804, p.344.
- <sup>112</sup> Note 386 to Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, pp.195-210 in the one-volume Twickenham Edition.
- <sup>113</sup> Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, 393-400.
- <sup>114</sup> Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714), ed. by F. B. Kaye, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), I, 173.
- <sup>115</sup> Edouard A. Stackpole, *Whales and Destiny* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), pp.245-46, "Memorials of the Life of Elizabeth (Barker) Rotch" in Bullard, *The Rotches*, p.342, and McKay, *The Rotches of Castle Hall*, pp.67-71.
- <sup>116</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 11 1804', p.37.
- <sup>117</sup> Ibid., journal entry '6 Mo 13 - 1804', p.37.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid., journal entry '2nd Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.46.
- <sup>119</sup> Though it should also be noted that for the years 1796-98 there is only one dated poem (though some undated ones might belong to these years) and a larger amount of prose pieces – mainly diary entries relating to Mary's 'deist' crisis. It could well be that she turned more toward prose, particularly her religious journal, at times of acute emotional conflict or stress.
- <sup>120</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To a Friend', 1804, p.366.
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid., 'To a dear Friend and family', 1804, p.364.
- <sup>122</sup> Vol.1, Prose, journal entry '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 31<sup>st</sup> 1805', p.56.
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid., journal entry '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 4<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.61 (pp.61-62).
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid., journal entry '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 10<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.62.
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid., journal entry '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1805', p.63.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid., journal entry '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 29<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.63 (pp.63-64).
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid., journal entry '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 8<sup>th</sup> 1806', '1<sup>st</sup> Mo 28<sup>th</sup> 1806', p.67.
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid., journal entry '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 3<sup>rd</sup> 1806', p.68.
- <sup>129</sup> Maria Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies. To which is added, An Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification* (1795), ed. by Claire Connolly (London: Everyman, J. M. Dent, 1993), pp.63-77, particularly pp.64, 65, 76.
- <sup>130</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Hope', 1808, p.416.
- <sup>131</sup> See Ibid., 'To E. Dawson On behalf of the Aged & Infirm Female Servants', and 'To the Same – for a friend', pp.420, 422. A dozen undated poems in the manuscript collection are thought to have been written after 1800, but the majority of these seem to belong to the years up to and including 1808.
- <sup>132</sup> Pamela Hammons, 'Despised Creatures: The Illusion of Maternal Self-Effacement in Seventeenth-Century Child Loss Poetry', *English Literary History*, 66/1 (Spring 1999), 25-49 (quotations taken from pp.25, 26). Finding this article fortuitously while writing this section on



Mary's poem 'To Hope', some time after writing the section on Mary's autobiography, it was interesting to find these parallels.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp.40, 31. Hammons feels, however, that this is but 'to reconceptualize [Jonson's crime] as a quality that seems unexceptionable in a good parent' (p.31). Thus he is an example of how men tend to minimise their implication in a child's death. Mary's crime, of hope linked to her own imagination, actually maximises her implication. See also Michel de Montaigne, 'On the Affection of Fathers for their Children' (1580) in *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, trans. and ed. by M. A. Screech (London, Allen Lane: Penguin, 1991 [1987]) for an earlier configuration of literary works, particularly poetic works, as offspring more cherished by their 'fathers' than bodily progeny. See too Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, pp.55-59, for discussion of 'Eliza's Babes' (1652) – the anonymous author casts her poems as children born of her relationship with God, her heavenly spouse.

<sup>134</sup> Felicia Dorothea Browne (later Hemans), 'The domestic affections' in *The Domestic Affections, and Other Poems* (London: printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand by J. McCreery, Black-Horse-Court, 1812), pp.148-172 (pp.165-68), available in the facsimile reprint series *Revolution and Romanticism 1789-1834*, introduced by Jonathan Wordsworth (Poole, England and New York: Woodstock, 1995).

<sup>135</sup> Eliza Daye, 'Ode to Hope' in *Poems, on Various Subjects* (1798), pp.96-98. This is available on the internet via the British Women Romantic Poets Project, University of California, Davis. Also to be found on the BWRP site are 'On Hope' by Isabella Lickbarrow in *Poetical Effusions* (1814), pp.48-50 and 'Hope' by Caroline Maxwell in *Feudal Tales, being a collection of Romantic Narratives, and Other Poems* (1810), pp.40-41. For Lickbarrow hope is a divine gift, a source of encouragement and reassurance for all – even when there is no hope left in this life, it is re-directed to heaven. For Maxwell, in a poem unusually devoid of explicit religious message, 'Delusive Hope' is 'a fickle friend' soon put to flight by despair.

<sup>136</sup> *The Task*, III: 124-33 in *William Cowper: The Task and Selected Other Poems*, ed. by James Sambrook (London and New York: Longman, 1994), p.115.

<sup>137</sup> Samuel Johnson, 'On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet' in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, 16 vols to date (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1958-), VI: *Poems*, ed. by E. L. McAdam Jr. with George Milne (1964), 313-15 (p.314).

<sup>138</sup> A full and accessible account of these aspects of Johnson's work is contained in Arieh Sachs, *Passionate Intelligence: Imagination and Reason in the Work of Samuel Johnson* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967).

<sup>139</sup> 'On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet' is explored in depth by T. F. Wharton in *Samuel Johnson and the Theme of Hope* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp.157-64. Wharton sees the detached tone of the poem as a form of displacement. It 'converts the loss to Johnson of an old and faithful friend into the loss to society of a useful man' (p.159). This 'is far more affective than explicit grief' (p.160), because 'feeling is actually transmitted by the act of repression' (p.161).

<sup>140</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.89 (pp.89, 90).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., journal entry '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.85 (pp.86, 87, 88).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., journal entry '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 15<sup>th</sup> 1810', p.80.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., journal entry '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 24<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.82 (pp.82-83).



## **PART 3**

### **MARY BIRKETT CARD AS A POET**

## CHAPTER 6

### THE VOICE OF FRIENDSHIP AND THE MUSE'S SONG

*The voice of friendship & the muse[']s song  
[. . .]  
Both – form my all of bliss & both combine  
To dignify this poor, dim lamp of mine.<sup>1</sup>*

Connection – not only with friends, family members and fellow Quakers, but the disempowered whose causes she espoused (slaves, Dublin's poor children, elderly female servants) and those to whom she appealed on their behalf – is the origin and function of the majority of Mary's poetry. Unlike her autobiography, which is concerned with her inner self and attempts to build protective walls around that self, the unifying force in her poems, and in her letters which resemble her poetry more than we might first assume, is a 'reaching out' to others. Both are, essentially, products of the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility, the defining characteristic of which was a view of humanity as essentially predisposed toward sympathy for and identification with others, mediated through the prism of Quakerism.<sup>2</sup> Mary herself refers on numerous occasions to being inspired by 'soft sympathy', to sympathy as an admirable or desired characteristic or its beneficial influence. Dedicating a volume of poetry by the Quaker John Marriott in 1804, she says of him:

Soft Sympathy inspired thy strains  
And gave thine heart to glow  
Taught thee to feel another[']s pains  
And ting'd thy lyre with woe.<sup>3</sup>

Yet sympathy, often conceived as a force or impulse, could embrace not only relationship with others in the present, but also with different times, past or future, and the natural world.<sup>4</sup> Imagining her feelings, at home in Dublin, should she receive welcome news of the safe return of Rotch's whaling ship from New Zealand, she anticipates her thoughts will be taken up with 'joy' and 'Soft sympathy pervade thro' every vein' to 'bring my heart to Milford back again'; while visiting Dublin's Botanic Garden with a friend circa 1805-06, she describes how she 'gazed on each scene[,] its soft sympathy caught/For twas Nature[']s own harmony reign'd'.<sup>5</sup> The majority of her letters too, claim their origin in sensibility – often prompted by 'the current of sympathy' or 'heartfelt sympathy', they are centred in what she calls at one point 'affectionate solicitude' for the other's welfare, temporal or spiritual.<sup>6</sup> Even if as early as 1799 her first dated letter, like many later ones, also demonstrates a contrary urge toward disconnection, the Quaker desire to separate from those who 'dwell' in 'the spirit of the



world', it does so in sensibility's vocabulary: for 'what comfort', Mary asks, would there be 'in being connected with those who not knowing the delicacy of the sacred impulse would continually and even involuntarily wound the feelings of the mind[?]'.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, with relatively few exceptions (verses addressed to her husband or Rotch, epistles to male relatives, for example) Mary's poems and letters are written within female cultural networks or for a mainly female audience. For their authorship was not a purely solitary activity, but enacted primarily within an arena of female friendship. Sensibility, of course, had come to be seen as women's particular province. In the words of Betty Rizzo:

As the eighteenth century progressed, not only was the possession of sensibility a badge of superiority both touted and flaunted, but for women it was becoming de rigueur. In either public or private presentation of themselves, women wished to display the attributes considered appropriate, and for genteel women after the midcentury, sensibility, with its concomitant benevolence (or altruism), was not only the superior moral position but also the only admissible superiority for the submissive gender.<sup>8</sup>

Mary's espousal of sensibility, then, both confirmed contemporary expectations of femininity and demonstrated her moral credentials. In such a guise, too, she could legitimately step outside that female network (albeit within limited parameters) to challenge male power. In 'A Satire', a man prejudiced against both women and sensibility, regarding tenderness for the less fortunate as incompatible with 'manly firmness', is dubbed 'Fabricious', the name of a Roman consul who upheld traditional Roman virtues (courage, stoicism, simple living, thrift) and censured those who deviated therefrom. Pompous, miserly, arrogant - this person 'censures all', but particularly the female sex: "Man is of noble workmanship he'll say/"And woman, worthless woman must obey". Thanks to the cultural capital accruing to sensibility, however, Mary can reply in a vein that not only asserts the equality of women as regards nobility (a rather freighted term) but rejects his jurisdiction out of hand by invoking the superior values of sensibility, deploying a much-quoted phrase from Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*:

Stop Friend – nor censure all our sex so free  
For we're as noble workmanship as thee  
Thy Stoic heart I never could revere  
Which for misfortune Scorns to drop a tear  
[. . .]  
Nor do I think it harm nor do I fear  
To say "to misery I could drop a tear".<sup>9</sup>

'To say' is one thing, 'to do' another. But Mary was committed to the belief that collectively women could wield influence – even, on occasion, prevail over men. Her 1792 abolition poem, of course, stands out in its call for concerted action by women in joining a sugar/rum boycott and influencing their husbands and brothers to do likewise - according to Moira Ferguson's study of female abolitionist writing, this was 'an unprecedented entreaty in anti-slavery annals'.<sup>10</sup> In the humorous 'A Petition To my Cousin T[homas] Harrison' (1794), Thomas is playfully urged by Mary and her female companions to succumb to their demands and abandon his Oxford studies briefly 'by becoming [their] guest' in London's social round. The poem valorises the holistically educative power of social life which combines reason and feeling ('There kindness & friendship & knowledge shake hands/So thy head may improve, while thy bosom expands') versus the ossification of the classics ('A truce of conversing so long with the dead/Come mix with the living – they too may be read'), and the power of women if they combine together:

Yield for once to our sex, for we join to assail  
 And one man against four, has small chance to prevail  
 For that ancient dominion so proudly you boast  
 Mid the tumult of voices is frequently lost  
 And tho' o'er us, empire you think to retain  
 When our voice is collected you lord it in vain.

Further, it implicitly identifies dead classicism with patriarchal power, 'that ancient dominion' - an illusion apparently destined to succumb to the collective voice of women.<sup>11</sup> Such iconoclasm is not apparent in Mary's later verse, yet always the bonds operating between women are instrumental in promoting benevolent social action. Her penultimate dated poem, to benefactress Elizabeth Dawson 'On behalf of the Aged & Infirm Female Servants' (1809), again draws on Gray's *Elegy* to construct a flattering request for money - Elizabeth, endowed with a special propensity for feminine sensibility, is ideally placed 'To soothe the poor domestic's woe'.<sup>12</sup>

This again emphasises the functionality of Mary's verse. A metaphor in a poem asking her friend, Debby, to walk with her one rain-refreshed morning, is salient. More complex than it first appears in its invocation of the natural cycle of renewal and its blending of biblical, Quaker quietist and biological imagery, its theme is the action of divine grace and our human response. God appears as 'the good gardener', engrafting His gift of grace onto His human nurslings, tending them until the right time when He 'views the promised store/And peeps beneath the leaves for something more'. In a poetic aside, Mary exclaims: 'Ah Debby[,] words are leaves[,] the fruit, the



fruit,/Alone can flourish nourish'd from the root,' (note her underlining of the metaphor). It is as if words, perhaps her poem as a religious text, are important in helping her friend toward Truth but the fruit, a true spirituality, can only reach its potential if sustained by a sound root-stock in Debby's own faith.<sup>13</sup> One source was almost certainly lines 309-10 of Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (1711): 'Words are like Leaves; and where they most abound,/Much *Fruit of Sense* beneath is rarely found'.<sup>14</sup> Though Pope's main subject – the role of literary criticism – may seem far removed from Mary's concern with divine grace, there are a number of parallels, particularly the way her poem echoes his in its urgings to guard against pride and, implicitly, be wary of taking words on face value as sufficient guidance either to productive meaning (Pope's '*Fruit of Sense*') or spiritual growth. In both, the concept of words as leaves is used to address questions of value and purpose in language. Mary is not, however, negating the role of words in nourishment and nurture. She surely knew that leaves are vitally important to the developing plant - indeed, in her poem they betoken 'the promised store'.<sup>15</sup> What is important, then, is that they signal, or guide, correctly.

For, unlike leaves which soon decompose into other forms once fallen, words, once written, have an unnerving permanence – particularly awesome when viewed from Mary's religious and cultural perspective. As she puts it:

If it is positively declared that we shall be accountable for each idle word, how much more for every idle line? Inasmuch as that unmeaning or idle words, when they have pass'd thro' our lips, evaporate and are perhaps never recalled to remembrance – but writing conveys an indelible mark which is much more difficult to be effaced than the sound which but reaches the ear.<sup>16</sup>

This question is posed at a tantalising point, for the reader, in her 1794 verse narrative 'Eugenio and Laura' (pseudonyms for people Mary knew, as yet unidentified) when, the young couple having just wed, a visitor from town, the 'fair Amanda sick of ennui' (p.243) whose feminine accomplishments and enchanting form cloak her many vices, seems about to succeed in captivating Eugenio. The narrative is not resumed owing to Mary's anxieties as to whether she can 'exculpate' it 'from the charge of an idle range of thought'. The exact point at which Mary breaks off is key, however. Not only does she tease the reader, but the final lines show that Amanda is devoid of that prime requisite, sympathy. Her cardinal crime is to pretend it: 'tho her words declar'd/That sympathy's congenial flame she shar'd [. . .]' (Mary's delicacy seemingly forbids her to specify what flame Amanda did share). Mary's abrupt cessation and repudiation of the poem are intriguing, not least in their careful crafting which gives the illusion of



spontaneity. As ever, her pressing concern is the right use of language – but contradictions abound. The poem is disavowed but not destroyed, lengthy and intricate though dismissed as a ‘little effervescence of a light and roving fancy’, and displays her poetic artistry in a ‘range of thought’ she feels should be suppressed. It is left, on one level perhaps, as an intentional source for future pride and self-flagellation (witness her stress on the power of the written word to resurrect memories). But the keyword, of course, is ‘idle’. The charge of idleness had a special resonance for young women with much time at their disposal in a developing middle class seeking to define itself, often against the aristocracy. In leisure terms, this meant replacing aristocratic licence and display with self-improvement and fruitful occupation – a dimension intensified within a dissenting Quaker tradition that eschewed ‘superfluity’. To spend her time in the production of frivolous verse could thus be regarded as highly reprehensible (unproductive of fruit) but, in what we could view as a clever rhetorical strategy, her rejection immediately converts it into part of an admirable moral exercise – incidentally, allowing her to produce the undesirable text (or part of it at least) and construct herself as a moral writer simultaneously. Whatever the case, it remains as a didactic testament, for herself and others, to the struggle with the ‘right’ direction for her literary imagination that her poetry and letters as a whole exemplify.

For just as her autobiography clearly splits into two sections – before her marriage in 1801 and after – so her adult poetry falls into two halves (1790s/early 1800s) before she confines herself, seemingly, to letter-writing, a more sanctioned form. Verse written in the 1790s, especially early in the decade, is dominated by friendships with other young Quaker women and their families (particularly romantic friendships with her companion from childhood, Hannah Wilson Forbes, and a new friend, Debby Watson, made when Debby’s sister, Eliza, married Hannah’s brother, James Forbes, on 4 October 1792), spiritual reflections with a mystical dimension, some light-hearted witty verse and, of course, her major anti-slavery poem. Only two poems are dated 1799 - the first to Nathaniel Card (19 January) and an elegy on the death of her beloved Hannah after childbirth on 9 May - while the only one dated 1800 is also to Nathaniel (29 August).<sup>17</sup> The latter, touchingly, looks forward to their marriage when, she believes (somewhat ironically as it turned out) all anxieties will dissolve in domestic content and reciprocity. From 1801, philanthropic appeals, domestic themes and religious or moral verse predominate, friendships with other women become centred in social converse and domesticity rather than romantic attachment while mysticism is replaced by a more conventional religiosity. Although the two halves may appear equal in volume (about 80 poems seem to belong to each period), the Milford



Haven poems (twenty-eight, possibly thirty, in all) account for a large proportion of the post-1800 output. And these, as has been shown, were products of a different set of influences. If they are taken out of the equation, we find that composition reduced dramatically in the later years.

We cannot assume a simple correlation between these changes and her relationship with Nathaniel. While it is probable that courtship (perhaps from 1798, given the first poetic address to him is dated January 1799) and marriage (1801) reduced the time available for writing, we should note that for the three years 1796-98 only one dated poem exists, even if some undated ones probably belong to those years.<sup>18</sup>

Undoubtedly, Mary's new status as a wife, and then a mother, might lead her to choose more domestic themes. But, as we have seen, the loss of children (of the first Nathaniel in April 1804 and then of her first daughter, Sarah, in September 1808) associated with her struggles with marital obedience and the right use of language, do appear to have been significant in her moves toward more serious themes and prose rather than poetry. The object in the following chapters of this thesis is to explore her poetry in the 1790s and post-1800, including the contrasts between them, and then her letters, examining how she participated in the literary traditions available to her, how she formed connections with her audiences, and constructed herself as a writer of sensibility. In the 1790s, the focus will be on *A Poem on the African Slave Trade*, which is in many ways typical of abolitionist poetry, and verses addressed to Hannah and Debby that clearly belong in a tradition of romantic friendship between women descending, in England, from Katherine Phillips and Elizabeth Rowe. Both are characterised by passionate expression, the anti-slavery poem in its articulation of anger at the injustice of the trade and its rallying cry for action by women, and the romantic friendship verse in voicing the power of intimate relationship. Her later writing seems prosaic in comparison, but the final chapter will show how frictions underlie its placid surface, how it poses challenges to theoretical perspectives that posit rigid boundaries between, for instance, public and private or conservative and radical, and how, even in the prose of her religious letters, it proved impossible for Mary to deny her impulse to artistic expression.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'An Epistle to D= [sic] Watson', 1793, p.205.

<sup>2</sup> Sensibility, originally meaning the capacity for sense perception, much connected with John Locke's theories that all human knowledge is gained empirically through the senses and the workings of the mind (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690), became endemic from the mid-eighteenth century as a term for an inner faculty of feeling and taste – one *OED* definition is 'a readiness to feel compassion for suffering and to be moved by the pathetic in literature or art'. Regarding a predisposition toward sympathy with others, the works of moral



philosophers were influential. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), proposed that human beings are endowed with an innate moral sense, linked this with the capacity for aesthetic appreciation, and asserted that emotion or compassion is the source of human action rather than self-interest or rationality. Francis Hutcheson, in *An Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), developed these ideas further, especially that of the moral sense connected with the aesthetic, while displaying aspects of an approach later termed utilitarian – the action to be followed is that which obtains the greatest happiness for the largest number. David Hume, most notably in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), is more qualified about human benevolence, seeing it as inflected to some degree by self-interest, but still sees morality as grounded in feeling rather than reason – his ethical system is based on sympathy as a key human characteristic essential to social interaction. Adam Smith, in *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759) developed this concept of sympathy, particularly with regard to empathic processes, though he did not subscribe to the idea of a specific moral sense. For an account of the historical context of sensibility, including the influences of the moral philosophers, from which some of the above has been drawn, see Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp.10-31. Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.5-48 also gives a good overview that includes the works of the ‘moral-sense’ school, before exploring issues of gender, culture and reading practice vital to a fuller picture.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ‘Written in a Volume of J Mariott’s[sic] Poems’, 1804, p.373.

<sup>4</sup> With her friend Debby, for instance, she yearns that ‘all the force of sympathy prevail’ (‘A Contemplative view of Nature’, undated, p.286 (p.287) and refers to ‘Th’attractive impulse of soft sympathy’ (An Epistle to D= [sic] Watson’, 1793, p.205).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., ‘On seeing the Ship “Hannah & Eliza” Set sail’, 1804, p.328 (p.329) and ‘Occasioned by a Walk to the Botanic Garden’, undated, p.428 (p.429).

<sup>6</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 8, ‘To E’, undated, p.110 (‘affectionate solicitude’).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Letter 2, ‘To . . .’, 1799, p.102.

<sup>8</sup> Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994), p.240.

<sup>9</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, ‘A Satire’, undated, p.275 (pp.275, 276).

<sup>10</sup> Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (New York and London, Routledge, 1992), p.180.

<sup>11</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, ‘A Petition To my Cousin T. Harrison’, 1794, p.224.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., ‘To E. Dawson On behalf of the Aged & Infirm Female Servants’, 1809, p.420 (p.421).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., ‘To D: Watson’, undated, p.282 (p.283).

<sup>14</sup> Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, pp.143-68 in the one-volume Twickenham Edition, 309-10.

<sup>15</sup> By the 1790s, there was a general awareness that leaves were necessary to the growth and existence of plants. Although Erasmus Darwin did not describe the process of photosynthesis until 1800, in his treatise *Phytologia*, his lengthy poem *The Botanic Garden* – a work of sensibility hugely popular in the 1790s – refers to the functions of leaves in the lives of plants. Part II, ‘The Loves of the Plants’, was published first in 1789, while Part I, ‘The Economy of Vegetation’ (1791) includes extensive prose notes. In Canto IV of the latter, lines 419-422 clearly refer to the circulatory system within leaves, and leaves’ interaction with air and light:

While in bright veins the silvery Sap ascends,  
And reflux blood in milky eddies bends;  
While, spread in air, the leaves respiring play,  
Or drink the golden quintessence of day. (p.195)

See also Darwin’s additional notes, pp.94-105: XXXIV on Vegetable Perspiration, XXXV on Vegetable Placentation, XXXVI on Vegetable Circulation, XXXVII on Vegetable Respiration (here, p.101, ‘The analogy between the leaves of plants and the lungs or gills of animals seems to embrace so many circumstances, that we can scarcely withhold our assent to their performing similar offices’). *The Botanic Garden*, 1791, A Scholar Press Facsimile (Menston, Yorkshire and London: The Scholar Press, 1973).

<sup>16</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, ‘Eugenio & Laura.’, circa 1794, p.236 (p.245).

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, p.255, 258 (‘To Nathl. Card’ and ‘Elegy’ on the death of ‘H W Reynolds’, both 1799) and p.310 (‘To Nathl. Card’, 1800).



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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.254, 'On causing anguish to a friend', 23 December 1797, is the only poem in the collection dated between 1796-98. However, thirty-five undated poems appear to belong to the 1790s.

## CHAPTER 7 THE EARLY 1790S

### A POEM ON THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

The major contribution made by Quakers to the anti-slavery movement has been well documented by historians including, recently, the part played by Mary's uncle, George Harrison, as one of the founders and most long-standing members of the campaign in England.<sup>1</sup> And the historical context of Mary's poem (the influences that impacted upon its production, how its two parts were products of particular moments in the campaign when petitioning was at its height as Wilberforce's 1792 slave-trade Abolition Bill progressed through the two Houses of Parliament and concerted action like boycotting slave-produced sugar was much promoted) is covered elsewhere in this thesis.<sup>2</sup> The intention here, therefore, is not to rehearse the historical context further, but to consider the poem itself.

Alan Richardson calls Mary's poem 'rousing and ambitious' and indeed it is an outstanding production for a seventeen-year-old girl in content, scope and poetic skill.<sup>3</sup> Not only is it written in accomplished flowing couplets and very lengthy (Part I has 384 lines, while Part II has 531), but it attempts a panoramic vista that alternates image and address, vivid pictures of the suffering slave (Part 1) or British ships as carriers of doom or beneficent commerce (Part II) with carefully crafted appeals to the sensibilities of possible supporters or rebuttals of pro-slavery arguments, maximising connection with her audience. Of course, its primary address to other women is vitally important. Indeed, in this it may be unique as it is the only poem Clare Midgley 'identified', in her comprehensive study *Women Against Slavery*, 'which was written by a woman and directed specifically at her own sex'.<sup>4</sup> Unsurprisingly, it has attracted the interest of other feminist scholars: Moira Ferguson, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, Phyllis Mack, Nini Rodgers.<sup>5</sup> But it must not be forgotten that it also speaks, within its text, to men, including male supporters of slavery and, in Part II, members of the House of Lords, thus engaging with a broader 'public sphere' than we envision if we consider it aimed solely toward women.<sup>6</sup> And what has so far gone unnoticed, it appears, is its relationship to at least two male-authored texts – James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-46), a favourite of Mary's from childhood, and *An Appeal to England, on Behalf of the Abused Africans*, a 1789 poem by the Quaker Thomas Wilkinson (later a friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge).



Mary deploys lines from a passage in Thomson's 'Winter', where the family of a country swain await his return, poignantly unaware that he lies buried in the snow, to draw her scene of an African's family, unaware of his kidnap by slave-traders.<sup>7</sup> This is not plagiarism with any intention to deceive – most of her readers would have been familiar with Thomson's passage, considered one of the most moving tableaux in eighteenth-century poetry. Two of her aims, certainly, are to enhance her literary credibility and to intensify pathos – 'borrowing' familiar text in this manner was one way of lighting that spark of emotional recognition on which the poetry of sensibility so much depended. But another, central to her purpose, is surely to refute unequivocally Thomson's assertion in 'Summer' that 'Love dwells not' in Africa, a place he pictures as devoid of 'tenderness' and 'sweet humanity', by claiming for the African family a capacity for love and familial affection in every way comparable to an English one – an essential claim if her readers' empathy is to be fully engaged.<sup>8</sup>

Thomson's 'Winter' tableau of the lost swain leads him to reflect on how 'little think the gay licentious proud', those living in 'pleasure, power, and affluence', of others suffering at that 'very moment, death/And all the sad variety of pain'. If only they did, he says, 'Impulse' would 'learn to think', inspiring 'Charity' and 'Benevolence', and so 'the social passions work'. He goes on to praise the work of the Jail Committee (1729) which, when 'touched with human woe,' exposed the appalling conditions in British prisons, and urges these 'sons of mercy' to:

[. . .] resume the search;  
 Drag forth the legal monsters into light,  
 Wrench from their hands Oppression's iron rod,  
 And bid the cruel feel the pains they give.<sup>9</sup>

Mary appears to take up the gauntlet he throws down, aiming to lay bare the evils and injustice of another 'legal monster' - slavery. Part 1 of her poem commences by apostrophising 'Oppression', with its 'hard & cruel chain', as the source of Negroes' torment (foreign oppression is Africa's problem, not innate savagery) and its 'infernal voice impels [her] song'. She continues by reiterating Thomson's earlier thought with a new dimension - the affluent are guilty not merely of thoughtlessness but of causing others' suffering by their own luxurious consumption:

How little think the giddy & the gay  
 While sipping o'er the sweets of charming tea,  
 [. . .]  
 How oft their lux'ry robs the wretch of rest,  
 And that to gain the plant we idly waste  
 Th'extreme of Human mis'ry they must taste!<sup>10</sup>

And Part I ends with an auroreal dawn, deferring to the Creator alone 'before' whom 'flee, the mists of error blind'. Her poem's task, it will be shown, is to be an instrument of that light, its mission to dispel the darkness oppressing her readers' heads and hearts. Her poem, then, does not merely appropriate, but interacts with Thomson's text on several levels.

Its intertextual relationship with Wilkinson's poem, which it resembles, or echoes, in numerous places, is even more intricate. *An Appeal*, addressing Britons overall as a powerful people, calls sequentially upon 'men of pow'r' (defined as those 'who can plead and write' though 'every class', 'however humble', has some power they can bring), the clergy, the colleges, 'British Dames', 'free and favour'd Britons', the 'House august', and the King to promote justice within their own spheres. Mary is responding directly to its call upon women, whose power Wilkinson locates, in line with prevailing ideals of femininity in society at large, in their compassion and ability to influence others based on that compassion:

*Ye British Dames!* Whose tender bosoms know  
To melt with pity o'er the couch of woe:  
How much your hearts commiserate his woes,  
Whose lot nor home, nor couch, nor country knows!  
These sacred rights he never must regain,  
Oh plead for such! – you seldom plead in vain.<sup>11</sup>

Sympathy empowers Mary to write by teaching her 'to melt at mis'rys tale', she addresses her Irish sisters as those to whom 'gall'd mis'ry seldom pleads in vain' and, later, presses them to 'shew their virtues, be humane indeed,/And plead for those "who have no power to plead"'. The quotation marks do not appear in manuscript, but are added in her published poem, clearly indicating that she is repeating, and responding to, his declaration, elsewhere in his text, of the 'need/To plead for him who has no power to plead'.<sup>12</sup>

Is *A Poem on the African Slave Trade*, then, hailed as a proto-feminist text, actually patriarchally complicit – an obedient response to a male call, constructing its author and other women solely in line with prevailing feminine stereotypes? On the contrary, its relationship to *An Appeal* is far more complex, for Mary revises rather than replicates Wilkinson's model. Throughout, she combines expression not just of tender feeling but of passion and outrage, with promoting the interests of her subjects (the cause and its victims) through practical appeals to the interests of the groups addressed. Indignation fires her as much as sympathy, for though her heart 'bleeds'



with 'compassion', the oppressed 'bleed' and suffer still.<sup>13</sup> Feeling alone is not enough - she must write, thus, necessarily, enrolling herself with Wilkinson's 'men of pow'r'. And she writes differently, in a style replete with classical reference he eschews. She develops his central theme of justice and takes forward another he barely touches on – colonisation - stressing the gains to be made from commerce without slavery. Most importantly, she asks women not only to feel and plead but act by refusing slave-produced goods. In these ways, she negotiates and challenges 'feminine' boundaries or stereotypes, laying claim, for herself and other women, to attributes culturally associated with masculinity – powers of reason, action and imagination, courage, determination, academic prowess - as much as the compassion ascribed to women on which Wilkinson's call is based.

Her text is passionate in urging empathy with the slave (albeit portrayed in conventional stereotypes), and in the vehemence with which it calls on other women to unite in a boycott and inveighs against the injustice of slavery. This passionate expression was something she felt compelled to defend, along with the act of publication, in her prefaces to the published poems, for both could expose her to charges of being unfeminine even if some anti-slavery activity was socially acceptable for her as a Quaker woman.<sup>14</sup> The prefaces assume a modest, self-deprecating tone. To some extent, though, this was a convention followed by male writers too. We find Wilkinson employing similar tactics in his preface. Just as Mary is conscious that she lays herself 'open to the censure of those' of 'superior discernment', partly because her poem is a 'juvenile attempt', Wilkinson, a farmer, feels his 'lines may stand in need of apologies' as he is 'a stranger in the walks of literature'. His 'diffidence' (a word used by Mary also) is only 'overcome by a zeal for the subject, and a desire to assist [. . .] the [. . .] oppressed'.<sup>15</sup> He has a similar justification at the beginning of his poem, situating himself as a simple country-dweller.<sup>16</sup> Mary too pleads feeling and 'the merits of the cause' as justification, but specifically links her ardent zeal to the crossing of boundaries set by constructions of feminine propriety: she feels she 'may justly incur the Censure of having acted with unbecoming Warmth'. Further, her poems cannot represent great literary effort. This might imply neglect of domestic duties, 'blue-stocking' aspirations or an unwarranted incursion into a traditionally male province. Part I therefore is 'a production of [. . .] little labour', Part II 'the spontaneous Effusions of an Unpolished Fancy', such spontaneity being the particular province of the supposedly less intellectual, emotional creativity of the female. By such strategies she, like other women writers, follows literary convention and attempts to construct a public persona consistent with conventional images of womanhood while



simultaneously stepping outside them. This negotiation typifies the practical tenor of the poem which operates within designated social parameters upon structures of feeling existing in her readers to attain its ends.

The primary structure of feeling was, of course, sensibility, for late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century abolitionist verse reached its audience effectively through its sentimental approach – ironically the greatest barrier to appreciation of it today. Jerome McGann has located reasons for this transformation in taste – the modern disparagement, even incomprehension, of sentimental poetry - in a ‘double neglect’ by criticism, well into the twentieth century. This not only excluded a major proportion from the canon but obfuscated its traditions and techniques so successfully that even the recent recuperation of ‘forgotten’ writing by cultural and feminist critics tends to be justified in terms of moral rather than aesthetic value – a distortion he works to rectify.<sup>17</sup> Abolitionist verse presents us with particular difficulties, accustomed as we are to view formulaic sentimentalism as detrimental to art, but we need to comprehend it as part of a tradition that authors accessed in different ways. For key features in its mainstream certainly constitute elements of a literary tradition as defined earlier in this thesis. Its conventional verse forms and poetic diction, imagery (set tableaux of severed African families, the sufferings endured on the middle passage and the plantations), stock characterisation of idealised native people, victimised slaves and sadistic traders, its appeals to religious feeling (slavery’s inconsistency with Christianity) and patriotism (the stain participation brought on Britain, the benefits of colonial commerce without slavery) - all work to evoke pity for the slave through forms that assume shared cultural values and emotional frameworks in its audience. Mary’s poem, and Wilkinson’s, are prime examples of the genre. Yet, as Alan Richardson’s recent anthology has shown, abolitionist poetry is actually far more varied than some of its critics suggest, and her poem is no exception, containing new departures within these standard formulae, ironically often in its intertextual relationship to Wilkinson’s. Feminist scholars often isolate women’s texts within specifically female traditions. Anne Mellor places women’s anti-slavery verse within a public and prophetic tradition of ‘the female poet’ as opposed to that of ‘the poetess’, and locates its origins in the writings of seventeenth-century Quaker women preachers.<sup>18</sup> Moira Ferguson, in her study of women’s abolitionist writing, highlights the influence of Hannah More, whose *Slavery, a Poem* (1788, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn 1791) was commissioned by the Abolition Committee purposely to invite imitation and enroll women, especially those of evangelistic fervour attracting popular respect, in the campaign. More’s contribution was to combine the ‘accumulated motifs’ of anti-slavery verse, ‘ushering’ in ‘a kind of abolitionist shorthand



that [could] be copied, expanded, or abbreviated at will'. In doing so, she drew on and extended associations of philanthropy and sentimentality with women's work and 'claimed the right to a collective political voice for women and a narrative strategy for constructing slaves that depended on a sentimental approach'.<sup>19</sup> More is certainly likely to have been a major exemplar for Mary. But of most immediate significance, as we have seen, was the male Quaker, Wilkinson, interestingly showing the importance, for Mary, of a model within the Quaker community.

Ferguson discusses Mary's poem at some length. Her boycott proposal was part of the widespread refusal of slave-produced goods after the defeat of the 1791 Abolition Bill, but urging other women 'to plunge into consumer refusal' was new while 'in its condemnation of slavery, [. . .] Mary Birkett's poem goes well beyond the tactic of refusal' by questioning 'legal precedent as well as the abstract concept of justice'. Thus she 'reframed the old ideological format yet retained 1780s formulaic verse as her medium'.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, though, Mary appears to be questioning and reframing Wilkinson's concepts of legality and justice. Justice, or rather unequal justice, is his key theme, often exhibited in ideas of balance/imbalance, resonant of the scales of justice. He asks how Britons can justify hurting Africans who never harmed them, why Negroes have all the suffering and Britons all the pleasure, whether the 'sweets' slaves produce balance their pain. We must plead for the Negro because he has no recourse 'To power', or '*justice*' - at least, Wilkinson is at pains to point out in a footnote, in the colonies (again, there is imbalance, or disparity, here because they are owned by Britain but not subject to the same laws). This move typifies his approach, which seeks the extension to Africans of the full protection of a British legal system regarded as admirable and is sometimes placatory of the establishment despite his political radicalism. He explains in another footnote, for example, that he supports gradual abolition.<sup>21</sup> Mary never qualifies her text in this way and, far from being complacent about British justice, she adapts one of his motifs to interrogate its validity and introduce social deprivation as a cause of crime. Wilkinson queries how, when people feel pity for a thief legally hung, they can refuse to act once aware of their responsibility for the deaths of innocent slaves.<sup>22</sup> Mary takes this further, displaying a capacity for rational social critique by challenging the legal system itself, the contradictions whereby a thief who takes one life, perhaps driven by poverty, is subjected to the death penalty while slave traders responsible for thousands of deaths go free: 'The guilt's diminish'd, as increased its size'.<sup>23</sup>



In Part II she tells how in Part I, a composition 'kindled' by 'the muse of pity' and 'Impell'd by fancy' until 'Imagination' bid 'her visionary heights explore' and 'social feeling forc'd th'untutor'd lyre', she had '(trembling) held the mirror to each breast'.<sup>24</sup> Here she makes two bold assertions. First, that her poem was the product of that higher power, the Imagination, and second, that it reflected the feelings of individual readers, perhaps even revealed what they were unaware of – while modestly claiming she was compelled by compassion which alone overcame her fears. Later she uses this same image with a significant addition, not claiming but wishing her 'muse the lively power possess [sic]/To hold the mirror to the thinking breast' (my underlining) - emphasising she aimed to appeal to the reason as much as, or through, the emotions of her audience (we must think with our hearts).<sup>25</sup> And if we look closely at both poems, we can see that this is exactly what they do. Part 1 contains a narrative that works on emotion through the familiar tableaux. There is the African scene where 'the sable youth,/Feels each degree of honour, love, & truth' though he has never heard of Jesus (using Quaker parlance, 'He keeps his inward guide'), living in simple ease with Nature until, out hunting to feed his family, he is seized by heartless traders. After picturing the tragic situation of his bereft bride and children, scenes follow of the dreadful confinement aboard ship where those who die are the lucky ones (the reader is asked to 'Think what the negros suffer! - what they feel!'), his 'shameful market' and the plantation where slaves are subjected to the lash.<sup>26</sup> In Part II, ships form the prevailing pictorial images: slave ships outwardly beautiful but harbouring death (their 'streamers kiss the yielding air' though their sails are 'shrouds', and the sailors, lost 'in sleep-Lethian', are victims too) contrasted with an idyllic picture of the imaginary arrival of British merchant ships bringing goods not 'woes', and their rapturous welcome from Africans thronging eagerly to the shore.<sup>27</sup> A grand vision of slavery's demise (resonant of More) is characterised by the overwhelming gratitude of native people and the spread of 'british learning' and Christianity 'dispel[ling] the chaos of the negro[']s heart'.<sup>28</sup> These emotive scenes, however, are interspersed with asides and rational arguments addressed not only to the fellow women she hopes to enlist in her campaign, but slavery supporters and, in Part II, the House of Lords.

Relentlessly, she exposes the specious justifications given for slavery. Often, she repeats pro-slavery arguments cited by Wilkinson (that Africans are 'naturally' inferior - mere savages, incapable of 'civilisation' - or that slavery is economically necessary) and counters them similarly. Both, like other anti-slavery writers, urge identification with Africans as fellow human beings and ask their readers to imagine themselves in the slave's situation (if their bodies are like 'ours' their feelings are too).<sup>29</sup> More



specifically, both counter the economic argument that Africa would become overpopulated without slavery by declaring God did not design the world so badly, and argue condescendingly that if Africans are savages then so were Britons once and Africans are capable of developing similarly.<sup>30</sup> But she also confronts other excuses - that slaves were not really so badly treated, or that they were better off than they would otherwise be at home in Africa - by straightforward questions pointing up the reality of slavery: even if 'a mild master kindly treats them well [. . .] Yet then, even then, can comfort on them wait/Depress'd, degraded to a servile state?' and 'One moment now with you his burden rest,/Then tell me, is he happy? is he blest?'.<sup>31</sup> And she brings in a social dimension, asserting that only environment and education make the difference ('if his manners suit the savage name,/Uneducated man is every where the same')<sup>32</sup> while any deficiencies of sensitivity or intellect perceived amongst slaves arise from the infliction of soul-destroying misery. Human beings in their 'natural' state are compared to unrefined metal, untended plants or unquarried marble requiring 'the forming hand of strength or art' to realise their potential.<sup>33</sup> And interestingly, though in the feminine mode of sensibility Mary casts her work as natural ('rude effusions', 'artless', 'an unpolish'd song'), it openly displays the forming hand of her own artistry, education and literary expertise. Whereas Wilkinson's appeals to reason and sentiment are couched in a simple style, entirely devoid of classicism, Mary's language is more complex and full of classical allusion. She is liberal with double adjectives ('fiend-like', 'all-unravelling', 'high-wrought', 'heaven-born'), ornate poetic phrases ('ere summer opes her perfumed vest', 'bright moons refulgent host') and the use of Graeco-Roman names and deities. If she seeks to combat the 'Orpheus-like' 'eloquence' of slavery's supporters by appeals to reason as much as feeling, she also aims to show, as she tells her fellow women, that 'on [women's] resistless tongue/The sweetest flowers of eloquence are hung'.<sup>34</sup> (Simultaneously reiterating Wilkinson's formulation of gentle feminine persuasion and challenging male dominance of language.)

At the close of his poem, Wilkinson briefly calls on England to 'civilise' Africa through peaceful commerce, so that 'By milder means to us let Afric' owe/What we to Rome, a thousand years ago'. He looks forward to a time when polluting war will be replaced by protective law, arts, cities, science and Christianity, while 'they who forward or retard/ The glorious work will meet their full reward' in the hereafter.<sup>35</sup> Mary takes this further to make colonisation a central part of her platform. In a twist of Wilkinson's text, the 'civilising' of Africans becomes a duty we owe them:



Plant there our colonies, & to their Soul  
 Declare the God who form'd this boundless whole  
 Improve their manners, teach them how to live  
 To them the useful lore of science give;  
 So shall with us their praise & glory rest  
 And we in blessing, be supremely blest;  
 For 'tis a duty which we surely owe  
 We to the Romans were, what to us Afric now.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, fulfilling this duty would be in British interests as much as that of African peoples. For arguments that exploitation of one race by another is justifiable self-preservation, or that commerce would collapse without slavery, are countered not only by appeals to scripture (God's power to provide) but also, more practically, self-interest - the greater wealth that might accrue through colonisation.

Our colonies: Mary's English identification is clear, and patriotic fervour underlies her support for colonial enterprise. In Part II, she stresses not only her love for the country of her birth and her pride in its achievements, but the stain brought upon its character when compared with that of Ireland which refused to participate in the trade.<sup>37</sup> The irony in England, supposed lover of freedom, engaging in the traffic is an anachronism soon to be abolished, however, for she writes in the firm hope that the Lords will vote for its abolition. Nonetheless, in addressing them she employs all the rhetoric at her disposal, appealing successively to Members' sense of justice, power and position, patriotic pride (the opportunity of setting an example to the world, particularly not to be outdone by France which had recently passed an abolitionist measure), and fears of divine wrath (they too, members of the highest court in the land, will one day be answerable 'before the bar of Heav'n'). In the last analysis, however, she knows that gains in this world probably count most. They should consider the greater profits to be made through commerce 'link'd in friendship[']s bonds', rather than through 'avarice'. Mary accuses slavery supporters of speaking only for self-interest - their arguments are but 'a thread-bare cloak' to hide this - but her own pro-colonial discourse speaks to the very avarice it castigates.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless she is not blind to the evil dimensions of commerce. A 'complicated gift', dispensing woe as well as wealth, its rapaciousness 'sucks the fattest produce of each plain' and forges the manacles of slavery.<sup>39</sup> Two vignettes in Part II exemplify its complexity.<sup>40</sup> First, 'the muse of fancy', 'fired' and 'unrestrain'd', rebels against the sovereignty of 'cool reason' and 'bounds away' to imagine an idyllic scene of grateful Africans falling at the feet of a messenger bringing them news of slavery's demise - a possibility eventually if Britain acts now to abolish the trade. Yet the text also hints at



the unreality of this dream, recognising that African suffering will not be relieved so easily: this scene Fancy 'views – or *thinks she views* [my emphasis] [. . .] When all the ills which rend the negro's soul/ Shall disappear – and freedom crown the whole'. Fancy then turns to 'calmer joys', a scene of 'peace', 'liberty' and emancipatory commerce: 'When british learning shall its light impart/ [. . .] And to the rights of men their souls restore'. Undoubtedly, mentioning 'the rights of men' (the term was also used by Wilkinson) was intended to evoke particular associations in her readers in 1792 - Paine's *Rights of Man* had just been published (Part I in 1791, Part II in 1792). Mary, however, shows none of the unqualified support for the French Revolution and its libertarian ideals displayed by Wilkinson in the euphoric atmosphere of 1789.<sup>41</sup> She is careful not to press radicalism too far. She refers to souls only, to spiritual salvation rather than earthly equality, and goes on to speak of conversion.<sup>42</sup> Tellingly, she compares her vision of the restoration of rights, created by poetic composition, to a 'finish'd piece of music – wrought/By master-hands' where 'each contributes to th'harmonious whole'. We cannot help feeling that however much other races might contribute to any realisation of the vision, the ownership of the master hands is never in doubt. And even this limited vision may be a chimera, only possible in verse, for 'in fancy[']s vain illusive glass/The muse can trace each image – as they pass'.

Where Mary's poem is most outstanding is in the way it prevails upon women to act on behalf of the enslaved. The mirror she holds before them is one which reflects not only their compassion, appealing to their construction as, and pride in being, the more tender sex to whom 'mercy[']s softest beams [. . .] belong', but their capacity for courage based on this construction. She calls her poem a 'daring song', calls for like daring in others, and strikes a rebellious note in her rallying cry: 'let us rise, & burst the negro[']s chain!'. For if one challenging message of her text is that women's sensibility entails a responsibility to use their 'soft' influence to fight injustice (for this reason 'to us the task belongs'), it goes further in urging them to exceed the usual parameters of that influence. They must do all in their power, even if it means going public, on behalf of 'those, who have no power to plead'. This phrase, used earlier by Wilkinson to justify his own anti-slavery intervention, has a special resonance when urged by Mary upon women who were also, in many ways, dependent. Mary confronts excuses women could give based on their sense of powerlessness: 'Say not that small's the sphere in which we move/And our attempts would vain & fruitless prove'. In her view, women had an 'important share', through their own consumption, in causing the Negro's suffering, and power to effect change by refusing slave-produced goods even in the face of ridicule.<sup>43</sup> Part II, dedicated specifically to women ('Sisters! - the theme -



the strain - the muse are yours'),<sup>44</sup> praises the sympathetic action of those who responded to Part I by abandoning sugar, but goes on to set them a greater challenge. To relinquish punch containing West Indian rum would involve more public action at mixed social occasions.<sup>45</sup> Unsurprisingly she anticipates their fear of derision and reluctance in the face of the obedience and reverence owed to male family members.

The first objection, the risk of derision, is easily dealt with – those who sneer are 'sons of Belial' (evil personified and a fallen angel in *Paradise Lost*). Mary's choice of this expression is significant. Belial carries associations with sophistry, while his offspring are those who 'go and serve other gods' (Deut. 13.13). For Wilkinson, not all 'Belial's sophistry' can reconcile the incompatibility between Britain's engagement in slavery and the libertarian ideals extolled in its Parliament,<sup>46</sup> while for Mary, supporters of slavery are 'sophists', their arguments subtle but fallacious. Moreover, Deuteronomy 13.13 is cross-referenced in the King James Bible to 1 Jn.2.19 and Jude v.19. In the latter, those 'who separate themselves' are 'sensual, having not the Spirit', 'mockers in the last time, who [. . .] walk after their own ungodly lusts'. The links here with self-indulgence in consuming sugar or rum and mocking those who forego these pleasures are obvious. Interestingly, Jude then enjoins those in the Spirit to 'Keep yourselves in the love of God' [. . .] 'And of some have compassion, making a difference' (v.21-22) – an injunction encapsulating the connection between feeling and action at the heart of Mary's project.

The second objection, obedience owed to husbands and fathers, is more difficult, but justice and God's law of universal love must take precedence over patriarchal law. Women should bravely set an example, beside employing the softer wiles of feminine persuasion, to influence their menfolk, who will yield to them if they combine successfully 'Pity[']s soft glow – & freedom[']s honest zeal', traditional feminine attributes with a passionate determination, even political awareness, not readily allowed to women.<sup>47</sup> Throughout both poems she cites, like other abolition verse, the affronts slavery posed to morality, religion and, particularly for women, family values, but most importantly she seeks to awaken women's own sense of personal social responsibility through female solidarity. As sisters they must rise to fight injustice through the strongest power they have - 'The kindling force of sympathetic love' (my underlining).<sup>48</sup>

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Mary's aim to hold a 'mirror' to each breast brings to mind her wish, when emerging from her deist phase, 'to proclaim in the ears of my fellow men the immutable truths which lie hidden within them'.<sup>49</sup> And we must also consider her anti-slavery poem in the light of her autobiography. Its 1796-98 section revealed her reading of radical authors like Paine and their influence which must have extended back several years. Certainly, *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* is a product of the enthusiasm and receptivity to fresh ideas identified as components of her personality as a young woman. Its arguments show traces of that blend of enlightenment empiricism and the Rousseauesque so characteristic of the hopeful faith of those on the radical side of the political spectrum: humanity is essentially good and the same everywhere, character is produced by environment, the world can be put right if people act to make it so, and truth (here awareness of the evils of slavery and the falsity of the arguments supporting it) is the means of that liberation. The keenest tension identified in Mary's early autobiography was between a desire to make her mark in the world and a fear of personal ambition as corrupting. In Part II of her poem, we find her assuring the Lords that she 'Nor sought – nor found – nor wish'd to find – a name', being moved to write by sympathy alone (Wilkinson, too, says of his muse: 'motives far beyond a poet's name/Inspire her numbers, and exalt her aim').<sup>50</sup> Whatever the truth of this conventional disclaimer (ambition and sympathy do not exclude one another), writing and publishing against the slave trade allowed her, a girl of seventeen, to express views with political connotations and address the most august male assembly in Britain. Inescapably, it must also have fulfilled some of her desire for recognition. Even if unconsciously, it served her own interests (and those of her gender) as well as the slaves'.

This brings us to Moira Ferguson's central, and persuasive, argument - that the production by women of anti-slavery texts played a significant role in 'the development of feminism', but that in championing the rights of oppressed Africans these texts constituted them not as 'real' people but stereotypical cyphers, denying them authenticity or agency. Furthermore, they 'displaced anxieties about their own assumed powerlessness and inferiority onto their representations of slaves' and thus:

mediated their own needs and desires, their unconscious sense of social invalidation, through representations of the colonial other, who in the process became more severely objectified and marginalized – a silent or silenced individual in need of protection and pity who must always remain "under control".<sup>51</sup>



No biographical information was available to Ferguson to indicate what individual concerns Mary may have brought to her poem. But Mary's conflicts with personal ambition and, ideologically, with different political and religious standpoints are certainly relevant. So also are the difficulties later experienced with obedience in her marriage, and her loathing of subjection. Women writers of the period often compared the situation of women, dependent on their husbands, to that of slaves.<sup>52</sup> It is likely that Mary's independent spirit felt constrained, long before her marriage, by the limitations placed on her as a woman.

How this inflected her representation of the African slave is less certain. Although, through empathic sensibility, she says she 'participates' in the African's misery,<sup>53</sup> and everywhere the slave's full humanity is stressed, he is without real voice or substance in her text. Whether idealised as 'the noble savage' dwelling, with his 'fond nymph', in harmony with Nature in their humble 'cot', innocently free of the corruptions of civilisation, or iconised in his suffering and degradation, he is an object of pity, the recipient of western cruelty or benevolence, invested with feeling and nobility not thoughts or opinions. Created through culturally available standard representations of Africans, and thus commodified for public consumption, he is inauthentic. The Negro remains 'other', the unimagined, in part because, without specific knowledge of African people or culture, his views and attitudes are largely unimaginable, unlike those of western men and women, pro- or anti-slavery, she engages with so ably. Yet whether granting the African a voice in text actually confers agency, as critics often argue, is debatable. Wilkinson's slave utters a speech as he breathes his last, in the sentimental 'victim' tradition querying how the sun can shine as brightly on his suffering as on his idyllic life in Africa. Passively, though, he seeks release only in death and the hope of greater happiness thereafter.<sup>54</sup> Mary, however, manages to allow slaves resistance and some agency, even if this is still deferred to the afterlife. Despite her reasoned arguments and emphasis on the force of love, she wants to see the traders receive their just deserts at the hands of those they have injured, visualising the Day of Judgement when all 'basely murder'd slaves shall rise' and, finding a voice denied in life, 'publish' their 'crimes throughout the skies'.<sup>55</sup> And, ironically, in both poems it is the westernised subjectivity invested in the course of empathic identification with the African that enables an understanding, if not actually condoning, of slaves rising in the present. Mary echoes Wilkinson's argument that brutality, far from being the only means of making slaves work and preventing rebellion, actually makes rebellion more likely. Given the Africans' suffering, it is 'No wonder, if fierce passion aims the blow!'. She lodges the guilt for this firmly with the



authors of their suffering – essentially a pacifist argument that violence only begets violence. Crucially, it is the patriotism within both writers, within their readers and assumed to be felt similarly by slaves that makes this understandable: Wilkinson asks, 'Are then the sons of England grown so meek/As to the blow to turn the smitten cheek?' and Mary, 'What son of thine, oh Albion, would bow down,/Would tremble at the upstart planter[']s frown?'.<sup>56</sup>

And whatever damage may have been done in the long-term by the limited portrayals of Africans and the pro-colonialist stance Mary's poem shares with much anti-slavery verse, it is also part of that verse's success story in changing contemporary attitudes.<sup>57</sup> We cannot know the scale of Mary's audience – only that her poem must have been quite popular as it went into two editions. But an idea of the impact literature urging people to give up sugar had at the time (and how it was circulated and publicised), can be gained from this letter written by Mary Bewley, a Dublin Friend, to Quaker poet Mary Leadbeater at Ballitore on 9 January 1792:

What think you of the revolutions that have taken place here by that Pamphlet I borrowed from you, I think it was worth my while to go for that only, there is a prospect of its being very usefull, almost every day we hear of numbers leaving off sugar by reading it. Our Rachel is warm in it and distributes many and sells to the people who buys almanacks to carry about the country.

Dear Richard Pike, I believe will give up selling it [i.e. sugar] but is not quite determined, Jacob Barrington is resolved to give it up, Joseph Williams in meeting yesterday stood up, made an apology and preface (I believe suitably) and then read the paragraph from the last yearly meeting Epistle relative to the slave trade, added a little more of his own, and afterwards concluded the meeting with a beautiful prayer. I am not capable of giving thee a fuller account, but I believe it was thought reasonable and gave good satisfaction. Thirdday Tommy came home last night, and brings account that this pamphlet has also had a good effect on many in Mt. Melick, that even our dear little John wont take sugar in his tea, since he hears that the poor little black boys is hurt in getting it for us. His Mother put sugar in his cup, whether to try or forgot I don't know, but he did not stir his tea but [————] it when he came to the bottom and was not pleased, ask'd his mother why she did it.<sup>58</sup>

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## MARY, HANNAH AND DEBBY: A TRIUNE FRIENDSHIP

Mary's poems to Hannah and Debby are conceived within a tradition sometimes called 'romantic friendship'. It was a term used contemporarily, for instance by the husband of the heroine, in Mary Wollstonecraft's novel *Mary, A Fiction* (1788), to describe his wife's intimacy with her friend Anne, a relationship based on Wollstonecraft's own friendship with Fanny Blood.<sup>59</sup> Originating in a Renaissance revival of classical models that elevated the virtues of friendship above those of heterosexual love (although imbuing these ancient models with Platonist ideas that divested them of explicit homosexuality), idealised same-sex friendships came to be highly regarded and evolved in varying patterns across Europe over the next two centuries. Initially a masculine tradition (indeed, male writers on friendship, such as Montaigne, regarded women as utterly incapable of its high calling) the idealisation of friendship was soon appropriated by women.<sup>60</sup> In seventeenth and eighteenth-century France, it flourished as 'tendre amitié' among 'les précieuses' (the intellectual women of the salons), while in England a sophisticated cult of platonic love grew up at the court of Queen Henrietta Maria. Most notably for its future development in women's poetry, it was celebrated by Katherine Philips (1631-1664), 'the matchless Orinda', who became an icon of virtue and a model for eighteenth-century women writers. Addressing many of her poems to her female friends, on whom she bestowed pseudonyms such as 'Lucasia' and 'Rosania', Philips propounded her ideal of spiritual friendship between women in language at once religious and erotic, depicting it as the highest form of love, a vocation leading to a spiritual union free of the entanglements of sexuality or the material considerations attendant upon marriage. She was not an isolated phenomenon. Margaret Ezell has shown how 'other women engaged in similar exchanges [. . .] throughout the [seventeenth] century' and Lillian Faderman, speaking of the eighteenth, says:

All the language and sentiments of romantic friendship – vows to love eternally, and to live and die together; wishes to elope together to sweet retirement; constant reassurances of the crucial, even central role these women played in each other's lives - are found in the actual letters and journals of the time [as well as in novels and verse].<sup>61</sup>

Four main streams of thought about the roles of women's intimate friendships and their textual expression can be traced within feminist scholarship. The first, most obvious, concerns mutual growth – how such friendships enabled women to support and nurture one another, to expand their horizons emotionally and intellectually and overcome personal limitations. Another considers their relation to society – for



instance, how they might have been encouraged because they served patriarchy (by preparing girls for marriage, fostering traits such as tenderness and empathy required in their future roles of wife and mother, rendering their situation more palatable by providing emotional outlet) or how, despite apparent acceptance, they might always have been regarded with a degree of ambivalence. Two other streams stress women's agency. One points up the ways in which their appropriation of friendship traditions challenged misogynist ideas of women as incapable of strong attachment or intellectual effort, or that regarded the language of female friendship as mere sentimentality. Finally, much emphasis has been on the opportunities they afforded women to forge their own identities and claim some autonomy outside marital/familial structures, particularly when marriage was still often a matter of economics and family pressures rather than personal choice and the gap between the ideal of so-called companionate marriage and practical reality could be considerable – a rich seam that has been combined recently with newer cultural and historical perspectives.<sup>62</sup> This exploration of Mary's friendship verse will concentrate on aspects related to the first and last of these streams.

Before embarking on this, however, we need to be aware that 'romantic friendship' is an area with a vexed historiography. Essentially, the debate centres around how far such friendships, in life and text, were forms of social bonding between women, their erotic language simply convention, in periods when men and women led more segregated lives than today, and how far they represented a lesbian sensibility.<sup>63</sup> This study of Mary's passionate friendships is underpinned by Liz Stanley's call for an epistemological approach that 'does not impose a theoretical structure on the lives and experiences of historical people, but which recognizes that love between women could take many shapes and meanings'. This 'can best be done through a combination of historical and biographical means looking closely at particular lives and how these are intertwined with others in patterns of friendship within a particular milieu'.<sup>64</sup> But I have two caveats. The first concerns one of Stanley's foundational questions: 'under what circumstances and using what kind of historical evidence is it possible to specify, one way or another, whether women's close and loving relationships of the past were romantic friendships or involved erotic/sexual behaviours?'<sup>65</sup> Her answer, methodologically, is that you pay attention to women's own writings – what they say about themselves – rather than relying on secondary sources or imposing our own frames of reference. This question, however, is in danger of making a division similar to that made by Faderman between 'the sexual' and 'non-sexual', so heavily criticised by Stanley – it merely ensures the erotic (even if non-genital) is firmly placed with the



sexual. It begs another question – why, particularly in the light of recognising the ‘many shapes and meanings’ of love, should the two sides be mutually exclusive? Which in turn begs another - why are we concerned to know on which side these relationships fell? And this is related to the second caveat, connected with our own purposes in ascertaining the meaning of these friendships. Writing as a lesbian critic, Stanley rightly emphasises both the need to construct a lesbian history and ‘the equal need to recognise that women’s relationships in the past, like those of the present, were highly complex and multidimensional’.<sup>66</sup> It is just that there is slightly more emphasis on the former. For instance, though it is vitally important not to deny women’s sexual relationships with each other (Faderman’s failing), no corresponding concern is registered about the risks in imposing or assuming sexual meanings. Referring to these difficulties, particularly those encountered with ‘romantic friendship’ and ‘lesbianism’ as terms, Elizabeth Susan Wahl says that ‘critics will need to continue to develop new conceptual models and a more nuanced vocabulary’.<sup>67</sup> This study cannot claim to do either of these, but it will seek to make a contribution to the discussion of female friendships through an analysis that makes no assumptions about Mary’s sexuality or that of her friends but, concentrating on the evidence within her texts, explores what her appropriation of the tradition of friendship verse in the language of same-sex desire enabled her to do – how it encouraged and allowed her to express her love for other women and provided a means by which she could assume roles not readily allowed women in discourse.

If women were to recreate aspects of themselves, they had to create spaces in which to do so, and one model, expounded by Katherine Philips, was that of a feminocentric, spiritualised community – a small group of friends bound together by feeling and faith – and it is within this concept that the relationships between Mary and her friends can best be understood. Their small friendship community (essentially Mary, Hannah and Debby though a few other friends, unnamed except for their initials, also feature) was inaugurated by the arrival of Debby Watson late in 1792, joining her sister Eliza in Dublin on or after Eliza’s marriage to Hannah’s brother, James Forbes, and it was during Mary’s extended stay with the Forbes at Summer Hill over Christmas and New Year that the girls’ triune friendship first flowered. It became a space in which these three friends could express both their spirituality and their art – and this is not too grand a word for it is clear that even if society viewed the skills girls acquired merely as accomplishments, these young Quaker women invested them with great significance. Indeed, although Mary’s poems, as always so formulaic in many respects, depict her friends as paragons of feminine modesty and virtue (almost as if



they walked straight out of a conduct book) without description of their physical appearance, foibles or individual character, they are differentiated by their artistic talents. Hannah's forté is painting and drawing while Debby, though 'each accomplish'd art, our sex's pride/Was hers', is most remarkable for her lovely singing voice: 'when she pour'd the melody of sound/How did she charm the listening ears around'.<sup>68</sup> Mary speaks of the great joys of conversation with Debby, the way she pours ardently over each line of her letters ('To mark the - moving of her hand/Where friendship does her thoughts expand'),<sup>69</sup> yet we never hear either Debby's voice or the content of her thoughts. And this brings us to the essential difference in Mary's relationship with each friend. For though we only hear Hannah's actual speech once – seeking a blessing for Mary at a family visit made by Deborah Darby<sup>70</sup> – her voice makes itself felt as Mary's guide, someone she looked up to and perhaps wished to emulate. Mary's tone toward her is often deferential. In fact, before Debby's arrival Mary's addresses to Hannah are reverential rather than intimate. It is to her that she submits her slave trade poem as if to a critic.<sup>71</sup> Earlier poems seek her approval for Mary's muse, asking her to 'join the critic & the friend', or pay 'grateful tribute' in return for her paintings, praising them profusely, acknowledging her kindness, yet fearful of 'presumption'.<sup>72</sup> Importantly, though she kindly excuses 'fault[s]', Hannah, 'Will tell me of them and reprove when wrong'. Of course, Hannah was some six years older, someone Mary had revered from childhood, while Debby, a girl of her own age newly introduced to their circle, was someone she could influence in her turn.

As a Quaker, it is not surprising that the literary model Mary invoked was not the Anglican Katherine Philips, but Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737), a writer of sensibility from the dissenting tradition, known for her prose work *Friendship in Death* (1728) and poetry that tended toward the mystical. Just as Philips was known as 'Orinda', Rowe adopted the pseudonym 'Philomela', the nightingale.<sup>73</sup> Mary participates in this same tradition, albeit briefly, by giving her friends 'romantic' names – Hannah becomes 'Lucilia' and Debby, 'Miranda'. Margaret Anne Doody points out that the use of such names within a friendship community 'offered an abstraction of personality allowing both intimacy and intellect'. A 'romance persona' was one 'separate from the filial/marital' which, in the case of an author, 'enables her to analyse her own position' – one example cited is Jane Barker's 'Fidelia arguing with herself'.<sup>74</sup> Mary herself says she shields Hannah under 'a borrow'd name' because she knows that Hannah's 'meekness more delights/To shun, than meet the praise [her] worth excites'.<sup>75</sup> This is somewhat implausible as Hannah's name is used abundantly in other verses and her brother, James, is also given a pseudonym, Amintor (resonant of



Philips's name for her husband, Antenor.) Perhaps her reasons had more to do simply with fashion, the fact that such names were an accepted component of women's friendship verse. Yet she created no such persona for herself. As in the majority of her poetry she and the speaker remain unified, possibly because her primary concern is not with self-analysis but to please and edify, or because developing a persona would be a step too far in the direction of acting, held in so much opprobrium by Friends. Nor does she mention her own accomplishments, whether she sang, danced, painted or embroidered. Rather, her accomplishment is her poetry and her part that of the story-teller, even the interpreter, the bearer of poetic gifts. She sings the praises of her friends' homes, families or talents, congratulates Eliza on her wedding to James Forbes, and tells a tale of their courtship designed partly to remind her friends of her role with them – when, of an evening, she would read aloud or 'cull from ancient lore th' historic tale'.<sup>76</sup> Ostensibly the story of James winning Eliza's love, the tale embedded is surely Mary's own courtship of Debby, this new friend - 'one who joined this happy throng/Whose mental charms would grace a poet[']s song'. It is in this poem that she first gives her friends 'romantic' personas, and first sings Debby's praises as 'Miranda'. Blessed with 'superior sense', 'good temper', 'native innocence' and every accomplishment so that 'her pencil' even 'with Lucilia[']s vied', 'Miranda' gives 'new lustre to the rural shade'. Perhaps there is a deliberate contrast here with Hannah whose pseudonym, 'Lucilia', means light. Debby, with her charming voice, 'talents & taste [. . .] for ever new' seems perfectly formed for friendship. Yet Mary is at pains to stress that Debby does not threaten to eclipse Hannah in her heart. Though she brings 'new delight' to all, her 'wit & sense' drive away 'rancour'. She is by all, including 'Lucilia', beloved.<sup>77</sup> When Mary makes her first poetic addresses to Debby, about to return home, she concentrates not on her own personal loss but on how everyone will miss this girl who 'claims an empire in our hearts' and whose 'kindred worth' arouses Hannah's love too.<sup>78</sup> Even so, she manages to strike an intimate note when, conflating herself with her muse, she avows she loves Debby for her 'worth alone' and views her departure 'with grief'. Her 'highest wish' is but to see her own 'name amongst the chosen few' of Debby's coterie.

Absence most often initiates the written expression of love, and it is only on Debby's return to Clonmel that Mary speaks directly of their intimacy by sending her a copy of Rowe's *Letters (Friendship in Death)* with an accompanying verse.<sup>79</sup> In these lines she first casts their love as sacred, a union so entire as to absorb their identities into one soul and one name, and prays that it will become immortal – not only by being 'inscribed' forever in the temple of friendship but through their own efforts to make the



'exalted pity', the 'dignity', and 'love divine' of Rowe their own. Interestingly, in the final lines 'our union' and 'our spirits' are conceived as separate ('So shall our union spurn the bounds of time/And with our spirits to the gates of mercy climb'), a division that draws attention to their union as temporal, a tangible entity in this world. It can only become transcendent through their endeavour, their participation in the tradition exemplified by Rowe. Implicit too is the risk that this precious friendship could prove ephemeral, for any desire for eternal love also contains its opposite, a fear of the loss of that love, and Mary's purpose here, as in several ensuing poems, is to keep alight love's flame: 'let not absence e'er effectual prove/To steal from Debby's heart her Mary's love'. Even a poem ostensibly addressed to others ('To Eliza Forbes & S Watson') carries a message assuring Debby of Mary's constancy.<sup>80</sup>

The theme of friendship as sacred, a 'power celestial', 'to ignoble souls denied', is continued in 'The tears of Friendship'.<sup>81</sup> As Mary walks alone in Marlay Park, keenly missing her friends' companionship, both appear as spirits, first 'Lucilia' and then, on her arm as if handing her to Mary, 'Miranda' - the one 'Who does with her my warm affection share'. Clearly Mary wants to emphasise her friends' intimacy with one another, and her own love for both – maybe even to assure Hannah that Debby has not supplanted her in any way. One intriguing aspect of this kind of verse, however, is the combination of platonic, spiritualised friendship with the emotional ethos of sensibility that finds expression in physical sensation. The 'warmth' of friendship 'thrills thro' every vein', loved ones are clasped to the 'throbbing breast' and, when her friends vanish as she moves toward them, she is thrown into a 'piercing agony' of 'tears' and 'sighs'. Religion, another female form, then appears in their place with a message often reiterated in Mary's verse, that 'purif[ies] even friendship's hallowed flame'. It speaks of pain as inextricably bound with the joys of friendship, and of friendship's inability to fulfil all human need which can only be met ultimately by God, the unfailing friend, through faith.

Mary's intimate friendships were an uplifting source of authorial power. 'Th'attractive impulse of soft sympathy', the intensification of pleasure in nature or intellectual pursuits shared with 'a kindred mind' were inspirational. Yet anguish inspires the Muse's song as much as joy. There is the pain that is the very essence of sensibility in its physically emotional identification with the other ('the heart[-]expanding throb & swimming eye') – a pain that is also an acute form of pleasure, and the pain of parting from the beloved.<sup>82</sup> It is these forms of suffering – the first so physical, the other so grounded in the reality of a passionate relationship – that underlie some of the



discomfort felt today when approaching this form of women's poetry. They seem at odds with a reading of this verse as either solely spiritual or empty convention, making us aware of the actuality of these relationships as love affairs, and of their physical dimension.

Mary's poetic epistles are devoid of the some of the most extravagant expressions characteristic of many eighteenth-century women's intimate friendships. She does not swear eternal love (something she could not do, in any case, as a Friend), consider death preferable to the loss of her friends' affections, or shower them with endearments. Neither does she desire to spend her whole life with one of them. Nevertheless her passions, for Debby in particular, are intoxicating. Their greatest rewards are found in reciprocity, the sharing of learning, pleasure and emotion, so that just to be near one another is bliss. She is utterly desolate when they are apart, is concerned that they should never forget her, and expresses these sentiments either in the language of a lover or by invoking the relationship between lovers. For instance, in 'A Contemplative view of Nature' she quotes from Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* to beseech, 'Come Debby, haste we to the greenwood shade/"For talking age & whispering lovers made"<sup>83</sup> Surprisingly, though, her most openly erotic poem is addressed not to Debby but to Hannah.<sup>84</sup> It was a custom to send a loved one a locket containing one's own hair. Mary, rather ingeniously, does so with a poem in which her lock of hair, as the speaker and the 'pledge' of her 'love', voices desire for an intimacy that invokes a physical relation directly, woman's body to woman's body: 'On Mary's brow, I wont to rest,/Oh! deign to place me near thy breast'. The intention is that she and Hannah can be close even when apart, that the presence of her hair next to Hannah's heart will keep her in her friend's thoughts always, but the sensual dimension of their emotional involvement in one another, is emphasised by her underlining here and in the last couplet: 'In brilliant hues, let others shine;/To feel thy genial warmth be mine.' This is not to identify their relationship as lesbian, or not. Any such attempt risks distorting the issue, imposing later meanings, through the lens of an historical displacement. It is to acknowledge, first, the homoerotic content of this text and several others addressed to Hannah or Debby (this one being the most outstanding example) and secondly, the complexity of feeling in which these texts originated - a complexity in which friendship, love and passion, the mental, emotional, and physical are intertwined.

One liberating aspect of this eroticism was that it allowed Mary to make love in text, to state her passion and to woo – activities generally denied women in heterosexual relationships where this would be outside the bounds of propriety and a usurpation of



male prerogative, even in Quaker circles where social relations between women and men were freer than in society at large. As Wahl points out, adopting the language of a lover enabled women to speak as 'autonomous, desiring subjects' outside 'the confines of silence and passivity dictated by their conventional role as objects of desire', thus disrupting heterosexual and male/platonic modes of representation where this 'position' is 'male'.<sup>85</sup> Most interesting in Mary's case, however, this 'male' subject position also facilitated her assumption of another – that of Debby's spiritual master or teacher. Debby is cast as both object of desire and spiritual disciple. And it is in this relation that their intimate friendship takes on a specifically Quaker inflection.

This is illustrated in Mary's poems to Debby concerning Nature and its relation to God, of which 'A Contemplative view of Nature' is the most outstanding example.<sup>86</sup> For this reason, it has received an extended commentary in my headnotes, allowing readers to discern more readily its intertextuality with major eighteenth-century poets Goldsmith and Pope and the challenges it poses to the ideas of rationalist philosophers such as John Locke. This necessitated some exploration of its central themes, so there is no need to repeat these in detail here. What is most pertinent in the present context is its notion of friendship itself as a tutor whose purpose is to school the heart in sympathy, and how this is preparatory to the concept of Nature as another sort of teacher – a book in which each natural form is emblematic of a spiritual dimension if we but know how to read it and thus chart a path through to God, the author behind the mask of His creation. The major task of the poem is also to teach – to show Debby how to penetrate the mask by reading Nature's signs (to some degree an intellectual process) and, importantly, by then surrendering intellect to feeling in order to commune with Nature in a space beyond language where consciousness of the separateness of self is lost. Another part of its project, linked to teaching in that it is also directed toward Debby, is to counter those forms of enlightenment rationalism best represented by John Locke that saw the deployment of human reason as the sole means of revelation, of comprehending the divine. The poem promotes feeling over reason, in effect the felt experience of the Inner Light over Locke's 'light of reason', as the primary source of religious knowledge and moral development. And what makes this felt response more possible, for both Mary and Debby, is their intimate friendship which allows that vital prerequisite, sympathy, to flourish.

These messages are totally in keeping with Mary's Quaker faith, and with the didactic purposes Friends prescribed for poetry. They are also compatible with the duties enjoined upon women generally to nurture each other's spiritual lives, and the project



of moral improvement allocated to women in the private spheres of family and friends where they taught the young and were generally supposed to exert an uplifting influence. Moreover, they were, in effect, ministry if we think of priesthood as becoming the vessel and interpreter of God's word – a role Friends allowed to women. Neither, in Quakerism, was learning discouraged for girls if it was put to good use. Sarah Fell learned Hebrew to 'confound her critics' theologically, the Quaker poet Mary Mollineux (who also wrote some intimate friendship verse) was taught classical languages, medicine and mathematics by her father (though both these women were to some degree exceptional).<sup>87</sup> In all these ways, Mary's project was legitimate and represented an acceptable, even admirable, use of her time. Yet such acute engagement with the intellectual positions of male authors like Pope and Locke was surely quite rare even for Quaker women, and was to some extent a trespass onto the largely male preserve of academic thought. And this transgression was brought about through the expression of her love for Debby and the adoption of a lover's stance. Further, it was Debby's position as the beloved and as pupil that made possible the roles Mary assumed in this and other similar poems of teacher, priest, or philosopher, and the construction of herself as a moral and spiritual force.

Spiritual discipleship was not one-way, however. For one fruit of Mary's friendship with Debby was the way it kindled the written expression of mystical experience: a sense of direct communion with God, of His immanence in the self. Visiting Debby later at her home in 'Summerville', the rapture experienced in contemplating Nature in this rural retreat where all combines to inspire the poetic Imagination and, once more, every tree emblematises our need to be 'deeply-rooted' in order to uphold 'Truth' and nurture others, is precursory to the hope that Debby will 'seek more permanent delight'.<sup>88</sup> Mary is not speaking of the hereafter, but of the 'joys of Heaven' here and now: 'may thy mind/A gentle inmate of the bower of bliss,/There take large draughts insatiate' of that elixir won only by those 'Who seek with ardent and expectant love'. As in 'A Contemplative view', the delights of Nature are but 'letters in our infant schools' pointing the way to a deeper reality. A current of shared mystical experience pervades these poems.<sup>89</sup> Further, Mary's own private mystical experience is most keenly expressed in poems undated but interspersed with those to Debby and so almost certainly inspired by their relationship. 'Sweeter far' than any sensual or intellectual pleasure, or even the 'soul vibrating bond' drawing people to one another, is the 'tie [. . .] to Christ' and 'the rapturous joy which waits the soul/Attentive on its God!'.<sup>90</sup> Characterised by deep inner peace and harmony, a sense of plenitude in mind, body and spirit, and the absorption of all her faculties, this joy is transforming,



lighting up her inner world and rendering the external one more beautiful. This 'speaking o'er the soul'<sup>91</sup> of the divinity to His bride is sheer delight, yet it eludes definition and can only be comprehended by those who have known it. Although much of the experience she describes is common to mysticism generally, it is clearly Quaker, found in yielding in silent waiting upon God and, more specifically, quietist in the yearning to be 'swallowed up in love':

Till not an idea actuates my breast  
 Save by thy word thy forming word imprest  
 Till not a sound my ready tongue reveals  
 But as thy spirit opes the sacred seals.<sup>92</sup>

The chief characteristic of quietism, as shown when looking at Mary's autobiography, was the attempt to suspend all conscious thought and desire in order to achieve a 'pure' contemplative state completely receptive to the divine will. Tellingly, she anticipates the derision such claims might excite: 'To those who feel it not, its inward peace/Seems as the tale of sensibility' (a rare reference, for Mary, to negative views of sensibility as affectation or self-indulgence).<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, she attests to its validity for her, and to an overwhelming desire for such spiritual communion that could overtake her even when writing verse so that, 'Down sinks the quill, the sheet unspoiled lies/And heavenly brightness charms my ravish'd eyes'.<sup>94</sup> Again and again she asserts that language is not sufficient either to express her mystical experience of the love of God or her love for her friends (because their reciprocity renders language obsolete), yet her love of language embodied in the outpourings of 'sensibility' insists on the attempt.

Unlike Mary Wollstonecraft, whose intimate friend, Fanny Blood, was not mentally or emotionally strong enough to become a true 'kindred spirit', Mary Birkett seems to have been fortunate in finding friends who could share some of her innermost feelings and aspirations, enabling her to grow emotionally and intellectually. Even if these intimate friendships were a cause of emotional upheaval, they gave her a considerable degree of that 'inner peace and confidence' she craved – a confidence that empowered her to write more vibrantly and to create fresh identities for herself in her texts.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810* (London: Macmillan, 1975), C. Duncan Rice, *The Rise and Fall of Black Slavery* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp.186-226, and James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), pp.97-122. The beginnings of an organised anti-slavery movement in England in a grouping of several concerned Friends (William Dillwyn, George



Harrison, Samuel Hoare, Thomas Knowles, John Lloyd and Joseph Woods), who held their first meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1783, is described by Thomas Clarkson in *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), I, 124-28. The group promoted the cause through thousands of publications, but did not advertise itself, so remained largely unknown. Clarkson liaised with the group frequently, mainly via Dillwyn, and describes how its members joined with other individuals to form the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (the London Abolition Committee) on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1787. George Harrison's contribution, along with that of Joseph Woods, Samuel Hoare and James Phillips, is traced in Judith Jennings, *The Business of Abolishing the British Slave Trade 1783-1807* (London: Frank Cass, 1997). See also Chapter I and Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.139-40 and 153, in this thesis. Though Quakers were in the forefront of anti-slavery agitation, it was not until the 1770s, largely due to the campaigning of John Woolman and his visits among South American slave-holding Friends from the 1750s, that slave-owning was made a disownable offence in America. In England, though London Yearly Meeting warned against slave-owning in 1727, it did not declare that any member continuing to be involved in the trade in any way would be disowned until 1761.

<sup>2</sup> See headnotes to the poems, Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.139-40 and p.153. The headnotes touch on influences that may have impacted upon the poem's production. Additional possible influences worthy of mention here include ex-slave Olaudah Equiano's visit to Dublin in May 1791, when he stayed with Friends (he travelled in Ireland for the next eight months), and Mary's links with the Shackleton family who were strongly anti-slavery. It was in 1792 that Mary wrote a poem on the death of Quaker schoolmaster Richard Shackleton (Vol. 2, Poetry, p.172). Finally, Mary's family originated from the Manchester area, where many women particularly took up the cause with great enthusiasm, and she may well have had connections with activists there. For Equiano's travels, see *Olaudah Equiano: The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. by Vincent Carretta (Penguin: London, 1995), p.235 (visit to Ireland) – Equiano first published his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of O. Equiano or G. Vassa, the African [. . .] written by himself*, in two volumes in 1789. Regarding women's activity in the Manchester campaign, see Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, pp.149-50, and Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.18-23. See Midgley also for a discussion of abstention as a tactic in this period (pp.35-40). Beside describing how abstention came into its own from 1791 in the wake of 'the failure of petitioning' to influence Parliament, and enabled women to take a greater part by making abolitionist activity possible within the home, she makes interesting points in relation to Quakerism. The Quaker William Allen appealed to women particularly when advocating abstention at a public meeting in London on 12 January 1792. Midgley remarks that:

The inclusion of women in appeals by Quakers like Allen was related to Quaker emphasis on the individual guilt of supporting slavery through consumption of slave-grown goods, and individual responsibility to abstain was tied to the Quakers' belief in the importance of following the dictates of one's conscience. (p.35.)

She links abstention with concepts of self-denial and to 1790s 'middle-class and evangelical critiques of excessive aristocratic consumption, which placed a high value on the renunciation of worldly pleasures', and points up how Mary Birkett pleaded for her fellow women to abstain from slave-produced goods 'both as a way of freeing them from guilt and as a way of advancing abolition' (p.36).

<sup>3</sup> See Alan Richardson's introduction to Part I of Mary's poem included in *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, general eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, 8 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), IV, ed. by Alan Richardson, 196.

<sup>4</sup> Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, p.34.

<sup>5</sup> Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, pp.5 and 178-83; Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.42-51; Phyllis Mack, 'In a Female Voice: Preaching and Politics in Eighteenth-Century British Quakerism' in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), pp.248-63 (pp.258, 260); Nini Rodgers, 'Two Quakers and a Utilitarian: The Reaction of Three Irish Women Writers to the Problem of Slavery, 1789-1807' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 100C, 4 (2000), 137-57 (particularly pp.145-51).



<sup>6</sup> Mary's addressing the Lords is unlikely to have been purely rhetorical. It is quite possible she anticipated her poem being circulated in London, given that her uncle, George Harrison, published his *Address to the Right Reverend the Prelates of England and Wales on the Subject of the Slave Trade* (London: J. Parsons and Ridgway) around May/June 1792 to influence the Lords' vote. Even though Harrison published his document anonymously, its authorship may not have been a great secret, and it is not inconceivable that his niece's poem was distributed in similar circles. Also, the kind of audience I am hypothesising here is structured by a material particular audience as distinct from the theorisations that absorb a critic like Klancher. See Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison, Wisconsin and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, p.143, Thomson, *The Seasons*, 'Winter', 311-17.

<sup>8</sup> See whole passage in Thomson, *The Seasons*, 'Summer', 860-97.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 'Winter', 322-88.

<sup>10</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, p.141.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Wilkinson, *An Appeal to England, on Behalf of the Abused Africans, A Poem* (London: James Phillips, 1789), pp.27-32 (address to 'British Dames', p.29).

<sup>12</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part II, p.155 and Part I, pp.146, 147). Published poem: *A Poem on the African Slave Trade, Part I*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Dublin: J Jones, 1792), p.15. Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, p.141.

<sup>14</sup> Copies of the prefaces are attached as Appendix 4.

<sup>15</sup> Wilkinson, preface to *An Appeal*, pp.iii-v.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp.7-8.

<sup>17</sup> See Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Anne K. Mellor, 'The Female Poet and the Poetess: Two Traditions of British Women's Poetry, 1780-1830', in *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730-1820*, ed. by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp.81-98.

<sup>19</sup> Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, pp.146 and 153.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp.178-83, particularly pp.180 and 183.

<sup>21</sup> Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, pp.8 and 31. Though he writes in sentimental mode and displays a strong sense of the iniquity of the slave trade, Wilkinson often counterbalances any tendencies to excess of feeling or radicalism by justifying his statements, as if he wishes to strike a balanced note, echoing the balance he urges in British/African relations. An analytical tendency is much evident in his resort to lengthy prose footnotes. One calculates how a single vote could save or lose a thousand lives, another how all the Africans slaughtered under 300 years of British slavery would cover 300 acres of English lawn (pp.29, 30).

<sup>22</sup> Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, p.18.

<sup>23</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, p.142.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Part II, p.153.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.158.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Part I, p.144.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., Part II, pp.156-57, 158-59.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.158.

<sup>29</sup> See particularly ibid., Part I, p.142 and Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, pp.8-10.

<sup>30</sup> See ibid., p.145 and Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, pp.19-20 (population). Birkett, p.142 (refers to Britons' 'forefathers savage lore'), Wilkinson, p.15 (Britons were once 'a northern clan' dwelling in woods) and 20-22 (particularly 'Are negroes savage? Britons once were so'). Mary also stresses Africans' capacity for development through commerce and education.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp.144, 142.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.143.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Part II, p.160.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp.159, 162.

<sup>35</sup> Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, pp.32-34.

<sup>36</sup> Vol. 2, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, p.146.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., Part II, p.154.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp.155-56 (addressing the Lords), p.161 (arguments of slavery supporters as 'a thread-bare cloak').

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.156.



<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp.157-58.

<sup>41</sup> For 'rights of men' and support for the French Revolution, see Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, pp.21-22.

<sup>42</sup> Quakers shared with most other Christian groups a belief that the welfare of the immortal soul was of far greater concern than that of the body. The *Narrative* of Martha Routh is interesting in this regard. She describes how, travelling in the ministry in America, she was assisted on a dangerous boat journey by 'three black men', 'who [were] slaves to their employer'. By calling them 'men', slaves only in relation to an owner described as their 'employer', she attests to their full humanity and refuses to acknowledge the validity of slavery. Their skilful efforts prompt her to consider 'their usefulness [. . .] to the community' if religiously and civilly educated and to express 'sorrow [. . .] that any should thus be continued in bonds by their oppressors'. Yet:

[her] soul travails, that neither they nor any of their race, may be bond slaves to sin; for as I have sometimes had to tell them, this would be the sorest of all evils, as the torture of the body can only kill that; but sin leads the soul into endless misery, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

See *Memoir of the Life, Travels, and Religious Experience, of Martha Routh*, pp.130-32.

<sup>43</sup> See Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, pp.146-48, address to the 'Hibernian fair'.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part II, p.154.

<sup>45</sup> Kate Davies's argument that abstention, by denying a 'luxury', was attractive to abolitionists because it disassociated women from 'corrupt' feminine consumption (unlike buying fashionable anti-slavery cameos or pictures), is a good one. However, I disagree with her statement that: 'The only display abstention necessitated was the entirely private display of feminine refusal at the domestic tea table'. See 'A Moral Purchase: Femininity, Commerce and Abolition 1788-1792' in *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. by Elizabeth Eger et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.133-59 (p.145). As Mary Birkett's poem makes clear, abstention (from sugar or rum) could be a very public, courageous, and transgressive, act for a woman, either within or outside the home, depending on the nature of the social occasion. For a fascinating discussion of sugar abstention and the female body in Mary Birkett's poem in the context of eighteenth-century consumer culture, see Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, pp.42-51.

<sup>46</sup> Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, p.25.

<sup>47</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part II, pp.161-63 (address commencing 'ye daughters of the sister isles', urging they abstain from drinking punch).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., Part I, p.147.

<sup>49</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, journal entry '11<sup>th</sup> Mo 5 1798', p.29.

<sup>50</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part II, p.155. Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, p.8.

<sup>51</sup> Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, pp.3-4. When writing of the years following Hannah More's contribution, she supports this by arguing that other women poets, while accessing More's formula, added variants connected with their own concerns or lives: the Falconar sisters and Helen Maria Williams evoke religious dissent, Williams and Letitia Barbauld elements of political radicalism (pp.154-61), Ann Yearsley (a working-class poet) endorses resistance in giving her fictional hero a voice in her text and possibly includes cloaked references to her own indigent situation and having cared for her starving mother (pp.170-72).

<sup>52</sup> Speaking of Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, Jennifer Breen (*Women Romantics 1785-1832: Writing in Prose* (London: J. M. Dent, 1996), introduction, pp.xxxiii-xxxiv) highlights how:

[they] employ concepts of enslavement as metaphors for the position of women. Wollstonecraft refers, in a general attack on established politics, to the 'abominable traffic' of the slave trade, adding, in relation to the legal status of women, that a 'more specious slavery [. . .] chains the very soul of woman, keeping her forever under the bondage of ignorance'. Moreover, in an extension of this metaphor of slavery, she adds, 'they [women] are made slaves to their persons, and must render them alluring that man may lend them his reason to guide their tottering steps aright'.\* [. . .] If, for a woman in marriage, her 'very being or legal existence [. . .] is suspended during the marriage',<sup>†</sup> then she is dependent on her husband's goodwill for her food, lodging and



general maintenance, and, like a child, she is not legally responsible for any of her actions in society. Her position is that of a slave, without the incumbency to perform menial tasks or heavy physical labour for long hours, and without the imposition of chains.

\* *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Vol. V, pp.214-15.

\* William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (1768), I, 15, iii, p.442.

<sup>53</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, p.141.

<sup>54</sup> Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, pp.16-17.

<sup>55</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, p.144.

<sup>56</sup> Wilkinson, *An Appeal*, pp.18-19. 'A Poem on the African Slave Trade', Part I, p.145. Here I differ from Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace's interpretation that the slave's 'domesticated status' in Mary Birkett's poem renders 'his situation less threatening to a white audience, which always had to consider the possibility of the slave's violent revolt' (*Consuming Subjects*, p.46). On the contrary, I feel that any passivity in the individual slave character featuring in her narrative is countered by the way, here, she countenances the possibility of slave rebellion.

<sup>57</sup> Midgley in *Women Against Slavery*, p.40, echoes James Walvin's assertion that 'though the [1807 Abolition] Act was the "function overwhelmingly of Parliamentary tactics and ploys" it was "the tactics and arguments of popular abolition" which "had served to lodge the issue securely with Parliament itself"' [*England, Slaves and Freedom*, pp.121-22]. Action by women, including the production of literature and boycotting slave produced goods, played a 'significant' part. With regard to abstention specifically, Midgley concludes that, even if it was rendered largely ineffective in damaging the West Indies sugar interest by other factors (for example, increases in European trade may have negated any reductions in British sugar consumption), the campaign awakened 'a sense of individual responsibility for slavery' and a confidence that it could be abolished, and gave women new opportunities for participation and influence.

<sup>58</sup> Letter, Mary Bewley to Mary Leadbeater, 9 January 1792. Transcript held at Quaker Museum, Ballitore.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary, a Fiction* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1788) – see *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1989), I, 1-74 (p.25).

<sup>60</sup> Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), in his essay 'On affectionate relationships', traditionally called 'On friendship' (1580), casts the ideal friendship, like that he shared with Étienne de la Boétie, as noble, spiritual, superior to any carnal tie. Paradoxically, though, he also asserts that if it involved the body, and therefore the whole person, 'loving-friendship would be more full and more abundant'. His remarks on why this is impossible with women owing to their incapacity for true friendship are well known but bear repetition. Essentially:

women are in truth not normally capable of responding to such familiarity and mutual confidence as sustain that holy bond of friendship, nor do their souls seem firm enough to withstand the clasp of a knot so lasting and so tightly drawn.

Less well known is his changed opinion later in life, when he formed a close relationship with his adopted daughter, Marie de Gournay le Jars:

If youth is any omen, her soul will be capable of great things one day - among other things of that most perfect hallowed loving-friendship to which (so we read) her sex has yet been unable to aspire: the purity and solidity of her morals already suffice for this and her love for me is more than overflowing, [. . .].

Rather egotistically, however, he bases his high opinion of her abilities largely on her capacity to appreciate his writing. See *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, ed. by M. A. Screech: 'On affectionate relationships', pp.205-19 (p.210) and 'On presumption', pp.718-52 (p.752). Similar derogatory views of women's capacity for friendship coupled with dismissive exceptions are found in Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-48). Lovelace says women's 'vehement friendships are nothing but chaff and stubble, liable to be blown away by the very wind that raises them' though 'My Clarissa has, if woman has, a soul capable of friendship. Her flame is bright and steady'. Morden similarly pronounces that 'Friendship [. . .] is too fervent a flame for female minds to manage' even if the friendship between Clarissa and Anna Howe is an exception. (See



Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa or, The History of a Young Lady*, 8 vols (Oxford: Shakespeare Head Press, 1930), V, 274-75 and VIII, 185.)

<sup>61</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p.121; Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: The Women's Press, 1985), p.120 [New York: William Morrow, 1981]. Ezell later adds that, 'By the end of the [seventeenth] century, no doubt in some measure the result of the models provided by Katherine Philips's verses, female friendship poems seem to be a feature of almost every woman poet's works' (p.124), while Faderman stresses how in the eighteenth century 'literary evidence of intense friendship (indistinguishable from romantic love) between women became abundant' (p.68).

<sup>62</sup> Lawrence Stone's hypothesis, in *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), that companionate marriage became the ideal in the eighteenth century has been influential, but it has since been much debated how far practice conformed to this ideal when legal, social and religious structures continued to uphold the traditional hierarchical relationship between husband and wife. Indeed, Mary and Nathaniel Card's marriage is an example of how companionate ideals, even amongst Quakers, did not fundamentally alter the woman's subordinate position.

The streams of thought I have identified in scholarship on women's friendships are not mutually exclusive. All four intersect in major studies such as Faderman's foundational *Surpassing the Love of Men* (though here friendship as mutual growth and support predominates) and Elizabeth Susan Wahl's perceptive *Invisible Relations: Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999). Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-century America', *Signs*, 1.1 (1975), 1-29, remains pivotal in its assertion of a life-enhancing sub-culture created by women bonded together in the 'private sphere'. Janet Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) concentrates on the novel and does not discuss 'romantic friendship' as such, but in summary perceives the functions of women's friendships in literature largely in terms of support and development (see particularly pp.413-14).

Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife*, pp.119-26 and Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (London: Women's Press, 1989 [1988]), pp.98-108, mainly exemplify the 'mutual growth' approach. Regarding women's friendships' relation to society, Tess Cosslett, in *Woman to Woman: Female Friendship in Victorian Fiction* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1988), finds that female friendships in Victorian novels 'nearly always operate to assimilate one or both of the women into marriage' (p.3), though her focus is also on women's negotiation of 'separate sphere' ideology as a source of female power. She quotes Deborah Goreham's study of conduct literature, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* ('Friendships between girls [. . .] were meant to foster femininity'), and Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women* ('schoolgirl friendships "taught girls intimacy and socialised them into the world of women") – see p.5. In fact, Vicinus also stresses the subversive quality of schoolgirl friendships - a social fear of 'excess' was always present. Centrally, she explores the interaction of 'distance and desire', arguing that it fostered identity through self-control. See 'Distance and Desire: English Boarding-School Friendships', *Signs*, 9:4 (1984), 600-22, and later adaptations in *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (London: Virago Press, 1985), pp.187-210, and *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. by Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey JR. (London: Penguin, 1991) [USA: 1989], pp.212-29. Emma Donoghue, *Passions Between Women: British Lesbian Culture 1668-1801* (London: Scarlet Press, 1993) shows conclusively that suspicion of the power and eroticism of romantic friendships always existed alongside their respectability. Margaret Anne Doody, 'Women Poets of the Eighteenth Century', in *Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800*, ed. by Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.217-37 (p.219) touches on issues of autonomy and identity, pointing up that the 'literature of friendship is also a literature of individualism'. Studies from a 'women's agency' standpoint incorporating new cultural and historical perspectives include: Susan S. Lanser, 'Befriending the Body: Female Intimacies as Class Acts', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32:2 (1998-99), 179-98; Carol Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714: Politics, Community, and Linguistic Authority* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Harriette Andreadis,



'The Erotics of Female Friendship in Early Modern England', in *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England*, ed. by Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.241-58. A fascinatingly original approach is Betty Rizzo's *Companions without Vows* which mainly explores issues of friendship and power in relationships between wealthy women and their female companions – becoming a companion was one occupation open to genteel women without financial support.<sup>63</sup> This can be illustrated by two recent responses to Faderman's work that seemingly offer contradictory interpretations. Wahl's criticism is that Faderman applies a narrow definition of 'sexual' behaviour leading her 'to argue that "lesbian" relations could not have existed before the nineteenth century and to place the intimacy of women prior to this period under the rubric of "romantic friendship", a term she coined to describe "women whose love relations were nongenital"' (*Invisible Relations*, pp.5-6), while Rizzo, having cited Faderman's text supportively on a couple of points, then adds in a footnote, that 'her work seems biased through special pleading, constructed to identify the romantic friendships of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women as essentially lesbian' (*Companions Without Vows*, p.279, note 38 (p.377)). For Wahl, apparently, Faderman denies lesbianism, for Rizzo she imposes it. Yet these criticisms are not as far apart as they seem. Faderman does not, in fact, claim that all romantic friendships were non-genital, but does assume the majority were on the somewhat dubious basis that:

women in centuries other than ours often internalized the view of females as having little sexual passion. Thus they might kiss, fondle each other, sleep together, utter expressions of overwhelming love [. . .] and yet see their passions as nothing more than effusions of the spirit. (*Surpassing the Love of Men*, p.16.)

Nevertheless, she still characterises these friendships as lesbian by adopting an impossibly wide definition of the term: '[. . .] if by "lesbian" we mean an all-consuming emotional relationship in which two women are devoted to each other above anyone else, these ubiquitous [. . .] romantic friendships were "lesbian"'(p.19). (A formulation that, by stressing ubiquity, implies that the majority of women were, in some sense or at some point in their lives, lesbian.) This double act - asserting that 'romantic friendships' were mainly non-genital yet attempting to reclaim them for a lesbian history – is partly behind Wahl's and Rizzo's differing perceptions. But another part resides in an incongruity in Faderman's approach identified by Liz Stanley – recognising that the 'meaning' of friendship is 'socially constructed' (and that friendships between women were sanctioned in the past 'as a central social relationship') yet assuming 'that "sexual" means the same things now that it meant in the late eighteenth [and nineteenth centuries]', and making 'a clear distinction between "the sexual" as genital acts [. . .] and "the non-sexual", thereby defining much erotic behaviour as non-sexual'. See Liz Stanley, 'Epistemological Issues in Researching Lesbian History: The Case of Romantic Friendship', in *Working Out: New Directions for Women's Studies*, ed. by Hilary Hinds, Ann Phoenix and Jackie Stacey (London and Bristol, USA: Falmer Press, 1992), pp.161-72 (pp.162-63).

These different interpretations manifest the struggle with terminology – with what we mean when we describe behaviour as 'lesbian' – that runs through feminist and lesbian feminist criticism. Faderman's inclusion of relationships she assumes to be non-genital within a lesbian paradigm shares aspects with Adrienne Rich's suggestion that virtually all forms of female bonding can be encompassed within a 'lesbian continuum' - a problematic concept that robs the term 'lesbian' of any genuine purchase and, as critics have pointed out, compromises the specific intensity of sexual love between women. See Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', *Signs*, 5:4 (Summer 1980), 631-60. Also Harriette Andreadis, 'The Sapphic-Platonics of Katherine Philips, 1632-1664', *Signs*, 15:1 (1989), 34-60 (pp.56-60); Martha Vicinus, "'They Wonder to which Sex I Belong": The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity', *Feminist Studies*, 18:3 (1992), 467-97, and introduction to *Lesbian Subjects: A Feminist Studies Reader*, ed. by Martha Vicinus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), particularly pp.2-3. Worthy of special note in relation to the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries is Lisa Moore's argument in "'Something More Tender still than Friendship": Romantic Friendship in Early-Nineteenth-Century England' in *Feminist Studies*, 18:3 (1992), 499-520, for the role 'female homosexuality played in the cultural imaginary of the period'. She reveals how 'tension' always existed between acceptable 'romantic friendship' and behaviours viewed as aberrant, and posits that this was instrumental in the establishment of 'bourgeois' 'private' and 'public' spheres. (pp.499-500.)



<sup>64</sup> Stanley, 'Epistemological Issues', pp.169-70.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.162.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.170.

<sup>67</sup> Wahl, *Invisible Relations*, pp.6-7. Recent criticism has veered toward readings based, not on whether subjects were or were not lesbian as physically expressed (something impossible to verify in this period through what women say about themselves as no women's writings as far as we know record physical lesbian sexual experience unequivocally, if we exclude the Greek Sappho, until Anne Lister in the nineteenth century – see *I Know My Own Heart: The Diaries of Anne Lister, 1791-1840*, ed. by Helena Whitbread (London: Virago, 1988)) or assumptions about what women's relationships actually meant to them (because we can never fully know), but on available evidence allowing examination of the meanings culturally attributed to same-sex desire and the way people interacted with, or negotiated, these. Wahl's insightful study avoids tendencies to view relations between women as rigidly sexual or non-sexual by positing two cultural models of female intimacy – sexualised and idealised – not to maintain them as separate entities but to interrogate their contradictions and the ways in which they informed one another. Another example is the way Andrew Elfenbein reads the 'historical significance' of the life of sculptor Ann Damer 'in terms of its uncertainties' (p.92) – using the way she responded to accusations of lesbianism, to explore contemporary interpretations of behaviour and reinstate an emphasis on human agency (see Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp.91-124).

<sup>68</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Anne, H-W & E Forbes & D Watson', 1793, p.188 (p.192).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 'To Eliza Forbes & S Watson', 1793, p.203 (p.204).

<sup>70</sup> See ibid., 'Elegy — Occasioned by the deeply lamented death of my long-lov'd & truly amiable friend H W Reynolds', p.258 (p.259 and note at end of poem).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 'To H W Forbes with the second part of my Poem on the African Slave trade', 1792, p.137.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 'To H W Forbes', 1787, p.37 and 'On being Presented with some Paintings By H.W.F.', p.114.

<sup>73</sup> The pseudonym 'Philomela', the nightingale, was a pun on Rowe's middle name – Singer. Her *Poems on Several Occasions* were published in 1696. Beside *Friendship in Death, in Twenty Letters from the Dead to the Living* (1728), her *Letters Moral and Entertaining* (1728-32) were very popular throughout the eighteenth century.

<sup>74</sup> Margaret Anne Doody, 'Women Poets of the Eighteenth Century', pp.218-21.

<sup>75</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Anne, H-W & E Forbes & D Watson', 1793, p.188 (pp.189-90).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., see particularly 'To Eliza Forbes', 1792, p.182 (Eliza's wedding), and 'To Anne, H-W & E Forbes & D Watson', 1793, p.188 (p.189 – 'th'historic tale').

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.192 – description of 'Miranda'.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 'To D= Watson', 1793, p.196 (pp.196, 197).

<sup>79</sup> See ibid., 'To D= Watson With Rowes Letters', 1793, p.198.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 'To Eliza Forbes & S Watson', 1793, p.203 (pp.203-04).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 'The tears of Friendship', 1793, p.199 (pp.200, 199, 201).

<sup>82</sup> See ibid., 'An Epistle to D= Watson', 1793, p.205.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 'A Contemplative view of Nature', undated, p.286 (p.287).

<sup>84</sup> See ibid., 'To H. W. Forbes, with a Locket of her Hair', undated, p.277.

<sup>85</sup> Wahl. *Invisible Relations*, pp.102-03.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 'A Contemplative view of Nature', undated, p.286.

<sup>87</sup> Trevett, *Women and Quakerism in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, pp.117-18; Mary Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement: or Miscellaneous Poems Moral and Divine, being Contemplations, Letters, etc, written on a variety of subjects and occasions*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Luke Hinde, 1761 [1702]).

<sup>88</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'Summerville', undated, p.284 (pp.284, 285).

<sup>89</sup> For another good example, see ibid., 'To D. Watson', undated, p.297, where Nature's scenes 'detach us from all & our high swelling thought/With ecstasy rises to Heaven'.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 'Response', undated, p.278.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 'An Address to the Almighty', undated, p.301 (p.302).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.301.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 'Response', undated, p.278. For discussion of 'The Attack on Sensibility' see Todd, *Sensibility*, pp.129-46.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 'Address to the Creator', undated, p.303.



## CHAPTER 8 THE LATER YEARS

The narrative that unfolds through the changes in Mary's writing after the late 1790s is in many ways one of limitation and withdrawal. As we have seen, the manuscript record strongly suggests that major changes in her poetry (thematically, for instance, a narrower focus on moral, religious, domestic and philanthropic subjects) and its seeming abandonment circa 1809 resulted from efforts to contain her literary imagination, to bring its expression into line with 'plainer' Quaker aesthetic values and more restrictive ideas about the most appropriate forms of creativity for her as a woman and a Friend. It is highly probable that this endeavour was intimately connected with life events, most notably the tragic loss of children. Mary continued to write religious letters however, a thoroughly approved literary form, initially included in the collection at the same rate of one or two a year, but increasing markedly in some later years.<sup>1</sup> The essential message of these keenly separatist texts is conveyed succinctly in the first of a sequence of remonstrative epistles to her wayward cousin, Kitty: 'it is not enough that the mind be open to [Him], it must be shut to all beside'.<sup>2</sup> (Significantly, this letter, only preceded by one dated 1799 seemingly related to the deist controversy and possibly another that might belong to 1797, was written in October 1804, just a few months after the first loss of a child.) Letter after letter enjoins withdrawal from the world: a few urge plainer, or less 'foolish', dress or conversation, many others the avoidance of any contact or pursuit that might be a source of contamination.<sup>3</sup> Yet, cast in ornate language, ritually formulaic and highly stylised, these letters are as much artistic constructs as the poetry she seemingly ceased to write. They are at once Quaker exemplars, essentially of the quietist stamp though they also contain evangelical elements, and literary artefacts of extreme sensibility. Moreover, the main function of this Quakerised sensibility is to encourage and intensify spiritual receptivity in others. Paradoxically, then, texts that document forms of closure and the denial of art are also a means toward spiritual openness and artistic expression.

We must be wary, then, of viewing Mary's story, in life or art, solely in terms of retreat. The purpose of this final chapter is to interrogate and qualify that narrative. Before embarking on this, however, it must be stated at the outset that Mary certainly did not incarcerate herself in a private, domestic sphere.<sup>4</sup> She continued, at least in the early 1800s, to concern herself with abolition, pressing the Dublin County Member of Parliament Hans Hamilton to vote against the slave trade in 1806, in a verse epistle probably addressed to him privately (a tactic suggested by the London Abolition

Committee in March). And she maintained a more public voice by publishing an obituary poem for Quaker elder Joseph Williams in 1807. It was in the later period of her life, and as a married woman, that she gained most recognition within her Quaker community and became most active in charity work (admittedly limited public spheres). This chapter is concerned to explore her writings, but we must not ignore what other sources have to tell us. Appendix 5 offers an account of Mary's roles in the Quaker women's meetings, and an idea of what they entailed, gleaned from Dublin Quaker records. It shows how her varied responsibilities and full participation in the life of the Society would have provided opportunities for personal growth (development of skills in public speaking, counselling, administration), for travel (at least in Ireland), and the exercise of some authority and influence – all of which must have conferred a degree of status and identity. We should not assume her life was entirely unfulfilled, even if we may suspect that, for a woman who dreamt of a place on the 'uppermost form', it was somewhat narrower in scope than she would have wished.

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### HEARTH, HOME AND PHILANTHROPY

Throughout her verse, Mary is much enamoured of two words dear to the discourse of sensibility. 'Rapture' and 'glow' delineate the forms of heightened sensation experienced in the joys of friendship, in communion with God or with nature, in philanthropic giving or domestic bliss. One useful way of describing the difference between her 1790s poetry and the majority of her later verse is to speak of a shift from 'rapture' and its counterpart, acute but tender sorrow, toward an overall effect of 'social glow' (to use one of her frequent expressions). The earlier poetry is one of extremes, of transport and woe. It abounds in the physical signs or emblems of sensibility: pangs, heartfelt or unbidden sighs, bleeding or throbbing hearts, and tears. It often speaks of a struggle with language, of its insufficiency to express either thought or feeling, whether the intensity of grief or the power of affection. 'Causing anguish to a friend' (1797) is such a 'poignant woe' that 'Not all the characters which language boasts/Can ever trace that suffering - I'.<sup>5</sup> Pangs and tears are present in the later verse, but fewer, and feeling is expressed in an altogether lower, more even key. Though some poems, for example one addressed to her (then future) husband in 1800 and one or two written at Milford, do gesture toward a struggle to find adequate expression, there is little further trace of this, one of sensibility's most recurrent tropes.<sup>6</sup> Neither is there much mention of the poetic process itself, of the workings of fancy or imagination, or any citing of a female literary model outside Friends like



Elizabeth Rowe. Indeed, the only other texts referred to are by Quakers: Job Scott, the Rhode Island minister, or John Marriott and Mary Leadbeater, Quaker poets.<sup>7</sup> Other absences include lyrical verse like 'Moonlight at Summer Hill', the solitary mystical experience voiced in poems like 'Response', and specific natural description (even in the clichéd manner of her earlier work).<sup>8</sup> Though she continues to agitate against the slave trade by writing to Hans Hamilton MP, she does not engage with other contentious public issues.<sup>9</sup> We find no challenges to male power as in 'A Petition [. . .]' or 'A Satire' against Fabricious, or suggestions for reform like the economic programme she proposed prior to the 1798 rebellion (admittedly in a prose piece) for maintenance of Irish stability through support for home industries and reductions in luxury imports.<sup>10</sup>

These absences make the later material seem bland, even mundane. It presents an unruffled surface, without apparent excitement, disturbance or conflict, an effect intensified by its conventional celebrations of social and domestic harmony. Female friendship remains central, but is characterised not by passionate intimacy, or emotional turmoil, like the earlier relations with Hannah or Debby, but by the 'social glow' of 'sweet converse'. It is comfortable and conducive to peace, inoffensive, its communications seemingly unaffected and easy. 'Sweet converse' may take place in the garden, or on a country walk, but another prime site is the fireside where 'grateful steams the teeming urn'.<sup>11</sup> This combination – conversation, the blazing hearth, and tea – is a scene, of course, that often features in contemporary literature evoking domestic bliss, free of the corruptions of city, trade or fashion. Davidoff and Hall draw attention to the passage in Cowper's well-known poem *The Task* (1785) which celebrates 'the cosy fire, the close fitting shutters keeping out not only wind and rain but the social disorder of the 1780s and 1790s [. . .], the convivial cups of tea, the comfy sofa [. . .], the "social converse" and the family group'. They also point to the popularity of Dr Nathaniel Cotton's poem entitled 'The Fireside'. As they put it: 'The family circle was seen as the source of comfort, the home and the fireside were the location and symbol of that warmth'.<sup>12</sup> Unsurprisingly, after her marriage in 1801 Mary devotes a greater proportion of her work (still mainly female friendship verse) to eulogising the connectedness of hearth and home – the base of affective bonds which extended, particularly for Quakers, well beyond immediate family to a network of other relatives, friends and visitors.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, contrary to appearance, this calm, unruffled surface is actually a product of tension and conflict. For the changes in her poetry cannot be explained simply as



reflecting her new life as a wife and mother, the departure of youthful enthusiasm, or even, as regards ceasing to challenge social hierarchies, that disillusionment experienced by so many people, initially enthused by the radical rhetoric of equality and human rights, who became increasingly conservative, and politically quiescent, in the years following the violence of the French Revolution - Wordsworth and Coleridge being the most famous examples. Such a revision of her political views is certainly relevant. It is clearly documented in a journal entry made in April 1805 after 'Parting with a servant [. . .] over whom [she] had lost [her] authority':

when I was younger how did I observe with abhorrance[sic] those social distinctions of rank which classed my fellow creatures above & below me, but now I see that those who want education, if they rule will also tyrannize & that equality is a chimera.<sup>14</sup>

There is a need for caution here, however, for this statement is more equivocal than it seems. The lower orders are not immutably so – all they require to become fit for government is education. And a year later, writing 'On behalf of the Injured Africans', Mary refutes, as radically as in 1792, any idea 'That Colour subjects man to tyranny'.<sup>15</sup> Non-white race or lower social class, then, do not, in themselves, entail subordination. All these factors are relevant, but they are not the whole story. For within the apparent tranquillity of her texts lie efforts to legitimise her poetry – to render it both religiously 'correct' (this is fairly straightforward) and socially 'correct' in gender terms (more complex because fraught with contradiction). These strategies will become clear on looking closely, first, at developments in her diction and, secondly, at the gender issues.

The 1790s verse is laden with classical allusions and elaborate poetic diction. Conventionally, the table is a 'mirth-inspiring board', Mary's poetic wings are 'unfledg'd pinions'. In *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* Irish women are 'the Hibernian fair' or 'Ierne's gentle daughters', pro-slavery sophists are named Lysander or Camillus, scoffers are guilty of 'Epicurean jests', and classical deities proliferate. In most other poems too, the sun is usually Sol or Phoebus, the moon Cynthia, the winds Zephyr or Boreas. Poems addressed to Debby or Hannah and her family, particularly, are replete with classicisms, especially conventions relating to poetic composition. In 'A New Years offering to her Friends Forbes' (1793), for example, Mary light-heartedly converses with her muse, one of the 'Heliconian maids' with 'noble minds but little store' because Mount Parnassus is so 'barren' that the only food, even for Pegasus, is laurel.<sup>16</sup> Such wit and humour is entirely lacking in her post-1800 verse, with the notable exception of the collection written at Milford Haven in 1804. Even an obituary



poem for respected Quaker schoolmaster (and verse-writer) Richard Shackleton speaks of his having 'drank of Helicon's sweet flowing stream'.<sup>17</sup> This wealth of classical reference and traditional diction shows her familiarity with classical mythology and poetic convention, and is surely indicative of a desire to prove her literary credibility – something that, from a Quaker perspective, could be seen as vanity.

In the course of the later verse we can clearly trace a reversal toward a poetry that is validated instead by the omission of classical allusion and complex diction. The few dated poems composed between 1799 and 1804 are mainly on loss (the deaths of Hannah Wilson Forbes and of Mary's sister, Jane Henrietta) or concern Mary's relationship with Nathaniel or motherhood. Some traces of the extravagant, more emotional, 1790s sensibility continue in these, as when thoughts of Nathaniel, as earlier of Debby, give rise to tender melancholy embodied in the 'heaving sigh' and 'trembling' tear, but classical myth is not deployed (unless we count mention of Aesop's fables in 'The Flies') – perhaps because the subjects did not readily lend themselves to it. Classical allusion is still plentiful, however, in an 'Inscription for a beautiful Mosshouse' (1803) where Pomona 'Pours her early fruitage round', and the 'shellwork' is 'Rescued from Lethean grave'.<sup>18</sup> The Milford Haven collection (1804) has very little classical reference, though amatory lines written to Gayer Starbuck on behalf of 'E.L' compare his dress sense to that of Proteus, and speak wittily of 'the wing'd Mercury which some call post'.<sup>19</sup> From summer 1804 (after the Milford visit and the death of little Nathaniel) to 1807, we find hardly any classicisms other than occasional reference to the poetic muse. 'To a dear Friend and family' (1804) expresses a hope that 'Boreas [may] to Zephyr resign', and 'To Castle Hall' (1806) fleetingly speaks of resting in the shade 'when by Phoebus' rays opprest[sic]', allowing 'free thought' to range 'in Classic lore'.<sup>20</sup> The anti-slavery appeal to Hans Hamilton (1806), in marked contrast to her 1792 poem, while it still deploys some high flown diction, contains but one rather inobtrusive classicism – rapacious slavers are dubbed 'the Harpy train'.<sup>21</sup> Finally, in January 1807, 'An Epistle to M[ary] Leadbeater.', Quaker 'muse of Ballitore', proclaims a manifesto for a simple poetry, devoid of pagan classicism, and elaborates on its functions.<sup>22</sup> After panegyrics to Leadbeater's 'peaceful vale' where rural scenes inspire her 'sweet and simple theme[s]' in contrast with the discord prevailing in town, and to 'the calm current of domestic life' where 'converse may inspire/[ . . . ] sparks of Wisdom's fire' (pp.396-97), Mary moves to the subject of 'Poesy' itself (p.398). Leadbeater's is ideal because it is 'artless', like the country, working people it portrays with so much pathos. Flowing gently and 'smoothly' like her river at Ballitore, its functions are to 'ameliorate', 'soothe' and 'calm',



to promote virtue and instruct by rendering knowledge attractive - to 'express/  
Lessons of Wisdom in poetic dress'. The style of dress chosen, however, is vital, for  
Mary cries:

Shame on the Bards, who mar thy beauteous face  
With Heathen lore to give thee Classic grace  
Who idly dream that fictions pompous art  
Refines the manners & improves the heart. (p.398)

This declamation effectively sounds the death knell to classicism in Mary's own poetry, even if the poem itself still mentions 'the Muses lyre', for no classical reference appears in subsequent dated verse.

This rejection is clearly inspired by a religious agenda. 'Heathen lore' is incompatible with a Christian poetry and, implicitly, belongs to pagan, not modern, times. Quaker charges against 'artificial' art forms (falsity, vanity, superfluity, ostentation) are neatly condensed in the phrase 'fictions pompous art' - 'pompous' meaning both 'pretentious' or 'unduly grand in style' and 'self-important' (*OED*). Crucially, 'Classic grace' is opposed to divine grace for it cannot 'improve', or heal, the heart. Part of a false taste tending to moral degeneration rather than regeneration, it is entirely at odds with any Quaker justification for poetry. And those who think otherwise (implicitly herself previously) are but idle dreamers – antitheses of practical, hard-working Friends.<sup>23</sup>

Even more interestingly, Mary's manifesto is gendered, for the stated purpose of this simpler poetry is to educate a female 'youth', primarily through sympathy, to 'Fulfil each duty of domestic life/The tender mother & the faithful wife' (p.398). When we look through her texts, however, we find that, unlike the condemnation of classicism, this statement is not an end-point or a marker for change. Of course, the ideological freight informing it surely permeates her work. If the ideal woman put others first and shone (or glowed) primarily (though not exclusively) in the private, domestic sphere, it is not surprising that Mary's later poetry as a whole is more 'other-related' and avoids challenging or political statement. Its offices are to serve: to heal and comfort not disturb, to uplift and edify rather than amuse, to celebrate domestic values at home and alleviate suffering abroad through philanthropic pleading, not to indulge the self. (The latter perhaps goes some way to explain the omission even of private mystical experience.) Curiously, though, given the educative aim announced to Leadbeater, she has little to say elsewhere about domestic duties or marital relationship, and offers no advice to young women. Surely, a poetry aiming to help girls become ideal wives and mothers should present itself and its author in keeping with that pattern. Certainly,



much of her work does reflect, and codify for other women, aspects of the ideology of domesticity that historians agree intensified in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries - the glorification of home as woman's proper sphere, to which she 'naturally' belonged by virtue of her soft, tender nature and where she could best exercise her gifts for care and nurture.<sup>24</sup> But what inspires her muse, what she chooses to celebrate most throughout her verse, is still female friendship and relationship. If she promotes those qualities society (and Friends) esteemed in women - piety, gentleness, humility, purity, faithfulness, a sense of neatness and order - by praising them in her friends, female kin and lady donors of charity, it is mainly in the context of friendship or shared female experience. And though she expresses love and tenderness toward her husband, it is in a tone no more affectionate than when addressing her friends, while the number of poems to other women far outweigh those addressed to him.

Indeed, even poems announcing her own domestic happiness are woven through patterns of female friendship. 'Seventh day night', which evokes the pleasures of precious time spent with the family, especially the children, on Saturday evenings after 'shutting up shop' in the warehouse - pleasures heightened by anticipating the joy and peace of First Day (Sunday) - is dedicated to Mary's new friend, Sarah Hoare.<sup>25</sup> The refrain 'I have a home' in the repetitive and rather sickly 'To D [Deborah] Robinson', echoes the words of this friend.<sup>26</sup> Another entitled simply 'Home' depicts the Cards' dwelling at winter twilight in snow, 'humble' yet the site of 'comfort', 'Peace and plenty' 'Purchas'd by [the children's] honor'd sire'. Her little boys eagerly await the tender father's return, and the poem culminates in their affectionate welcome for him and Mary's own thankfulness for her 'cup of blessing'. Its significant image, however, is that of the elm tree that stands sentinel beside the house, a marker for visitors and strangers. This beloved tree is a 'Precious emblem of affection' because, though its leaves have fallen, its 'sap' lies 'deep' if dormant 'in its root', to re-awaken when the 'Suns of friendship's sweet connection' 'return'. Only then will it be truly useful once more, its leaves again a home for many forms of life. This poem, then, while rejoicing in family love and a security only obtainable through patriarchy, also mourns a temporary loss of companionship over winter and, tellingly, asserts that serviceable connection can only be made under the auspices of friendship.<sup>27</sup> Other poems valorise a social, primarily female world, over the natural world. In 'To a dear Friend and family' (June 1804) the 'social enjoyments' her friends bring are more welcome than the arrival of spring, while 'To a Friend on her return to Town' (October the same year) conveys a similar, if somewhat reversed, message: the coming of winter, with its

cold winds and gloomy skies, is welcomed because it brings a loved friend back to Dublin. The trees may be 'leafless' and 'benumb'd' but she and her friends will not be affected for they will 'Glow with the warmth of sympathy' (p.368). A friend, we are told, combines the 'essence' of all 'Creation[']s beauties', and the splendours of the external world can only be realised in and through friendship: birdsong is not sweet if 'Unchoruss'd by the voice we love' (p.368), 'the treasures of nature & art' are 'vague' unless 'friendship' and 'love' invest them with beauty (p.364).<sup>28</sup> Hence Mary's friendship verse, while promoting domestic ideology, subverts its rhetoric on a number of levels by prioritising connection between women.

It is tempting to interpret this writing solely in terms of that branch of feminist 'separate sphere' theory that makes a case for a female sub-culture, a private sphere separate from the male-dominated public one, characterised by strong emotional bonding between women. Locating the origins of this female world culturally and socially in the segregation of the sexes in many areas of life and the support networks formed by women themselves at each stage of their lives (as daughter, maid, wife, mother, matron or widow), some historians have argued that women, far from being passive victims of an imposed domestic ideology, created their own rich and complex culture.<sup>29</sup> Such theories help us comprehend aspects of female experience, in many ways so radically different from men's, and how female networks enabled women to develop their own identity, status, and perspective. The problem, however, is that this private woman's sphere is envisioned as a closed world, into which women were born and lived, apart from men, with virtually no options beyond the domestic: 'Most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women lived within a world bounded by home, church, and the institution of visiting [. . .]. It was a world inhabited by children and by other women'.<sup>30</sup> As a formulation this does not readily allow for differentiation between cultural milieux, the varying gradations of public and private life, or the social spaces women and men shared.

Quakers were particularly idiosyncratic. Their conceptions of gender difference were displayed in customs that varied between communities, yet the sexes mixed relatively freely in social life. Men and women always sat separately at Meeting, but sometimes, mainly in America, partitions could be drawn across to divide them from one another for Business Meetings. Amongst some Pennsylvania Friends it was not acceptable for men and women to attend each other's deathbeds.<sup>31</sup> Mary's deathbed, on the other hand, rather resembled a theatrical event, attended over thirteen days by friends and relatives of both sexes eager to catch words of wisdom or insight from



someone, hopefully, about to enter the heavenly sphere of eternal joy.<sup>32</sup> The system of separate Business Meetings for men and women laid down by George Fox operated throughout the Quaker world – a system that can be seen as confining women to their traditional, supportive role, primarily catering for the needs of other women and children, or empowering them to manage their own affairs.<sup>33</sup> Yet provincial Quarterly and national Yearly Meetings were major social events, with large numbers of men and women Friends convening from considerable distances to enjoy, perhaps, the conviviality of mixed social gatherings as much as religious uplift. A constant round of entertainments took place between meetings for worship or business; mainly breakfasts, teas, dinners and suppers accompanied by ‘social converse’ in the homes, very often, of leading Friends. As Friends were unable to frequent public haunts such as theatres, balls or concerts, such homes were the hub of social life. Hospitality was much prized and an important component in the maintenance of a family’s status. Perhaps food, and the social rituals of the dinner table, assumed greater importance too when so many other social pleasures – cards, music and dancing – were frowned upon or forbidden altogether.<sup>34</sup> The table, and its mixed social world, was a domain where a woman could reign, on which she could place her individual stamp – witness Mary’s praise of Hannah Wilson Forbes after a social occasion as the ‘Queen of the feast! - its elegance - thy own’.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, a woman’s influence stretched beyond the home, again to varying degrees in different communities.<sup>36</sup> Ireland was remarkable for having so few men willing to take up the ministry in Mary’s period that it fell almost entirely to women. Ministers, of course, were a rather special category, speaking to both sexes in the Meeting House and, if they travelled, addressing mixed audiences in a variety of public venues. But it was not only the preponderance and high profile of Irish women ministers, but the extent of activity and time spent away from home by many Quaker women, that attracted criticism – for instance, in the narrative of disgruntled defector from Irish Friends, Sarah Greer.<sup>37</sup>

Although Mary’s writing originates within a primarily feminocentric set of social relations, this should not be read as evidence that she was confined to the home. Indeed, she may not have found much time to sit by her cosy fireside. There is no evidence she travelled in the ministry, but as she occupied positions of increasing responsibility within the women’s meeting structure and on associated committees, she would have attended meetings not only in Dublin but away from home, perhaps several times a year, maybe without her family - to Quarterly Meetings in provincial towns (Moate, Enniscorthy, Carlow, Mountmellick), sitting on preparative meetings like

Wicklow, visiting the Provincial School.<sup>38</sup> It must be considered what the commitments mentioned in her texts could have meant in terms, not only of time and energy, but of participation in realms outside the home. First, there are clear indicators that she participated in the family business: the mention of shutting up the warehouse on a Saturday, the financial awareness shown in her journal. It is frustrating that no evidence has emerged to enable us to be specific, but she may have spent a fair proportion of her time on the business premises, perhaps selling goods, arranging stock or book-keeping. It is not unreasonable to assume, therefore, that she would have interacted on a regular basis with the general public outside the Quaker community. The ground is firmer with regard to education, though, again, what her exact remit was is uncertain. She assumed significant responsibility for a school on the death of Hannah Wilson Forbes and may have run another of her own, though these could have been one and the same. Comments in her diary may both relate to the 'School and Repository', an establishment for poor girls funded by subscriptions mainly elicited by Hannah from rich patrons and, when these fell short, the sale of needlework produced by the girls at home. She was also closely connected with the General Daily Free School, seemingly the Quaker initiative for Catholic children in School Street, St Catherine's Parish, founded in 1798 – a project that would have brought her into contact with Catholic boys and girls from some of the poorer homes in Dublin and their families. (The success of this school led to the foundation for the Society for Promoting Education for the Poor in Ireland, later the Kildare Society, in 1811.) Each winter, from 1805 to 1807, she sought money for clothing the children from a benefactress named Elizabeth Dawson – usually successfully, as the appeal is twice followed by a poetic 'receipt'. The poems are interesting on two counts: the practical emphasis placed on securing the children's physical well-being (it was useless to attempt to feed their minds if their bodies were neglected), and their hints as to her own roles in purchasing items and as an educator. Any money donated 'we shall wisely apply', while she thanks Mrs Dawson for 'oft as we toil in the fields of the mind/Our path is made easier by thee' (my underlining).<sup>39</sup> It seems, therefore, that Mary's part in this philanthropic enterprise went far beyond dashing off a few poems, to teaching and administration.

Philanthropy was a rapidly developing sphere that all middle-class women could legitimately enter beyond the domestic. It should perhaps be called semi-public, for though it involved activity with others outside the home, this was mainly with other women in areas traditionally considered their province such as teaching, and helping the poor of their own sex. The situation for Quaker women was more complex in that,



for them, philanthropy was definitely not an 'optional extra' but a vital component in the make-up of the ideal woman Friend. Engendered in childhood through the inculcation of social responsibility and an ethic of 'usefulness', it was incumbent upon them and essential if they wished to gain respect within the Society.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the focus of their work could be somewhat different. Maria Luddy, in a recent study, argues for the development of two traditions in nineteenth-century Irish women's philanthropy: the benevolent and the reformist. The benevolent tradition (more 'dominant') was characterised by 'a desire [. . .] to do good within a specific organisation which limited both the scope and recipients of its charity', its participants being more concerned with the physical and spiritual wellbeing of the poor than looking for social causes. Quakers were often to be found in reformist groups which, conversely, tended to locate the causes of poverty in social structures (at least to some extent), and were therefore more inclined toward 'public' or 'political action'. Citing anti-slavery work as an example of this reformist consciousness, Luddy examines women's anti-slavery societies from the 1830s, finding that Quakers played a major role – most members of the Committee of the Dublin Ladies Anti-Slavery Society were Friends. She concludes 'that the reformist instinct was strong among Quaker women from the early years of the century and it was an instinct which they brought to bear on all their philanthropic work'. Many Friends later became involved in suffrage and other reformist movements with a political agenda.<sup>41</sup> Clearly, Mary's anti-slavery poems can be seen as early progenitors of the reformist tradition, while other work (for charity schools or female servants) probably belongs in the benevolent.

The split between benevolent and reformist traditions, between approaches that, implicitly, either uphold or challenge the existing social order, is not clear-cut, however. One important factor is Mary's awareness of the corrupting effects of poverty, individually and socially. In verses addressed 'To Poverty' itself, she again deploys the familiar tree imagery. Like birds abandoning denuded trees in winter, 'fair weather' friends soon desert those who lose their money (perhaps an oblique reference to the Cards' own situation as this seems to have been written circa 1805, the time of their major business crisis). The poem praises those who maintain moral principles in the face of destitution yet recognises that poverty, by impoverishing mind, heart and spirit, generally leads to the erosion of morality.<sup>42</sup> This has implications for a wider view of society, and even in her 'benevolent' poems we find Mary subscribing to the more radical, 'reformist' view that the roots of disaffection and crime lie in social deprivation. On the other hand, her thinking also has a conservative ethos, for she believes that ensuring a 'natural' hierarchical order best preserves social stability.

Contemporary literary criticism is revealing how works of sensibility, long considered apolitical, actually participate in economic and political discourses.<sup>43</sup> This can be illustrated in Mary's charity poems by examining how they participate in what we might call a currency of 'philanthropic glow'. She often refers her readers to the gains to be had from benevolence. In the language of the money market, donors are sure to receive back 'with interest large' whatever they choose to give. Benevolence helps secure a place in heaven and divine blessings in this life - peace, contentment and hope. It will be a source of comfort at death, but also in life because there is a particular delight in giving. Such kindness, we are told, reverberates back on the heart, imparting 'the thrill of mild rapture' – or 'glow'. This is more complex than the self-satisfaction felt after dispensing relief. With associated images of light and warmth, 'glow' comes into play throughout the process of appealing, donating, and receiving. Charity itself is conceived as a 'burning ray', or 'bright form', an aspect of 'Love Divine' that initiates pity in the human breast, teaching it to 'glow' with compassion - an eternal, guiding force issuing from and attracting to Heaven, yet fed by all creation.<sup>44</sup> There are some parallels here with the Quaker Inner Light. Mary's verses attempt to kindle this 'glow' already present in the heart – a 'glow' akin to physical pleasure in its effects for 'nought of all the joys of sense/Is sweeter than Benevolence'.<sup>45</sup> First she flatters the addressee as someone powerful and privileged. Wealth and status not only allow them to do good but confer a duty to help those less fortunate. They, as individuals, are compassionate, members of the special community of those who truly feel. It may even be claimed their exemplary qualities inspired the poem. Next, their sensibility is stimulated, often by depicting the sentimental subject, poverty's victim, in highly emotive rhetoric. Elizabeth Dawson is urged to 'See where their torn offspring are led', their 'tatter'd robes' and 'wet feet'.<sup>46</sup> Seeking a place for a chronically sick woman in the Incurable Hospital, the likely donor is asked to 'turn [their] eye' to where she lies paralysed, 'stiffen'd as with bands of death', yet with 'Two feeble infants' dependent on her and a distraught 'aged mother'.<sup>47</sup> If this is successful, the addressee's bosom 'expands' in sympathetic response, and so, hopefully, do their purse strings. Finally, Mary may write a verse of thanks to complete the cycle, which 'flows' back to the donor, describing the consequences of their generosity – the recipients' hearts glowing with gratitude, or a 'soft ardour' glowing in Mary's own breast. A manifestation of sensibility, 'philanthropic glow' is, in a real sense, physical – a pleasurable sensation – but also circulatory and connective in function, serving to link author, benefactors and the objects of charity or pity, to bring them into harmony with one another.



This is central to Mary's entire project, for she sees poverty and attendant vice as distorting 'the harmony of creation'. The founders and trustees of the School and Repository began their work, she says, because 'all appear'd unharmonized[,] misused'. They saw children growing up in want, their minds as neglected as their bodies, and so falling prey to vice. The radical perception that crime originates in social injustice, in poor environment and education, underpins Mary's work. Indeed, crime is how 'on Society the untaught throng/Repay with interest large their early wrong' (note again the commercial rhetoric). The children must first be fed and clothed but then their minds, like 'soil', must be prepared in order to receive the 'seeds' of industriousness and religion.<sup>48</sup> The aim, for girls taught at such a school, would surely be employment in shops or household service before, hopefully, setting up home and rearing their own children in the paths of hard work and virtue - thus taking up their rightful places in a 'natural' order. Society benefits through a reduction in crime and a supply of diligent workers. This thinking is explicit in Mary's appeal for an Asylum for Aged and Infirm Female Servants. Again, it goes against 'the Harmony of Creation' that women who work all their lives to free their mistresses for 'sublimar pursuits' and 'more exalted occupations' should end their days in want.<sup>49</sup> Privilege entails responsibility - the employing classes have an obligation to see to the welfare of those who serve them. And such care will reap its own rewards. As servants will require 'certificates of good conduct' to enter the Asylum, their greater 'fidelity & attachment' will amply recompense employers. The prospect of security in old age, then, will encourage them to perform their allocated roles more readily, aiding social cohesion.

Beside harmony, the other key word here is interest, with its commercial overtones. Not only are people paid back 'with interest large' according to investment or the lack of it (charitable donors receive benefits, an uncaring society suffers crime) but mutual interest, reinforced by ties of obligation and dependence, holds them together. These emphases on harmony and mutuality share much with conservative writers. Edmund Burke declared he loved order 'for the universe is order'<sup>50</sup> and, conceiving 'the People' as a unity operating under the 'discipline of Nature', he warned against political radicalism in the following terms:

when you disturb this harmony; when you break up this beautiful order, this array of truth and nature, as well as of habit and prejudice; when you separate the common sort of men from their proper chieftains so as to form them into an adverse army, I no longer know that venerable object called the people [. . .]<sup>51</sup>

Apposite too are Hannah More's remarks in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799):

Now it is pretty clear, in spite of modern theories, that the very frame and being of societies, whether great or small, public or private, is jointed and glued together by dependence. Those attachments which arise from, and are compacted by, a sense of mutual wants, mutual affection, mutual benefit, and mutual obligation, are the cement which secure the union of the family as well as of the state.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, 'philanthropic glow' works to strengthen this 'cement' precisely by promoting and reinforcing these kinds of mutualities. But a more radical discourse about rights is also present in Mary's text. For if crime and disorder form the interest with which the 'untaught' pay back their 'early wrong', then denying them education (the wherewithal to earn a living in their proper stations) constitutes an injustice. It follows that they have a right to expect this need, at least, to be met, and if it is not, unruly or unlawful behaviour is the understandable consequence. The 'Address to Hans Hamilton M.P.' refers to human rights explicitly. Africans are 'brethren' with 'freeborn rights', and to sue for these in Parliament, to help 'liberate what Heav'n created free', will be 'a glorious deed' on Hamilton's part, promoting 'Virtue's fragrant bloom' - its 'fruit' will 'enrich' him and its curative 'Balsamick influence' spread amongst peoples, it will 'bless[,] refine and harmonize our hearts'. Moreover, Hamilton's final reward will be a place in 'harmony divine', welcomed by those who though 'in Heathen darkness chain'd/ Yet true to Nature's inward Law remain'd'.<sup>53</sup> Thus, supporting the African's right to freedom serves a spectrum of interests – individual/international/social - and works to mirror a heaven harmonious in its inclusion even of non-Christians who follow the guide within, vouchsafed to all. The political ideological perspective informing Mary's rhetoric of harmony and interest, then, is not wholly conservative. Furthermore, in this rhetoric, and links with economics, she was drawing on ideas that already had a long history in the eighteenth century.

Gillian Skinner reiterates the stress placed by other critics on the need to be wary of seeing radicalism and conservatism solely in terms of 'binary opposition'. She quotes arch radical Thomas Paine 'echo[ing] [. . .] his ideological opponents' in emphasising "mutual dependence and reciprocal interest". For Paine, commerce, specifically, was 'pacific' in nature, a means toward 'the unceasing circulation of interest, which, passing through its million channels, invigorates the whole mass of civilised man'. (Mary, as we know, shared this positive view of commerce, although she was also aware of its exploitative propensities.) Skinner also points out that the 'rhetoric of



mutuality', so much part of the Burkean brand of conservatism, had long been 'the ideal of the sentimental community' as well as being 'common to the discourse of economic analysis'.<sup>54</sup> Ideas of 'universal harmony' were nothing new either. Andrew Varney quotes lines from Thomson's 'Autumn' (1730) in which natural elements 'A social Commerce hold, and firm support/The full-adjusted Harmony of Things' as an example of the 'idealising of the cosmos and of the social world of man [which was] one of the commonplaces of reflective writing in the first half of the eighteenth century'. Here, features in Nature 'work together in a way that can be called "social", much as that quintessential social activity "commerce" [. . .] operates'.<sup>55</sup>

The currency of 'philanthropic glow' must be understood in terms of this train of ideas whereby the world's health, natural and social, is promoted and supported by forms of interaction, either commercial or likened to commerce. Envisaged in terms of profit and exchange (donors receive 'glow' as reward for parting with their cash), it travels along conduits of feeling created through the text to form connections binding people to one another. If one purpose of this binding is to bolster established class distinctions and allegiances, this does not exclude other functions. Albeit to a limited degree, it still seeks to awaken social responsibility as duty, raises awareness of the condition of the poor, and hints at the social causes of poverty. An equality of experience, at least, is asserted in that 'glow' itself, as sensation, can be felt by rich and poor alike.<sup>56</sup> Most importantly from a Quaker point of view, 'philanthropic glow' works toward social harmony or peace by attempting to reconcile different sections of society through feeling and reducing potential for conflict through amelioration of poverty, sometimes at source, rather than by advocating either continuation of tradition or radical change.

This reconciliative aspect offers insights into the trans-denominational elements in Mary's philanthropy. For another of Luddy's key findings was that although, as elsewhere, religion inspired philanthropic endeavour, in Ireland it was along more rigidly denominational lines: 'Religion decided the membership of philanthropic organisations, it targeted those who were considered most in need, it divided and separated women's organisations from each other'.<sup>57</sup> This had a particularly adverse effect on education as proselytising formed the real impetus behind the foundation of many charity schools.<sup>58</sup> Undoubtedly, Mary would have worked alongside other Quaker women to a considerable degree, but she probably worked with women from other denominations, at least Protestant ones, for instance in anti-slavery work and the Asylum for Aged and Infirm Female Servants. More interestingly, there was a trans-

denominational component built in to some of the projects she was involved in. Her advertisement for the Asylum clearly states an aim 'to avoid the distinctions of religious denomination'.<sup>59</sup> The General Daily Free School was set up specifically by Friends to educate Catholic children without any denominational bias and seems to have represented a genuine effort to work across denominational barriers in the interests of children. Yet one wonders if the school could have been completely free of any element of proselytism, even if this was confined to pressing Protestant Quaker values, especially given the Quaker antipathy to 'papism' evident in Mary's account of 'the preservation' of Friends in the Irish Rebellion.<sup>60</sup> One way of looking at this work, fostered by the exploration of 'philanthropic glow', is to view it as seeking not to challenge received prejudice overtly, far less eliminate religious divisions, but to harmonise society by reducing some of the divisive effects of sectarianism such as uneven distribution of charity, or the disaffection of Catholics denied an education.

However that may be, two things are clear from this resumé of Mary's life and work after her marriage. First, that writings centred in feeling and emotion, produced and mainly circulated within the worlds of female friendship and philanthropy, still manage to address public issues and participate in political and economic discourse. Secondly, Mary was certainly no 'domestic parasite' and, although her primary networks would have been with other women within the Society of Friends, she interacted with a wider public, both men and women, in the course of a full, and probably at times, hectic, life.

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## THE ART OF EPISTOLARY INTERCOURSE

Mary's first extant dated letter, written in 1799 soon after her 'conversion' while Friends were still in the throes of schism, is apocalyptic in tone: 'this is a day in which Lord God is making a separation between the precious & the vile', when 'waves are dashing as against every foundation'. Help is at hand, however, for 'Divine unerring Wisdom' 'is affectionately uttering the compassionate language - "Come out from amongst them and be ye separate, & touch not the unclean thing and I will be with you"'.<sup>61</sup> God's peremptory Biblical injunction becomes the language of the heart, of empathic pity for His people. Yet it is strangely heartless. For to respond is to refuse empathy, to alienate oneself from 'the worldly', to turn them into the untouchable 'other'. The path to truth is paved with 'pure' intentions; to avoid contamination from 'vain discourses', 'tinsel or transitory amusements', 'circles of dissipation and luxury' – and those who



indulge in them. The essential problem, however, is one of discernment. To recognise the impure one must learn to see aright, to understand 'those things which make for thy peace'.<sup>62</sup> Mary's letters aim to help others gain this insight by nurturing the discipline, a turning away from 'folly' on the one hand and openness to spiritual guidance on the other. As such, they represent the ultimate subjection of language and her artistic gifts to approved purposes: peace, unity, moral improvement, and religious regeneration. Presented in a spirit of love and fellowship even when they admonish, attempting to tell 'the truth' as she sees it with absolute sincerity, even if unpalatable, they seek to express total concern for the other's welfare rather than the feelings or doings of the 'self'. (By 'the other' here is meant the individual addressed, though we should be aware that, however intimate the tone, other readers – Friends in the Meeting, family, descendants - may also have been in mind.) They appear, too, to be free of the tainted imagination, being enacted in the present, without imaginative digression, in direct response to a perceived need. Yet they also escape these prescriptions in numerous ways. If the religious letter as a form, and Mary's seemingly confining herself (eventually) solely to letter-writing, constitutes a safe space in which to write that rather resembles a well-hedged garden, it is still an elaborately cultivated one, adorned with the flowers of one discourse seemingly not rejected as vain – sensibility. And just as the creation of a garden exhibits the gardener's art, Mary's letters display her skills in the art of writing 'the feeling heart'.

The retention of sensibility is, in fact, imperative because it promotes that 'feeling sympathy' which validates and enables her writing. Almost all the letters claim origin in sympathy for 'the expression of feeling sympathy has a tendency to strengthen & encourage the best life & therefore ought not to be withheld when freedom is allowed to impart it'.<sup>63</sup> In an opening formula repeated in letter after letter, sympathy justifies her freedom in addressing the other, her intrusion into their space to hearten or advise, exhort or upbraid. Most affect spontaneity, signaling sincerity. She claims to be voicing ideas immediately as they arise, being 'induced' (this inducement overcomes her unwillingness) 'to pour forth the effusions of my mind'. Her 'thoughts flow into expression' or are 'thrown before' the reader.<sup>64</sup> An abundance of dashes and lack of full stops intensify this effect, conveying a 'breathless' quality. These are, of course, all features of the literary style of sensibility, more specifically what Janet Todd, speaking of Richardson's style in his epistolary novels, has called 'a typographically excited mode using a plethora of emphatic and repetitive devices' and, as she also draws attention to, a manner that Richardson, in his preface to *Sir Charles Grandison*, calls 'writing "to the *Moment*, while the Heart is agitated by Hopes and Fears"'.<sup>65</sup>



Mary's cares, however, are for the other, and her communication often the expression of a spiritual drawing toward them, or a concern, experienced in moments of solitude or silent worship. She is at pains to stress to a cousin, for instance, that she 'wrote the above this morning by candlelight, for my mind was & is turned towards you in near affection'.<sup>66</sup> To someone identified only as 'W.A.', she expresses 'the secret thoughts which impressed my mind as it was turned towards thee in the hour of silent waiting'.<sup>67</sup> She invokes intimacy, not just between two people on matters only they have access to, but by identifying with the other. Sometimes she feels into their inner life in a manner resembling the Quaker minister's ability to 'speak to states' - to address an aspect of someone's spiritual condition at a given moment. She may, for example, assert her belief that God is just now extending a unique opportunity to them for spiritual renewal, called 'the day of visitation'. (In the Quaker theology promoted by Robert Barclay, this is a moment in the life of each individual that affords a singular opportunity for response to the Inner Light.) This special dispensation may be something they are unaware of, a secret she imparts, while at other times she writes to intensify a knowledge she is sure they already possess.

Although not all her epistles are to family or friends (though the majority are), they attempt to perform the office of friendship - seeking 'to promote the best interest of those we love'.<sup>68</sup> Even the censorious 'To a servant (at parting)', written to 'poor O' whose misdemeanours are but hinted at, is signed 'thy injured friend'.<sup>69</sup> Like sensibility itself, 'true' friendship is the domain of those set apart by a special sensitivity: it is 'a felicity as inexplicable to the worldly minded, as colours to a blind man or sounds to a deaf one'. It can only be realised fully, therefore, in reciprocity, with others who share this sensitivity. A cousin is told that steadiness and sincerity differentiate the friendships of 'the Children of Religion' from those of 'the giddy circle'. 'The voice of a true friend' is 'soothing', its 'province' is to support in suffering, intensify joy and, most importantly, point 'the finger of Hope to a land of Purity'. Moreover, such celestial friendship cannot dwell 'in an impure mind', for it is 'a light which burns not in tainted air'.<sup>70</sup> As in the philanthropic poems, ideas of 'current' and 'flow' denote sympathetic connections. One 1805 letter arises in thinking of the other, whereupon 'the current of Sympathy' with which they comforted Mary in her distress flows back toward them in theirs. Most interesting, however, is its emphasis on 'reciprocation - the priviledge [sic] of friendship, which alternately receives & communicates the sentiments of each' that also constitutes the 'vital sap which circulates from the root Christ Jesus', making His followers feel one body with him and one another. 'Reciprocation', in this formulation, actually becomes the uniting, life-giving blood of



Christ. Furthermore, it enables Mary to see, and thus read aright, 'the depression visibly engraven' on her friend's face.<sup>71</sup> 'Reciprocation' is not mentioned often specifically, but it is delineated elsewhere in terms of pleasure and refinement, thereby linking it to the aesthetic.<sup>72</sup> In these various meanings, it is central to understanding the letters as a whole, for they too, like other documents of sensibility, are dependent on 'reciprocation' – on modes of feeling exchange between author and reader – if they are to be read aright.

Problematically for Mary, however, those with whom 'reciprocation' is truly possible are few. Concepts of reciprocity, and sympathy, are bound up with notions of being set apart, religiously and secularly. Reciprocal feeling in the other is assumed by appealing to a shared exclusivity based on religious separatism (membership of the Quaker community) or common ownership of a developed sensibility (the other is also one of the few capable of refined and tender feeling) - usually both. The sympathetic project becomes fraught with contradiction. One quality of the pure in heart, for instance, is to think evil of no one, yet the very act of discerning between 'the precious and the vile' involves viewing those outside the fold as depraved or disgusting. More complex tensions arise from anxieties that the other, if not possessing the facility for reciprocity and therefore unable to comprehend messages communicated under its aegis, might not receive her letters in the spirit she asserts they are written in. A letter written in 1814 where she trusts (or hopes) her friend 'wilt receive it in the love which drew it forth' is typical of many.<sup>73</sup> Most interesting in this regard is the series of letters 'to Kitty' or 'CB'. Cousin Kitty (Catherine Birkett) breaks most of the Quaker codes for living: she gets into debt, eschews plain dress, and desecrates 'First Day' (and rules of feminine decorum) by gallivanting about with young men on a Sunday without a female chaperone. Kitty 'knowest the difference between good & evil, clean & unclean', she 'knoest[sic] the Father's will' but 'doest it not'.<sup>74</sup> Yet Mary's final letter, following Kitty's marriage outside the Society, still, effectively, bids farewell (if not actually casts her out) by reference to feeling (interestingly framed in relation to motherhood – a point that will be picked up on later). After citing 'the bond of strong affection which rivetted my soul to thine' as apology for 'this intrusion', she wonders whether she should 'give way to [her] feelings' in writing at all as Kitty's 'levity' may lead her to show the letter to others. She compares the 'anguish' Kitty has caused to:

the death of one of my own children, which pervadeth my mind as the intertwined fibres of our tender love broken - if for one moment thou wouldst feel as I feel, thou wouldst not lightly treat nor foolishly expose these lines.<sup>75</sup>



Kitty has not only literally left the fold, she is disqualified for inclusion by virtue of her insensitivity (marked in part by an inability to appreciate Mary's epistles). The earnest appeal for her to feel as Mary does implies she may not be able to - yet still begs her to try. Mary may fear ridicule but, just as importantly, circulating and mocking her letter would fracture the reciprocal basis on which the letter of sensibility depends. This basis is not just one of intimacy, but of interactive connection, created by adoption of a style that relies, if it is to be effective, on the reader's recognition of its conventions, on forms of religious and aesthetic appreciation that work to strike that vital chord of reciprocity.

The letters repeatedly call for plainness and simplicity yet, somewhat incongruously, this style works through excess, elaboration, even artifice. Mary may often apologise for her plainness of speech, but this relates to her candour - certainly not her language which, on the contrary, is ornamental, overblown, even bombastic at times. It is as if she is in love with language for its own sake, constantly reaching toward overstatement, going for maximum effect. Characterised by highly wrought diction ('terrene' is preferred to 'earthly', 'fostering tenderness' to 'kindness', while sickness is 'languishing on the pillow of debility'<sup>76</sup>), and liberally dotted with superlatives ('unutterable', 'ineffable', 'inestimable', 'unspeakable'), her style is verbose, sometimes pompous. 'Is happiness dependant', she asks, for instance, 'on the fluctuating concomitance of exterior circumstances[?]'.<sup>77</sup> A melodramatic, even Gothic-like, note is struck in well-worn clichés: death is 'the pale faced messenger', she and an uncle 'are both [. . .] hastening to the awful confines of the grave'.<sup>78</sup> Another feature is a patterning of words or phrases creating an oratorical effect akin to preaching. Perhaps the simplest example is frequent recourse to a repetitive, tripartite phrasing structure: 'he chaseneth[,] he purgeth us, he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth', we must attend 'to those secret checks of conscience - to those heartfelt reproofs of instruction, to those secret admonitions'.<sup>79</sup> Despite this verbal excess, the characteristic trope of sensibility largely lost in her later poetry - the inadequacy of language - reappears in full force: she is 'strait[e]ned for want of expression', unable to 'communicate' her 'feelings'.<sup>80</sup> Throughout there are innumerable uses of the image of the heart as the emblem or locus of feeling. This array of devices ensures that her letters display themselves as artistic constructions, artefacts made in a certain style according to a set of literary conventions. One effect of this style - a surfeit of words and embellished diction combined with a stated struggle for language, constant reference to the heart - is to build up a sense of acute emotion exceeding the power of words to convey. In its patterning and rhythms, and a tendency to use words for aesthetic effect rather than



their meaning alone, it evokes responses rather similar to those invited by poetry. It is not surprising, then, that these prose letters demonstrate some of the features Jerome McGann has revealed as characteristic of 'the poetics of sentiment and sensibility': they 'operate within determinate rhetorical conventions [. . .] like any poetic style', Macpherson in his Ossianic poetry (if we use this as a straightforward example) 'treats language as a dynamic and volatile order, more performative than referential', his 'environment exploits the sensational and aesthetic features of words'. McGann argues that 'writers in the languages of feeling and the heart' used language not as a conceptual tool, a vehicle for conveying ideas or information, but rather as an 'affective' apparatus.<sup>81</sup> And Mary's letters do not impart facts, expound theories or describe events (this is also true of her journal and is partly Quaker convention), but work almost entirely in and through the emotions.

A key component is their imagery. Beside imagery of water ('the polluted streams of Babylon', 'the still waters of life') and warfare (fighting the good fight between flesh and spirit - quakeristically, building defensive walls against the Enemy or 'little foxes', biblically, becoming 'polished shaft[s] in [the Lord's] hand',)<sup>82</sup> there are imageries of light, of the garden, and, connected to these, of the heart. The garden enclosed with its protective hedge is defensive, but has 'enriching soil'<sup>83</sup> for it is also the inner garden, or garden of the heart, where we experience a foretaste of paradise, 'gilded' by the Light of Christ Himself, the Sun of Righteousness, so that we, His flowers, can bloom. For a brother greeted as 'a flower in the garden of God', Mary desires 'a dwelling in the quiet center [. . .] where the pure rays of the Sun of Righteousness sweetly [. . .] vivify, fructify & cause to bring forth the plants of his right hand planting'.<sup>84</sup> The Son of God is 'manifested' in his own 'inward temple' of the heart, out of which 'there is no acceptable worship', where 'we may experience the most delightful enjoyment of himself not imaginations: ahl but happy realities'.<sup>85</sup> The 'garden' and the 'temple of the heart' are metaphors for the site of inner religious experience, where we learn and grow through feeling for the only way to 'an increase' in 'the Divine principle' is 'by faithfully following what we feel made known', obedience to the leadings of the inward teacher manifested in the heart.<sup>86</sup> And what is discovered in the heart, in attentiveness to the Light, is God's beauty: '[He] will be to thee a diadem of beauty', and His face 'is comely'.<sup>87</sup> The 'realities' of experiencing the divine presence may be differentiated from false 'imagination', yet they are cast in terms of aesthetic pleasure and the path to them is signalled through imaginative forms – the images and literary devices of the text.



Much of Mary's language and imagery is in the Quaker quietist tradition: we must yield to the 'drawings' or 'requirements' of 'the Inward Monitor', die to the self's 'propensities', cultivate 'indifference to externals' and a receptive passivity to allow the Seed within to grow. The Lord's Sabbath is not confined to 'First Days' (Sundays) but is the experience of God's rest created in the human heart, in a habit of silent waiting, even amidst daily occupations. The letters are ideologically quietist in their emphasis on suspension of mental activity to allow operation of God's spirit and their suspicion of rational thought, and, specifically, Quaker quietist in promoting 'the discipline' and a fear of worldly taint. But Mary lived at a crossroads when the orthodox quietism of the Society in the eighteenth century was giving way to what was become the evangelical orthodoxy of the nineteenth. Her unbounded admiration for the American evangelical David Sands and friendship with Susanna Hill, who accompanied Mary Dudley, a minister who converted from Methodism, have already been mentioned. This co-existence of religious loyalties is not irreconcilable. First, the categories of quietism and evangelicalism may not have held meaning for her (the term 'quietist' only came to be used subsequently). It is quite possible that she, and many other Friends at this time, engaged with whatever they considered valid or relevant from both religious environments without concerning themselves about incompatibilities. Secondly, dissension was not so much between quietists and evangelicals as between freer thinkers influenced by liberal or deistic thought and the more orthodox. As this thesis has shown, in rejecting deism Mary was aligning herself with the emerging Quaker orthodoxy. Thirdly, quietism and evangelicalism shared an experiential rather than intellectual approach that could meet Mary's needs for a living faith, its well-springs located in an emotional, intimate relationship with God – a relationship that deism, with its vision of a supreme being removed from His creation, was unable to offer.<sup>88</sup>

Interestingly, Ted Campbell includes quietism and evangelicalism in his fascinating study of what he calls 'religion of the heart movements' – cultural religious traditions based in a 'form of religious life that stresses personal encounter with the divine through affective experience'. Campbell does not discuss quietism and evangelicalism within Friends, but sees Quakerism itself as 'represent[ing] a radical, but in a sense a logical, extreme of the "religion of the heart": with the heart as the center of religious life, all external observances, institutions and forms became strictly secondary'.<sup>89</sup>

To configure the 'language of the heart' against the 'religions of the heart' is outside the scope of this thesis, but there is just space to gesture toward one essential connection - the way in which both are forums for experiential learning - by briefly linking Campbell's work on affective religion with McGann's on sensibility. Campbell



points out that 'The concern for valid sources of the human knowledge of God is evident in Fox's own quest for knowledge of God, and his stress on the "Inner Light" that Christ gives to the individual'. He describes how early Friends 'developed an epistemology in response to [their age's] crisis of assurance, [. . .] grounded in an individual's direct (unmediated) knowledge or experience of God', and compares Barclay's 'subordination of Scripture to the immediate testimony of the Spirit' to the way that 'the scientists and philosophers of [his] century had subordinated traditional authorities to experiential knowledge'.<sup>90</sup> It was shown when exploring Mary's 'deist' phase that divisions between late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century Friends lay in just this issue – the degree of authority accorded to scripture and to the spirit, exemplified in differing emphases drawn from Barclay. Put simply, 'liberals', more often of a quietist tendency, stressed the secondary nature of scripture, while 'conservatives', tending to move toward evangelicalism, emphasised its 'excellence and certainty', though derived from the spirit. For both, however, spiritual knowledge was still gained experientially, through the Inner Light – even if for evangelicals, that Light could not be incompatible with a more literal interpretation of the Bible. McGann argues convincingly that for 'writers of sentiment and sensibility', the languages of classical learning, of formal education, were inadequate. The language they created instead, the affective language of the heart, charts a different route to knowledge, one in which people learn in process, through feeling.

[Their writings] worked their revolution by developing new and non-traditional modes of expression – styles that were the dress of their new thoughts. These new thoughts [. . .] assume that no human action of any consequence is possible - including 'mental' action - that is not led and driven by feeling, affect, emotion.

In the world of Ossianic poetry, for instance, he shows how: 'Its language builds knowledge by developing sympathetic relations, not by labelling, storing, sending, and receiving data'.<sup>91</sup> 'Religions of the heart' and 'the language of the heart', according to Campbell and McGann respectively, forge non-rational, experiential paths to knowledge through feeling. Long considered antithetical to the rational empiricism of the Enlightenment, they are actually related to it in this primacy attached to experience (and perhaps in the need for 'proof' in personal verification).<sup>92</sup> Importantly here, both offered unprecedented opportunities for participation by women. Women were prominent in most 'religion of the heart movements': Quakerism, some Methodist groups, continental quietism, Catholic forms such as devotion to the sacred heart. Campbell does not expand on why, other than to link this to the growth of the bourgeoisie and, secondly, separation 'from the power structures of the sacramental



system',<sup>93</sup> but surely it also owed much to the empowerment conferred on individual members of faiths where the heart in each person, rather than status or learning, validates spiritual knowledge. And sensibility, as a locus of tenderness, sensitivity, and emotion inextricably linked with ideas of the feminine, the domain of feeling experience rather than academic learning, offered women particularly a means of artistic expression without compromising their femininity.

These letters, with their strangely heavy blend of sensibility and Quakerese, are surely vehicles of self-expression rather than self-denial. Within their narrow confines, Mary still finds scope for her joy in language, a place where she can revel legitimately in the luxurious foliage of verbal extravagance, retaining (or regaining) some aspects of the fuller-blown sensibility that characterised her earlier poetry. For although classicism, of course, remains anathema, intense emotional affect, elaborate diction, a stated struggle for language, expression of intimacy and of the mystical, all appear in fresh guises. The letter provides another arena for re-deploying familiar writing techniques and practices, displaying her skills in the idioms of sensibility and quietist spirituality. Writing at odds with Quaker injunctions against luxury and superfluity is seemingly sanctioned within these accepted traditions, these valid ways of reaching the heart. Inescapably, while seeking to meet others' needs Mary fulfils some of her own desires for artistic and emotional expression. Though she casts imagination as an unavailing foundation - worldly desires are but 'hope[s] built on imagination which never will be realized'<sup>94</sup> - she herself cannot forego indulgence of her own literary imagination.

Inevitably, too, the letters, like autobiography, also provide a theatre for projecting desirable aspects of the self. Mary creates her persona by assuming multifarious roles in relation to others: comforter, counsellor, adviser, censurer, all of which belong to the parts of the minister or spiritual teacher, and of course, the 'true' friend. Along with her justification in sensibility, we need to consider what enabled Mary to admonish others, men as well as women, so freely. For although the letters' essential functions can be encompassed within three overlapping headings - comfort, encouragement and remonstrance - remonstrance certainly predominates. Some authority could have derived, in part, from her roles within the Meeting. Overseers, for instance, shared responsibility for pastoral care which, in practice, often meant looking into infringements of discipline, so she might have been asked to write to some individuals. But another role she casts herself in is far more relevant - that of the mother. For the ideal mother not only embraced all of the roles listed above in some sense, including that of first, and best, friend, but did not shrink from her awesome responsibilities for



the moral and spiritual development of her charges. Mary describes her feelings toward Kitty as 'truly maternal', so that 'I should hardly be clear of thy blood if I forebore to admonish thee'.<sup>95</sup> Seeking to reconcile a mother and daughter, she speaks as one mother to another: 'we mothers are [. . .] accountable for the discharge of the important duties of our station & that we guard from harm the susceptible minds of our children'.<sup>96</sup> These stratagems employ the contemporary construction of motherhood as woman's supreme and sacred task to justify the extension of influence beyond her immediate family. Perhaps more influential, though, was an older Quaker image, that still tied in beautifully with a later sensibility. Her sister was 'early visited' spiritually, Mary says, in order to 'raise thee up a Mother in Israel', able to:

give to him or her that needeth not only a cup of [. . .] pure unsullied water, but also often to administer of the wine of the Kingdom – which should comfort and strengthen, animate and encourage . . . thereby experiencing the truth of that sentence "It is more blessed to give than to receive".<sup>97</sup>

The 'mother in Israel', Phyllis Mack explains, was a name for the 'archetypal female Quaker', initially women in the early movement who, though they might also preach or prophesy, sustained the religious community through their organisational skills and spiritual mentorship (the aspect Mary emphasises). Mack continues:

No Quaker woman ever described her activities in terms of a desire for self-expression, least of all the selfless, nurturing mother in Israel. Yet it was in her role as mother in Israel that the Quaker woman came closest to expressing her own, self-generated moral authority and personal talent. For just as Quaker models allowed men to view their prophetic activity as a direct reflection of an Old Testament archetype, so the image of the mother in Israel allowed women to view both their domestic activities and their moral authority among Quakers as emanating from an equally powerful biblical archetype.

The image conferred authority 'to offer moral and personal advice to men as well as women', even to 'chide' or 'admonish'.<sup>98</sup> Mary, of course, never calls herself a 'mother in Israel' – that would be self-glorification – but the image surely informs her construction of Quaker femininity and therefore of her 'self'. Her formulation of it stresses selflessness – giving not receiving - yet empowers a woman to assume a priestly role (to administer, spiritually, the sacrament of communion) and to speak authoritatively on God's behalf to either sex. According to Mack:

The authority of the mother in Israel [also] derived from the Quakers' vision of marriage as a union of spiritual equals, men and women restored to the state of Adam and Eve before the Fall – that is, before human disobedience created the need for relationships of subservience and oppression.<sup>99</sup>



Yet (as this thesis has shown) over a century later, Mary's major struggle, the one that perhaps most affected her sense of self and its expression in text, her creativity, was with the requirement to obey her husband. It seems appropriate to end this thesis, then, by looking at Mary's last extant piece of writing, a letter to him written on 16 August 1817, in awareness of her impending death, exhorting him to vanquish his own inner demons.<sup>100</sup> For Nathaniel had 'contracted a sore malady of soul' - certainly a falling away from faith, or at least the religious standards Mary set store by. There are hints, though, of a more tangible malaise – problems she could not help but share as his partner. Nathaniel was later disowned for 'drinking to excess', so his struggle may well have been with, to use a colloquialism, 'the demon drink'. But what is to be made of Mary's extraordinary text that reproves him in the same manner she adopted for letters to recalcitrant Friends, that bitterly regrets his departure from 'the straight & narrow' yet sympathises with his sorrows, full of tenderness for the 'beloved & chosen companion of [her] life'? Did she hand this document to him herself or did she leave it for him to discover, perhaps after her death? Did she feel she was fulfilling her last service to him as his helpmeet and dutiful wife or was she attempting to harangue him from beyond the grave? Or was it confided to her journal alone? These questions can only be speculated on. What her text does tell us, however, is that Nathaniel's error, rather like her own, had been to take a 'flight as in the summer, into a vain imagination'. His mistake was to have believed that 'the light & the life' vouchsafed to him on his Quaker conviction before their marriage would be his forever, without realising that 'this whole life is a [. . .] warfare' for the eternal crown. A pair of opposing delusions held him fast: a false confidence in taking his own salvation for granted, forgetting his frailty and so failing to resist his 'soul[']s enemy' and then an apprehension, equally false, that his sins were 'too great', leading him to resist God's power to save. Care must be exercised over imposing simplistically gendered interpretations on Mary's language (her letters sometimes employ masculine imagery in addressing women and vice versa) but it is interesting that to obtain the same heavenly goal, Mary, after the loss of her first daughter, had to cultivate entire passivity and resignation while here she begs Nathaniel to accept God's help to access masculine attributes - strength and determination. The final irony, however, is that while she struggled in their marriage to render him obedience, her last epistle demands that he listen to her voice preaching salvation through 'obedience' to the inner 'manifestations' of Christ, a voice confidently asserting its own access to truth.

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<sup>1</sup> Only one dated letter exists in the collection prior to 1804 (it is dated August 1799), though one undated letter was probably written around 1797. There are then only one or two from



each year until 1812, apart from 1805 (the year of a dramatic switch from poetry to prose) when there are five, possibly six as one undated letter probably belongs to that year. In 1812 there are six, possibly seven (again if one undated is included), only one in 1813, six in 1814, four in 1815, reducing again to two in 1816, then three in 1817. Of course, the letters included in the manuscript collection may only be a proportion of the total number of letters written. Still, there does appear to be a tendency to turn more readily toward this form in later years.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 3, 'To: C . . .', '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 21 – 1804', p.103.

<sup>3</sup> In Letter 6, 'To C B', '6<sup>th</sup> Mo 20<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.108, Mary says 'it is a very unusual thing' for her 'to press any one' to take up the Quaker plain dress as she does here (presumably she adhered to it herself, though she might only have adopted it fully after her 'conversion'). Elsewhere she urges plainer dress and speech together ('truth requires that we should put away all foolishness of dress as well as conversation, that we should be seperated[sic] in appearance & in reality from the spirit & temper of the world' – Letter 29, 'My beloved friend', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1814', p.137 (p.138). But she is most concerned, as ever, with language - the need to avoid 'idle talk' or 'trifling conversations', sometimes seen as debilitating as well as contaminating ('let us avoid, as snares of death, that company and conversation whose delusive influence steals away our inward strength' – Letter 17, 'To Elizabeth Rebecca Card . . .', '2<sup>d</sup> Mo 1<sup>st</sup> 1809', p.120 (p.121).

<sup>4</sup> A central concept in women's history has been 'the cult of domesticity', first known as 'the cult of true womanhood'. These terms have been deployed to describe the ideology of separate spheres whereby women's place and influence was defined in the private domain of the home as opposed to the world of public life inhabited by men. The progress of this ideology is usually linked to women's withdrawal from economic life in the wake of increasing industrialisation. A foundational article is Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860', *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), 151-174. See also Linda K. Kerber, 'Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History', *Journal of American History*, 75.1 (1988), 9-39 for an excellent overview. The ideas of Habermas have been influential in initiating reconsideration of the 'public sphere', most notably configuration of a 'polite culture' – central to society's power structures as the arena in which public opinion was significantly constructed – to which both sexes contributed in a variety of social situations. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). In the words of Vivien Jones, 'current research is increasingly unwilling to assume the absolute efficacy of the public/private distinction, and is uncovering all kinds of ways in which women contributed to the complex network of communications through which public opinion is formed'. See *Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800*, ed. by Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.6, also her 'Guide to further reading' on 'Public and Private', p.307.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'On causing anguish to a friend', 1797, p.254.

<sup>6</sup> See *Ibid.*, 'To Nathl. Card -', 1800, p.310, 'Written for E Rotch Junr. Milford.', 1804, p.337 and 'E.L . . . to G.S. . . . Milford.', 1804, p.341. All these poems commence by referring to thoughts or ideas seeking to 'be free', to find expression.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, 'To C.B. with J. Scott's Journal', 1804, p.365, 'Written in a Volume of J Mariott's[sic] Poems', 1804, p.373 and 'An Epistle to M. Leadbeater.', 1807, p.396.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Written by Moonlight at Summer Hill', 1792, p.181 and 'Response', undated, p.278.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 'An Address to Hans Hamilton M.P. On behalf of the Injured Africans', 1806, p.380.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 'A Petition To my Cousin T. Harrison', 1794, p.224, 'A Satire', undated, p.275, and Vol. 1, Prose, untitled piece on Ireland, p.158.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 'To a Friend on her return to Town', 1804, p.367. The phrase is reworked in 'To Castle Hall, near Milford-Haven the Seat of Benjamin Rotch', 1806, p.390 (p.392) – 'The social hearth, the converse kind/ [. . .] /While steams the urn with grateful glow'. For other examples of the fireside see, for instance, 'To S: Hoare', undated, p.430 and 'Seventh day night. Address'd to Sarah Hoare', undated, p.432 (p.433). Although Mary's earlier friendship verse also speaks of times with Debby and members of the Forbes family 'When friend[I]y converse cheers the illum'd[sic] fireside' – see 'To Anne, H-W & E Forbes & D Watson', 1793, p.188 - mention of this is more frequent and pronounced in the later verse. It is worth noting that the fireside is configured as a focal point not just for chat but for learning through sharing. In 'To a Friend on her return to Town', p.367, it is 'Where many a brilliant spark is found/And intellectual treasures grow/Enrich'd by giving what we know', while in 'An Adieu to my friends at Milford.', 1804, p.360, all imbibe 'streams of knowledge as they flow' at the Rotches' 'dear fire-side'.

<sup>12</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp.165-66.



<sup>13</sup> Some of the most popular poems celebrating the joys of home were by Felicia Hemans. See, for instance, 'The domestic affections' in Felicia Dorothea Browne, *The Domestic Affections, and Other Poems* (London: printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand by J. McCreery, Black-Horse-Court, 1812), pp.148-72, available in the facsimile reprint series *Revolution and Romanticism 1789-1834*, introduced by Jonathan Wordsworth (Poole, England and New York: Woodstock, 1995), and *Records of Woman*, 1828, available in a modern edition – *Records of Woman with Other Poems*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999). Less well known today, but also very popular in this period, was the Quaker poet, Bernard Barton, who was 'known nationally as "the poet of domesticity"' (Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.178). See his *Metrical Effusions, or Verses on Various Occasions* (Woodbridge: S. Loder, 1812), *Devotional Verses; Founded on and Illustrative of select Texts of Scripture* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1826) and *Household Verses. By Bernard Barton* (London: George Virtue, 1845).

<sup>14</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, '4<sup>th</sup> Mo 23<sup>rd</sup> 1805', p.53.

<sup>15</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'An Address to Hans Hamilton M.P.', 1806, p.380 (p.382).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 'A New Years offering to her Friends Forbes', 1793, p.183.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 'On the Death of our sincerely lamented Friend Rich'd Shackleton', 1792, p.172 (p.173).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 'Inscription for a beautiful Mosshouse', 1803, p.320 (pp.320, 321).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 'E.L . . . to G.S. . . . Milford.', 1804, p.341 (pp.342, 343).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 'To a dear Friend and family', 1804, p.364 and 'To Castle Hall, near Milford-Haven the Seat of Benjamin Rotch', 1806, p.390 (p.391).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 'An Address to Hans Hamilton M.P.', 1806, p.380 (p.382).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 'An Epistle to M. Leadbeater.', 1807, p.396.

<sup>23</sup> There is no evidence that Mary ever read any of the major Romantic poets, and so Wordsworth is unlikely to have been an influence. It is worth noting, however, that the *Lyrical Ballads*, first published in 1798, were published again in 1800, and then in 1802, with Wordsworth's famous 'Preface', his manifesto for a poetry 'in a selection of language really used by men', devoid of poetic diction he considered artificial. One of the lines he regards as having no value in a poem by Gray is a conventional classicism: 'And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire'. See 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), I, 109-89 (pp.132-35). Jeffrey Cox points out that Wordsworth later 'dismissed Keats's "Hymn to Pan" as a "pretty piece of paganism"' and, 'in *The Excursion* explained Greek myth as a shadowy adumbration of Christian transcendentalism'. See Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.185-86.

<sup>24</sup> Amanda Vickery, for instance, who successfully debunks rigid dichotomies between public and private spheres as separate domains of men and women respectively in *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), agrees that 'the language of domesticity became more powerful and pervasive in the period', even if 'genteel women became increasingly adept at manipulating it to pursue a range of activities and assume a set of responsibilities outside the home'. Two of the 'newer themes' she identifies in the eighteenth century, overlaid on 'long-standing chords' stretching back into previous centuries, are 'a sustained, secular celebration of romantic marriage and loving domesticity' and 'the growing sentimentalisation of motherhood.' (See her conclusion, pp.293-94 and pp.285-86.)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 'Seventh day night. Address'd to Sarah Hoare', undated, p.432.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 'To D Robinson', undated, p.437.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 'Home', 1805, p.377 (pp.377, 378, 379).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 'To a dear Friend and family', 1804, p.364, and 'To a Friend on her return to Town', 1804, p.367.

<sup>29</sup> See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's pioneering article, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-century America', *Signs*, 1.1 (1975), 1-29. This branch of feminist 'separate sphere' theory, which usually draws on women's own writings, contrasts with work stressing the restrictive nature of domestic ideology, early represented in the article by Barbara Welter referred to above, based largely on analysis of conduct books and other literature. Both articles are anthologised in *Major Problems in American Women's History*, ed. by Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1989), also 2<sup>nd</sup> edn 1996.



<sup>30</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual', p.10.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>32</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, 'Geo Harrison Birkett's Account of the last illness and death of his sister Mary Card', p.188.

<sup>33</sup> Mary Maples Dunn makes an interesting case for the latter, based in part on how forms of separation granted women control of 'their own space'. See Mary Maples Dunn, 'Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period', *American Quarterly*, 30 (1978), 582-601 (particularly p.600). Also available in *Women in American Religion*, ed. by Paul Boyer, Janet Wilson James et al (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), pp.27-46. The establishment of Women's Meetings is also seen as an enabling factor in *The Influence of Quaker Women on American History: Biographical Studies*, ed. by Carol and John Stoneburner, Studies in Women and Religion, XXI (Lewiston and Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), a study which depicts women Friends active in society as 'shapers of public space'. See Carol Stoneburner's introduction, particularly p.14.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Fry's memoirs provide glimpses into the rather hectic social lives many Friends led. In the words of her daughters:

During the fortnight occupied by Yearly Meeting, St Mildred's Court [the Frys' early marital home] was, according to a very general custom among the Society, an open house for the reception of the Friends assembled in London on that occasion, from all parts of the kingdom: some were inmates there during the time, whilst the parties at dinner were generally very numerous.

Elizabeth found not only the hospitality incumbent upon her, as a new bride, something of a strain, but also the constant round of visiting in general. She wrote in her diary at Plashet, then the home of her in-laws:

*Plashet, Seventh Month, 9<sup>th</sup>*. [1801] We are so very much from home and in such continual bustles, that really when I am here, I feel at a loss for regular employment. I just have time enough to keep things in order; engagement follows engagement so rapidly, day after day, week after week, owing principally to our number of near connexions, that we appear to live for others, rather than ourselves.

*Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry*, I, 104, 106.

The dishes served amongst Friends when entertaining were often prodigious, even if excess could be criticised as being at odds with Quaker simplicity. Sarah Greer gives rather amusing if jaundiced accounts of Quaker gatherings, including Dublin Yearly Meeting, in which home entertaining assumes huge social importance. After dining 'with one of the head Friends of Dublin', where the 'entertainment was excellent, choice, substantial, and varied, with most delicious confectionary, and good wines', catering standards fell rapidly when a woman Friend in a Meeting for Discipline pronounced that 'sweets after dinner were a great need-not', 'wine was apt to make Friends drowsy, when they came to the Evening meeting' and 'cakes at tea are a superfluity'. The dinner following, 'in a large company', 'was a capital good one; fish, flesh, and fowl, and pies and puddings in abundance' but, 'The lady of the house apologized for the excellence of the repast [. . .] saying, that dinner had been ordered before she went to Meeting; otherwise she would have paid due deference to the advice given'. At least one guest thought the woman Friend criticised because she could not keep up with current hospitality levels herself, but many hostesses subsequently heeded her advice. At 'another dinner party': 'A leg of mutton and potatoes, and a red round of cold beef, was all the dinner, not even a pudding; and when the cloth was removed, instead of wine, coffee was served up'. (*Quakerism; or the Story of my Life*, pp.137-51.)

<sup>35</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To H W Forbes with the second part of my Poem on the African Slave trade', 1792, p.137. Amanda Vickery's exploration of how 'the household and family were not the limit of an elite woman's horizon', while the home itself was not 'in any simple sense a private, domestic sphere' was influential here, initially in prompting my consideration of hospitality within a specifically Quaker context. (See Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, Introduction, particularly p.9.) However, as early as 1986, the separate sphere public/private dichotomy was found inadequate to describe the situation of Quaker women. For discussion of 'The Quaker Home as Private and Public Space', a base for religious and organisational meetings in the early movement and always the site of Quaker networking, hospitality, intellectual debate and



social exchange that included women, as well as the centre of domestic family life, see *The Influence of Quaker Women on American History*, ed. by Carol and John Stoneburner – their introduction, pp.22-31.

<sup>36</sup> One striking example is that of the Quaker whaling community in Nantucket. Nathaniel Philbrick describes how, in the absence of the men at sea, 'the island's women maintained active social lives' that 'were the setting in which much of the business of the town was transacted'. According to native Nantucketer, Lucretia Mott, 'a husband back from a voyage commonly followed in the wake of his wife, accompanying her to get-togethers with other wives'. She 'commented on how odd such a practice would have struck anyone from the mainland, where the sexes operated in entirely different social spheres'. Nathaniel Philbrick, *In the Heart of the Sea* (London: Harper Collins, 2000), pp.15-16, citing Mott's remarks from Margaret Hope Bacon, *Valiant Friend: The Life of Lucretia Mott* (New York: Walker, 1980), p.17.

<sup>37</sup> According to Greer, at one point 'there were [. . .] only two men ministers in all Ireland, and a host of women' (*Quakerism; or the Story of my Life*, p.85). Much of her invective is directed against women ministers. Disowned for attending the established church, she asserts her real 'crime' was to have been critical of women's preaching, attributing her disownment to the machinations of one woman minister in particular. In her account of Dublin Yearly Meeting already referred to (note 34 above), a visiting English Friend at a social gathering comments on Irish ministers being 'mostly females', then states 'there is a danger to be apprehended, when this important office in the Church is wholly delegated to our sex. Some of us may not be well skilled in administering that solid meat, which a healthful body requires, although capable of supplying the milk which is suited for babes' (pp.142-43). Discussion ensues on the unsuitability of a twenty-four year old woman as an 'acknowledged' minister. But Greer's discomfort lies deeper, in what she perceives as the undermining of traditional gender roles within Quakerism. Her own mother, sensibly aware of a woman's proper place, only joins the Poor Committee and never speaks in ministry or assumes other office. Greer derogates 'strong-minded' women who, given the opportunities Quakerism offers, tyrannise unnaturally over men, and implies that women's desires to attend their Meetings arise out of selfishness, a wish to enjoy themselves away from their responsibilities at home. In one conversation allegedly overheard at a 'Quarterly Meeting tea party', one young woman sympathises with another whose husband generally refuses to let her attend such Meetings:

he said, it was fitter for me to stay at home, and mind my children. And [. . .] that our Women's Meetings were all humbug; that it was only for the sake of getting new bonnets, and new gowns, and shawls, and good eating, and talking among ourselves, that we wanted to go at all.

Attending this Meeting was a reward for nursing him through an illness. The episode is revealing in showing that even amongst Friends a woman still felt she should obey her husband without question, and that Greer's own sympathies lay with the husband (pp.73-74).

<sup>38</sup> Such work, certainly not frivolous in the manner the young woman's husband quoted in the footnote above suggests, could be deployed as a valid reason for leaving domesticity behind. In a letter to her cousin, Sarah Birkett, Mary excuses herself from attending Sarah's wedding owing to 'the difficulty of breaking thro' my domestic chains' - the children require her 'close attention'. She anticipates criticism from Sarah – 'thou mayest probably remark that I sometimes go from home to quarterly meetings' – and pre-empts it by asking her to remember 'that "hunger breakes thro stone walls" & I generally go in the hope of obtaining a morsel of bread'. (Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 34, 'To S Birkett', '9<sup>th</sup> Mo 7<sup>th</sup> 1814', p.143 (p.144).

<sup>39</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To E.D.', p.406, and 'To E.D', p.389. For information on the Dublin Free School, in all probability the General Daily Free School, see p.375.

<sup>40</sup> F.K. Prochaska's *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (1980) remains a pivotal study of the huge growth and extent of women's philanthropy in this period. He offers a curious explanation for the high level of participation by Quaker women, however, in a need for emotional outlet: 'Evangelicals generally and Quakers in particular were shut out from many of the ordinary sources of emotion, and benevolence became more important to them than it might have been otherwise' (p.11). On the contrary, inclination to benevolence was surely intensified through the cultivation of empathy, an emotional response to the needs of others, intrinsically linked to a sense of social responsibility.



<sup>41</sup> Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See particularly her introduction (pp.4-5) and conclusion (pp.216-17) on benevolent and reformist traditions. She contrasts her findings with work by Anne Boylan, who 'argues for three different types of organisational tradition developing in America from the early years of the nineteenth century, a benevolent, reformist and feminist tradition, and notes that these traditions "remained essentially separate"'. (Anne M. Boylan, 'Women in groups, an analysis of women's benevolent organisations in New York and Boston, 1797-1840', *Journal of American History*, 71 (1984), 497-523.) For Quakers and anti-slavery work, see Luddy, pp.63-67 (p.66).

<sup>42</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To Poverty', undated, p.435.

<sup>43</sup> Much work has been done particularly in the field of the novel. See, for instance, Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and Gillian Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel, 1740-1800: The Price of a Tear* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> See particularly Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To [. . .] On the School and Repository', undated, p.439 (particularly pp.440-41).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 'An Address to Elizth. Dawson requesting a Donation to assist in clothing the Poor Children of the General Daily Free School', 1807, p.405.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 'An Address to E.D for cloathing for the Children of the Poor School', 1806, p.387.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 'To [. . .] A Request for 20 Guineas to place a poor Woman in the Incurable Hospital', 1806, p.384 (pp.384, 385).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 'To [. . .] On the School and Repository', undated, p.439 (particularly pp.441, 442, 440).

<sup>49</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, 'Asylum for Aged & Infirm Female Servants', 1808, p.182 (p.183). See also Vol. 2, Poetry, 'To E. Dawson On behalf of the Aged & Infirm Female Servants', 1809, p.420.

<sup>50</sup> Edmund Burke to the Archbishop of Nisibis, 14 December 1791, in *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. by Thomas W. Copeland and others, 10 vols (Cambridge and Chicago: Cambridge and Chicago University Presses, 1958-78), VI: *July 1789-December 1791*, ed. by Alfred Cobban and Robert A. Smith (1967), 457-461 (460). The full sentence reads: 'I love order so far as I am able to understand it, for the universe is order, it is part of that order not only to cultivate what is right, but to endure much of what is wrong'.

<sup>51</sup> Edmund Burke, 'An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, in consequence of some late Discussions in Parliament, relative to the Reflections on the French Revolution 1791' in *The Works and Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, rev. edn. [no editor given], 8 vols (London: Francis and John Rivington, 1852), IV, 393-490 (p.467).

<sup>52</sup> Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), II, 173-74. Also in *Selected Writings of Hannah More*, ed. by Robert Hole (London: William Pickering, 1996), p.232, and cited by Gillian Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel*, p.155.

<sup>53</sup> Vol. 2, Poetry, 'An Address to Hans Hamilton M.P.', 1806, p.380 (p.382).

<sup>54</sup> Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel*, pp.156-59. Skinner goes further than simply qualifying 'binary opposition', 'to demonstrate ways in which these divisions have failed to pick up other configurations of opinion, configurations which may find the "radical" writer side by side with the "conservative"' (p.156).

<sup>55</sup> Andrew Varney, *Eighteenth-Century Writers in their World: A Mighty Maze* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp.145-46. This is part of a chapter entitled 'The Harmony of Things: An Essay on Man and Moral Essays', that not only sets these essays by Alexander Pope succinctly in the context of Newtonian science, Lockean philosophy and 'Shaftesburean idealism' (concepts of the universe as a mutually dependent, divinely appointed system, the laws of which could be understood, and, in the case of Shaftesbury, of humanity as having 'an instinctive moral sense' (p.152)), but offers a complex reading of Pope's promotion of 'universal harmony' and humanity's place within it. 'Thomson's poem, for all its diversity, looks at the world through a single window; light keeps breaking in on Pope's verse from all kinds of unexpected angles' (p.149). Pope's ideas could also have been an influence for Mary, familiar as she was with *An Essay on Man*. See, for instance, Vol. 2, Poetry, 'A Contemplative view of Nature', p.286.

<sup>56</sup> This perhaps bears some relation to the emphasis in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries on what human beings share. Christopher Ricks, in his rich and perceptive study, *Keats and Embarrassment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), for instance, at one point draws attention to the link between this and the significance of blushing (which is surely akin to 'glow' in its physical aspect as a manifestation of emotion) in Keats and other Romantic texts. He



finds Charles Darwin's view of blushing as 'the quintessential human expression', animals being incapable of it (*The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 1872), to be:

co-operating with more than one of Romanticism's insistences: not only upon this question of what the irreducibly human was (a question that spurs Byron as much as Wordsworth) but also the related stress upon what humanity has in common – in Wordsworth, say, the ordinary sorrows of man's life; [. . .]. It was in the name of a common humanity that Romanticism so often spoke (pp.50-51).

Though Ricks confines himself to consideration of Romanticism, reference to blushing, of course, like 'glow', is found frequently in works of sensibility as a whole.

<sup>57</sup> Luddy, *Women and philanthropy*, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., see pp.68-96 on orphanages and education, particularly pp.77-84 on proselytism.

<sup>59</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, 'Asylum for Aged & Infirm Female Servants', p.182 (p.183). Luddy, p.192, mentions the Asylum for Aged and Infirm Female Servants.

<sup>60</sup> See Vol. 1, Prose, 'Some Account of Remarkable deliverances experienced by friends during the disturbances of 1796 and 1798', p.160. The narrative is essentially anti-republican with anti-Catholic nuances. For instance, John Cozins, a member of Cooladine meeting, is described as 'having been formerly a papist' (p.162) while Jacob Goff and his wife acquit themselves bravely in the face of Catholic threats and mockery (p.163).

<sup>61</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 2, 'To . . .', '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 2<sup>d</sup> 1799', p.102.

<sup>62</sup> See Ibid., Letter 4, 'To E . . .', '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 24 1804' p.105 (p.106).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Letter 23, 'To SR', '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 1812', p.129.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., Letter 28, 'To A Robinson', '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 21<sup>st</sup> 1813', p.135 - 'effusions'. See also, for example, Letter 24, 'To CE', '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 21<sup>st</sup> 1812', p.130 (p.131); Letter 15, 'Dear Friend', '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 1808', p.118 and Letter 25, 'My beloved Brother George', '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 31<sup>st</sup> 1812', p.131, for thoughts flowing, or being thrown onto, the page.

<sup>65</sup> Janet Todd, *Sensibility*, p.85.

<sup>66</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 39, 'My dear Cousin', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 1<sup>st</sup> 1816', p.149 (p.150).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., Letter 14, 'To W.A.', '8<sup>th</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> 1807', p.117.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., Letter 20, 'My dear Friend', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 20<sup>th</sup> 1811', p.125.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., Letter 12, 'To a servant (at parting)', '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 5<sup>th</sup> 1806', p.114 (p.115).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., Letter 17, 'To Elizabeth Rebecca Card . . .', '2<sup>d</sup> Mo 1<sup>st</sup> 1809', p.120 (p.122).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., Letter 5, 'To . . .', '4<sup>th</sup> Mo 10<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.107.

<sup>72</sup> See, for instance, Ibid., Letter 21, 'To EA', '5<sup>th</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.126: 'these dormant sensations of sympathy & friendship the reciprocation of which, comprizes[sic] some of the most refined enjoyments of human life'.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., Letter 29, 'My beloved friend', '2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 26<sup>th</sup> 1814', p.137.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., Letter 11, 'To . . .', '6<sup>th</sup> Mo 14<sup>th</sup> 1806', p.113 (p.114).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., Letter 33, 'To C', '4<sup>th</sup> Mo 30<sup>th</sup> 1814', p.141 (pp.141, 142). It is of note that, though Kitty will be outside the Society, Mary still hopes that God will 'grant [her] an access tho' a different access to the house of prayer', possibly referring to, and recognising the value of, worship within a different denomination.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., Letter 17, 'To Elizabeth Rebecca Card . . .', '2<sup>d</sup> Mo 1<sup>st</sup> 1809', p.120 (p.122) – 'debility'. The phrase has an effete note, more appropriate, perhaps, for describing an affected, or hypochondriacal, invalidism, but Mary uses it seriously in relation to severe or chronic illness.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., Letter 5, 'To . . .', '4<sup>th</sup> Mo 10<sup>th</sup> 1805', p.107.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., Letter 12, 'To a servant (at parting)', '12<sup>th</sup> Mo 5<sup>th</sup> 1806', p.114 (p.115) and Letter 22, to an uncle, '7<sup>th</sup> Mo 7<sup>th</sup> 1812', p.127 (pp.127-28).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., Letter 25, 'My beloved Brother George', '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 31<sup>st</sup> 1812', p.131 (p.132) and Letter 41, 'To W Watkins', '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 7<sup>th</sup> 1817', p.151.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., Letter 3, 'To: C . . .', '10<sup>th</sup> Mo 21- 1804', p.103 (p.104). This is but one instance - there are several examples of this stated struggle for expression in other letters.

<sup>81</sup> McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility*, see particularly p.4 and p.38.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 32, 'JP[?]', '3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 23<sup>rd</sup> 1814', p.140 (p.141) which contains imagery both of water (p.140) and of warfare.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., Letter 17, 'To Elizabeth Rebecca Card . . .', '2<sup>d</sup> Mo 1<sup>st</sup> 1809', p.120 (p.122) contains a prime example of quietist Quaker garden imagery combining protection and nurture: 'Be it thine and mine also [. . .] to dwell within "the garden enclosed" – whose soil would enrich & beautify



us – and whose hedge would protect us from the inroads of “the little foxes which spoil the tender grapes”.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., Letter 7, ‘To ...’, ‘7<sup>th</sup> Mo 15<sup>th</sup> 1805’, p.109. Similarly, Cousin Kitty is pressed to ‘resemble a rose tree in Winter’, dormant until awakened by the ‘rays of the sun of Righteousness’ - see Letter 3, ‘To: C . . .’, ‘10<sup>th</sup> Mo 21 – 1804’, p.103 (p.104).

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Ibid., Letter 37, ‘To MW & MG’, ‘10<sup>th</sup> Mo 7<sup>th</sup> 1815’, p.146 (p.147), which refers to ‘the gifts of God which is the son of God manifested in his own temple – the temple of the heart’, and Letter 39, ‘My dear Cousin’, ‘2<sup>nd</sup> Mo 1<sup>st</sup> 1816’, p.149 (p.150) for the heart as the only ‘acceptable’ place of worship.

<sup>86</sup> See Ibid., Letter 19, ‘To MG’, ‘11<sup>th</sup> Mo 1<sup>st</sup> 1810’, p.124 (pp.124, 125) – this letter, commenting on biblical annotations, asserts ‘it is safest for us to rely on those openings which are invariably manifested to the waiting soul’ rather than rely on ‘the experiences & judgements of others’, however ‘helpful’ they might be.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., Letter 3, ‘To: C . . .’, ‘10<sup>th</sup> Mo 21- 1804’, p.103 (p.104) and Letter 7, ‘To ...’, ‘7<sup>th</sup> Mo 15<sup>th</sup> 1805’, p.109 (p.110). Other examples include Letter 4, ‘To E . . .’, ‘10<sup>th</sup> Mo 24 1804’ p.105 – ‘glimpses which thou hadst of his most excellent beauty’, and Letter 33, ‘To C’, ‘4<sup>th</sup> Mo 30<sup>th</sup> 1814’, p.141 (p.142) - ‘thine inward eye was open’d to see his beauty’.

<sup>88</sup> See Josephine Teakle, ‘Inwardness and Outwardness: Quietism and Evangelicalism in the Life of Mary Birkett Card, 1774-1817’, *Quaker Studies* 3.1 (1998): 71-81 (pp.80-81).

<sup>89</sup> Ted Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), p.11 and p.59. Campbell’s achievement is to show how a range of spiritualities that many would consider had little in common – Jansenism, pietism, elements of Calvinism, continental quietism, Quakerism, Methodism and evangelicalism, devotion to the sacred heart, some forms of Russian and Eastern spirituality - are different manifestations of an identifiable religious tradition of emotional affect.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp.61,63, 62.

<sup>91</sup> McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility*, see particularly pp.5-6, and p.38.

<sup>92</sup> Speaking of Methodism, Campbell states:

Throughout their works, John and Charles [Wesley] stressed the centrality of religious experience and the way of salvation punctuated by such experiences. John Wesley had developed an epistemology of religious experience (sometimes utilizing Lockean terms) [. . .]. Having this spiritual epistemology, Wesley could then proceed by a more or less scientific method to observe and describe the affective progress of the religious life.

In his conclusion, Campbell discusses how these new religious faiths had to struggle with aspects of the Enlightenment, including the deist ‘threat’. Nevertheless, the two were related, ‘nearly simultaneous cultural phenomena’ – ‘Locke’s philosophy was employed not only by the Deists, but by Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley as well, in their attempts to forge an empirical account of religious experience’. (Campbell, pp.121 and 175-76.)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.175.

<sup>94</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 30, ‘To M A’, ‘3<sup>rd</sup> Mo 12<sup>th</sup> 1814’, p.138 (p.139).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., Letter 3, ‘To: C . . .’, ‘10<sup>th</sup> Mo 21 - 1804’, p.103.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., Letter 15, ‘Dear Friend’, ‘5<sup>th</sup> Mo 1808’, p.118 (p.119).

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., Letter 4, ‘To E . . .’, ‘10<sup>th</sup> Mo 24 1804’ p.105 (p.106).

<sup>98</sup> See Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp.215-35. Quotes taken from pp.216, 232-33. See also Hugh Barbour, ‘Quaker Prophetesses and Mothers in Israel’ in *The Influence of Quaker Women on American History*, ed. by Carol and John Stoneburner, pp.57-77. The more public roles of preacher, prophet or writer and the organisational or counseling ones were never mutually exclusive, but the term ‘mother in Israel’ tended to adhere to the latter increasingly as the Society developed. For Mack, the ‘mother in Israel’ was a key image in Quakerism’s development from charismatic sect to structured religious society, a movement that succeeded in retaining Friends’ unique blend of the ecstatic or mystical with the quotidian. Michele Lise Tarter has recently put forward a fresh viewpoint in her study of early Quaker women’s ‘corporeal prophecy’. She argues that it was in their identification as ‘mothers in Israel’ that early women Friends’ gave physical manifestation to the spirit (quaking, fainting, bodily movements) and preached or prophesied. Only later, as a second generation of Friends sought to erase some of the enthusiasm of the first from the record, did the ‘mother in Israel’

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become a term generally reserved for socially eminent women in the Quaker community. See Michele Lise Tarter, 'Quaking in the Light: The Politics of Quaker Women's Corporeal Prophecy in the Seventeenth-Century Transatlantic World' in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, ed. by Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp.145-62.

<sup>99</sup> Mack, *Visionary Women*, p.226.

<sup>100</sup> Vol. 1, Prose, Letter 43, 'To', '8<sup>th</sup> Mo 16<sup>th</sup> 1817', p.155 (pp.155, 156).



# **TRANSCRIPTION**

**THE**  
**SPIRITUAL JOURNAL**

**1794 – 1817**



Mary Birkett Card's spiritual journal begins during a visit to England between May and August 1794 when she was nineteen years of age. The first entry is prompted by a spirit of thankfulness to God for his mercy in allowing her to see, once again, the country she was always to regard as home. Yet this is only 'an outward blessing' which means little without the inward one - the living experience of God's Kingdom within, for which she yearns.

This first entry was written at Park Gate, a small port near Chester. At this time, the town consisted of 'fifty to sixty houses in an irregular line by the water side' (Mrs Delany quoted in Maxwell - reference below). The Dublin/Park Gate route was one of the most commonly used passages for travellers between England and Ireland in the eighteenth century, the other major one being Dublin/Holyhead. It was often preferred to the Holyhead one, though the passage itself took even longer (Dublin/Holyhead usually took between ten and twelve hours, sometimes days if there was a bad storm, or no wind at all), because it avoided a long trek with horses and luggage across bad roads in the Welsh mountains. However, this was counterbalanced by the fact that the Welsh mountains were considered, by the end of the century, to be picturesque. By 1815, the Park Gate route was mainly superseded by one to Liverpool. (Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges*, pp.248-51.)

### Parkgate 8th of 5th Mo 1794

Father and fountain of everlasting Mercies from whose hand we daily receive that bread which is needful for us, to thee with a degree of thankfulness & humble resignation to thy divine good pleasure do I lift up my heart thro thy continued mercy am I favoured again to breathe my native air. Oh! make me every day to know thee love thee more and more. Deliver me from all evil<sup>1</sup> : I earnestly beseech thee open mine heart and take out everything that is contrary to the nature of true holiness. Baptize me I entreat it of thee with thine holy spirit, give unto me a portion of thyself, and then I shall lack nothing Oh! surely thou wilt deign to hear me. to thee I owe all that I enjoy, and thro thy mercy I am what I am. Grant that henceforth I may live only unto thee and that cleansed by the precious blood of my ever adorable Redeemer I may henceforth walk as in thy presence and do nothing contrary to thine holy will. Shew forth thy mercy Oh! Lord and purify me from all sin. I cannot live without thy presence Oh! satisfy me yea abundantly. for thou givest not grudgingly Oh! for that Manna<sup>2</sup> after which my soul is hungring[sic] Oh! for that bread which nourisheth the inward man. Surely my Spirit travaileth for an admission into thy Kingdom Father thou knowest that my soul mourneth and is exceedingly sorrowful till I can livingly experience that thy Kingdom is come and thy will done in me<sup>3</sup> How have I desired as an outward blessing to behold my native land and yet without thy divine presence I am not happy, this has hitherto been my experience thro every place where I have travelled that where there is not a living knowledge of the one true God of Jesus Christ his only begotten son and a Witnessing of the comfortable presence of the Holy Ghost all the rest is vanity. My Spirit is low exceeding low, I am hungry and who giveth me bread, I am thirsty and who giveth me drink I knock yea loudly and who giveth me admission.<sup>4</sup> I am drinking of the bitter waters of affliction:<sup>5</sup> yet can truly say thy will be done O Lord.

1. Mt 6:13 - 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: [. . .]' - (the Lord's Prayer).

2. Manna - The wafer-like food supplied miraculously by God for the starving Israelites in the wilderness (Ex 16), here used as a metaphor for spiritual sustenance.

3. Again echoing the Lord's Prayer.

4. Echoing Mt 25:35 - 'For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in'.
5. **waters of affliction** - a frequent Biblical expression for suffering, as in Is 30:20 - 'And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction'. See also Rev 8:11 where, when the Day of Judgement approaches, the waters are made bitter.

After disembarking at Park Gate, Mary went on to London where she attended Meeting and subsequently wrote the following entry. It was probably written soon after arriving - London was a five or six day journey from Chester on horseback, though the mail coaches (running from 1785) were considerably quicker (Maxwell, *Dublin Under the Georges*, p.249).

During this visit to London, she spent much time with the family of her maternal uncle, George Harrison. He was one of the founders of the movement in England for the abolition of the slave trade and we can assume that Mary, having had her *Poem On the African Slave Trade* published in 1792, must have been pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the campaign with him. She became particularly close to his daughter Lydia and it is clear that, while in London, she participated in a lively social life. (See Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.223-30.)

In June and July, Mary travelled up to Halton, near Warrington in Lancashire, and then to Kendal (her mother's childhood home) before returning to Ireland. (See Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.231-33.)

### London 5th Mo 18th 1794

I have sat in thy congregation<sup>1</sup> O Lord and I have mingled with them that call upon thy Name. I have earnestly desired to see this day, and I have seen it and yet what better am I for it. Blessed are thy servants O my Redeemer. yea thrice blessed they who are permitted to take the cup of salvation and to call on the Name of the Lord. I have been told my state and condition exactly and I have been informed where to apply for succour Lo I come to do thy will Oh! let thine handmaid find favour in thy sight, let the light of thy countenance be shed abroad upon me and not upon me only but upon all those who earnestly desire to enter in at the strait gate and narrow way.<sup>2</sup> Oh! my merciful father I beseech thee make perfect in me the work of regeneration that I may come to experience that glorious Kingdom of thy dear son established in me And that my dwelling may be near to the fountain of life for ever Amen saith my soul

1. congregation - Quaker Meeting.

2. Mt 7:14 - 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'



After the trip to England in 1794, Mary made no more entries in her spiritual journal (at least none are extant) until this next one in July 1796.

### Dublin 7th Mo 12th 1796

Hath not the ineffable light of truth manifested to the eye of my soul (while waiting singly for its divine direction in an external duty) that on the day of the Lords Sabbath which he hath appointed to be kept Holy unto him and which whensoever he pleaseth he can create in the dedicated heart.<sup>1</sup> That on that holy day his children shall rest from labour enjoying in the inmost centre of their spirits that unutterable foretaste of eternal felicity which the Lord in the incomprehensible riches of love is pleased to bestow on them. On that day may no sticks be gathered to kindle the fires of self complacency or self exaltation for the God of Israel the mighty deliverer whose Omnipotent Arm upholdeth us - is all in all - In that day we covet not the light of the sun nor the Glory of the moon or stars of the firmament. Jehovah himself is our delight and our exceeding great reward : Covet not too earnestly Oh! my soul the enjoyment of these inestimable graces for the suspension of our faculties and the sweet vibrations of the voice of thy beloved. tho the resting on his bosom and the rejoicing in the light of his Countenance are indeed so solacing to the weary pilgrim as to cause it utterly to forget all its sorrows and to feel that its miseries are banished as the clouds of the Hemisphere before the bright luminary of the day<sup>2</sup> - yet Labour is the allotment of all those who are engaged in the important work of regeneration. It is not enough that we rest in the smile of divine approbation, we must press forward (when these delicious moments are over) we must renew our daily toil, take up our daily cross and feel after an advancement in the Kingdom of life. It is not enough that thro infinite mercy and adorable condescension of Him thro whom I am what I am I may have attained to the stature of a babe We are not always to remain babes we must Witness and advancing forwards we must be weaned not merely from the world but weaned from the very gifts and pleasures which are granted to little children even the gifts of the holy spirit which exceedingly refresh the soull thus growing in the Will and Wisdom of the father we shall at length know the proper portion of labour which is intended for us and of which in our infant state we were altogether incapable. We shall see what part of the vineyard<sup>3</sup> will be for us to till, to sow, to weed, or to prune & to move forward, not in the unsanctified movements of our selfish spirit, but guided by infallible wisdom after having experienced the preparation of our hearts by that hand which toucheth in secret we shall work to the praise and Glory of the Lord of the Harvest and in the end receive a crown of Life!

1. The Sabbath is seen not just as Sunday (which Quakers called 'First Day'), a special day reserved for religious observance and rest from labour, but also as a state of being that God is able to create in the human heart or soul at any given moment in time.
2. bright luminary of the day - the sun.
3. Mt 20:1-16 - Christ's parable of the workers in the vineyard who, though beginning work at different times, nevertheless received the same payment from the master. It shows how those who are last may be first in the Kingdom of Heaven. See also the parable of the tenants in the vineyard, Mt 21:33-45. In this journal entry, the vineyard is the world in which we must labour to realise the Kingdom of God.



The entries for the winter of 1796-97 mark a period of spiritual crisis for Mary, a time which she was later to describe as one in which her soul was 'often deeply exercised' and 'many a painful struggle' experienced. (See narrative entitled 'Progress of Infidelity' in this volume, p.21.) Briefly, to put these next few journal entries into context, the 'Infidelity' narrative describes how in the winter of 1796, feeling increasingly sure that she would be called to become a minister and anxiously desiring this to happen, she was 'proud of her spiritual attainments'. Moreover she had, since the previous winter, been much involved in the setting up of a free school in Dublin. This was in all probability the General Daily Free School in St Catherine's Parish founded by Quakers, which opened in 1798 to provide an elementary education for poor children from all denominations. See journal entries below for 1805 - '4th Mo 4th', 'undated' (p.53), '5th Mo 23rd', '5th Mo 31st' - and Vol. 2, Poetry, p.375. Young, earnest, and receptive to new ideas, she made the acquaintance of a respected Quaker elder and schoolmaster with whom she corresponded on educational and religious subjects. This gentleman, whose identity is never declared although it is probable he was Abraham Shackleton, the famous schoolmaster of Ballitore, belonged to the liberal or free-thinking wing of the Society of Friends and through him Mary imbibed ideas which challenged traditional faith based on literal interpretation of the scriptures and caused her to question her most fundamental beliefs. For a while, she became an avid reader of Rousseau, Thomas Paine and other radical authors whose works posed great challenges to traditional 'ways of seeing' in both religious and political terms, as well as some of the great writers of the Enlightenment who propounded a form of religious belief based on reason rather than revelation known as deism. The result was a period of tremendous doubt and inner turmoil to which her diary bears witness, though it does not at any point mention the texts she read, the ideas to which they gave rise or the people with whom she had contact until we come to her formal recantation of deism in the 'Progress of Infidelity' narrative of 1798.

This first entry for the winter of 1796 was written aboard a Canal Packet Boat, probably on the Grand Canal en route to Edenderry where the next entry was written two days later. Packet boats carried mail but passengers could also use this mode of transport. The Grand Canal, ending in specially constructed docks on the south side of the River Liffey in Dublin, had not long been completed.

### Canal Packet Boat 9th Mo 23 1796

Oh Almighty and eternal father Creator and presence of all I beseech thee by thine unmerited mercies so abundantly dispensed heretofore to thine unworthy handmaiden, by those bowels of love and long suffering which induced thee cloath'd[sic] with the garment of mortality to descend and offer thy body a sacrifice for sinners of whom I am chief! I implore thee in thine abundant compassion and infinite condescension look down with an eye of pity on my miserable estate!<sup>1</sup> Oh Lord! an host opposeth me and I whether[whither] but to thee my sole refuge shall I fly? Vile that I am I trust I complain not I would hope I murmur not at this adorable dispensation of deep and trying baptism! at this time of deep distress and sore famine when divers<sup>2</sup> temptations beset my wading[sic] soul when anguish of which thou alone art Witness almost weighs down my mourning spirit! When the bars of the earth surround me! bars which I have brought upon myself when the heavens seem as brass and not one drop of refreshing rain to satisfy my thirsty soul When no voice of thy ministers can reach to my state and the Watchmen all pass me by - Even thou my best beloved my delight and my joy and the sole chosen of my heart, even now art thou not as a spring shut up? as a fountain sealed!<sup>3</sup> and the light of thy beautiful countenance is hid from mine eyes - But Oh! my blessed Redeemer I am thoroughly convinced that thy secret arm upholdeth me and that thy mercy



encampeth around me! and I Beseech thee I conjure thee Oh my beloved suffer not thyself to be awaked till thou please<sup>4</sup> Let me not lose one drop of this bitter cup cause me to drink the very dregs and let not this trying season pass till the time which thou hast appointed be fulfilled Amen

1. **estate** - often used in the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries to mean 'state' or 'condition'.
2. **divers** - several.
3. Song 4:12 - 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.'
4. Echoing the refrain in Song 2:7 - 'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.' Repeated in Song 3:5. Quotations from the Song of Solomon or Song of Songs occur frequently in Mary's journal. A series of love poems in the form of a dialogue between a man and a woman, the Song of Solomon has been considered as emblematic of God's relationship with His chosen people and/or the Church, but it can also be used, as here, to describe, or give expression to, the relationship between the Spirit of God and the individual soul. Its beautiful imagery lends itself to the expression of spiritual and mystical experience, here of being estranged from the presence of the Spirit and the need for patient waiting for its renewal in the soul.

Edenderry was the site of a Monthly Meeting and an alternative venue to Moate for Quarterly Meeting (the Quaker business meeting for a group of Monthly Meetings in an area) from 1794. Therefore Mary Birkett, as a member of Dublin Monthly Meeting, was in all probability attending the Quarterly Meeting at Edenderry when she wrote the following entry.

### Edenderry Meeting 9th Mo 25 1796

A Spring shut up a fountain sealed is my beloved unto me.<sup>1</sup> So continue thou chosen of my soul until thine own appointed time

1. See notes 3 and 4 to journal entry 'Canal Packet Boat 9th Mo 23 1796' above.

### Dublin 11th Mo 2nd 1796

Oh my ever adorable and infinitely wise Creator How inscrutable have been thy just dealings this day with a sinful and deeply polluted worm<sup>1</sup> Thou hast caused me to drink deep of the bitter bitter cup of crucifixion, Grant that it may be followed by a total privation of self can it be possible Oh! my God that there still lurks within the deceitful folds of my vile corrupted heart such strange contrarieties such abominable workings of self! O spare me not I entreat it of thee spare me not or I am lost for ever! Quench! O Quench with the trying crucifying dispensation of a deep and saving baptism, this perverse attachment to the creature,<sup>2</sup> mortify me slay me cause me to be despised of all to be the outcast of all trodden under foot of all, so thou wilt but wean me thoroughly, not in part but thoroughly from an attachment to thy sublime gifts an ardent desire as thou knowest clings as the skin to the flesh of my heart that I may minister before thee may offer up the prayers of the people to thee, and be as thy mouth unto them. If thou wilt altogether wean me from the selfishness of this and if thou wilt wash me clean from this base impure attachment.<sup>3</sup> If thou wilt continue unto me this purifying operation, then will I be thine for ever No other

shall possess[sic] mine heart, no longer mine but thine who hast redeemed it no other shall my soul delight in. For thou art my God and my Husband for ever. Oh! then with joy and with trembling will I lie down in the hope that the morrow may be as this day hath been, a day of darkness & of gloominess a day of deep horror and anguish in which sorrow hath taken hold of me as hangs on a woman in travail<sup>4</sup> A day in which the sword of the spirit hath pierced me through, and the face of my beloved hath been hid from mine eyes, a day in which my bones seemed all dislocated by reason of my sin and my heart groaned under the weight the cruel weight of my past abominations Oh! God thou hast stretched me on the cross. Yet not thou but the villainy of my own heart, Oh! tear from me this idolatrous attachment to a creature weak perhaps as myself.<sup>5</sup> Oh! clean me from all mine iniquities, purify me from all my pollutions Let me be thine alone, let me sink into profound annihilation of self and spirit Let me lose in a total separation[sic] all that belongs to me, let me henceforth sink in the depth of the grave & enclosed as I am in the belly of hell, have no will but thine alone Oh! let my will be thoroly[sic] broken, myself and creature love<sup>6</sup> be utterly subdued as the fogs by the brightness of the sun - That henceforth & forever I may only be found in the immense Ocean of thy infinite and unmeasurable goodness and fulfil that glorious end of my creation (which so continually I have miserably perverted by dedicating my time & attention to ignoble purposes) in an uninterrupted Hallelujah of eternal praise to thee to whom with the Lamb<sup>7</sup> it is alone due

1. Delineation of the sinful self as a worm was a much used metaphor in both women's and men's spiritual journals. For instance, an Evangelical clergyman in Birmingham wrote, 'I ought to think it a rich mercy that one spark of enjoyment [. . .] is afforded to such a worm as I am'. (*A Memoir of the Rev. John George Breay (1840)*, p.79 quoted in Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.87.)
2. **perverse attachment to the creature** - over concern with, or love for, the self, one's own will and worldly desires, which inhibit or prevent devotion to God.
3. Mary wishes to become a minister, but is concerned that this may have a selfish origin in a desire to put herself forward in order to gain admiration or recognition. The desire to be weaned from 'an attachment to thy sublime gifts' could also refer to the risk of seeking a selfish pleasure in spiritual or mystical experience.
4. **in travail** - in childbirth.
5. The subject of this 'idolatrous attachment' is not known. Perhaps her deist mentor (Shackleton?), perhaps a woman friend.
6. **creature love** - see note 2 above.
7. **the Lamb** - John the Baptist hailed Jesus as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29).

### Dublin 11th Mo 19th 1796

Oh! Thou inscrutable and merciful searcher of hearts who in infinite compassion hath caused me in a degree to feel the intolerable burden of my sin and to suffer a weight of exercise I trust for farther[sic] purification. Enable me to bear with perfect resignation the polishing strokes of thy divine hand,<sup>1</sup> and Oh! my true my only friend now in this hour of desolation when all whom outwardly I most tenderly love have forsaken me When the friend of my heart upbraideth me as the cruel cause of her extreme anxiety<sup>2</sup> Cause me to dwell near thy well a spring of life And Oh! whatever it be that is thus oppressing my weary soul whether it be future evils which this painful weight forebodes - loss of reputation or scorn of men for I know not. enable me to bear it for thy honor



and the glory of thy most excellent Name Oh! preserve me in patience Increase my faith and above all keep me little keep me low - keep me in the nothingness of self - for thou knowest that vile that I am I abound with vanity and pride, obduracy, hardness of heart, consoriousness [?censoriousness] thinking highly of my abominable self & meanly of every other Disobedience to thee my heavenly guide Neither obey I in all things my earthly parents, Lying Oh! my tongue is prone to a lie, covetousness fain would I oft give with the gifts of another and keep my own in secret, vain glory Ah! thou accursed root - how deeply hast thou branched forth in this earthly heart of mine - Why then talk I of exercise of a truth I bear about in my body a weight of iniquity heavy enough to sink me down into the lowest hell, If it were not for thee sweet Jesus and for thy divine voice which graciously sounds at this moment within me I had long since been consigned to that eternal torment which during my whole life I have done little else but purchase. Oh! the proffered salvation of Jesus, on which as on an Anchor in soul and all that is within me now I trust will for ever rely Amen

1. polishing strokes of thy divine hand - suffering and misfortunes are seen as God's way of preparing, or refining, the soul.
2. Mary would write a poem a year later, on 23 December 1797, 'On causing anguish to a friend' (see Vol. 2, Poetry, p.254) - there may be a connection.

### Dublin 11 Mo 21 1796

Be still Oh! my soul that thou mayst see wonders in the deeps! Be still for in stillness consists thy safety. Attend to the voice of the Lord thy God and it will yet bring thee out of the dark land out of the mire and filth of sin, out of the putrefaction and misery of self, and out of that dreadful corruption in which my base heart is overwhelmed! Yes I believe thro the power of the most high, thro the adorable mercies & infinite compassion of the Lord my God, I have faith given me to believe that vile as I am and almost irrevocably sick of soul as I have long been If I am but attentive to the unspeaking voice of the Holy spirit of life & truth and if I am but obedient to the drawings and leadings of this inward light. He will in his own time guide me into a place of safety, yea and cloath[sic] me with a Garment of love - he will deliver me from all mine enemies he will pluck up by the roots the proud & stately trees<sup>1</sup> He will set me in the valley of self abasement He will mortify my pride he will cause the blast of the breath of his mouth to consume the accursed Idol self - he will close for ever that evil eye which like the Basilisks<sup>2</sup> poisons where it glances and altogether corrupts what little I am enabled to do. yes it is an unspeakable favor that I have faith to believe that putrified as I am with iniquity and entangled in the labyrinth of guilt there is a physician who can cure my malady and who will not (like those of no value) give me up. Be still then Oh! my soul let the Heavenly physic<sup>3</sup> operate baffle not as heretofore the gracious designs of the God of love, but yielding up all the powers of my body soul and spirit with perfect and entire resignation to his divine will and knowing that all mine own efforts contribute but to sink me deeper as the struggles of one entangled in a pit, here let me lie as a Wretched outcast unworthy of the attention of God or man and continue to believe that he who came to seek and to save that



which was lost,<sup>4</sup> hath an infinite desire to possess my soul, and that he will in his own time purify and cleanse me empty me of all my dross<sup>5</sup> and purge out all my sin that he may cloath[sic] me with white and unspotted raiments even with the gifts of his love - and cause me to forget all my miseries in the delightful remembrance of him who was and is and ever will be the alone source of permanent felicity the fountain of life of peace of joy the purifier of all whom he hath chosen even of all who hear heard and obeyed the voice the unspeaking voice of his holy spirit. The Lamb without blemish and without spot the unchangeable rock of ages The leader of all who are willing to follow him thro great tribulations and to have their robes washed white in his blood<sup>6</sup>  
Amen

1. Perhaps thinking of Lk 3:9 - 'And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'
2. The basilisk (or cockatrice) was a mythical monster, reptilian in nature, thought to have been hatched from a cock's egg by a serpent. Its look, like its breath, was supposed to be deadly.
3. **physic** - medicine.
4. Lk 19:10 - 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'
5. **dross** - the impurities removed in the process of refining metal.
6. **The Lamb [. . .] blood** - Christ who was born without sin and whose death on the cross, according to the doctrine of the Atonement, washes away our sins if we accept His sacrifice on our behalf. Rev 7:14, speaking of the servants of God - 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'. **Rock of ages** - title for Jesus Christ.

### Dublin 12th Mo 1st 1796

Oh! Thou most merciful creator and Redeemer in whose sight no impurity can dwell! Oh thou adorable and all bounteous giver of every Good, suffer an heart overwhelmed with thy love to pour forth its gratitude to thee. What induced thee O ineffable Ocean of supreme felicity. What but unparalleled condescension could induce thee thus to favor my vile heart? surely I am altogether wicked deceitful and vain prone to drink in floods of iniquity as a fish drinketh up the water and ready to distend with pride & arrogance: as an horse that snuffeth up the air, surely then there is nothing desirable in me Nothing lovely in thy pure sight And yet Bow down Oh all ye powers within me in humble prostration before his throne and be amazed Oh my soul at the unalterable loving kindness of the Most High God. That he who created the Heavens and the earth, who commandeth & it is done who saith Be still and the Winds and waves obey<sup>1</sup> That he of his meer[sic] mercy & free condescension hath deigned to manifest himself to my soul Hence away ye base deceitful joys of earth Not all your smiles not all your flatteries can compare with one moments enjoyment of him whom we were created to enjoy, no intercourse so sweet so delightful as that of a soul with its God No confidence so happy so free so delivered from fears No friendship so delicate so lovely so charming no love so pure so chaste so peaceful of a truth not all the wild descriptions of an attachment out of its true center[sic] Not all the rapsody[sic] of fond delirium and frantic[sic] passion unworthy of the name of love, can in its most felicitate moment compare with this Oh! then what rapture to think nay to be sure that this blessed union this inexpressible vibration of all that is within me shall continue not only continue but increase thro the



immensely immeasurable ages of eternal duration Oh! divine love what bliss exquisite as thine Pure as the flame in which indeed is but an emanation of thee, soft as the voice of harmony whose every thrill dissolves the soul in exstasy[sic], more ardent than the fondest earthly love yet more durable than a rock of Adamant<sup>2</sup> or mountain of brass - and wonderful yet true (my soul can testify the truth of it, tho ardent, tho durable, tho jealous of the least infrigent and a consuming fire to all that would oppose, yet thou oh sacred & ineffable flame art mild & peaceful as that saviour whose image thou art Oh: who may describe thee what tongue, what language can half enough emphatically tell thy innumerable perfections. where thou art no void is felt - thou satisfiest every want, thou fillest & animates the soul & inebriates it with thyself No thought tumultous No idea from the imaginative part may rise to oppress the mind, thy voice as formerly - stills every tempest & infuses an ineffable calm "Thy lips Oh Love" drop as the honeycomb & the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.<sup>3</sup> Oh! how delicious how extatic[sic] will be the moment when I shall hear thee pronounce in sounds impenetrable to the ears of unbelief. Thou art all fair my love there is no spot in thee<sup>4</sup>

1. Mk 4:39 - Christ's miraculous calming of the storm.
2. Adamant - diamond, or hard stone.
3. Song 4:11 - 'Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.'
4. Song 4:7 - 'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.'

This entry was written on a Sunday ('First day') evening.

## Dublin 12th Mo 11th 1796

### First day Evening

My spirit hath been exercised this morning in supplication to the God of life! that he would be graciously pleased to continue unto me the extension of his unutterable loving kindness, and to remove far from me all that is displeasing to him, that I may become a pure vessel in which the water of life may flow freely, an instrument for honor or dishonor equally in all things dedicate to him. And he the beloved of my soul hath peculiarly favored me this morning by shewing to me more clearly than in a glass more evincingly than in a Book, that the stone which the builders rejected the same is to become the head of the corner,<sup>1</sup> and that in order to attain that power of an endless life after which my soul is thirsting this stone this inestimably precious stone must by me be purchased with the loss of all that I possess[sic], or ever did possess[sic] in self, it is not enough that I have found the pearl<sup>2</sup> which lies hid underneath a multitude of oppressive trifles, cares, attachments & superfluous concerns, I must make it mine by an indubitable purchase, mine by an irrevocable deed, never more to be revoked. I must above all things attend to this unspeaking voice & putting far away every entanglement, turning away as much as possible from the still unsubdued calls of a disordered affection to the creature,<sup>3</sup> from the fleshly reasonings of my own heart & from all those desires



with which the enemy seeks my ruin by enticing my attention to something which is not God, I must altogether and wholly attend to this divine leader I must endeavour to understand its gracious motions, I must be careful to follow its blessed leadings, being assured that its drawings are indeed the love of God to me, and if decayed are quite sufficient to lead me out of the chaos & misery of self into the glorious Kingdom purchased for us by the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh! thou my soul down, down to thy secret centre away with every idle thought away with all thy dreams of greatness, away with every thing whatever it be that is not God. Fully persuaded that he and he alone can constitute the felicity of the souls which he hath formed & fitted for the enjoyment of himself - Oh! then down down to thy secret centre where no polluted thought may intrude, where all lesser objects are totally obscured as stars in the presence of the sun, down to the depth of the Bottom of Jordan if there thy Lord and Master meet thee and oh let nothing in any degree divert the attention of my spirit from thee, That so thou mayst be graciously pleased in thine own due and appointed time to deliver me from all mine enemies my inward enemies, which seek my ruin, to cause the earth to open her mouth and to swallow up the flood which they have raised against me - to deliver me out of the Wilderness state in which I desire to remain a time times and half a time<sup>4</sup> and to manifest unto whom thou wilt the manchild of thy own begetting which thou hast hid in a place of safety until the day is accomplished in which it will be given me to sing, "Unto me a child is born, unto me a son is given and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor the prince of Peace The High and Mighty God[""]<sup>5</sup> Amen saith my soul

1. Mt 21:42.
2. Echoing Christ's parable of the pearl of great price - Mt: 13:46.
3. **disordered affection to the creature** - over concern with, or love for, the self, one's own will and worldly desires. A disorder because it inhibits or prevents devotion to God.
4. Rev 12:14 - 'And to the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.'
5. Is 9:6 - 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' Usually taken as a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. Mary is also expressing hope in the coming of Christ - into her own heart.

### Dublin 2nd Mo 21st 1797

Oh! thou true and essential source of purity, to whom the dark workings of iniquity are an utter abomination hear, I pray thee the cries of my soul. I groan being in bondage - I was under the oppression of guilt and defilement. Oh that thou wouldst be pleased to grant me these three things if consistent with thy holy will Cleanse Oh cleanse me from all that is offensive in thy pure sight and by the mighty workings of thy divine spirit, drive far from me superfluity of sleep, superfluity of words, and superfluity of thoughts,<sup>1</sup> that so thro thy great mercy I may sink down into that profound annihilation of self and selfishness where as at the bottom of a deep well the spring of thy living water<sup>2</sup> is found Oh! divest me of all my own will strip me of every fig leaf covering<sup>3</sup> & cause me to see in the true light that thou art my all my Redeemer My God - Amen



1. The Quaker testimony to simplicity involved seeking to avoid excess and live as simply as possible. This extended to all aspects of life, and in the eighteenth century the word 'superfluity' came to be used generally within the Society to denote any activity, possession or item deemed unnecessary or not in keeping with this testimony. Hence, one should take only as much sleep as necessary to refresh the body, speak simply and to the point, and centre one's thoughts on the useful or spiritual, avoiding, for instance, idle flights of the imagination or selfish daydreams.
2. Jn 4:7-15 - The exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, where Jesus describes himself as the source of living water.
3. Gen 3:7 - Adam and Eve made aprons for themselves out of fig leaves because, having eaten the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they knew they were naked and were ashamed. Then they hid themselves from God. Mary asks God to take away every barrier or form of self-protection, created by herself or her own will, which might inhibit spiritual growth.

### Dublin 2nd Mo 26 1797

Oh the horrors of darkness Oh the anguish of privation how have they surrounded my soul & overwhelmed me, in the bitterness of my spirit I have poured out my heart before God. Lord hear the groans of a polluted Worm!<sup>1</sup> Let judgement and burning utterly consume all that is impure within me. Let my Lot be to dwell in thy presence & as for the rest I seek not to evite<sup>2</sup> sufferings. Thou hast heard the agonizing cry of my wretched heart and thy word is a fire, as a slowly consuming fire within me. I have felt it and I now feel it! Blessed be thy holy name for ever as a flame of infinite subtlety dividing between thought and thought, as a sword a two edged sword which pierceth to the bottom of the root of corruption and as a soft & secret whisper which infuses a gleam of comfort even in this miserable estate.<sup>3</sup> Oh! my God continue to me the Grace of patience for thou knowest that I have need of patience I am grievously torn by contending passions impatience irritation anger and a desire to leave this valley of obscurity in which my dwelling is & hath been Oh leave me not to my own ruinous & corrupt desires Oh let the operation of thy spirit be unhindered by me, Oh give me strength to go down to the bottom of Jordan<sup>4</sup> and Oh leave me not I beseech thee

1. worm - a common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry 'Dublin 11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.
2. evite - from the French 'eviter', to avoid.
3. estate - often used in the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries to mean 'state' or 'condition'.
4. The River Jordan in Israel was where John the Baptist baptised proselytes and Jesus Himself. Hence to go down to the bottom of Jordan signifies purification and rebirth.

### 3rd Mo 12th 1797

I crumble into dust before thee Oh! omnipotent word of God I bow down to the ground at thy presence and beseech thee to proceed with thy perfect work "Dust thou art and unto Dust thou shalt return "<sup>1</sup> Oh gracious promise on which as on an anchor my soul repositeth! fulfil thy word thy word in truth. Annihilate that corrupt & abominable man of sin which hath so long dwelt in me that odious body the offspring of putrefaction & death. Tis not enough Oh my gracious Redeemer that I feel it as cold & lifeless within me, nor yet that the stink thereof is graciously offensive It must be thoroughly decayed & return to



its pristine dust that the blast of the breath of the high God may scatter it as chaff driven by the Wind. Oh! then I beseech thee let not one drop of cheering rain descend upon it nor the moisture of refreshing dew to retard its dissolution, but may the keen wind blow upon it & the parching heat dry it up, may no consolation refresh it but may it be reduced into dust - into nothing - then shall nothing oppose thy holy will Oh! God then shalt thou create anew then shall thy tabernacle be there & the work of thy hands shall be unobstructed, then shall the restoration of all that was lost in Adam be witnessed in Christ Jesus, the morning stars shall sing together & the sons of God shout for joy, all shall be holiness unto thee & innocence sanctified by thee, all shall be without blemish before thee & prepared as a bride for her Lord, Hasten then Oh my God as fast as consistent with thy will that the sabbath of thy rest<sup>2</sup> may be known a day of holiness unto the Lord and sacred unto our God

1. Gen 3:19 - God's curse on mankind for the disobedience of Adam and Eve in eating the forbidden fruit. These words here become a blessing, a promise that the corrupt and sinful self can be destroyed and a new self created in Christ.
2. Gen 2:2-3. See also note 1, journal entry '7th Mo 12th 1796' above.

### Dublin 3rd Mo 16 1797

My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me<sup>1</sup> why art thou so far from the voice of my roaring! my soul is in darkness & surrounded with horrors / in the midst of the gulph[sic] of anguish, Oh God! My God be not far from me for I am exceedingly miserable - The archers have shot at me and wounded me my enemy hath enveloped me as a mighty host I am a poor wretch beaten with stripes I am tormented, darkness & clouds surround me Oh God I have deserved all and more it is just, I acknowledge thy Justice I am sunk in the mire & in the clay The prince of the power of the air<sup>2</sup> hath reigned over me, I have said my way is hid from the Lord & my path from my God Oh that I were indeed annihilate in all of self - Hear me Oh God Hear me for I am very low I am exceedingly miserable Pity me Oh God Pity me for I am an outcast from thy presence I look for thy coming Oh Horror tis all darkness, I watch as a traveller for the dawn of the day, how long shall I watch in vain. Thou art just Oh God in all thy Judgments and perfect in all thy dealings with us, Oh God My God be not far from me, draw near I pray thee & consume with thy brightness, these dismal fogs these shades of darkness. Oh God! my God I will not cease to cry unto thee

1. Mk 15:34 and Mt 27:46 - Christ's cry of anguish from the cross.
2. The prince of the power of the air - Satan, the prince of this world.

### 3rd Mo 16th 1797 [same date as above]

A Testimony to the truth and a memento of remembrance to my soul! If thou canst forget Oh my soul that horror of darkness in which all & every faculty was



enveloped yesterday while my feet were wandering the streets of Dublin. If thou canst forget that anguish in which thou traversed Sackville Street<sup>1</sup> determined if possible not to return home till thou hadst found thy God! If thou canst forget the thick cloud which covered thee & the dreadful confusion of all thy thoughts then mayst thou again be liable to the same suffering & expose thyself to the same temptations, Remember & tremble what was the cause Why Oh my mother consentedst[sic] thou that thy weak and impotent child should pay that visit or why unable as I was to lift up an hand in the battle did I God[Go] How is it that I cannot resist the allurements of pressing invitation & rather expose my self to these trials than offend those who are piercing my soul thro & thro. Oh! direful imbecility when shall I grow strong. Oh ye tender Mothers who feel an interest in your childrens eternal welfare Oh! that I had a voice to address you & to penetrate to the very centre of your hearts. How would I cry unto thee. How would I charge you & conjure you as you love the souls of your little ones expose them not to corrupt conversation. Oh! suffer them not to hear the language of spiritual impurity & Beware that you suffer not their feet to enter where the pure love of God reigneth not! Oh Watch over your darlings as your father watcheth over you! Oh! cause them not that anguish of spirit which must be felt if their hearts internally give way to the approach of impurity nor that endless misery of which you may be unknowingly the cause by leading them or suffering them to be led out of the paths of the footsteps of the flock. Oh ye tender Mothers how important is your charge. You stand before God accountable for your dear little Lambs: Oh suffer them not to be exposed to impure conversation spiritually impure how dreadful:

1. **Sackville Street** - main street in Dublin, now renamed O'Connell Street.

### Dublin 4th Mo 5 1797

Is there anything within me Oh! my soul to prevent the full and perfect operation of the holy spirit. Is there any secret reserve? is there any covered image? I trust not Lord, spare me not Lord pity not but accomplish thy perfect will Lo I am viler than dung I am indeed the lowest dross,<sup>1</sup> but Oh! if there be no resistance from that accursed idol self if it be utterly slain (thine Oh my Redeemer is the Glory & the power) then Oh! then canst thou create anew Search I beseech thee and see is there anything within me to oppose thee and if there be let it die the death Oh! spare me not Lord Jesus

1. **dross** - the impurities extracted in the metal refining process. Therefore impure waste or rubbish.

### 4th Mo 12th 1797

How unspeakable a felicity is it for the soul to be content to lie as a seed in the Ground waiting for the appointed time of its resurrection into the power of an endless life<sup>1</sup> For as there is much to be done in the outward before the period of silent growth the Ground must be plowed[sic] again & again & every stone

whose hardness would oppress the rising of the tender plant must be carefully removed that nothing may remain but the soft pliable earth which watered by refreshing showers becomes a fit receptacle for the precious seed - so in the inward when the Gospel plough has been experienced again & again - the hard flinty Nature removed and the showers of repentance have been plentifully shed - then and not till then may we wait in safety for the growth of the seed of life; Knowing that the good husbandman lets not slip the best time of implanting it in the heart - and that as surely - yea more surely than that the seed tho' enveloped with clods of earth will rise in renovated beauty so shall the patient waiting soul receive its reward in due time

1. Likening the soul to a seed in the ground, awaiting the moment when growth will begin yet with all its potential present, was an image frequently used amongst Quakers (particularly quietists) to describe the state of silent waiting and readiness in which the inner self was best prepared for communion with God.

### 8th Mo 1st 1797

After a day of unutterable misery a day in which my tears were my meat a day of darkness and Gloominess, Thou Oh! my God hast been pleased to say "Peace be still"<sup>1</sup> - I feel the hovering of thy spirit, I feel the calming of thy voice and if I have any desire, it is that no foul breath of self accursed self - may irritate the ruffled waves of my soul, but that resting under thy tranquillizing operation they may gradually subside, and that in thine own appointed time the fury of these troubled waters being changed into stillness thou mayst cause thy pure image to be reflected in the face thereof (to the praise & Glory of thine excellent name) & that nothing no no thing no fallen leaf no discordant gale may retard or obstruct the full enshining[sic] of thine adorable sun

1. Mk 4:39 - Christ commanded the wind and sea in the storm, 'Peace, be still.' and they obeyed him.

Mary visited England again in 1797, as evidenced by the next journal entry, written at Hampstead. But there is no other writing surviving from this time. There is no way of knowing, therefore, who she came to see at Hampstead. Her uncle George Harrison communicated regularly with Samuel Hoare, the Quaker banker whose son Samuel married Elizabeth Fry's sister Louisa Gurney, through their joint work on committees for the abolition of the slave trade. The pair had been friendly since their schooldays together at Gilbert Thompson's in Penketh. The Hoare family moved from Stoke Newington to a new home, Heath House, that they had built at Hampstead, in 1790 (Judith Jennings, *The Business of Abolishing the British Slave Trade*, p.83). Mary may well have paid a visit to the Hoares, but this must remain purely conjecture. She was later to become very friendly with a Sarah Hoare who, though not Samuel's daughter Sarah, was probably a relation (see Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'). The Hoares had Irish connections - Samuel Hoare's father, also Samuel, was born in Ireland and set up trade there.

If Mary did visit the Hoares, she would have had a fascinating time. They enjoyed a wide circle of acquaintance extending beyond the Quaker community, including authors and others in the literary field. One friend of Samuel's was the evangelical writer Hannah More.



**Hampstead 8th Mo 31- 1797**

Oh Nature whose unrivalled charms are evidently impressed by the finger of Omnipotence,<sup>1</sup> whose unartificial sweetness diffuses an universal calm, and lulls to rest those discordant emotions which so untune the soul! Whose pure air impregnate with healing virtue unites with this corporeal frame & exhilarates[sic] every member<sup>2</sup> of it. Oh Nature how lovely art thou how complete! how perfect! formed & fitted by thy good & gracious God to contribute to the comfort & convenience of that prime creature - Man - But Oh how insufficient to satisfy the ardent thirst of his immortal soul - how empty to supply the vacuum which its Lord alone can fill. Oh Nature not even thy charms can convey to my oppressed mind the balm of peace I turn in vain I turn to the woods whose verdant<sup>3</sup> branches wave with the fructifying<sup>4</sup> breath of air: to the fields whose Grassy carpet courts me to rest on its fragrant bosom. I lift up my eyes to the blue canopy whose amazing circus extends over the universe and I cry, can that immense power who hath placed me amongst the works of his hands - beneath this sky & amidst these manifestations of his invisible power & goodness! Can he Oh! can he forsake the creature whom he hath formed - surely No: Fixed in the belief a belief with which every object impresses me - I revert from thee Oh! Nature and from all thy soft allurements, from the sweet melody of thy winged warblers from the rustling of thy leafy boughs, from the murmurs of thy streams - I turn to the inward receptacle the desolated habitation within my own breast and I wait in an agony of poignant distress for the visitation of the presence of my beloved: Depart ye aerial guests daughters of imagination who oft seek to intrude on moments devoted to more serious avocation:<sup>5</sup> Depart there is no room for you: all is occupied by eager longing to receive the Bridegroom of souls, and I reject with abhorrence the reception of any other: Oh that he would indeed appear Oh that he would purify all that remains impure within me - As the hart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee Oh God As the benighted traveller sigheth for the morning & patiently waiteth for the dawn of day, even so torn with unutterable anguish & enveloped with dark distress: my spirit waiteth upon thee - Oh that thou wouldst turn and satisfy the incessant craving of my hungry soul; for as the keen sensation of a famishing appetite - as a fire that burneth unquenched - as a worm that knaweth incessantly - even so is the feeling of my heart - I would traverse the Indies could I find thee there & would joyfully wander from Pole to Pole were I assured that I should there receive the fruition of my toil - Oh I groan but it easeth me not Oh! for patience: Strengthen thou my hope in thee

1. finger of Omnipotence - hand of God.
2. member - part.
3. verdant - green and fresh.
4. fructifying - encouraging to bear fruit.
5. avocation - calling, occupation.



In manuscript, this entry is placed just before two other entries, dated '9th Mo 18th 1797' and '1st Mo 9th 1798' respectively, outside the main sequence of journal entries and letters. It is reproduced here, therefore, because it is likely to have been written in 1797, before the entry dated 18 September.

### **[Undated]**

In the midst of all these scenes my heart retires to its centre to enjoy more intimately those delicious sensations which can only be experienced in the nothingness of self & I pour out my heart before thee O thou God of my life to implore the continuance of thy affectionate regard - Be with me, oh be with me, thou sole delight and sustenance of my spirit thou hast indeed been with me hitherto, thou hast led me through the thorny wilderness, thou hast plucked my feet as a brand out of the fire, thou hast impregnated my bosom with a spark of thy divine flame and I burn, yea, I burn with a desire to be wholly thine - ?? Oh Lord will I commemorate thy mercies which have been without number dispensed to a worm<sup>1</sup> whose sole pleasure hath often been to grovel on this earth, to feast on the dust of the ground - but thou Oh Light in darkness Oh riches in poverty hast illumined my visual ray and I can now see the beauties of thy Kingdom and I pant after the full enjoyment of thee - O thou who hast found me a loathsome a naked infant unbathed unclothed thou didst indeed compassionate my miserable estate,<sup>2</sup> thou didst change it according to thy will; & now if I forget thee O Jerusalem let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth let my right hand forget her cunning<sup>3</sup> - Oh how hast thou been with me in the depth of my distress, and hearkened graciously unto the voice of my roaring when enveloped as in the midst of the belly of hell, thou snatch'd me out of the mire and the clay and thou hast set my feet upon a rock even the rock of thy salvation against which no enemy can prevail<sup>4</sup> Thou hast stripped me and more and more mayest thou strip me of the abominable rags of self-righteousness, thou hast clothed me more & more mayest thou clothe me with the beautiful garment of thy divine presence form me fashion me, mould me, model me, any thing or nothing honour or dishonour - as thou wilt - only let thy will be done, that so in thy own time my soul may be ravished with that delightful salutation - thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee!<sup>5</sup>

1. worm - a common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry 'Dublin 11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.
2. compassionate my miserable estate - take pity on my unhappy condition.
3. let my tongue [. . .] forget her cunning - let me lose the power of speech or the use of my right hand.
4. Christ said that whoever heard his sayings and did them was like a wise man who built his house upon a rock, enabling it to withstand wind, rain and flood (Mt 7:24-27, Lk 6:47-49). The rock is also Christ Himself who offers salvation to those who follow him (see 1 Cor 10:4).
5. Song 4:7.

### **Dublin 9th Mo 18th 1797**

Is there a heart so cold & so insensible that it glows not in the luminous contemplation of Divine Love? Creating renovating Love, which incessantly is seeking the cooperation of the spirit of man thereby to overcome all the wrath and all the irritation which his yielding to disorderly passions doth occasion, to



ameliorate and soften all the hard and freezing influence in which his heart may have been enveloped - to dispel the mists of darkness and chase the hovering fogs of night to eradicate the malevolent propensity to malice and hatred which devours like a canker the flower of human happiness and gives venom to the shaft of revenge - To mingle its sweet harmonizing impulse even with the interior centre - and there to form gradually to form a throne and a temple for the spotless Lamb of God<sup>1</sup> To change the violence and warmth of irregular nature into the glowing flame of purified affection and the swelling hauteur<sup>2</sup> of high crested loftiness into the meek and lowly humility which form'd the characteristic of the Son of God! No! Tho' they whose harrowed<sup>3</sup> feelings have shrunk beneath the corruptive influence of the spirit of this world - whose mercenary souls never experienced a joy beyond that of the accumulation of wealth, or tinsel pageantry<sup>4</sup> Though these may refuse to listen to the voice of the charmer who charmeth wisely. yet blessed be God the eyes which have seen and the ears which have been ravished with the sound of the unutterable mysteries of his Kingdom are proof to the sophisticated reasonings of fools and they glow with an ardent, unconsumed desire after the knowledge of the possession of him who is altogether lovely

1. **the Lamb of God** - John the Baptist hailed Jesus as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29).
2. **hauteur** - haughtiness.
3. **harrowed** - distressed, damaged, wounded.
4. **tinsel pageantry** - tawdry outward show.

### Dublin 10th Mo 19 1797

Lo we have left all and followed thee<sup>1</sup> was the appeal of the primitive disciples of Christ & it remains at this day an awakener of hope & a strengthener of the mind when bowed down beneath a weight of that depression which fails not to attend a deviation from the beaten track. Behold we have left all. We have thrown away every cobweb system<sup>2</sup> every comfort floating on the uncertain wave - every resting place whose basis abode not in the hour of trial. We have quitted our fathers house (& in its spiritual signification) we have not where to lay our head<sup>3</sup> Here however may be forcibly evinced the fulfilment of that gracious promise which extends to all who have quitted lands or houses etc.etc. they shall receive one hundred fold even in this life and in the world to come Everlasting life.<sup>4</sup>

1. Lk 18:28 - the disciple Peter's words to Christ.
2. **every cobweb system** - referring to man-made systems based on human reason, such as deism, which, in Mary's view, obscure true vision.
3. Mt 8:20 - Speaking to a scribe who had promised to follow Him, Jesus said, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.'
4. Mt 19:29 - 'And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' Also Mk 10:30 - 'But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.'



## Dublin 1st Mo 9th 1798

Is there oh is there a sensation so painfully oppressive so enshrouded with gloom, as a secret consciousness (of what shall I [?say]<sup>1</sup>) of deviating from the perfect standard of Divine & Moral Rectitude<sup>2</sup> It is not the being safe from the researches of fellow-mortals that can in the least degree ameliorate the pang of retrospection! oh no! where the sovereign efficacy of bold and fearless Truth is not experienced how puny is every other offer of consolation No external can present balm to the heart! Oh! Truth thou lovely child of simplicity and candour hadst thou nothing to offer me but the secret feeling of the moment, hadst thou no future joys to attract my attention - yet such is thy potent thy uncontrollable[sic] magnetism - that (in spite of all the decorous allurements of falsehood) I would adore thee for thyself alone - Can aught of felicity surpass the internal consciousness of undeviating obedience to the sacred Monitor,<sup>3</sup> of standing with our feet upon a rock - an impregnable rock against which nothing, no, nothing can prevail to unharmonize us<sup>4</sup> O! the peace which flows throughout every fibre of our frame - the peace attendant on obedience. May it be our portion henceforth and for ever. May no momentary pursuit ever prompt us to hazard the loss of this inestimable Gift! but in all our movements may we be simply attendant on our best feelings and listen to the voice of admonition which suggests in the secret of our hearts those things which we shall always eventually find most conducive to present & future peace

1. Word missing in manuscript.
2. **Moral Rectitude** - righteousness. Here divine justice and morality are conflated.
3. **sacred Monitor** - expression for God, conveying the sense of God as inward guide and regulator acting through the human conscience.
4. Christ said that whoever heard his sayings and did them was like a wise man who built his house upon a rock, enabling it to withstand wind, rain and flood (Mt 7:24-27, Lk 6:47-49). The rock is also Christ Himself who offers salvation to those who follow him (see 1 Cor 10:4).

## Dublin 7th Mo 13 - 1798

Oh! my God thou alone knowest how my soul hath been tossed - how my sentiments have changed of later times - to thee only is known the dark deprivation which my own folly or thy blessed will hath led me into - Oh thou that hast broken me off from all systematic knowledge<sup>1</sup> that hast taken from me all the enjoyment of the experiences of others, that art closing the eye of speculation<sup>2</sup> within me that has far removed all desire of theoretical attainments and hast brought me into the dust of self abhorrence - In deep humility do I address thee and beg of thee to go on with thy gracious work and not to spare, but to utterly smite all that would impede thy arising within me.

1. **systematic knowledge** - human knowledge based on reason alone. See note 2 to journal entry '10th Mo 19 1797' above.
2. **the eye of speculation** - the element of the reasoning faculty that leads to questioning and doubt.



### Dublin 8th Mo 1 - 1798

When the heart which unceasingly & unremittingly pants after the possession of supreme good - feels itself turned from terrestrial enjoyments & sickens at the trifles which earth can afford - when it has experienced the futility of all things below & finds nothing around to supply the dreadful chasm Oh! then with what ardency with what burning thirst does it present itself before the source of all Good the sacred fire which is enkindled within its inmost centre absorbs all before it every object is fuel to its unquenchable flame & it powerfully rises high over every intervening obstacle which serves but to augment its force till it reaches to & unites in the closest bond of bliss with that immeasurable Ocean whose overflowing tide is eternal Love

Oh my God can this burning ray this ardent unconsumed desire to mingle with thy essence to be as thou art to act as thou actest to love as thou lovest overcoming all evil only with good, can this be of temporary creation - No it is an emanation of thee tis the air in which I breathe tis the life in which I live and without which I could no more exist than could the animal which enshrouds me<sup>1</sup> if deprived of vital air.

1. **the animal which enshrouds me** - the human body, seen as an outer covering of animal life encasing the real self which, by implication, must consist of mind, soul or spirit.

To place the following narrative in context, see notes prior to journal entries for 1796-97, p.6 above.

### Progress of Infidelity Dublin 8th Mo 25 1798

When the hoar frost of the winter of life shall have besprinkled my devoted head, when the deep furrows on these cheeks shall remind me that the bloom and folly of youth are fled, when the hand which guides this pen shall tremble with the palsy of age robbed of its strength & spoiled of its vigour & the heart which has so often palpitated with such various emotions shall feel the fire of its strength spoiled, now verging to decay - then haply<sup>1</sup> the recollection of the sensations of youth may interest the bosom which they can no longer agonize & may raise in my soul the language of thanksgiving, adoration & praise for all his deliverances, his unmerited mercies & wonted tenderness & care towards the creature whom his beneficence[sic] hath warmed unto life & his love hath preserved & redeemed - But why should these lines record feebly and faintly those seasons which hath [been]<sup>2</sup> deeply engraven on the tablet of memory<sup>3</sup> Ah the tablet of memory may fail its faithful delineation may sink into obscurity & that slow progression of the now free flowing current of life while it steals from the body its vigour & its ardour will assuredly impair the faculties of mind.

In recurring to the winter of 1796 amongst an infinitude of continual aberration I yet find many and abundant seasons [?reasons] for which to commemorate the adorable condescension of him who liveth for ever & ever



My soul was often deeply exercised and many a painful struggle did I experience - anguish did pillow my head with thorns and often had I no light yet still I did experience a growth in God & my root was deepening in the heavenly soil. I well remember when first speculation impelled me to explore the mystery of Christ: I puzzled and puzzled yet determined to receive into my mind only those ideas of him which light should internally Manifest: Thus I Remained in a sort of involuntary scepticism believing fully in the power & privilege[sic] of internal revelation<sup>4</sup> and humbly adoring him in the dark ignorance in which he was pleased at times to leave me I remember I was proud of my spiritual attainments & anxiously desirous of an elevated station in the Church of God<sup>5</sup> and I waited with an ardent impetuosity for the moment in which he should evencingly[sic]<sup>6</sup> call me to the Glorious Work of the Ministry - I believe I had an eye to this in perhaps every action & it served to preserve me in a sort of circumspect walking.<sup>7</sup> tho I have nothing of which I can in any wise boast.

Since the Winter preceding my natural part<sup>8</sup> had been no little buried<sup>9</sup> in the commencement & establishing of a free school<sup>10</sup> it occupied some of my time and much of my thoughts perhaps the impurity of my mind might not at first have been uninfluenced by a desire of signaling[sic]<sup>11</sup> myself before men & of thereby acquiring the Wreath of praise. Alas how vile how contemptible[sic] were the motives which caused many an action seemingly good, how truly despicable was I unpurified in the furnace of regeneration<sup>12</sup> unwashed in the lava of self abasement.<sup>13</sup> The School was the topic of much of my conversation, it introduced me to the acquaintance of some whom I hold in tender remembrance and of some who have contributed not a little to the almost closing of the fountain of life within me.

One Evening at our house amidst a circle of friends was a certain individual who with me was vastly interested about schools,<sup>14</sup> he talked on the subject with animation & warmth, he spoke of the corrupt system of coercion with abhorrence, he dwelt much on the good effects of mildness & urbanity & expatiated with warmth on the beauty of uncorrupted Nature - I credulous & eager[sic] of novelty, & feeling within myself the justice of many of his sentiments, swallowed the gilded hook and became a sort of proselyte to his sentiments From that time we corresponded - it was sanctioned by his station in society as an elder, a father, a schoolmaster, an husband, & one as I thought looked up to by most, but sanctioned less highly self love wants<sup>15</sup> have doubtless availingly prompted me to exchange sentiments & communicate and receive ideas with and from him - The subject of our letters was chiefly about scholastic engagements theoretical improvements etc but soon it reverted to the theme next my heart (to that for which alone I covet to live) to Religion. he addressed me as a father experienced long in probationary exercises<sup>16</sup> to whom mental or internal recollection was familiar who sought in all his actions to please God and who shunned the approbation of men, nay more he was a father in the church acknowledged an elder what then could I fear from unfolding as I did the secret entanglements the besetments the innumerable difficulties which I found in the inward path, he encouraged me he consoled me his advice was beautiful and his precepts appeared consistent with Gospel simplicity but how is it that on the first proposition of Deistical sentiments I did not altogether relinquish an



acquaintance with him, alas I considered his experience so much deeper than mine, I a novice, he grown old in the truth & while I was sucking in the most destructive sentiments which unfailingly tended to sap the foundation of all good which might have been begun within me - while I was imbibing those very heresies of which the prophet complained hardness of heart & blindness,<sup>17</sup> I thought I was encreasing[sic] in wisdom & stature & growing More & more pure, by degrees what at first had shocked me (lightly valuing the scriptures) was quite familiarised to me & a secret repugnance arose against the sacred text. I endeavoured to bring down the character of The Most High to the level of my own narrow conceptions was ready to doubt every thing which I could not understand - I read as he recommended Pains[sic] Age of Reason,<sup>18</sup> was convinced of the propriety & reasonableness of his arguments I said within myself "I detest that book the Bible it is trash I know nothing of Jesus Christ I understand not what I have to do with him. The idea of a tempter is ridiculous mere heathen mythology patched up by a set of ignorant credulous men interested[sic] for their advancement in secular emoluments<sup>19</sup> who have deceived the people called Christians". Thus was I led on from error to error from darkness to darkness & yet what was still more astonishing I was so wise in my own conceit that I concluded as that individual told me I was ripe for Heaven, I looked upon all to judge it, I was inwardly blind & deaf, Oh God thou knowest by what insensible gradations<sup>20</sup> I became so, what preaching could touch me, I who was whole, was full, was great, was rich could the advice of my friends I was superior to it all could the censure the odium of mankind<sup>21</sup> - I was taught to disregard what men could say & I despised their odium, the odium of Deism,<sup>22</sup> could the scriptures bind me by the Written Law, No, I disbelieved and disregarded their admonitions deeming them the offspring of crafty & designing men, what then could bind me, I was taught to obey the impulse of nature Nature was extolled above all and that impelled me into many errors, it would altogether have ruined me had I not been restrained by the secret Arm of God. Our Lords exhortation to watch:<sup>23</sup> I neglected. My reason taught me it was rather the office of a Shepherd than of the Sheep, I thought that he was to watch over me & I what had I to watch were not all things good I had only to observe & follow nature Oh Lord thou didst assuredly pity my miserable situation & gave me to feel by dear bought experience the hardness of heart which one may insensibly<sup>24</sup> acquire. All order & regularity in devotion was called system & therefore despised, all preaching was deemed useless & our Ministers little valued, this last cost me much for I was unwilling to give up the idea of being a preacher. My ideas of the Deity were changed. I yielded to the flattery of my sophisticating reason & became an advocate for Moral Rectitude<sup>25</sup> alone, the avenues to my heart closed insensibly & the sun of life ceased to rise with peace. I felt condemned in spite of my purity, What to do I knew not. I found that somehow or other I had lost Ground and I knew not where to apply. Oh the horrors which I underwent Oh the darkness which seized my soul Where to apply for relief I knew not. my resource within was closed up, the streams of Gospel Ministry - ceased to flow or when they did I could not receive them nor understand them because I judged them I would have given the world if I could to believe in Jesus Christ it was not in my power to believe. I considered death as an awful change in spite of the maxims which I had imbibed, that it was nothing more than a sleep. I endeavoured to persuade myself that the pale faced Messenger<sup>26</sup> was not that terrific guest which I had apprehended - that sickness and pain were only the natural consequences of things, but conviction



unwelcome conviction of the contrary clung fast to me alas: I changed my course of reading, instructed that the scriptures & experiences of Holy men were mere trash and beneath the use of the followers of the new way. I read Rousseau<sup>27</sup> who convinced me for a short while of the purity of nature, his polished style and elegant language were aptly suited to enforce his sentiments. Reason was his God or the God of nature. Nature not as it came pure from the hands of God but sophisticated stript[sic] of its highest office - the footstool and exalted as a kite in the air far above what it ought alas Bolingbroke shewed me the absurdity of Moses Relation<sup>28</sup> and Paine crowned the whole Good God is it possible that thro the whole stage of my disorder, I sought at least believed I sought thee I lived for a while on past experiences the remembrance of what I had gone thro of what I had suffered this was feasting on riotous living it lasted not long, the tree of knowledge of which I had tasted opened my eyes and I saw as I never saw before and as I never wish to see again I saw indeed as the Scripture hath said<sup>29</sup> But Oh it was a direful seeing it shewed me that Superstition and Bigotry for such was the name for order and stability etc wished to keep us in ignorance lest acquiring knowledge we should throw off their yoke. It puffed up my spirit so highly that no hand but the hand of God could lay me in the valley of humility again it filled me with visionary ideas of God inspired me with disrespect for his son blinded me to the light of truth and altogether injured my understanding by perverting it. Helvetius<sup>30</sup> who treated on the equality of Man and asserts that education only makes the difference not allowing the possibility of superior Gifts and internal illumination he I say convinced my credulous reason & our Lords parable of the ten talents etc in vain presented itself to my mind.<sup>31</sup> I felt myself sinking to the level of a brute nor could I at all save myself for having considered that I was in the Order of God and had only to breathe to act & to die I regarded that precious Counsel "Strive to enter in at the strait Gate["] etc<sup>32</sup> only as a stumbling block which with all my boasted wisdom I could not get over. Thus the hedge<sup>33</sup> which surrounded my little Garden was broken down and become subject to the inroads of every intruder. I was taught that we should have all things in common and gave or endeavoured to give myself no trouble about cultivating what was better without it. the consequence soon appeared, weeds noisome weeds instead of grateful flowers convinced me of the change within What a mercy that I was not left in this dismal situation That the Most High gave me to feel the excruciating anguish which I had entailed on myself by my conduct, I was a Leper all over, I cried "Lord if thou wilt thou canst make me clean"<sup>34</sup> what avails it to me that I have myself done this mischief Thou must deliver me or I shall inevitably perish. Often in many a solitary walk when no eye but his could penetrate my anguish, did I pour out my bitter complaints<sup>35</sup>

Often when the rays of the declining sun shot obligingly athwart mine head & seemed to inspire me with additional regret, oft have I cried thus fade all my joys - my sun is set in night & my misery no language may delineate

Oft when the waving boughs have murmured around me to the salubrious breath of air, have I said Oh ye trees of my Lords creation would I were even as you you have never perverted yourselves, you grow up beautiful and in dignity and bear the fruit which he hath appointed, but I miserable am as a viper which envenometh all around. Long very Long did I implore his mercy, but his mercy seemed far away. Often threw myself before him on the ground and gnashed my teeth with very anguish I cried Lord Lord is there yet hope for



me, but no reply would my Lord vouchsafe. Oh that thou wouldst close this eye within me - this eye which the fruit of the tree of knowledge that grows beside the tree of life in the midst of the garden of God hath opened & which Omnipotence alone can close.<sup>36</sup> Alas it remained unclosed. I had lifted up the sluices & the waters of death poured in. I had opened the Gates but I could never shut them. Thus was I a prey to the devourer<sup>37</sup> & he failed not to torment me, my secret sufferings God only knoweth. The Reasoner,<sup>38</sup> the accursed Reasoner was triumphant within me & none save they who have groaned beneath his yoke can judge of the severity of his iron rod. He had promised when I tasted of his fair seeming fruit which was beautiful to the sight & pleasant to the palate, that he would open my eyes & enlighten my understanding & fill me with natural and spiritual knowledge to judge & discriminate between evil & good. But Oh fatal deception, he grasped me in his infernal claws eternally to destroy my soul and eventually to deprive me of that peace which he had already broken - Yielding to that reasoning principle no ministry, no reading, no exhortation could impress me, because an infinity of arguments and objections arose in my mind against all that could be alledged[sic] by the most pathetic<sup>39</sup> address - Was I called upon to believe? this appeared the machination of priestcraft = to pin our faith on their sleeve, to accept as revelation that which might have been revealed to them but had not been so to me. I have said of the Bible I hate it for its very sight was an offence unto me. Did any speak of the suffering of the son and sent of God<sup>40</sup> - Lord was it I or the Demon within me that kicked most forcibly against this doctrine, that abhorred it, that rejected it, & that yet sought favor of thee and dared to recommend my purity before thee. The apostolic Fishermen<sup>41</sup> I considered as weak & credulous, and the Prophets as men who only sought the advancement and propagation of a set of tenets, which they had themselves adopted. Did I hear or read of the unutterable mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. How could I at all receive it or benefited[?benefit] thereby? What was mystery to me I did not understand it - let things be expressed clearly that all may understand, tho Christ himself hath spoken in parables, that is only they who had spiritual discernment might comprehend & unravel the else impenetrable meaning, in order to preserve safe from the vultures eye<sup>42</sup> the adorable truths which he hath established. Yet even was that truth expressed in plain and simple language a reasoning immediately arose, is this the Preacher's own experience? has he not heard it from other men & they from others. Is it not either traditional knowledge or hearsay. I cannot drink of the muddied stream, I require not these ineffectual helpers I will try for myself. But ah, in what spirit did I try. I was like one in a quicksand - with every struggle sank I deeper & deeper, yet persisted in refusing the assistance of every friendly hand. Oh my God may I rather be annihilate, than know again this deplorable state, may I rather be the vilest, the lowest, the most despicable of thy creatures, than the most highly gifted with such internal sensations, for I believe it very possible to possess high gifts and shining abilities nay to have just and clear ideas of truth, with power to express those ideas, and yet to be destitute of one single spark of Heavenly flame. Oh Reader who soever[sic] thou art, whose eye shall glance over these pages whether it be myself at a more advanced age, or if perchance any other, when the hand that now writes this shall be laid in the silent Grave. Oh Beware of the tree of knowledge, its Growth is indeed in the Garden of God, hard by the tree of life, but its fruit thou art forbidden to taste. Death is the assured consequence thereof, such is the decree of The Most High, and his decrees



are irrevocable, Long had continued my lamentable situation, for I had sinned against the commandment of God, & he suffered me to feel the poignancy of that deviation and long had I bewailed mine error (for every hour is long when the light of life is withdrawn & no prospect but a cloud salutes the mental optic<sup>44</sup>) e'er it pleased my Gracious God to recommence the internal operations of his holy spirit, to close that eye which sin had opened & to seal up those mysteries which vainly & presumptuously I had pryed[sic] into - & this effected he not suddenly but gradually as the rising of the outward orb of light & as he arose the tormenting Ignis Fatuus<sup>45</sup> disappeared & shrunk before him - slowly and as I thought very slowly did this divine Physician infuse his heavenly balm & if he hath now effectually healed my wound & that only the sore remembrance of it remaineth, shall not my heart return unto him the grateful incense of adoration Prayer & Praise, for He and He only is able to open the book and to unloose the seals thereof,<sup>46</sup> To Him belong might and dominion both now and for ever Amen<sup>47</sup>

1. **haply** - perhaps.
2. **[been]** - possibly omitted by copyist in error .
3. **tablet of memory** - figurative term for human memory. A tablet was a slab or plaque of stone on which an inscription was written, usually by way of some form of commemoration, but, less well known, it was also, originally, a thin strip or sheet of wood or ivory for writing on with a stylus. Several such tablets, or leaves, could be strung together through holes punched in their top left corners. Both sorts of tablet convey the idea of memory as a site on which discrete memories are inscribed without easy erasure.
4. **Internal revelation** - revelation vouchsafed to the inward self directly or experientially.
5. **elevated station in the Church of God** - the ministry.
6. **evencingly** - adverb from the verb 'to evince', meaning to show or indicate.
7. **circumspect walking** - Quaker expression meaning to keep within the bounds of 'Truth': being faithful, adhering to the Quaker Discipline and Testimonies, exercising care in religious observance but more particularly in developing all aspects of the spiritual life. Ex 23:13 is relevant: 'And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.'
8. **natural part** - mortal self.
9. **no little buried** - much occupied.
10. Almost certainly the General Daily Free School in St Catherine's Parish, Dublin. See journal entries for 1805 - '4th Mo 4th', 'undated' (p.53), '5th Mo 23rd', '5th Mo 31st' - and Vol. 2, Poetry, p.375.
11. **signalizing** - signalling.
12. **furnace of regeneration** - an image of spiritual purification and renewal, drawn from the metal refining process. Smelting ore in a furnace extracts the pure metal.
13. **lava of self-abasement** - humiliation or denigration of the self is also seen as a purifying process. 'Lava' here refers to a substance used for washing, from the Latin 'lavare' - wash.
14. Many leading Quakers were involved in school projects and the late eighteenth century was a period of much discussion and experiment with regard to education. It is probable this individual was Abraham Shackleton of Ballitore. As a schoolmaster who propounded novel views on education and who was a respected elder until his departure from the Society of Friends in the course of the deist controversy, he fits the characteristics given here. Contact with him, at Ballitore, would necessarily have been by post in the main, though Mary might have visited the village. She knew Shackleton's daughter Mary Leadbeater, and a poem addressed to her reveals a keen knowledge of the village of Ballitore (see 'An Epistle to M. Leadbeater.', Vol. 2, Poetry, p.396).
15. **self love wants** - selfish, egotistical desires.
16. **probationary exercises** - spiritual discipline, probably referring to practical methods of achieving 'mental or internal recollection', a state of inner peace, contemplation or communion with God.
17. **hardness of heart and blindness** - source untraced.
18. *The Age of Reason* by Thomas Paine was published in 1794. His better known text, *The Rights of Man*, in which he responded to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* by defending the Revolution and egalitarian principles, had been published in 1791. *The Age of Reason* was concerned specifically with religion and attempted to apply Enlightenment ideas to religious belief. It questioned Christian orthodoxy and 'applied to religion the principles of natural reason, developing a system of deism based on science and abstract morality' (Babuscio and Minta Dunn, *European Political Facts*, 1984, p.169).



19. **secular emoluments** - worldly gains or profit.
20. **insensible gradations** - stages so gradual as not to be noticeable.
21. Series of rhetorical questions which seem muddled without correct punctuation. Just as no preaching could touch or affect her opinions, neither could the advice of friends or the censure or derision of others.
22. **the odium of Deism** - essentially an exclamation, as in '[Oh], the odium of deism', indicating Mary's present feelings as opposed to the odium of the previous phrase ('I despised their odium') which refers to the disdain in which, when tending towards the deist persuasion herself, she had once held the scorn of orthodox critics.
23. Mt 26:40-41 - Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest, sorrowful and unable to sleep, asked his companions to stay awake and watch with him, but they fell asleep. Castigating Peter in particular, 'What! could ye not watch with me one hour?', he exhorted them, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'.
24. **insensibly** - unknowingly, without being aware.
25. **Moral Rectitude** - morality, righteousness. Here, a sense of right and wrong based on human judgement without reference to divine authority.
26. **pale faced messenger** - personification of death.
27. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), French writer and philosopher who, in his famous discourses - *Discours sur les arts et sciences* (1750) and *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754) - put forward the view that humanity was essentially good and extolled the virtues of the natural man, or native. Seeing people as having been corrupted by society, and evil as being the result of that corruption, it followed that by changing society for the better, human beings could once again become good - and by their own, not divine, intervention.
28. Henry St. John Bolingbroke (1678-1751), statesman and philosopher. Best known as the author of *The Idea of a Patriot King* (1749) in which he argued that the monarch should represent the whole nation rather than a segment of it, he also exerted much influence through his philosophical works such as *Reflections Concerning Innate Moral Principles* (1752). He promoted deism as a 'natural religion' which transcended denominational boundaries. At a time when religion was the cause of much dissension in politics, he saw deism as a reasonable religion to which the majority could subscribe in principle, as it retained belief in a godhead and universal creator while discarding superstition and bigotry.  
**Moses Relation** - the Jewish Law or law of Moses expounded in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. The idea that laws to live by could be given to man by supernatural means, as with the Bible story of the Ten Commandments and other laws given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai, would have been rejected by Bolingbroke.
29. Gen 3:5 - 'For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' The words of the serpent, tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
30. Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715-1771) was a French 'philosophe' who contributed with Diderot and D'Alembert to the production of the *Encyclopédie*. He published *De l'Esprit* in 1758. This 'was a statement of materialist and utilitarian doctrine which attacked all forms of morality based on religion. Denounced by the Sorbonne, the book was ordered to be burned in public' (Babuscio and Minta Dunn, *European Political Facts* (1984) p.161). This status as a banned book ensured it was read widely. Helvétius believed that human beings are motivated not by any innate morality, but by self-interest.
31. Mt 25:14-29 - Christ's parable comparing the Kingdom of Heaven to a master who entrusted his goods to his servants while travelling to another country. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to the third only one according to the ability of each. The first by wise trading turned the five into ten, the second likewise doubled the amount he had been given, but the third hid his money for fear of losing it. On his return, the master praised the first two as good and faithful servants, but the third he accused of being wicked and slothful and so took his one and only talent away to bestow it upon the one who had ten, saying, 'For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath'.
32. Mt 7:14 - 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it'.
33. **hedge** - protection or shelter. 'Hedge' was a word much used in the Society of Friends at this time to denote the protection from temptation, or 'the ways of the world', afforded by membership and by customs - in dress and speech for instance - which separated Quakers from other people. It could also be used in a much wider sense to describe a framework or structure of belief and practice which protected the individual, as here, from ideas that might damage their faith.
34. Mt 8:2-4. Christ's healing of the man with leprosy who came to Him saying, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean'.
35. **plaints** - lamentations.
36. Just as Adam and Eve, once they had eaten of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil located next to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, were able to see that they were naked, Mary by participating in speculation



had opened the 'eye' of religious doubt which made her see as she had not done before. Only the mercy of God (Omnipotence) could, she felt, return her to her previous innocent state.

37. **the devourer** - the Devil, who feasts on human souls.
38. **the Reasoner** - another term for the Devil whose specious arguments appear reasonable and who was thus able to ensnare Eve and so the entire human race. Also perhaps a personification of the reasoning faculty within, which sets human reason above implicit trust based on faith.
39. **pathetic** - appealing (especially to the feelings and emotions).
40. **suffering and sent of God** - Jesus. Referring to the doctrine of the atonement according to which Christ is considered to have suffered and died on the cross in order to atone for the sin of humankind.
41. **the apostolic fishermen** - Jesus's disciples. Jesus said to the fishermen Simon Peter and Andrew his brother, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men', Mt 4:19.
42. Job 28:7 - 'There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen.'
43. A space, sufficient for several words, is left in manuscript, presumably because the copyist could not read the original but hoped to be able to fill in the gap at a later date.
44. **the mental optic** - the mind's eye.
45. **Ignis Fatuus** - literary allusion for 'delusory hope'. Commonly known as the Will-o'-the-wisp, or Jack-o'-lantern, the Ignis Fatuus was a phosphorescent light sometimes seen above marshy ground which could lead travellers astray, as it could suddenly disappear and then reappear in another direction.
46. Rev 20:11-15 - At the Last Judgement, the Book of Life will be opened and only those whose names appear in it will enjoy eternal life.
47. Similar to verses towards the end of epistles by the apostles, for example 1 Pet: 5:11 - 'To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

The next three entries look back on the time of speculation and doubt as one of great inner conflict from which salvation was only possible through the mercy of God and the intercession of Christ. They acknowledge a dependence on redemption through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross in tones resonant of evangelicalism, and deplore the effects of 'serpentine wisdom' both on individual people and, in the entry for '1st Mo 15 1799', on the Church - here referring somewhat obliquely to the separation within Irish Quakerism as 'the desolation of the sanctuary'.

### **Dublin 9th Mo 16 [17198]**

My soul blessed be God hath gone thro such a dreadful conflict as language would fail to express Nay there is no language that may communicate what is the severe & real anguish of such a conflict, my whole soul & spirit was as a flame of fire, pent up within a narrow compass & panting burning to be free: I strove & strove with all my might - I besought with many bitter tears and after a considerable time of stretching out all the powers of my soul to reach after God whose infinity could alone satisfy my infinite desires, he was pleased to reveal the ameliorating influence of Jesus Christ whom I then knew to be the alone intercessor and mediator with God, Jesus I now know thee to be my Saviour my Redeemer. Thou art the Lamb of God<sup>1</sup> I never knew thee before that I remember, as I know thee now my crucified Lord I can now acknowledge thee, and before had I given worlds for the purchase I could not acknowledge thee the Saviour of men.

1. **the Lamb of God** - John the Baptist hailed Jesus as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29).



**Dublin 11th Mo 5 1798**

Oh that I had power and a voice to reach from the centre to the circumference of the Globe to proclaim in the ears of my fellow men the immutable truths which lie hidden within them & longing & striving for the union of the Will to come to the birth in them. Oh that I might effectually prevail to the overturning the mystery of iniquity which pervades the whole earth that I might persuade men to believe & to feel the terrors of Judgment & to embrace the offers of Mercy, thro Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour - for it is indeed an evil thing and bitter to forsake God and they that are ensnared in the subtlety of serpentine wisdom<sup>1</sup> (which is earthly sensual & devilish) must feel the bitterness thereof e'er they are healed of the deadly wound. Oh it is not in man - as Man to blunt the weapons of this destructive enemy, whose very breath is pestilence & whose words are poisoned arrows sticking fast & wounding sorely, surely there is not in all the regions of created space so formidable so effectual an enemy to Man. It wears the aspect of a friend & sucks out our portion of joy. It entwines itself round our affections calling that Holy which is not Holy & exalts the reason of Man by placing it where it ought not to be even on the throne of God judging all things. Blind to the Mystery of Gods Kingdom, which it considers as the invention of Priests it would level every thing to its own comprehension & shake off every Yoke. Infinitely more easily insinuating its infection into men of abilities where it assumes the form of truth and entices their adoration by a Multiplicity of refined ideas & certain reasons of causes & effects which as applied to the soul can never enter the Kingdom of God - often besetting the inexperienced young traveller as he journeys on towards Sion,<sup>2</sup> & Oh Lamentable! frequently causing to err those that think they are in the right way - What shall I call thee thou abhorred of my soul What appellation canst thou bear sufficiently expressive of my inmost detestation. none - none - more subtle than the serpent - thyself the beguiler of Eve fair as an angel and lovely as truth to those whom experience has not taught wisdom - may I never more be caught in thy wiles, but may I choose to be simple & foolish & ignorant, that so I may sink down into the deep valley of self-abasement & in due time rise superior to thy attacks thro faith in the Power of God  
Amen

1. **serpentine wisdom** - the wily wisdom of Satan who, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve as well as serpentine in the sense of being devious or circuitous and therefore misleading. This journal entry goes on to make it clear that this is also the aspect of human reason which, by assuming a power of understanding over and above revelation, undermines faith.
2. **Sion** - alternative spelling of Zion, the Holy City. Mount Zion was the hill at Jerusalem on which the Temple stood.

**Dublin 1st Mo 15 1799**

Oh my Lord thou that hast opened mine eyes to see the machinations of the evil one, protect me from the snares of the wicked, they cast upon me their envenomed glances - already they gather round me and rejoice as a Lion over its prey, confound them in their devices Oh God! & break in pieces their galling chains, for they have sought to deceive by subtlety and thou wilt take them in their own craftiness. Oh! Lord thou hast seen their secret abominations their



horrible rebellion is not concealed from thee. They have put on the strength of Hell & come forth to fight against thee & against thine anointed. Oh cleanse thy sorely polluted Church and heal her putrifying sores, let not the innocent suffer, let the vail[sic] be rent in twain<sup>1</sup> and thy truth be exalted over all for ever.

Oh how frightful the desolation of the sanctuary,<sup>2</sup> how horrible the devastation, how transformed the accursed one, Send Oh send the sword of thy spirit to aid us<sup>3</sup>

1. Mt 27:51 and Mk 15:38 - At Christ's death, the veil of the Jewish temple was 'rent in twain'.
2. **desolation of the sanctuary** - probably referring to the schism taking place in Irish Quakerism between deists, or those whose views were regarded as deistical or unorthodox, and evangelical or orthodox Friends.
3. In the manuscript, the last paragraph has a pencil cross through it and at the bottom a note written in pencil - 'so in Original'.

This passage marks the culmination of Mary's religious crisis. By dedicating herself wholly and entirely to God in the form of a marriage covenant entered in her diary, she attests to her reconciliation with Him, her rediscovery of faith, and her overwhelming desire and intention to make the promotion of that faith the work of her life above all else.

### Dublin 1st Mo 21 1799

Bear me Witness Ye Heavens, thou earth hear & record the solemnity of my Marriage covenant with the Lord of hosts, for I declare, solemnly declare in this his sacred presence that I will be his for ever, that I will and do irrevocably dedicate myself and all my faculties to him alone, that I will most faithfully obey his holy requisitions that I will and do unreservedly yield up everything which I call mine & henceforth & for ever hold all only and solely from him - That I will unfeignedly & with true sincerity - endeavour every moment of my life to promote his cause and his Kingdom - that in the ministration of his life giving Word which I firmly believe shall be committed to my trust and care<sup>1</sup> - I will unremittingly attend to his own most holy movements - that I will faithfully & at all times speak or be silent as he shall see meet to ordain, That I will divide<sup>2</sup> & minister as he shall be pleased to illuminate and not grudgingly or negligently, but freely and willingly with all my whole heart; that I will most heartily strive to keep me within the canopy of thy light which alone is able to cleanse and to sanctify even to the perfecting of thy own all Glorious Work - And this I do solemnly attest and declare from the very inmost of my heart having neither wish nor desire to live nor to die but singly and solely as may most conduce to the promotion of the Universal promulgation of thy everlasting Gospel through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour  
Amen

1. Mary has a clear sense of vocation to the ministry, and feels sure that she is destined to become a Quaker minister.
2. **divide** - share, i.e. amongst others.



**2nd Mo 23 1799**

In a powerful manner has my inmost heart been called to an entire cessation from all its own works, from all its own strivings and prayings to rest in the nothingness of self, surely an hard labor is seeking to rest from labor. Oh! that I may not go back in the day of battle but go on from strength to strength.

Cease from thy own Works is the Command of the day

**Dublin 9th Mo 30 1799**

I feel that which satisfieth which sets a bound to the mind and limits all the desires, which gives content in a low degree and causeth all the willings and workings to cease. Is not this the baptizing influence of Jesus Christ Is not this the efficacious circulation of his blood by which we feel our intimate connection with him Is not this an adoption into his church out of which there is no Salvation. Oh adorable father how great is thy condescension to a poor Weak Miserable Worm<sup>1</sup>

1. Worm - a common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry 'Dublin 11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.

**2nd Mo 2 1801**

Deeply feeling the agonizing effects of inbred depravity & prostrate before thee Oh thou who bringest judgment to the line & Righteousness to the plummet<sup>1</sup>, do I come my eternal my unchangeable and true friend imploring thee to allow me again to renew my often broken covenant with thee - I call not upon thee because I am innocent - but because I am indeed a transgressor and have sinned as [in] thine holy sight. Yet again hear me Oh my God & unite me in thee by an irrevocable tie, suffer me not to be seperated[sic] from thee for [a] moment, for in the moment that I leave thee I fall into error. It is not in me to support myself thou art my hope & my refuge forsake me not - I Groan after higher degrees of purity I thirst after entire and perfect holiness. I long for the standard of Justice & Equity to be set up in my heart. I conjure thee Oh My Redeemer to change & renew my spirit to heal all my Backsliding & to remember my follies no more I acknowledge that I have found thee faithful to fulfil and Merciful to forgive, that thou hast heard the bitter cry of thy Miserable Worm<sup>2</sup> and hast granted my supplication - in Months that are over and gone when grievous anguish laid hold upon me & terrors inexpressible assailed me, when sleep forsook my anxious eyelids and the long night was a night of horrors - then called I upon thee, thou mighty helper a God hearing prayer and thou didst altogether deliver me and hadst compassion on the creature whom thou hadst formed. Now again do I beseech thee to hear me and to purify me and renew a right spirit within me. Cleanse me from all evil from every defilement and thouroughly[sic] purge the secret recesses of my heart Oh! God to thee do I appeal, whom have I in Heaven beside thee or on earth in comparison of thee, do I not long for thy Salvation more than for any other



good, do I not groan for my full redemption which I can alone receive from thee Oh! unite me to thee by an indissoluble tie, that Henceforth & for ever I may render unto thee that which is thy due

1. Is 28:17 - 'Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.'
2. Worm - a common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry 'Dublin 11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.

Mary married Nathaniel Card on 13 March 1801. Perhaps because she was busy with her new responsibilities, there is a gap in her diary until the December of that year. This, then, is the first diary entry after her marriage. Already there is mention of financial concerns - the desire that the Cards be enabled to meet every 'temporal engagement'. Such worries were to dog her married life.

### Dublin 12th Mo 21 1801

It is with humble reverence that I have to acknowledge the continuation of thy chastening hand Oh Lord My Saviour spare not I beseech thee till the whole be consummated in the total annihilation of sinful self. I feel in all my affliction a desire to accomplish thy holy will and in personal abasement I can say I have rejoiced - Have I been too solicitous dearest Lord after the bread which perisheth<sup>1</sup> or is it not that my soul mourneth in secret to perform Equity and justice towards Men, Oh may we be enabled to fulfil every temporal engagement<sup>2</sup> and to cast away all reproach from the lip of the censurer for the rest my spirit clings intimately to thee Oh God and her incessant address unto thee is forsake me not my best Loved Lord - but give unto me a portion incorruptible & which fadeth not away I think I have no will for life or for death all resteth in the holy hands of the Almighty - but an earnest travail remains with me to obtain a certain and a sure refuge which will never fail me. Oh suffer me not to be deceived for all that is within me doth altogether supplicate to be thine alone Thou hast caused me to pass through many trials thou hast led me thro many a thorny maze, thou hast delivered me when no arm but thine was near to save a perishing worm<sup>3</sup> & thou canst not now forsake me. I do trust in thee. Thou hast brought me as thro fire & water and I have known the day of thy Judgments Oh God thou hast been unto me as a refiner of silver<sup>4</sup> & hast in measure redeemed my soul therefore have I confidence to leave all things unto thee knowing that thou wilt administer that [which] is needful for us

1. Jn 6:27 - 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life'.
2. temporal engagement - financial commitment. Failure to meet such commitments would incur reproach and censure from both the Quaker community and the world at large.
3. worm - a common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry 'Dublin 11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.
4. The difficulties and hardships of life, both temporal and spiritual, are seen as part of the process by which God refines, or prepares, the soul. Silver refining, whereby impurities are extracted leaving only the pure metal, is frequently used as an image of this process in Mary's autobiography and other Quaker journals.



On 10 January 1802 Mary's first child, William, was born. Three months later, watching her sleeping son in his cradle, she contemplates the awesome responsibility entrusted to her as a mother, seeing her child as a 'precious loan' from God and praying that God's blessing will rest on him.

#### **4 Mo 9th 1802 [dated at end of entry in manuscript]**

Glancing over the tender frame of my beloved child, my eyes overflow my heart fills with ineffable[sic] sensations - I feel that I am a mother and my soul is prostrate before the best of fathers - imploring divine aid rightly to acquit myself of my duty towards his precious loan I lean over his cradle and renew my petition again and again - Oh! that his mind may never be warped by the contaminating influence of error and injustice may he grow in grace as he grows in years, the dew of the Most High<sup>1</sup> resting upon him! Often do I covet that he may never feel as I have felt the woe of offending God - that he may move in the paths of rectitude and truth, unbiassed unprejudiced by party or sect: that having eyes to see the beauty of holiness and an heart impressed with the Divine Image his judgment and his understanding may be ennobled, and his soul early enamoured with true beauty thus devoting the whole strength of his mind to the unerring[sic] guidance of his inward monitor<sup>2</sup> his actions may spring from that principle of order and disseminate the seeds of felicity and peace. Amen -----

1. dew of the Most High - God's blessing. See Ps 133:3 - 'As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.'
2. Inward monitor - not simply one's own conscience. The 'inward monitor', if listened to carefully, could offer 'unerring guidance' because it was the manifestation of God's guiding principle in the individual soul.

By October, financial concerns had once again become paramount.

#### **10th Mo 9 1802**

I think I have seen in the light of the lord that a true Christian must preserve his mind from anxiety such as I am immersed in, bowed down beneath the pressure of heavy engagements, it is clear to my view that his blessing which alone gladdens the heart will not rest with us when under such cumbering difficulties: it is a most precious plant,<sup>1</sup> let us give it room to grow let us not impoverish the soil within by harbouring weeds to our prejudice, let us altogether root them out But Ah says the desponding querist<sup>2</sup> how then am I to live If I pass not bills how shall I accumulate sufficient for prompt payment? Let us have faith in God, we have been toiling and rowing all night to little purpose. let us now cast our nets on the other side<sup>3</sup> - peradventure nay<sup>4</sup> - but most assuredly, he who increased[sic] the barley loaves & the few small fishes,<sup>5</sup> will if we move in the right line, sanctified by entire dedication & earnestly breathing to be freed from these fetters which have gathered round our feet & ascending by swift progression are chaining down our souls into captivity to Mammon<sup>6</sup> I do certainly believe that if we are thus careful to shut the avenues to anxiety he will bless and increase our little store so that without



these heavy engagements we shall have bread to eat and raiment to wear. O Lord God Almighty thou searcher of hearts I beseech thee that thou deliver us break our chains Oh God loosen us from our bonds of captivity, that we may go and serve thee, give unto us not only to know but to do thy will to live free from engagements which distract the soul and render it unfit to approach thee: Give us our daily bread keep us from the evil [one]<sup>7</sup> & Oh Lord I fervently beseech thee so impress a deep sense of thine holy law on both of our hearts as that we may never under any pretence or on any occasion[sic] deviate as we have done by forming engagements which thou only knowest how we shall be able to accomplish

1. **precious plant** - i.e. God's blessing.
2. **desponding querist** - doubting and pessimistic questioner.
3. Jn 21:6 – 'And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.' The risen Christ's advice to his disciples at Lake Tiberias, when they had been fishing all night without success. Following His instruction, they filled their net with fish.
4. **peradventure nay** - perhaps not.
5. According to Mt 15:32-38, Christ fed over 4000 people with seven loaves and a few small fish.
6. **Mammon** - wealth regarded as idol or evil influence (*OED*). From Mamon, the Aramaic word for riches. Mary refers to concern with money, rather than the desire for wealth as such.
7. From the Lord's Prayer, Mt 6:11 - 'Give us this day our daily bread', and 6:13 - 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil' (King James Version). Interestingly, the modern Good News Bible translates 6:13 as, 'Do not bring us to hard testing, but keep us safe from the Evil One'.

In this entry Mary tells how her own self-complacency arising from financial security in the past had led her to accede to the belief, dating from Biblical times and still current in many quarters, that wealth or poverty were the just deserts of the righteous or unrighteous respectively. Her own financial difficulties, experienced since her marriage, now provide her with a different insight.

### Dublin 12th Mo 17 1802

The voice of humble gratulation[gratulation]<sup>1</sup> ascendeth from the centre of my soul to the throne of the Most High because that in the depth of humiliation he hath corrected my folly and from the bitter root of anxiety and secret uneasiness hath extracted a cure for self-complacency and pride for I said in mine heart as I lifted up mine head in the streets surely the Lords blessing resteth upon me, he giveth me my bread day by day & not to me only but also to all those who sincerely are concerned to cleave to the Lord, then remembered I those words of the Royal Psalmist,<sup>2</sup> "Once I was young and now I am old but I never saw the Righteous forsaken nor his seed beg their bread"<sup>3</sup> and my foolish heart was hardened against those in temporal distresses believing that their sufferings were entailed them as the wages of unbelief or unrighteousness. But Oh! when the heavy hand of the Almighty was laid upon me, how did I groan and lament. my tears watered my couch<sup>4</sup> and I besought of him that his truth might be clear, and that let me suffer what I might as an individual, that none other might suffer by me for bitterer surer than death is the prospect of dishonesty & pleasanter to go down to the grave than to violate the property of others, and adored for ever be his excellent Name he heard my cry & relieved my sorrow having tried me he helped me,



therein correcting me and thereby teaching me that it is not for a Worm<sup>5</sup> to judge another but each to think lowly of himself and fear. And now O Lord far be it from me in any degree to exalt myself or to despise those who are mourning beneath the pressure of similar or heavier entanglements seeing that thy varied visitations are suited to our different dispositions and that some endure thy secret chastisements and others thy rod more openly - Well - All is good that thou ordainest and I bow to all with this only reserve of which I cannot divest myself, that in all outward trials we alone may suffer & others receive all their due at our hands<sup>6</sup>

1. **gratulation** - a word largely replaced today by 'congratulation'. As used here, it is expressive of thankfulness, praise and joy.
2. **the Royal Psalmist** - King David, to whom composition of many of the psalms is traditionally attributed.
3. Ps 37:25 - 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' This psalm evidences the prevalence in Biblical times of the belief that earthly riches are distributed by Providence according to merit, and consequently that poverty is punishment for wrong-doing.
4. Ps 6:6 - 'I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.'
5. A common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry '11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.
6. **others receive all their due at our hands** - i.e. that the Cards will be able to pay all their debts.

### Dublin 2nd Mo 4 1803

To Him who is alone the Author of all Good be ascribed the Glory and praise of his own works - Thy works praise thee Oh! God - The terrific voice of thy Judgments declare thy power. The harmonious voice of mercy rendereth homage unto thee and the heart of thy Worm<sup>1</sup> delighteth to extol thee because great and marvellous are thy dealings with me - thou hast changed my anxiety into contentment, my solicitude into Quietness, my Misery into Peace; instead of the briar hath come up the Myrtle tree and instead of the thorn the fig tree hath blossomed<sup>2</sup> - the assurance of good the certainty of Faith is given unto me & I rest nothing doubting believing in the promises & reposing with unlimited confidence in God my Saviour He hath bounded the waters of discouragement that they prevail not against me. He hath given me to dwell in the cleft of the rock where no harm can reach me - I have heard the roaring of the storm I have seen the dashing of the waves, but they approach not my habitation - I dwell in peace, secure in the midst of danger - unmoved yet surrounded by tempestuous seas, My soul is joyful in the joys from within and returns thanks to her Lord for the peaceful abode which he hath allotted her and in which she dwells, Himself being her light and her song and the glory of her dwelling place<sup>3</sup>

1. **worm** - a common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry '11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.
2. Is 55:13 - 'Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.' The manuscript, however, definitely gives 'fig tree', not 'fir tree'. This could be an error, on the part of Mary's memory or the copyist, but might be a deliberate choice. Christ, foretelling the signs that will indicate the second coming of the Son of Man, uses the fig tree as an example - when its leaves shoot, we know that summer is near (Mt 24:32-33).
3. **Himself [. . .] dwelling place** - exact source untraced. Possibly echoing phrases in the Psalms, where the soul's 'dwelling place' is frequently connected with Heaven, Mount Zion or the abode of the righteous, or found in God Himself (e.g. Ps 90:1 - 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations'). Also Is 4:5 - 'And the Lord will



create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, [. . .] and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.'

### Dublin 7 Mo 6 1803

A painful feeling of my own worthlessness a certainty that I cumber<sup>1</sup> the ground attends me. Oh that I could prevail with God the Munificent and ever adorable Giver of all the blessings which are heaped upon me to grant that I might be acceptable in His Most Holy sight, I am a good for nothing worm<sup>2</sup> why am I retained in existence, Whom do I succour or bless, who is there that is cheered by my Labour, none - none I am sunk in supineness. I am indolent if it not from choice Yet as feeling the puerility of every thing that I can do and aiming at nobler employments I earn not the Bread I eat. Oh Giver of every Good unite my soul more intensely to thee and give me ability to fill my station while here, thou hast blessed me on every side, what can I do but receive and adore. Thou hast removed from my mind all anxiety all care and the removal has given me to feel more of my own emptiness than I heretofore experienced. While Occupied temporally or spiritually I knew not the burthen<sup>3</sup> of myself which now weighs me down peradventure<sup>4</sup> my state may change as the clouds which are & pass away Yet thro all a little ray of thy dear presence is mostly with me - else how should I exist

1. **cumber** - abbreviation of 'encumber', meaning 'burden'.
2. **worm** - a common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry '11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.
3. **burthen** - archaic form of 'burden'.
4. **peradventure** - perhaps.

### 10th Mo 14 1803

On this morning or rather noon my spirit has been clothed with supplication<sup>1</sup> and I have cried loudly and mightily to God feeling power and utterance in a marvellous manner. I said arise Oh God and let mine enemies be scattered.<sup>2</sup> for all the past forgive us and for the future be thou our guide. let thy mercy cover us & enable us to fulfil our engagements It was awful yet Glorious to feel utterance given to address the Throne of The Most High assisted by his holy spirit. Oh that he may place a watch round about me and guard my heart from evil, that so he may delight to dwell there and often to grant access to the fountain of life in which all stains may be removed - all spots cleansed and security and peace be ensured for Ever

1. **clothed with supplication** - empowered to pray, and also perhaps to give voice to that prayer.
2. Num 10:35 - '[. . .] that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered'.



In April 1804, soon after Mary's return in February from a trip to Milford Haven in South Wales (see Vol. 2, Poetry, pp.323-62), her second child, Nathaniel, died aged almost nine months. If all suffering serves God's purpose of refining the soul, how are such tragic events to be interpreted? Mary cannot escape the view, which she had earlier learned to reject in relation to poverty (see journal entry '12th Mo 17 1802' above), that events in this life - even the health or illness and death of one's children - should be seen in terms of Providential reward and punishment.

### 5th Mo 11 1804

As I do believe that the sufferings allotted us are intended for our Chastisement and that our aberrations from the principle of light and life do cause the gracious extension of the rod - so I do believe that the sore affliction the deeply excruciating pang of seperation[sic] which pierced my heart 4 Mo 16 1804 in the loss of my little son Nathaniel was intended a just punishment for my inattention. Oh God if I had not earned this I had not received these wages at thy hands

### 6 Mo 13 - 1804

With the whole strength of my soul with the whole desire of mine heart, do I long after thee Oh God! Most earnestly covetting to dwell in purity and beseeching of thee that thou wilt enable me to lead a sinless life and altogether to avoid every thing which sullies the interiour[sic] and incapacitate[s] me for an admission into thy pure Kingdom. Oh! Lord God I do sincerely beg it of thee that thou wilt assist effectually my very poor endeavours after righteousness my continual forgetfulness of truth and simplicity and my incessant deviations from thy holy way. If thou deign Oh tenderest of fathers to exercise me by thy rod and by thy staff<sup>1</sup> I may yet arrive at that sinless state which I do entirely long after, but doubtless much on my part remains yet to be done. I must watch diligently to all the avenues at which sin doth enter, my lips lest I be (as indeed to my shame I record that I am) soiled by the guilt of exaggeration - of untruths of too much conversation of light talk - my thoughts lest I murmur at any thing that befalls[sic] me. lest I repine at the just Judgments of the Most High lest I encourage the spirit of malevolence of envy, of hatred, of discontent, of detraction & of remarking & animadverting on<sup>2</sup> others, for why should I look on a Brother or on a sister to judge them, my own heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and incapable of right judgment, mine eye is jaundiced and cannot clearly discern the state of things. Oh Lord God I pray thee with all the powers of my soul that thou give unto me the simplicity, the sweetness, the gentleness of that lovely infant whom it pleased thee to lend me and for my unworthiness to take from me again, for I did abuse thy blessing & thou chastizedest[sic] me, neither wouldst thou grant me my intercessions for his life because that tho I readily made a covenant with thee - yet I as readily broke thro it. I have said I will set a watch to my tongue that I speak no evil and Lo my words have witnessed against me and have proved me a Liar, so thou took from me my darling & my sorrowing heart was troubled. And now I do entirely desire henceforth to live sinless Guileless void of anger pride or resentment, to speak truth strictly to act simply and to exercise



benevolence and tenderness towards all. I entreat thee to hear my prayer and grant my petition

1. Echoing Ps 23:4 - 'thy rod and thy staff they comfort me', but seeing the Lord's rod and staff as Instruments of guidance and punishment as well as comfort.
2. animadverting on - censuring or criticising.

### 1st Mo 14th 1805

In what language shall I commemorate[sic] thy goodness O God! who art leading me & instructing me by thy rod & thy staff & thy rod & thy staff are very precious to me.<sup>1</sup> I value them before any earthly joy, I would not be without them for any mundane consideration, - the fools back is indeed for the rod as saith the wise man<sup>2</sup> - & for my folly thou hast plentifully striped me,<sup>3</sup> thou hast poured out of the cup of thine indignation anguish & sorrow & unutterable distress, so that no created being could administer comfort to me - yet were thy judgments mingled with mercy - & thro all an arm underneath hath been evidently felt, which hath borne up my head as passing thru[sic] the deep waters; yea and blessed be thine holy name - tho still I possess impurity, tho' not yet eradicated all evil from within me - yet I believe that I have a little of that grain of faith which removeth mountains of danger & difficulty & plucketh up by the roots every tree which is not fit for the garden of God,<sup>4</sup> yea I feel a grain of it springing up within me, to that are all my views directed, on that I lean as on an immoveable anchor in the midst of a sea of trouble & tho my bark<sup>5</sup> be tempest tost[sic] & weather beaten, yet I know that my anchor is sure & the cords which unite me to it are indissoluble, yes tho in an infantile state yet is it the crown of mine hopes & to it I bring all my presents, myrrh & frankincense<sup>6</sup> for a sweet smelling savour & from the midst of mine anguish springs forth the dawn of joy.

1. Ps 23:4, see note 1 to journal entry '6 Mo 13 1804' on preceding page.
2. Prov 26:3 - 'A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.'
3. thou hast plentifully striped me - i.e. used the rod.
4. Mt 17:20 - Christ told his disciples that if they had faith even 'as a grain of mustard seed' they could say to a mountain, 'Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove'. The gist of this saying is repeated in Mt 21:21 when, after withering a fig tree because it bore no fruit, Christ said to his disciples, 'If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done'. See also Mk 11:23. In Lk 17:6, elements are combined - 'If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.'
5. bark - ship.
6. myrrh & frankincense - gum resins used in Jewish religious ritual, myrrh in the production of anointing ointment (Ex 30:23) and frankincense in holy perfume or incense (Ex 30:34). Two of the gifts brought to the infant Christ by the three wise men (Mt 2:11).



**1st Mo 21st 1805**

I feel that I am yet under the rod, a self evident proof that I am not sufficiently purified, for all correction and chastisement is the beneficent work of a gracious & tender parent who wills our perfect sanctification, & I know well that if there were no dross in me the operation of the furnace<sup>1</sup> would cease - The Lord hath no pleasure in our sufferings, but as they increase our dedication and cleanse us from the filth of sin - to that are his unerring views directed, for that does he visit & afflict & Oh! what matter in passing thro the River<sup>2</sup> which lies between us & the new Jerusalem what matter whether we are wet, fatigued, benumbed & weather beaten when there is such a glorious mansion of rest prepared for all the patient travellers, where there is every comfort & every joy to recreate & a never ending Eternity in which we may repose - Convinced of this I thankfully kiss the rod & humbly crave that I may receive the benefit of this necessary dispensation, that it has continued so long is certainly at once my fault and my punishment, even as the Israelites who because of disobedience prolonged the term of their stay in the wilderness far beyond what might have been<sup>3</sup> - so I their fellow traveller, having in common with all others to pass thro the deserts in my way to Canaan,<sup>4</sup> having prevented my journeying on & have been detained because of my sins, such was the discipline of God to his children & such it will ever be: the unsanctified impatient spirit, cannot enter into perfect peace & when accomplished the death of self-will, all purgation must constantly cease, all suffering is changed into enjoyment - all hope into reality & all sorrow into unmixed felicity! pressing after this holy state I desire not to be freed from the deep & trying exercises which may be needful, but yield implicitly to the painful tribulating allotment, with this alone request that we may have power to act honestly, justly, & in no wise ever to bring a reproach on the truth<sup>5</sup> - if sufficient for this be granted I dare extend my supplication no farther, for thou hast dealt bountifully with me & encreased[sic] my blessings - thou hast restored my beloved partner from a most grievous malady, my head & my heart were sorely agonized on his account, - the excruciating thrill of misery pierced me thro & thro & humbly prostrate before the throne of the Most High I besought for him, what thou O my father hast most mercifully granted & this great & signal favor calls for continued gratulation,<sup>6</sup> my spirit bows down before thee in deep commemoration of thy great goodness bestowed, on one so undeserving, Oh that thou in thy infinite mercy mayst see meet to continue to me this very great blessing, if it be consistant[sic] with thine Holy will - for oh! surely it is a most dreadful trial nevertheless not my will but thine be done.

1. **the operation of the furnace** - refining process through smelting by which the 'dross' (impure material) is removed to leave the pure metal.
2. **River** - the River Jordan which separated the Israelites from the Promised Land. Used as a metaphor for the trials which must be undergone to reach eternal peace.
3. Num 14:26-35 - God condemned the Israelites to wander in the wilderness for forty years because they lacked courage by accepting the advice of those of their number sent to 'spy out the land of Canaan' (Num 13:17). The spies' opinion was that they should not attempt to take the country because they were not equal to the task of overcoming its existing inhabitants.
4. **Canaan** - the Promised Land.
5. Dishonest behaviour or unjust actions on the part of individual Friends could compromise the Society's witness to truth and honesty, leaving the way open to public reproach and charges of hypocrisy.
6. **gratulation** - praise or thanksgiving. See note 1 to journal entry '12th Mo 17 1802' above.



In 1805, the Cards underwent a financial crisis in which they came close to losing their business and the majority of their assets. If this had happened, it would have had severe consequences for them. They would almost certainly have been disowned by the Society of Friends as bankruptcy or inability to pay one's debts was considered dishonest and therefore out of keeping with the Society's testimony to truth and reputation for honesty. It would entail loss of personal reputation, credibility and status as well as actual poverty.

Mary gives little information about the nature of the crisis because her aim in her journal is to record her feelings and the support she believes God has given her during the course of events. But her diary makes it clear that the Cards had enemies in business, one individual in particular, and she finds it difficult to reconcile her bitter feelings towards this person with the Christian charity she feels it is incumbent upon her to practice.

The following memorandums from 1st mo 24th to 1st mo 30th were occasioned by a most afflicting & unexpected source of distress occasioned by unjust treatment - & as I am wonderfully supported as well as my dear Husband, it seemed worth while to record some of my feelings just as they arose.

### 1st Mo 24th 1805

Heavier & heavier is the ponderous load of distress which weighs me down.

### 25th

A little glimpse of faith which cheer'd me this morning seems now not overthrown, yet pressed down as a cart under sheaves<sup>1</sup> by reason of the great distress that surrounds us, our way tho' thro' deep waters, is yet I hope traced out by Him whose holy arm is underneath to support, such is the weight of my anxiety that I have nothing left to say to my Heavenly Father & I cast my cares & my sorrows upon Him, looking to Him alone for succour & for deliverance, which I yet believe He will grant, because our dependance[sic] is on Him alone - are we not as sheep amongst wolves, annoyed & threatened on every side, yet surely the Lord will help us, as he has often done before, we have sinned, we have repeatedly broken our covenants,<sup>2</sup> yet unto Him only do we look for pardon & for pity.

MC

1. **sheaves** - heavy bundles of corn.

2. **covenants** - promises, a word reminiscent of the special agreement or contract existing between God and His people.



**26th**

Agonised with distress I took up the Bible & fervently desiring to open on some passage similar to our case, how was I comforted by the 37th chapter of Psalms which first caught my eye.<sup>1</sup>

1. Ps 37:1 - 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity'. The psalm goes on to say that the prosperity of the wicked shall be brief - 'they shall soon be cut down like the grass' (v.2) - but the righteous, those who trust in the Lord, 'shall inherit the earth' (v.9-11).

**1st Mo 26th 1805**

This hath been a day of sore anxiety and distress - the Lord sent us outward help by the hand of a Friend - but apparently the help answers not the desired end. the storm hath been high the clouds have gathered blackness yet my faith is & I record it, that we shall get through safely, & that the tremendous tempest which threatened no less than our destruction as to the things of this life will have no power to hurt us. The heavy load of misery fear & dread seems vanished, for God hath done what hath been done for us, & He will not leave it unaccomplished - what a stimulus to entire dedication! Oh! may every thought, word & deed be henceforth regulated by his Spirit only.

**1st Mo 27th 1805**

So greatly am I comforted so wonderfully am I supported, that I am ready to say of this sore trial (arising from unkindness injustice & cunning) in the sincerity of faith, surely the bitterness of death is past - for I experience strength in weakness, hope & confidence amidst threats & desolation, calmness in the storm & quietness, tho surrounded as by a sea of trouble - I know who hath said that the pride of man shall be laid low & I believe in Him, I know Him to be our deliverer & whether we are now delivered or yet to be so amounts to the same thing, we depend on Him, our trust is in Him & he will not forsake us in the day of our calamity - I see that my dear Partner<sup>1</sup> is upholden by the arm of the Almighty & that he acts with wisdom & prudence thereby evincing the fortitude, dignity & humility of a man beloved of God & observing this with awful admiration & feeling my own mind borne above all threats & wicked devices. I am fully assured that we shall conquer thro the mighty power of faith, which is at this day quite as efficacious[sic] and as omnipotent as in the days of the primitive Christians, quite as able to remove mountains of difficulty & danger to pluck up trees of pride & highmindedness<sup>2</sup> & strong as ever to enable us to say, by Thee we have run thro' a troop, by Thee we have leaped over a wall, I think I am certain that when this great trial is over, we shall both of us experience a deeper settlement in the root of life, an increase in the increase of God, a most happy establishment in solid comfort & quiet enjoyment of his divine presence & notwithstanding that the howling of the blast is fraught with desolation, poverty, pecuniary distress & a most grievous temporal unsettlement, yet indeed I have faith that all will end well, that the hovering desolation will change into comfort, the poverty into a competant[sic]



sufficiency of the good things of this life the pecuniary distresses will cease & I trust that we shall not experience this most grievous temporal unsettlement; O! for greater purity, greater simplicity, greater inward retirement & total annihilation of self O! that our spirits were purified, were justified, were sanctified - O! that every word & every action might savour of the sweet smelling ointment of Divine Grace that we might sustain our Stations with dignity, as members of a religious society, professing to be led & guided by the unerring spirit of God & which holds up a light to the world, as a City set upon an Hill, as a Candle placed upon a Candlestick which illuminates the whole room & may He who hath called us & visited us in early life, who hath been with us & delivered us out of many troubles, who is now our alone dependance[sic] for aid & for succour, may he preserve my dear Nathaniel steady to his cause & firm in faith, so shall he grow in grace & truth & in favour with God and man, so shall he deal prudently in spirituals & temporals & act consistantly[sic] as becometh our profession being born up in all trials & Stedfastly[sic] supported by the Holy arm of God which is now made bare for his defence & succour, blessed for ever be His Holy name & adored be he for ever

1. my dear Partner - Mary's husband, Nathaniel Card.
2. Conflation of ideas in Mt 17:20 and 21:21, Mk 11:23, Lk 17:6 - Christ's words about the power of faith. If faith is sufficient it can move mountains or cause trees to be plucked up by the roots.

### 1st Mo 28th 1805

I cannot but admire how in the midst of tumult I am preserved so quiet, how I am as it were lifted above surrounding commotions in the midst of which we are deeply involved, & not only how I am favor'd to feel my spirit centr'd on the immovable Rock,<sup>1</sup> but also how my dear Husband is enabled to bear every thing with fortitude & wisdom not rendering railing for railing,<sup>2</sup> but acting with prudence & firmness, undaunted by threats & unseduced by flattery. We have surely been favor'd to feel something of a real heartfelt dependance[sic] upon God, of trust in his promises, or we could not enjoy any calmness in the midst of such impending calamity - Oh! may we know an increase of Faith! may we grow in grace & in the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, may we witness complete redemption from the power of sin & be exactly what thou designed us to be amen

1. the immovable Rock - perhaps thinking most of Lk 6:48, Christ's likening of the man who hears His sayings being 'like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock : and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock.' Also Mt 7:24-25. But Mary is also possibly thinking of Christ Himself as the Rock. See 1 Cor 10:4 where, speaking of the Israelites' kinship with the Christians who were to follow them, St Paul says, 'And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ'.
2. not rendering railing for railing - not returning verbal abuse.



**1st Mo 29th**

Tho' the empoison'd[sic] accents of malice & pride are levelled at my dear Husband & every effort excited to oblige him to yield his right to a cruel man,<sup>1</sup> tho' my NC<sup>2</sup> appear like an innocent fly which has been inadvertantly[sic] entangled in the web of a Spider, yet my faith is strong & my belief wavereth not that he thro' patient abiding under the sacred shield shall be able to repel the fiery darts of the wicked & that by opposing meekness to violence, silence to insolence & dignity to oppression, he shall insure to himself the victory over his designing enemies, my mind is clothed with strength & I have no doubt that the issue of this affliction will be for our lasting benefit Oh! what a blessed gift is faith! I believe I never experienced more of its efficacy than on the present occasion it is the precious leaven which leaveneth the whole lump - it is the anchor that supports the human bark<sup>3</sup> amidst the power of contending elements - it is the safe tower, the impregnable defence, that bids defiance to every assault - Oh! it is in moments like these which I am now experiencing that we know how to estimate the value of faith; in vain may the Infidel, the libertine & the apostate ridicule its supernatural power, in vain may they deny the excellency of its glory, the weather beaten traveller Zionward,<sup>4</sup> comforted, refreshed, strengthened & supported by its living healing waters, is convinced of its existence by testimonies which no opposer can subvert - the arguments of sophisticated reason affect him no more than if a blind man were to preach to him that the sun or the moon gave no light & that there were no beauty in colours or than if a deaf man sought to persuade him that there were no harmony in sounds, no music in the grove, the consious[sic] feeling of the falsity of each assertion & the comfort enjoyed in the divine gifts are incontrovertible evidences that remain immutable for ever - O! my soul praise thou the Lord, let thy confidence be in Him for ever, for immutable[sic] are his promises, gracious are his dealings & tender his mercies to the work of his hands

1. Probably John Helton. See journal entry '3rd Mo 23rd 1805' below.
2. NC - Mary's husband Nathaniel Card.
3. bark - ship.
4. Zionward - heavenward.

**1st Mo 30th 1805**

My spirits and those of my dear Nathl.<sup>1</sup> are affected by a continuance of unworthy behaviour, threats & insolence, feeling low I sought refuge in the sacred tabernacle<sup>2</sup> & was enabled to utter a prayer for our enemy,<sup>3</sup> O! may the Lord turn his heart. may he give him to see the injustice the iniquity of his proceedings, that so he may repent & be converted before the day of his visitation<sup>4</sup> shall have utterly passed away & there be no space left for repentance. Tho' very low a little dawning of the heavenly ray is within me - surely I ought to remember that the floods remain upon the earth for some time after the storm hath ceased & the waters seem to accumulate even after their sources have dried up - this is to me an instructive lesson, for I believe it is so with the proud man, he feels himself foiled, yet can he readily yield, may the



Lord God Almighty who hath done too much for us to leave us now comfortless, complete the conquest & establish the victory, if it be his holy will.  
MC

1. Nathl. - abbreviation. Referring to Mary's husband Nathaniel.
2. **the sacred tabernacle** - in the Old Testament this was the sanctuary tent in which the ark of the covenant was kept during the wanderings of the Israelites before their settlement of Palestine - therefore the home of 'the holy of holies'. Mary here, however, refers to the inner self where prayer and contemplation can take place and the presence of God be felt.
3. Probably John Helton. See journal entry '3rd Mo 23rd 1805' below.
4. **the day of his visitation** - the 'day of visitation' was a concept promoted by the Quaker theologian Robert Barclay (1648-1690). It was believed that there occurred in the life of each individual a special time, 'a period in which the opportunity of repentance and response to the light was on offer. It could be at any time, but it was temporary; once lost the opportunity was gone, never to recur' (John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p.125).

On 1 February 1805, Mary's third child was born. This child was also called Nathaniel like her second son who had died nine months earlier (see journal entry '5th Mo 11 1804' above). It was common practice among Quakers particularly to keep a family Christian name through each generation by giving a new baby the same name as a deceased sibling. It was this son who was destined to compile and copy his mother's writings in 1834.

### 2nd Mo 2nd 1805

Yesterday morning delivered of another son, I had hoped that entire resignation and patient faith might keep me quiet but now oppressed with fresh intelligence, almost beyond what my nature can bear, I sank down in extreme agony & bursting into a flood of tears, I secretly cried do thy own will, work thy own way, let me suffer as thou pleasest only let me be what thou designest.

### 1st[?] Mo 3rd & 4th 1805

Mostly oppressed, dejected, wearied with thinking, toiling myself with future plans, agonized in mind & body, writhing like a worm on the hook, Lord God be with me keep me & purify me as thou wilt, I fear I am not resigned, because I think I would fain have my own way & the prospect of the reverse tortures me. I am not yet what I want to be.

### 1st[?] Mo 5th 1805

The content, the resignation expressed & felt by my dear Nathaniel<sup>1</sup> seems to spread its soothing influence over my mind & a sentiment of tranquility, quietude & peace & gratitude, extends like oil over all my inward faculties - I feel the holy covenant delightfully renewed between God & my Soul "Be thou sinless & I will dwell with thee"<sup>2</sup> I see that sin separates[sic] me from perfect communion with him & I long to be absorbed in Him alone.



1. **my dear Nathaniel** - Mary's husband Nathaniel.
2. The exact source of this quote has not been found. In Mt 5:48, Christ enjoins, 'Be thou perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect'. See also Ps 5:4, 'For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee'.

Occasioned by a continuance of most unjust behaviour towards us

### 2nd Mo 8th 1805

The extreme of mental agony so overcame me this afternoon that I cannot find language to depict what I felt - O God - I pray thee evince in us thy dedicated servants, not only thy all sufficiency to create but also to preserve thro' the thorny mazes of this chequer'd<sup>1</sup> scene - Oh! mighty God let us be perfected by the means ever so severe & how severe! how unexped! [?unexpected] this present trial has been & is - thou knowest - to thee I commend our righteous cause! to thee do I appeal! Oh be with us! let thine arm uphold us! for thou art our Saviour, & on thee & not on man is our sole dependance[sic].

1. **chequer'd** - changeable, variable.

### 14th

When trouble with its piercing pangs is seizing on the heart, in the excruciating anguish thereof we lift up our voices to the Saviour for help & cry out mightily, but when the farther accomplishment of the dispensation of affliction hath cover'd us - & its waves are going over our heads; then crushed, silenced & altogether overwhelmed as beneath a millstone, the power of utterance is at once suspended & we sink down as it were breathless in the pit of self abasement - thus it is with me - sorrow hath taken hold of me - strong hold indeed - we are indeed surrounded with enemies - we are low and can scarcely communicate our sentiments to each other; this cruel business is advancing towards its conclusion! under what a weight of injuries do we lie; Oh that the Almighty, who is our alone support may preserve my dear Nathaniel & bring him safely thro' this trial May more & more refine his spirit, qualify him for usefulness & increase his dedication to the Divine will - Oh! may he be to him a mouth & wisdom, tongue & utterance.<sup>1</sup>

1. **may he be to him a mouth & wisdom, tongue & utterance** - most relevant is Lk 21:15 - 'For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.' But also perhaps thinking of the inspiration and strength to be gained from the Holy Spirit as in Acts 2:4, 'And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.'



### 2nd Mo 26th 1805

The sweet calm (and our consoling<sup>1</sup> visit of the Divine presence) in which I have been for some days preserved, were but perhaps preparatory to my grievous sufferings yesterday - & they were very grievous - being most deplorably enhanced by my own vile tongue - Oh! my fervent prayer is for the tongue of a little child, that can only cry for its food & its necessary wants, it hath seemed as if Hell were let loose against us - & as if we were left destitute of all succour - but magnified for ever be the great name of the Highest. how are we relieved this morning by the nomination of a friend - now I know that all doth work together for good.

1. **consolating** - comforting, consoling.

### 3rd Mo 4th 1805

This evening at 7 oClock - the arbitrators<sup>1</sup> are to meet in order to decide this trying affair, May God Almighty, so inspire with his true wisdom, the heart & mouth of my dear Nathaniel - as that he may with dignity & nobility clear himself from the unjust accusations of the wicked - I believe it cannot be that the Lord will forsake in the hour of need - it cannot be - that He will suffer the Evil so to prevail against us, as that innocency shall not be seen; tho' their malice hath poured out as a torrent, yet it will surely prove like a Phantom which can only terrify in the dark - but which vanishes altogether when the light arises.

1. **arbitrators** - the Society of Friends operated its own forms of arbitration to seek to resolve business disputes or difficulties between members. The arbitrators Mary refers to would probably have been local Friends, as the Meeting sometimes appointed groups or individual Friends with relevant experience to visit the parties concerned at home. It is worth noting that an organisation also existed to arbitrate in disagreements between merchants generally in Dublin - the Ouzel Galley Society. This was an association of merchants of high standing developed early in the eighteenth century. It formed a tribunal to which disputes could be submitted and, hopefully, resolved within the merchant community itself. (See L. M. Cullen, *Princes and Pirates*, pp.25-26.)

### 3rd Mo 5th 1805

What have I to record, but that God is all goodness & I am all ingratitude & sin - hitherto he hath helped us!

### 3rd Mo 6th 1805

Another meeting of the parties concerned is to be held this evening,<sup>1</sup> I feel not enough grateful for the very uncommon favours so liberally bestowed by my Heavenly Father - all his chastisements have not eradicated my folly - I feel that I am good for nothing - a very reptile! yet he dealeth bountifully with us, &



in mercy enableth us to lift up a Standard against our adversary,<sup>2</sup> surely for the sake of his truth he doth it! that the reputation thereof may not suffer thro' us its professors! Oh! be yet with us we beseech thee & enable us to come out victorious & rejoycing[sic] in thee who art able to deliver! & surely I do know that the Devil forsaketh his children in the hour of their need, therefore let the liar be confounded, let the false tongue be put to shame, let his iniquities be manifested, & all his treacherous dealings! but O Thou who knowest the heart, deliver the man who is dedicated, uphold him as thou hast upholden him! yea! & altogether save him, because he trusteth in thee!

1. parties concerned [. . .] this evening - see note 1, journal entry '3rd Mo 4th 1805' above.
2. our adversary - probably referring to John Helton. See journal entry '3rd Mo 23rd 1805' below.

### 3rd Mo 7th 1805

"Cast down but not forsaken"<sup>1</sup>

The Lord our God hath suffer'd a shade to pass over us, not of evil, but thro' my N's<sup>2</sup> inadvertance[sic], yet I know that we shall rise again & triumph over the insults of our sore enemy, may the Divine will be done.

1. 2 Cor 4:9 - 'Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;'
2. N's - referring to Mary's husband Nathaniel.

### 3rd Mo 12th 1805

We are both exceedingly low, we are press'd down beneath a weight of injuries! we are unable to plead our own cause! oh! my Father be with us, thy depending<sup>1</sup> children! support us in this trying hour, we are ready to faint, we are sorely distress'd, our Enemies are powerful & fluent of speech, false witnesses have risen up against us, we are little, weak, mean, contemptable[sic] & poor; Oh! do thou rightly direct us! do thou aid & help us! leave us not!

1. depending - dependant.

### 3rd Mo 14th 1805

Agony extreme is my portion! I am near to fainting - the battle rages - another meeting tonight<sup>1</sup> - my Husband almost worn out - his delicate frame seems to sink beneath the pressure, how unequal a match for his enemies! my darling child my William<sup>2</sup> seized violently ill, a Physician is sent for, completely



unhinged in business, looking round and round for a settlement, not knowing what to do, what language can delineate my frame of mind.

1. another meeting tonight - see note 1, journal entry '3rd Mo 4th 1805' above.
2. William - Mary's first child, three years of age at this time.

### 3rd Mo 15th 1805

A bright sun has broken out at the close of this dismal storm; which blessed be the Lord is now over! I feel renewed in spirit, my child is almost recover'd - my Husband has I hope done with this wicked man.<sup>1</sup> Prospects open wonderfully already! already our plan seems realiz'd - how good is the Lord!

1. this wicked man - probably John Helton. See journal entry '3rd Mo 23rd 1805', on following page.

### 3rd Mo 19th 1805

An earnest desire accompanies my mind that our future Steppings may be guided by the Most High that in the business which we may undertake for the sustenance & comfort of these perishing bodies, we may carefully attend to the pointings of truth, that our language to our customers may be strict truth & that we may use as few words as possible in dealing.<sup>1</sup> - Oh! how unhinged, how low, how weak we are - & for me, how stupid, how bereft of heavenly good was the day after our wonderful deliverance - Wonderful I may call it, if we came off with unstained character. When so much pains were taken to impeach my Husband by falsehood & false witnesses. My feelings are perhaps like those of a weather beaten mariner just escaped with life from Shipwreck, his first sensations are those of joy, gratitude & thankfulness for the preservation of his life - till a train of reflections arise & then he begins to lament his loss; so I when the storm of the strife of tongues, malice & treachery were venting their fury over us - overwhelmed with anguish, I was satisfied with the prospect of escaping irreproachable, but now I feel our situation, our disappointment, our blasted prospects - our losses all at one view rush before me - & I am oppressed thereby - yet why so oppressed - my child is recovering, my Husband is preserved from sickness, I myself am favor'd with health, Friends sympathise with us & comfort us, we can pay every man his own & are not left destitute - Oh! then may I be thankful - Surely I am not ungrateful - it is only I hope the feelings of nature which like the passing clouds[clouds] change alternately from lowering<sup>2</sup> to brightness & from gloom to perfect day: and after all it is good for us to be seperated[sic] from false friends - those who sought & who obtained our confidence - & who betray'd it shamefully - who in the privicy[sic] of an hour of Friendship - attracted the overflowings of our unsuspecting hearts, & in public before many not only betrayed us but added thereto shameful exaggeration[sic] & falsehood; Oh! seperate[sic] us more & more from these! Make the gulf between them & us, wider & wider, yea a sea



that we cannot pass over - yet I would that they may repent and find a place of forgiveness & turn unto their God, while there is yet time!

1. **use as few words as possible in dealing** - there are three aspects to this. Using many words was regarded as unnecessary, a 'superfluity' to use Quaker parlance, not in keeping with the Quaker testimony to simplicity. Then language used in business necessarily involved communication with 'worldly' people and such contact was to be kept to a minimum. Finally, business itself was to be engaged in only so far as was necessary to fulfil essential needs, not to be served as an end in itself.
2. **lowering** - heavy, overcast.

### 3rd Mo 23rd 1805

An agony of grief seems to overwhelm me as a torrent, occasioned by the villainy of John Helton,<sup>1</sup> our wicked, unjust & cruel adversary - he has taken the bread as out of our mouths, he is glorying in the success of his deep laid plan - can he prosper Oh! God - Yea he may grow rich, but wilt not thou provide for us also. Oh! my Father - I never saw the depth of the villainous scheme till this day - how shall I nurse my sucking child!

1. Here the individual Mary considers responsible for her family's distress is finally named. No details of this particular dispute have yet been discovered, but John Helton was later to be disowned from the Society of Friends when a complaint made against him by Charles Dudley, for evading payment of a debt, was upheld (Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes, 15 September 1807). Charles Dudley had sought the help of the Meeting, and several Friends had accordingly visited John Helton to no avail (Dublin Monthly Meeting Minutes, 15 May 1807). Helton was engaged in the tanning business, which was connected with the soap-boiling and candlemaking industries because both used tallow obtained from cow hides in their production processes. Mary's father was a soap-boiler and tallow chandler, and it is possible that her husband too, as a merchant, might have been connected with these trades, perhaps through the export and import of tallow. This might account for his doing business with John Helton.

### 4th Mo 4th 1805

Separated from our cruel adversary<sup>1</sup> & estranged from our false friend - blest with what I dreaded the loss of my dear companions health, possessing two sweet children & some hundred pounds after paying all we owe, kind friends who care much for us & a tender sympathiser in our dear Sally Hoare,<sup>2</sup> who is lately given to me, having set[sic]<sup>3</sup> off part of our house which more than defrays the rent of the whole & the promise of many of our old customers, to enable to live comfortably, the school too settled near me & established on a firm basis<sup>4</sup> - circumstanced thus why am I not happy, why do I feel despondent at times - why am I so good for nothing? so stupidly insensible? so ungrateful? so easily irritated? Ah! the answer is plain I am unrefined! I have suffer'd what many would have sunk under - I have been washed & rinsed, scraped & hammer'd at - put into the furnace again & again - yet all has not done for me. I am wicked still, I have been lifted up as on the top of Carmel<sup>5</sup> & I have seen the beauty of holiness & I have been plunged into an abyss of suffering over & over - the gall & the wormwood<sup>6</sup> mingled in the waves of sorrow, have pushed into my mouth, & I have been forced to swallow the ungracious draught - yet all



has not done for me, I am wicked still! what shall I do to be saved, the burthen<sup>7</sup> of myself is heavy! Wretch that I am, I thought that the enjoyment of the presence of the Beloved, was as the beautiful polish on the marble, which comes not till after the hard hammering operations[sic] are over, which is received as the last & crown of all - Will[sic]<sup>8</sup> & it is my crown & my joy, my hope of rejoicing & my exceeding great reward - it hath supported me under my troubles, it hath brought me thro' hitherto & it will yet be with me "a Friend that sticks closer than a Brother"<sup>9</sup> soothing the agonising pangs of Death & leading my (may I dare to hope purified) spirit to its Eternal abode! Oh! that I might for ever move only in the straight & narrow path of truth, where tho' rugged[?rugged] be the road, yet pleasant is the end & where the glorious prospect of immortality, so surrounds the weather beaten traveller, that in the extacy[sic], the luxury of feeling, we almost altogether forget that the thorns & the briars have wounded our feet! Dearest father I entreat it of thee, make my spirit as the spirit of a little child - cleanse me thoroughly, mold[sic] me, form me, and imprint on me the sacred characters of holiness unto thee - I long to be simple, to be humble, to be good; I look forward to the next yearly meeting, hoping to receive benefit from the precious testimonies of thy saints, if peradventure<sup>10</sup> the holy oil, flowing to the nether skirts of the outermost garment<sup>11</sup> may reach even to me - With increased affection I regard the members of our religious society - & long to be found cherished & nursed in the warm bosom of the visible church,<sup>12</sup> sucking in the soul sustaining nourishment provided for children & comforted with the embraces of maternal care-

1. **adversary** - John Helton. See previous journal entry '3rd Mo 23rd 1805'.
2. **Sally Hoare [. . .] lately given to me** - this indicates that Mary had just recently met Sarah (Sally) Hoare who was to become one of her closest friends. Sarah Hoare ran a school for Quaker girls in Dublin and was a poet and amateur botanist. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.
3. **set** - is definitely written in manuscript. This could be the copyist's error - 'set' being written instead of 'let' - or the term 'set off' might be used to mean 'to set against', ie. to set the rent of part of the house against the rent of the whole.
4. Possibly the Daily Free School in St Catherine's Parish, Dublin, founded by Quakers in 1798 to provide education without denominational bias to children from all backgrounds, but especially poor Catholics who were often denied access to education. (See Warburton, Whitelaw, Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin*, II, pp.852-54, and M. Quane, 'Quaker Schools in Dublin', *Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 94 Part I (1964), 1-66, pp.56-57.) This is the school Mary seems to have been involved in, and for which she applied to wealthy patron Elizabeth Dawson for funds (see Vol. 2, Poetry, p.375). The school was situated in School Street, not far from Mary's home in Summerhill. However, the reference here to the school being settled near her and on a firm basis has a personal note, possibly more an indication of ownership than involvement in a large project such as the Daily Free School would represent. She could perhaps have run her own small school, or be referring to the School and Repository for poor children established, at least in part, by her friend, Hannah Wilson Forbes, which Mary helped to continue after Hannah's death in 1799. See journal entry '5th Mo 23rd 1805' below, and poem 'To — On the School and Repository' in Vol. 2, p.439, applying to a possible subscriber for funding. Not wishing to continue to confuse the issue further, it must nevertheless be said that it is by no means certain that the School and Repository was a separate entity from the Daily Free School - they might well have been one and the same, or connected in some way.
5. **Carmel** - mountain in Palestine (see Amos 9:3). The mount on which the prophet Elijah ordered the people of Israel to gather to decide between worshipping the idol Baal or the one true God (1 Kgs 18:17-46).
6. **the gall & the wormwood** - Biblical phrase for bitterness, gall meaning bile and wormwood being a plant with leaves noted for their bitterness although they could be used medicinally.
7. **burthen** - archaic form of 'burden'.
8. **Will** - clearly written in manuscript, but this is likely to be the copyist's error for 'Well'.
9. Prov 18:24 - 'A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.'



10. peradventure - perhaps.
11. Ps 133:2- 'It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments'.
12. the visible church - the Society of Friends.

Jesse Kersey was an American travelling minister who visited Ireland in 1805, leaving in May when he felt 'his prospect of further religious labour in this land' appeared to 'to be nearly closed' (Ireland Yearly Meeting Ministers and Elders Minutes and Certificates, 27 April/5 May 1805). Before visiting Ireland, Jesse Kersey had been in England. At the end of January, he had stayed at Sunnyside, the home of the Darbys, the well-known Quaker industrial family at Coalbrookdale, and had travelled with minister Deborah Darby to New Dale where he 'was livingly engaged in counselling the youth' and to Shrewsbury where 'he had many Gospel Truths to convey in a Public Meeting'. (See Labouchere, *Deborah Darby of Coalbrookdale 1754-1810*, pp.304-05.) He had also been to Liverpool where he had been present at Hardshaw Monthly Meeting when it inquired into the publication of William Rathbone's *A Narrative, of Events that have lately taken place in Ireland*. This account had offended by publicising facts about the Irish schism in a manner critical of the Quaker establishment, and of too literal an interpretation of the Bible. Kersey seems to have wanted to strike a balance between the parties while maintaining his orthodox position. Supportive of some form of sanction by those in authority before a member of the Society published a work concerning it, he was nevertheless critical of someone holding orthodox or evangelical opinions who had, anonymously, questioned Rathbone's 'motives' in a personal, and 'illiberal manner'. (See Newhouse, 'Seeking God's Will: A Monthly Meeting at Work in 1804', *Journal of Friends Historical Association*, 56 (1990-1993), p.230.)

Jesse Kersey's words as recorded in this journal entry seem in keeping with his character as described in the Newhouse article. On the one hand he is highly traditional in asserting the separateness and purity of God's people, 'the saints'; yet on the other, when attempting to find a balanced resolution to a scriptural controversy, he reveals his own rejection of the orthodox view that every word of scripture should be taken as being the literal word of God.

Jesse Kersey is also mentioned in Mary's letter to the better known American travelling minister David Sands - see Letter 38 in this volume.

#### 4th Mo 5th 1805

I was conversing with our precious friend Jesse Kersey & remarked to him that I hardly knew how to account for the unpleasant feelings which I experienced in the company of some that it seemed as if I were contaminated & had a cloud over me, after talking with them, altho' perhaps nothing faulty had occur'd in the conversation - his reply was striking, "It is the character of the Saints, They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy - now nothing is so easily soiled as white & it is essensial[sic] to us to keep our garments clean & uncontaminated with the World; with more to that effect & certainly if dressed in white we were to mingle with very dirty people or go into a filthy room, we should be apt to receive some spot or stain which would defile us & the feeling of defilement be painful - as pain is the signal or guard against danger, placed by the most High in the body and mind, even as the eye suffers much if it receive a mote<sup>1</sup> or grain of dirt - so the spirit is agonized at the intrusion of sin.

The above named friend when we were speaking of the controversies which had been incur'd[sic] in consequence of different interpretations which had been put on the writings of Holy men particularly of Paul, who is charged as



the author of the doctrine of predestination<sup>2</sup> - Said "Tho' I verily believe that what has been deliver'd by the apostles, is in perfect unison with Christ yet when any interpretation is put upon their writings differing from the general tenor of the doctrines of the Saviour - I must pass by all secondary testimonies & go directly to the Fountain head, let us see if there be anything which he has said that savours of predestination - & if not I reject every construction that can arise from the writings of the servants that does not Strictly coincide with his words, they being the Source to which the rest are to be traced" - how quickly would this method decide the controversies of Christians.

In one of his public testimonies speaking of the difference between Time & Eternity, he said there is difference between Time & Eternity, that in Time changes take place, but in Eternity there is no change, neither can be, for it would then be time, when time ends Eternity begins etc.

1. **mote** - particle of dust (see Mt 7:3).
2. **predestination** - the doctrine that each human being is destined for either salvation or eternal damnation according to the predetermined will of God.

Abigail Fayle was a minister of many years' standing who frequently represented Leinster at the Meeting of Ministers and Elders for Ireland (see Ministers and Elders Minutes and Certificates from 1802 onward). She died on 15 April 1805 aged 67 and Mary was so much affected by the loss of a friend and an 'ornament' in the church that she made this entry in her diary only two days later.

Abigail Fayle was the daughter of James and Susanna Malone, and married Thomas Fayle in 1773. Abigail 'avoided any sort of superfluity in their house, furniture and arrangements but both she and her husband were hospitable. "There was a cheerful kindness to be met with in visiting them which attracted and attached their friends; and the genuine piety which warmed their hearts was beheld in their countenance and felt in their conversation.'" On her death she left two adult sons, Robert and Thomas. The brothers ran an Irish Linen and Blanket Warehouse in Thomas Street. Robert became chairman of the Hibernian Peace Society. (Richard S. Harrison, *A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Quakers* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), p.44.)

#### 4th Mo 17th 1805

The decease of a revered friend A Fayle has affected me, Oh! that like her I might possess the mildness of charity the steadiness of faith, the integrity of truth, with a sweet placidity of disposition & a portion of her dovelike innocence, which as it thought no ill, neither could it judge evil of a brother or a sister - How is the church militant stripped of her ornaments, her pillows are many of them removed her children are few & most of those few rebellious & insincere<sup>1</sup> - Oh! that the great Husbandman<sup>2</sup> may yet speedily visit & increase us.

1. Referring to the loss of membership through the Irish Schism and the controversies within the Society as well as the deaths of ministers and people of standing.
2. **the great Husbandman** - and agricultural image, delineating God or Christ as the cultivator of souls.



**[undated]**

The spirit of supplication<sup>1</sup> was a little felt this morning & I was enabled to enter into my own heart & to search all its cravings, we cannot live without desire, every action tends to something there is a secret spring which impels us forward - life itself is a state of desire - as the flame is to the fire incessant in motion & ever issuing forth such & so natural is desire to the mind of man - whatever then is my desire, that is my life - whatever I breathe after shews me clearly as in a glass my real state - Inverting my mental eye, my secret desires present themselves & first in grateful thankfulness for present blessings, I covet their Continuance as long as consistent with the Divine Will, I covet also that we may be more entirely dedicated to his service for which purpose I would that our minds were more disencumber'd of worldly cares & that we were more without heavy anxiety as to the fulfilling our engagements, therefore I desire the increase of our business, so far beyond food & raiment as to settle us in a capital on which we may trade without passing bills or going into debt which causes uneasiness, solicitude & distraction of thought from the heavenly principle & I also covet to be indulged in the sweet luxury of administering to the necessities of others, for it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive & much do I desire the prosperity of our poor little school,<sup>2</sup> that its funds may be sufficient for its support & increase.

1. spirit of supplication - spirit of humble prayer.

2. poor little school - see note 4 to journal entry '4th Mo 4th 1805' above.

**4th Mo 20th 1805**

Am I of an ungrateful disposition am I prone to gloom, or why am I so low today, after the experiences of such tender care from my heavenly Father, I am low, because our business is not as stirring as I could wish, I am low, thro' fear, because that this day the sales have been trifling, am I then a mere worldling, have I lost the dew of my youth & degenerated into an earthworm - No! blessed be God the giver of every good & perfect gift - I am not - but I covet after that comfortable situation in life in which our minds may rise above that care, consequent on struggling for bread.

**4th Mo 23rd 1805**

Parting with a servant from whom I & my family received affectionate care but over whom I had lost my authority causes me much pain & a dismal feeling something like Death possesses[sic] me at the sound of her name - Yet I think I neither can or ought to retain her & she does not leave me destitute, having plenty for her temporary support: when I was younger how did I observe with abhorrence[sic] those social distinctions of rank which classed my fellow creatures above & below me, but now I see that those who want education, if they rule will also tyrannize & that equality is a chimera, because that they would soon usurp a superiority acting without judgment & often unreasonable,



may I ever be under the guidance of that principle, which teaches to govern rightly, for I am sure I would not willingly injure even an animal nor desire I to cause pain to any one unnecessarily.- A sudden turn of corporeal indisposition has brought me very low - Oh! that thou would hide me in the hollow of thine hand,<sup>1</sup> beneath the shadow of thy wing,<sup>2</sup> that I might no more go out to offend thee, but be entirely that which thou wouldst have me to be - My life is a burthen<sup>3</sup> to me without thee - my days are unquiet & anxious I am not sufficiently center'd in Thee

1. Is 40:12 - 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?'
2. Ps 17:8 - 'Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings,'. Also Ps 57:1 - 'Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.' and Ps 63:7 - 'Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.'
3. burthen - archaic form of 'burden'.

### 5th Mo 3rd 1805

We have had a very blessed Yearly Meeting, plentiful effusions of gospel rain have been shower'd down upon us,<sup>1</sup> consolation unity & strength have been experienced, & we have drawn nearer to each other in the simplicity of truth Some of our understandings have been I believe enlarged & we render'd more clear sighted than before - I have seen the true unity of gospel fellowship founded on the Rock Christ,<sup>2</sup> all else is false - that alone is the foundation of friendship, there is no other, in that we have true sympathy with one another & feel for one another - every other coalition will end in seperation[sic] Truth is the sole bond that can endure - out of this blessed unity I covet no society, nor is there any other worth possessing - The language of the spirit this Yearly Meeting was expressed & felt "Speak to my people that they go forward"<sup>3</sup>

1. gospel rain [. . .] us - spiritual blessings in the twin sense of inner spiritual nourishment and spoken ministry.
2. Rock Christ - St Paul, speaking of the Israelites' kinship with the Christians who followed them, said, - 'And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.' 1 Cor 10:4.
3. Ex 14:15 - 'And the Lord said unto Moses, [. . .] speak unto the Children of Israel that they go forward'.

### 5th Mo 7th 1805

Giving way to the cares of the world I made up my mind to stay from meeting this morning - but when the hour drew nigh I felt so uneasy under it, that in obedience to the impression I hastened & went - & have the reward of peace, besides additional comfort in the things of this life - the meeting was a good one, tho' stripped of its late worn ornaments<sup>1</sup> & I felt it was delightful for friends to return to their homes whilst the savour rests upon them & not lose it in idle visiting or unnecessary conversation - the feelings of my mind are peace - joy



springs up within me so happy am I that I seem as tho' I had forgotten all sorrow. - Oh! that I may watch even here.

1. Perhaps referring to the death of individuals such as Abigail Fayle - see journal entry '4th Mo 17th 1805' above.

### 5th Mo 23rd 1805

As in the outward creation the sun breaks forth & illuminates every object causing the birds to sing & the flowers to spring up, so that we altogether forget the evil day, even so is it with my soul which hath put off her robes of mourning, & feels clothed with the garments of joy - peace ineffable, comfort inexpressable[sic], happiness felt but undefinable is truly my portion, I experience these as a well of living waters springing up unto everlasting life:<sup>1</sup> I have no sorrow, I have no grief, I have no fear, no anxiety, but I am more happy than I can express, all things comfort me - with temporal goods I am amply provided & the prospect of their continuance by sufficient business, My husband preserved in health, my two boys growing in stature - & I doubt not they will in wisdom - The School the precious legacy of dear H W F<sup>2</sup> seems to prosper beneath mine hand - it has attracted the notice of some persons of oppulence[sic],<sup>3</sup> all seem to encourage me my hands are strengthened in God, I go on in faith, my work shall increase & its fruits appear - The Lord is to me a shield & a defence, my hope & my sure reward - I have no doubt whatever, I have no fear of any kind, my heart & my soul are at perfect peace, peace of which I cannot express its amiable beatitude, so I desire not its continuance out of my heavenly Fathers will, I am happy. MC

1. well of living waters [. . .] everlasting life - Jn 4:9-15 - Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, where he describes Himself as the source of living water that shall become, within those who receive it, a 'well of water springing up into eternal life' (v.14).
2. HWF - Hannah Wilson Forbes, Mary's friend from childhood who had died in England in 1799 soon after giving birth to a son. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'. The school is the subject of a poem written to request funds from a potential subscriber (see Vol. 2, Poetry, p.439). Called a 'School and Repository', the institution consisted of a school for poor children linked to a scheme to alleviate poverty whereby fine needlework was produced for sale by the poor scholars and/or their families working from home. The poem makes it clear that Hannah Wilson Forbes was instrumental in establishing the school. It may have been linked with the General Daily Free School (see note 4, journal entry '4th Mo 4th 1805' above and Vol. 2, Poetry, p.375).
3. persons of oppulence[sic] - probably actual or potential wealthy subscribers.

### 5th Mo 27th 1805

Comforts unmixed as those I experience, joys pure & solid, pleasures unalloyed surely are not always designed to gild a vale of tears, such however are my present contented allotment. I desire nothing that this World can add for it cannot add a continuance of these blessings. - The mind of my beloved N<sup>1</sup> is also comfortable & closely bound to the cause of truth; surely the Lord hath placed me on an eminence & I take a view of the Holyland,<sup>2</sup> I see



Paradise the garden of God<sup>3</sup> in which man was & is placid[placed] in innocency, where grows every delicious fruit & also the tree of knowledge forbidden now as formerly - I have a view of the new & inward creation - which exactly corresponds with the outward relation of Moses<sup>4</sup> - I see, indubitably how it is that man losing his state of innocence falls into a thorny wilderness & becomes a miserable wanderer there - disquieted, anxious & sorely distressed, he is yet the object of divine regard, who by various means continues to allure him to return - often he tries, but frighten'd at the flaming sword which turns every way to guard the tree of life,<sup>5</sup> he shrinks from the ordeal, & by every foolish act, he makes more difficult the path which must be passed because this flaming sword, this baptism of fire will consume all the fallen nature, will destroy the effects of sin & purify the Soul - Led here (by the attracting principle Christ Jesus, placed by God according to his promise in every heart) so frightful seems the prospect that the poor sinner is almost if not altogether persuaded to relinquish his immortal hopes, but this once passed joys unspeakable, prospects replete in heavenly beauty - fields saturate with dew, flowers of delicious fragrance & fruits of exquisite flavour, salute our astonished eyes - these are all for the use of man - all but the tree of Good & Evil,<sup>6</sup> that whenever tasted brings Death into the Soul, here all the creatures receive their right names from the new man<sup>7</sup> - all is known - for here is no guile or deceit, yet here is the Serpent<sup>8</sup> the author of it, ready to cast forth his venom wherever it will be received yet unable to inject it without the concurrence & consent of the Soul.

1. N - Mary's husband Nathaniel.
2. Moses, from the top of Mount Pisgah, was allowed to see the promised Holy Land before his own death.
3. **Paradise the garden of God** - the Garden of Eden.
4. **I have a view [ . . . ] outward relation of Moses** - the Law of Moses provided the rules for living in this world (hence 'outward relation') given by God to the Jewish people in the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) known as the Pentateuch and traditionally attributed to Moses. The words 'outward relation' also hark back to Moses' view of the Holy Land laid out before him - see note 2 above. There are several layers of meaning intimated here: the New Testament revelation as a fulfilment of the Old, the law of the letter (the outward) and that of the spirit (the inward), the physical revelation vouchsafed to Moses in his view of the Holy Land and the mapping of the inner spiritual journey.
5. Gen 3:24 - after Adam and Eve's banishment for their disobedience, God set cherubim at the entrance to the Garden of Eden together with a flaming sword to guard the path to the Tree of Life. The first humans were thus barred from access to this Tree lest they became like Gods - immortal. In Mary's text, human beings must dare to pass the sword to gain spiritual gifts or eternal life.
6. **tree of Good & Evil** - the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that bore the fruit with which Eve tempted Adam.
7. Gen 2:19. When God created Adam He brought all the animals of creation before this first and therefore 'new' man to be named by him. The 'new man' here is also the one born again in Christ who can see reality clearly and thus name the world anew.
8. **the Serpent** - Satan who deceived Eve in the guise of a serpent.

### 5th Mo 31st 1805

I think I never in my whole life enjoyed such a state of solid felicity & perfect peace as I now do - I am as happy & content as the World can make me. I feel no cloud between me & the Redeemer. I endeavour to live in purity - & I know that my endeavours are accepted of him - the School prospers,<sup>1</sup> the children



improve, my own domestic affairs are center'd in faith, we have enough of business & are at ease from the cumber<sup>2</sup> of temporal engagements, so that business is rather a recreation to us than a load. - I have really forgotten the hour of sorrow so entire is my comfort & bliss. - I retain little or no remembrance of my former distresses - "The Lord hath wiped my tears away, the Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad"<sup>3</sup> The Lord hath delivered us from our enemies, even from those who hated us, he hath established our goings - he plucked us out of the mire & the clay & hath set our feet upon a rock, even the rock of his Salvation,<sup>4</sup> he hath mightily helped us. - he hath dealt graciously with us, he it is that comforteth us, & we are comforted indeed - & now what remaineth but that we more & more love him our Benefactor & Lord, our king, our Father & Leader, that we serve him in all our actions, whether we eat or drink or whatever else we do, we may do it to his glory & honor, who hath called us to such perfect salvation - & doubtless if we faithfully remain dumb before him (as Infants) the tongue, yea the tongue of the learned will be given us, therewith to magnify the name of the Lord. Religion is a great comfort, it doth mightily bless & exhilarate[sic] the heart - how dreadful then is Deism,<sup>5</sup> which taketh away all these comforts and giveth us in lieu thereof doubts, confusion, misery, anxiety & grief.

MC

1. See note 4, journal entry '4th Mo 4th 1805', and note 2, journal entry '5th Mo 23rd 1805' above respectively.
2. cumber - burden.
3. Blending fulfilment of prophecies contained in Rev: 7:17 and Rev 21:4 (Rev 7:17 - 'For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes', Rev 21:4 - 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'), with a direct quote from Ps 126:3 - 'The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.' See also Is 25:8 - 'and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces'.
4. Christ said that whoever heard his sayings and did them was like a wise man who built his house upon a rock, enabling it to withstand wind, rain and flood (Mt 7:24-27, Lk 6:47-49). The rock is also Christ Himself who offers salvation to those who follow him (see 1 Cor 10:4) .
5. See 'Progress of Infidelity' narrative, in this volume, p.21.

### 6th Mo 11th 1805

Preserve me O Lord! from the desire of becoming rich - keep me from coveting an accumulation of property, this supplication arose livingly[sic] within me this morning & I clearly saw the distinction between using & abusing the traffick[sic] which promotes our sustenance & comfort - when the mind discontented (as mine is not) with the allotment of a sufficient portion of daily bread covets after what is called a fortune - & for the attaining thereof neglects the one thing needful,<sup>1</sup> then, things of incalculable moment are made subordinate to earthly views, opportunitites of heavenly good are slighted as they thwart pecuniary prospects, till at length render'd obtuse by habit & by interest, we lose & obliterate the delicate emotion of Divine life which by & by becomes as a strange thing to us; here is an avenue, I fear an ever open avenue, into which I am perpetually[sic] liable to stray. Lord God almighty uphold us by thine arm of power. keep us in the straight and narrow way,<sup>2</sup> for therein is joy & comfort, peace ineffable, felicity inexpressable[sic], let us ever be poor in spirit,<sup>3</sup> let us not be the rich of whom it is said, that a camel can sooner pass thro' the eye of



a needle, than they enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:<sup>4</sup> be with us for ever & ever - Amen - MC

1. **the one thing needful** - religious devotion, encompassing faith and practice, as being of primary importance. This was a commonly used phrase. See Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, Ch. 1 (pp.76-106) - "'The one thing needful": religion and the middle class', for an exploration of the significance of religion in the lives of middle class people at this time. The phrase takes its origin from the story of Martha and Mary, Lk 10:42 - 'But one thing is needful and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'
2. Mt 7:14 - 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'
3. The first beatitude given in Christ's Sermon on the Mount - Mt 5:3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'
4. Mt 19:24/Mk 10:25.

### 6th Mo 17th 1805

What have I to record but that the inexpressible[sic] felicity of peace & comfort, are as an ever flowing spring within me. I long to communicate the happiness which I feel - I long that the full cup may overflow into the vessels of his appointment;<sup>1</sup> perfect harmony reigns within me, externals are subordinate to the internals,<sup>2</sup> the things of Time to the things of Eternity, I know no sorrow, I fear no evil, I have no dread save one, the dread of deviation, & I ardently aspire after that permanency in Godliness which I can never lose, neither in this life, neither in that to come - I long after yet greater heights of purity, a more deep rooted foundation, from which I shall never, never, never fall, having gained a delightful height. - I long to advance yet higher with the wings of faith, with the feet of humility, with the heart of love to the cause of Truth - I am as it were impatient to get on. I know that I go on conquering & to conquer thro' him that hath loved me - but Oh! for that state from which I shall never fall away - that I may become a pillar in the temple of God & go no more out:<sup>3</sup>- as a weather beaten traveller in a thorny way, who has been refreshed & comforted, fed & clothed, healed of his wounds, & set forward again on a sunshiny day, with his face towards the mountains - & his feet on a rock,<sup>4</sup> at every ascent the prospect widens & the variegated scene grows richer, he mounts with a quicken'd pace & a bounding heart & as he mounts, he longs for the summit, which seems already as within his reach, so I rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord & with joy of heart, which rises almost to pain, go on from strength to strength - blessed be the name of Israel's God. MC

1. **vessels of his appointment** - vessels used in Jewish worship ritual, described in Exodus as dishes or basins.
2. **externals** - things of this world, **internals** - the inner spiritual life.
3. Rev 3:12 - 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out'.
4. Christ said that whoever heard his sayings and did them was like a wise man who built his house upon a rock (Mt 7:24-27, Lk 6:47-49). The rock is also Christ Himself who offers salvation to those who follow him (1 Cor 10:4).

### Undated

As I have had almost nothing to say in the discipline,<sup>1</sup> except at times the correction of some expressions mostly in answering the queries,<sup>2</sup> I have had a



something arising within me ready to complain of the littleness of the services required at my hands, & to say if the Lord desired a great thing would I not do it, but this is a very small offering! I have checked the ungrateful inclination & am willing to be despised, it is an honour to cleanse [cleanse] even the shell that contains the kernel of life, it is an honour to do the lowest office in his holy house; there is that within me, that as it were repugns [repigns] at it, that seeks after great things, but it is of the seed of the destroyer,<sup>3</sup> I will give it no room. MC

1. **the discipline** - the business meetings of the Society of Friends, such as monthly and quarterly meetings, which Mary attended. The term 'discipline' also refers to the principles of the Society of Friends to which its members were to adhere.
2. The Queries were a way of strengthening the Discipline. Individual Quaker meetings considered in depth and replied in writing to 'queries' - questions set by, for instance, Yearly Meetings or Quarterly Meetings, eliciting information on the spiritual condition of the individual meetings and their members' conformity to discipline.
3. **the destroyer** - a name for the Devil.

### 6th Mo 23rd 1805

The indisposition of my beloved companion<sup>1</sup> (occasioned by a cold) tho' not at all of an alarming nature has awaked some of those tender emotions which frequently lie dormant as the sound within the bell, till called forth by occasional circumstances which manifest what was within. Thou art very good to me Oh my dearest Father, out of thy royal magnificence thou hast dealt bountifully with me, thou hast greatly comforted, blessed & enriched me; thou hast been pleased to give me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning & the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,<sup>2</sup> munificent in all thy gifts, thou hast rewarded me, not merely an hundredfold but infinitely more than I deserved. I who deserved a curse from thee - thou, thou alone, O! Physician of value hast healed my dear companion from his most grievous & unutterably afflicting malady, when the earthly Phisician[sic] had pronounced his skill in vain, when agony rent my heart, & sorrow with ruthless claws seized upon me, when excruciating agony rent my mind, - then, even then, didst thou decree to heal him - then, even then didst thou raise him from the very verge of the grave; for this unspeakably great donation, this miricle[sic] as truly one - as any of those which he our truly compassionate Saviour wrought while on earth in that prepared body - this miricle[sic] hath inspired my heart with humble gratitude & caused within me an entire prostration of Soul towards thee - I feel altogether & entirely dependant[sic] on thee, and this dependance[sic] is an ever flowing source of serenity & peace; I hold all my joys from thee all my blessings from thy will, my fresh springs are in thee! & they flow forth at thy command. Oh! Lord to what a state hast thou raised me - that I have no wish but to please thee, more & more, to obey thee more & more, altogether to do thy will & never to deviate from thy laws - Oh! how my very Soul is animated by this painfully delightful flame - the desire to be more pure - more holy, more acceptable to thee, who alone art worthy of all praise now & forever.

1. **my beloved companion** - Mary's husband Nathaniel.
2. Is 61:3 - 'To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.'



## 6th Mo 28th 1805

There are some people so very like nettles, that I cannot touch them with my mind, but I am stung, I covet to get from under their influence altogether, I covet to be established in the perfect way - the Lord God who hath plucked my feet out of the mire & the clay, hath set me on dry ground, he hath turned my face & my feet towards Sion,<sup>1</sup> he attracteth me towards him very forcibly, giving me great joy & delight with the sound of his voice - with the covering of his presence - now this way in the which I am set to walk I perceive to be very narrow & straight forward & such is my aptitude to aberration, that I am continually liable to turn to the right or to the left, thereby experiencing that he punisheth terribly the disobedient; thro' his judgments I still persevere till I feel restored & on safe ground again, then all pain is taken away & am at peace with God as before. I feel that the Shepherd & Keeper of Israel hath planted a hedge<sup>2</sup> about me on the right hand & on the left, but I also feel that the plantation is young, that the hedge is not grown & that therefore it is not very difficult for me to turn aside & trample it under my feet - Lord God Almighty let thy sun shine & thy rain descend that the hedge of thy planting may grow, that it may increase quickly in root & branch so that I may no more go out, for I do dread exceedingly to deviate from thy way, knowing that all my peace depends on my steady persevering therein: - & the Lord granteth me a large portion of peace insomuch that I at times think it is not fit it should last long in a world of probation<sup>3</sup> like this - but in all & all & thro' all may the Divine will be done.

1. **Sion** - alternative spelling of Zion, the Holy City. Mount Zion was the hill at Jerusalem on which the Temple stood.
2. **hedge** - protection or shelter. 'Hedge' was a word much used in the Society of Friends at this time to denote the protection from temptation, or 'the ways of the world', afforded by membership and by customs - in dress and speech for instance - which separated Quakers from other people. It could also be used in a much broader sense. Here the 'hedge' is conceived as a form of spiritual protection cultivated by God.
3. **world of probation** - this world is seen as a site of testing or trial for the life to come.

## 7th Mo 22nd 1805

Tho' comfort joy & tranquillity are mercifully extended to me, with an hand so liberal that I be said to rejoice continually, yet strong & ardent is my desire to obtain yet greater purity of life & stricter & more entire consistency of conduct & conversation. - O God! by thy mercies & thy omnipotence - by thy will to all goodness, I conjure thee make me a transparency<sup>1</sup> in thy Holy Kingdom - a transparency that shall receive & communicate, yet lose nothing by giving of its light & of its lustre as far as it can extend O God my Father, I demand it of thee in humility & fear - make me a transparency in thy Kingdom, a Star in the firmament of thy power. - Yea thou must do it, Yea thou will do it - I will not rest till thou clarify me & illuminate me thoroughly with thy true light. Amen MC

1. **transparency** - an object which is transparent, allowing light to shine through it. Also a picture or inscription made visible by the light behind it (*OED*). Mary is asking that her whole self become so full of God's light that it can act as a sign or beacon of that light to others.



7th Mo 29th 1805

Make me more grateful for all thy mercies thou most munificent gracious & adorable Lord God for out of the rich abundance of thy mercies thou replenishest us abundantly thou art encreasing[sic] us in the goods of this life - & more infinitely more thou hast set before me an open door into thy Kingdom, even evident access to thy holy Throne - there I have prayed & there I know I have been heard, I have besought thee O! Lord. - (as the faithful helpmete[sic] of my beloved partner)<sup>1</sup> that thou say peace peace to his precious mind, surrounded by the turbulency of affairs, so that the sacred flame may burn brightly, in no wise injured by the winds of this life - for our affairs may be compared to a breeze which if we watch not may extinguish the candle of God. Oh Lord omnipotent thou whose word infused a calm when the storm howel'd[sic] dreadfully,<sup>2</sup> thou art as able and as willing now to dissipate the storms which arise, for thou art immutable, thy word changeth not & thy will is curative - that which thou speakest is done & that which we spake thro' faith in thy name is also done I feel it is so - & that my secret petition for my dear partner is answer'd even that his dwelling may be in the pavillion of peace, shelter'd safely from the storms. - Oh! enable me my heavenly Father to fulfil my duty of a wife, make me to help my husband in every way spiritually & temporaly[sic] - thou dost - & bless thy name for it. I am thankful that I feel openings to supplicate for our worst enemy,<sup>3</sup> may the Lord overpower him by a mighty visitation - attract him to himself with great force, shew him a glimpse of that beauty so transcendent & uncreated & inflame him with the love of durable riches - that so he may repent & be baptized & know salvation by & thro' the Saviour. Amen Amen

1. **helpmete of my beloved partner** - Mary sees herself in terms of the traditional Christian wife, cast in the role of Eve who was created as a companion and 'help meet' for Adam - Gen 2:18-25. Note the word 'helpmeet' (Mary's spelling 'helpmete'), usually understood as 'helpmate', is actually a corruption of the Biblical 'help meet' (for him), i.e. a helper suitable for Adam's needs.
2. Mt 8:23-27, Mk 4:35-41, Lk 8:22-25 - Christ's calming of the storm.
3. **our worst enemy** - presumably John Helton (see journal entry '3rd Mo 23rd 1805' above).

8th Mo 4th 1805

O Lord rebuke me not in thine anger neither chasten thou me in thy hot displeasure, correct me not in thy fierce wrath, lest I be altogether consumed, remit unto me the punishment due to my transgressions forgive me mine iniquities & heal my child, for because of disobedience to the voice of my husband am I now sorely afflicted with the sickness of my child. Oh Lord! thou hast deigned to shew unto me the cause thereof, seeing I repent & am humbly bowed down as in sackcloth & ashes<sup>1</sup> - do thou heal him, yea I have faith to believe & I am sure that thou will heal him, because that thou art merciful forgiving offences & healing maladies unto thee Oh thou who hast afflicted me do I apply for thou only canst relieve me - give me - yea thou givest me the life of my child.

Even now he revives, he is given to me - he will recover - he will not now die - his sickness is for the Glory of God - for the punishment of my disobedience &



his healing is according to thy mercy Oh! Lord. - In my self will I acted & its consequence was disobedience to the will of my husband - the fruit thereof is bitterer than death - even as wormwood mingled with gall<sup>2</sup> - the sickness of my child - resulting from my own conduct which I ought to have avoided by patient humility, obedience & care - if thou O Father forgivest me this time, I will I trust be more careful in future how I disobey MC

1. sackcloth & ashes - the Biblical garb of mourning.
2. wormwood mingled with gall - Biblical expression for terrible suffering and bitterness, as in Lam 3:19 - 'Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall'. Gall is bile or bitterness, and wormwood a plant with bitter leaves though it could be used medicinally.

### 8th Mo 10th 1805

I have committed a great sin this day - hastiness of expression in opposition to my dear husband - my conscience smites me, I record it to my shame, I repent it in confusion of face - forgive me Oh my Father, I am deeply grieved and ashamed!

### 8th Mo 25th 1805

Knowing experimentally<sup>1</sup> the necessity of ceasing from all my own works, I long ardently & continually to work the works of God. I covet to promote not merely the harmony of society, but the union and communion with the Father thro' the Son Christ Jesus, as natural as to breathe is my earnest desire to evidence in myself the glorious truth of the gospel even fellowship with the Saviour & that I may be instrumental in its promotion & Soul saving spread Oh! when will that happy day arrive! Oh that it may be hastened in the divine will, Oh! how insipid to me, in comparison thereof is the savour of my present diligent labours to promote the comforts of the poor & the ignorant - & yet I may not remit them, because they are good - but oh! how poor, how minute, how trifling are they in comparison of that of that<sup>2</sup> which helps out the salvation of an immortal Soul, my allotment is therefore in the cross yet I freely yield to it, knowing that obedience is better than sacrifice & that the fruit of my hands may tend to promote or pave the way to the true principle tho in a remote degree. happy they who standing on the rock of salvation,<sup>3</sup> thro' faith prevail mightily with God, who ask & receive who knock & it is opened,<sup>4</sup> but O I am neither murmuring not[?nor) enoying<sup>5</sup> for the Lord doth very much for me & is even now condescending to teach me that omnipotent prayer, which entereth into his Holy Will & obtaineth its whole desire - I have known it to be so - it will I hope be yet more so, Blessed be the adorable name! Amen -

1. experimentally - experientially, through the trial of experience.
2. of that - repeated twice in manuscript.
3. Christ said that whoever heard his sayings and did them was like a wise man who built his house upon a rock (Mt 7:24-27, Lk 6:47-49). The rock is also Christ Himself who offers salvation to those who follow him (1 Cor 10:4).
4. Mt 7:7-8 - Christ's words on prayer at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek,



and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.'

5. **enoying** - clearly written in manuscript. Possibly a variant of 'annoying' used in the sense of giving voice to irritation, fretting.

### 9th Mo 3rd 1805

Punished, justly punished Oh! when shall I learn in the meekness of wisdom, the obedience of a child! Awake part of the night, felt dark, distressed, & I believe repentant. - remit unto me my punishment if it be thy will, so shall I know that thou hast forgiven me my sin. I find this lesson of obedience a hard one, for it is very repugnant to my nature, which abhors it, I loath subjection, I would assey[sic]<sup>1</sup> my own dignity - this is pride! but it is a deeply rooted pride early engrafted into my mind nourished & cherished by education by habit, by example - Lord God Almighty spare me not! I hope I shall yet be what thou wouldst have me to be! but oh! I am frail, I feel the renewal of peace, I feel deeply contrited[sic] - I fear lest I again fall may the Lord be my helper - I rely wholly on him, I am a broken reed.<sup>2</sup>

MC

1. **assey** - assay, meaning to try or attempt.
2. Is 36:6 - 'Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it'. See also 2 Kgs 18:21.

The next piece was written after a visit made by a couple named John and Elizabeth Hoyland. Hoyland is a common Quaker name and several Hoylands appear in the *Dictionary of Quaker Biography*. An Elizabeth Hoyland (1758-1839), married to John Hoyland (1752-1831), made extensive ministerial visits in England, Scotland and to Dunkirk. She also visited London in 1784 in the company of Esther Tuke. The *Dictionary of Quaker Biography* relates that she was plain in speech and dress and concerned that these should survive. She worked hard to spread Bible knowledge among the poor, for whom her 'sympathy was quickly aroused' and she frequently helped them 'from her own slender resources'. 'Humility and love were the outstanding characteristics of her testimony.'

Her husband John Hoyland published several books: *An Epitome of the History of the World* (1812-23), *A Historical Survey of the Customs of the Gypsies* (1816), *The Fulfilment of Scripture Prophecies* (see Joseph Smith's *Catalogue of Friends' Books*). The son of a silver plater, he was a factor (a merchant or agent acting on commission) by trade.

No record has been found, as yet, of this couple visiting Ireland in 1805, but John's brother, Joseph Hoyland, and his wife Margaret, a minister, moved to Waterford in 1791 (Labouchere, *Deborah Darby of Coalbrookdale*, p.377). It is possible that they came to visit them. Interestingly, in view of the thoughts they are recorded as expressing here on the upbringing of children, the couple never seem to have had any children of their own.

### 9th Mo 29th 1805

I was favor'd with the company of John & Elizabeth Hoyland, some of whose conversation was deeply instructive, they urged the absolute necessity of



subjecting early the wills of children & beautifully elucidated that text of scripture - "binding his foal to the vine & his asses colt to the choice vine"<sup>1</sup> shewing thereby how very subject & docile the will must be, seeing that the vine was a tender thing & easily broken - so that if our young ones were bound to it, they must be indeed docile & carefully subjected, lest they injure it. Oh! how explanatory[?explanatory] does this feel to me; I also admired their explanation of that council to be wise as serpents, for it is the serpents wisdom never to come out but in the sunshine, so we should never move but in the light.

MC

1. Gen 49:11. Extracted from Jacob's blessing upon his son, Judah - In whose tribe the future royal line was to reside. The relevant text reads: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be./Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes;/His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk'. (Gen 49:10-12.)

### 10th Mo 5th 1805

Strong desires after perfect purity reign in my mind, that we may both cooperate with God & live to his glory - yet I feel the littleness of human endeavours for the good of others, & good as it may be to assist & benefit the poor, it is better to wait in silence upon God - "the poor ye have with you always, but me ye have not always",<sup>1</sup> therefore a care for the poor is not to interfere with higher duties, but to be kept in due subordination tho attended to with diligence.

MC

1. Mt 26:11, Mk 14:7, Jn 12:8. Jesus's answer when his disciples criticised the waste of money involved, saying it would be better given to the poor, when a woman came and anointed His head with precious ointment while He was at supper. Jesus said the woman had anointed his body for burial. John identifies the woman as Mary, the sister of Martha.

### 10th Mo 7th 1805

It is in my heart this morning to renew my covenant with thee, Oh! thou immaculate, inscrutable, invisible & ever adorable Lord God - I conjure thee by thy tender mercies that I may never more offend thee, in thought word or deed, I conjure thee by thine only begotten son, strengthen to the fulfilling of my covenant with thee; tho' surrounded with earthly blessings I feel that all is as nothing without thee - Oh then I pray thee regard the sincerity of thy servant & let me dwell in innocency[sic] before thee.

MC

### 11th Mo 3rd 1805

Oh! that the unreserved dedication of my soul may meet with acceptance before thee - I long ardently that thou mayst touch me & make me wholly



clean, preserve me I beseech thee in entire cleanness, let my words & my actions shew forth thy praise - for thou lovest righteousness & thou hatest iniquity & I long to resemble thee.

The anxiety of business, the care attendant on our temporal concerns the solicitude which frequently occurs respecting them, feel like thorns in our sides, they wound us, they oppress us at times; they militate against that devotedness which we aspire to attain, yet why should they prevail? the enemy can only conquer by subtlety - not by force - If I be among[*sic*] thorns - surely my dwelling is not in the centre of the peaceful fold - for thorns are in the hedges round about, set for the preservation of the flock - that when they feel wounded, they may turn again to the only safe & quiet habitation.<sup>1</sup>

1. Is 33.20 - Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, [. . .]'

### 12th Mo 7th 1805

Oh Lord, my maker, my earnest supplication to thee this day, is that thou wilt draw with strong cords of love, into thy Temple of peace, my dearly beloved husband - Oh! my Father his desire is unto thee, his heart panteth after thee, his Soul coveteth to be thine - altogether thine - be thou pleased Oh! gracious Father to lead & guide him, with my own Soul in the straight & narrow way<sup>1</sup> - & whereas he is easily cast down, mayest thou be pleased as far as consistent with thine holy will, to bear him up - to settle & deeply root him in thine own pure Kingdom which endureth for ever - I desire to render unto thee the grateful homage of thanksgiving & praise for all thy unmerited favours, bestowed so liberally & so beyond hope, upon thy weak unworthy creature who now addresses thee, my heart is bowed in reverent commemoration[*sic*] of some of them magnified be thy most holy name who alone art worthy of adoration prayer & gratitude for evermore, may the day be hasten'd in the which the whole Earth shall acknowledge that thou with the Lamb<sup>2</sup> art altogether worthy. - Oh! blessed Father make perfect thy gracious work, draw my beloved partner yet more & more strongly, not only to offer thee the secret aspirations of his heart but also continually to present unto thee his body in the public weekday assemblies of thy faithful people;<sup>3</sup> be thou his strength in weakness, his ability to regulate his temporal affairs in due subservience to thine holy law, be thou yet more & more his leader, his help, his support, guide him Oh guide him, thro' the thorny mazes of this life, succour him & cherish him as a lamb of thy fold as a sheep of thy pasture & bring him in thine own good time, to thy holy hill of Zion, where every tear shall be wiped away & sorrow & sickness be remember'd no more.<sup>4</sup> Amen, Amen saith my Soul.

1. Mt 7:14 - 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'  
 2. the Lamb - John the Baptist hailed Jesus as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' (Jn 1:29).  
 3. Quakers held meetings for worship on some weekdays as well as Sundays (First Days).  
 4. Zion - Heaven or the Holy City. Mount Zion was the hill at Jerusalem on which the Temple stood.  
 Rev 21:4 - 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'



**12th Mo 27th 1805**

The inward precious feeling of the omnipresence of the Supreme is so sacred, so sublime, so comforting that human power is wholly insufficient to set it forth. - Oh! that He who made us for a purpose of his own glory, would preserve us both beneath that canopy, where alone is true safety, that we may never more go out.

Feeling disagreeably oppressed with the turmoils of outward affairs & a wish for that pecuniary independance[sic] which I consider'd might free me therefrom - I was led thro' the gracious condescension[sic] of the spirit of truth, to look unto him who is able to deliver us from every thing that can possibly hinder, then I saw that I need not wait to be rich, in order to be disencumber'd with care, but that to simply cry unto him for help at the present moment was & is the most effectual way & as power to act ever accompanies the right view, I leant on him who shewed me the right way & my thoughts were presently staid<sup>1</sup> & center'd in quiet, even as Wine in the outward,<sup>2</sup> which being kept still & quiet, grows clear & purified its lees<sup>3</sup> settling to the bottom; Oh! Preserver of thy creatures - May that for which thou called'st me forth into being be accomplished suffer me not to loiter & waste the precious moments allotted me, but whatever may have been thy purpose concerning me, I ardently desire its accomplishment, that so when thy awful stroke is felt which shall seperate[sic] my spirit from materiality I may lie down in perfect resignation & expire without a struggle.

Amen, Amen.

1. **staid** - stayed, stopped from wandering.
2. **in the outward** - in the external, physical world.
3. **lees** - sediment.

In January 1806, Mary's third (but second surviving) child, Nathaniel - the future collector of his mother's writings - became gravely ill once more. Nathaniel was now eleven months old. In the next three journal entries, Mary's prayers and thanks for his recovery are accompanied by renewed promises to guard her speech and thoughts, and observe humility, presumably fearing lest any sin on her part be punished through the suffering of her child (see journal entry '8th Mo 4th 1805' above). In the third entry, she goes on to seek God's help in an undertaking on her own account - one that, it appears, will help the Cards extricate themselves from their financial difficulties and regain their property. The nature of her plan, however, is not revealed.

**1st Mo 5th 1806**

Oh! Lord thou knowest that all my dependance[sic] is upon thee, thou knoweth that in thee all my hopes lie, therefore have I said rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me thou in thine hot displeasure - In the midst of corporal infirmity & pain - & afflicted by the heavy sickness of my beloved child, yet am I wonderfully preserved in stedfast[sic] confidence on thee O Father - who tho' thou triest[sic] the reins & the heart yet hast thou mercy on the children of men - I believe that thou purposeth to heal my little darling, I believe that his sickness will not be unto Death, but that he will recover & grow up a



precious plant in thy choice garden; the church militant for which his nature & the apparent tenor of his formation of body & mind do I trust peculiarly fit him<sup>1</sup> - which that he may fulfil is the breathing of my soul - & the belief thereof more to me than choice wine - Lord thou wilt restore him.

1. Nathaniel grew up to be an active member of the Society of Friends, and a keen philanthropist.

### 1st Mo 8th 1806

Oh! Lord that regarded the affliction of thine handmaid - enable me to fulfil the covenant which I have made with thee in the hour of much affliction, even that I will put (thro' thy strengthening & abilitation<sup>1</sup>) a bridle on my lips that I sin not with my tongue, that I will never mention with bitterness the name of the man who hath evilly treated us<sup>2</sup> - that I will guard my speech & my thoughts with all mildness & humility - that I may not offend in any wise-<sup>3</sup>

Last night as I lay on my bed awake my heart was agonized for my beloved little Nathaniel, whose delicate frame was heavily oppressed with sickness, & I besought the Lord whose judgments are fearful & whose hand is terrible to have mercy on me. Oh! that I may be holy & spotless for ever world without end. Amen

### 1st Mo 28th 1806 [dated at end of entry in manuscript]

Oh! thou preserver of men, who hast restored my child to my prayer, who alone canst enable me to keep my covenant with thee - unto thee do I bring an offering for acceptance - even the promise of purity of lips, thro' thee I will henceforth speak evil of no one, I will be silent respecting evil characters, who are justly to be condemned I bind myself to this, thro' faith in thee, knowing well that feebleness, nothingness is my portion when I cease to depend on thee - Faith, which consists in a belief in & dependance[sic] on thee, is my hope, my refuge, my protection & my reward.-

And now oh! thou whose ears are open to intercessions - I beseech thee, if it please thee, bless my present undertaking & prosper me in the thing that I am about to do; as thou prosperedst Judith, who went forth of the camp & by subtlety overcame the enemy,<sup>4</sup> so may it please thee Oh! Lord that I by subtlety, may this day restrain the hand of the uncircumcised<sup>5</sup> & wrest that outward property which in thy goodness thou hast given us, out of the hands of him who seeked to retain it. bless Lord my work & my doing, strengthen & enable me to perform it, let the words of my mouth prevail, that the device of cunning may be broken & we escape as out of the net; Oh! dearest Father I feel not a wish to prosper in this thing & obtain it, out of thy holy will, but I believe that thou hast given me the thought & the courage to do it, & I freely & without doubt beg it of thee to be with me, for thou art strength & ability, & I believe thou intendest to make my way in this affair prosperous.



1. **abilitation** - granting of ability.
2. Presumably referring, once again, to John Helton.
3. **in any wise** - in any way.
4. 'The Book of Judith' belongs to *The Apocrypha*, seven books and parts of two others that are included in Catholic but not Protestant Bibles as part of the Old Testament. Mary's choice of Judith as a role model is therefore interesting because it reveals her access to, and high regard for, a text regarded by Protestants as non-canonical. As knowledge of the story is necessary to understanding Mary's thinking in this journal entry, a brief summary is given below.

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Assyria, sought revenge against the people of Judea for refusing to support him in a war against King Arphaxad of Ragae. He sent his general, Holofernes, with a large army to punish them. The army laid siege to the Israelite city of Bethulia and cut off its water supply, whereupon the desperate populace wished to surrender. Judith, a much respected widow - god-fearing, beautiful and rich - summoned the elders of the city to her and urged they stood firm lest the Assyrians went on to pollute the Lord's sanctuary and the Temple in Jerusalem. They agreed she should carry out her own plan for the salvation of Israel. After praying, 'give to me, a widow, the strength to do what I plan/By the deceit of my lips [. . .] [to] [. . .] crush their arrogance by the hand of a woman' (Jud 9:9-10) and thus witnessing to the world the power of God, Judith decked herself in fine clothes and jewels and journeyed to the Assyrians' camp. There she flattered Holofernes and offered to help him defeat the Israelites. Holofernes, wanting to seduce her, invited her to join him in the banquet after which, when they were alone and he was in a drunken stupor, she decapitated him with his own sword and carried his head back to Bethulia. The following morning, the Assyrians, greatly surprised by the death of their commander, were set to flight by the Israelite army. Thus were the Lord's enemies 'foiled' 'by the hand of a woman' (Jud 16:6).

5. **the uncircumcised** - the Assyrians, being non-Jews, were uncircumcised. Mary regards the Cards' enemies likewise as 'the uncircumcised', i.e. not the Lord's people.

## 2nd Mo 3rd 1806

Like the welcome arising of a bright morning, after a dark season of rain & of gloom, are the renewed sensations of my relieved, cheer'd & comforted mind this day, cheer'd by the restoration to health of my beloved, relieved from the distress & sore anxiety which thereupon pervaded my heart & comforted in the hope that he who thus bountifully hath spread out my table,<sup>1</sup> hath enlarged my borders, hath blessed my blessings, will condescend to finish the work that he hath begun & sanctify me wholly.- Oh! Lord how long, how long Lord God Almighty ere thou take to thyself the great power & reign. I covenanted with thee to watch diligently my lips & I have broken my covenant - yet again hear me O God & enable me thro' thy abiding grace "to be silent respecting characters which are justly to be condemned"<sup>2</sup> as the efforts of a child to walk, intermingled with repeated falls, yet persevering in endeavouring to obtain its desire - so I & I do humbly hope that my sad breach of that part of it, may not altogether separate[sic] me from the Divine help.- Oh! if words flowing from the consciousness of the injury that I sustain by allowing evil to pass thro' my thoughts in any shape, if the secret supplication & very earnest desire to be delivered from all evil, may prevail with thee, Mighty Helper, then surely shall I never more speak evil of any one - whether it be false or true, whether it be public or private, for the ideas of evil being encouraged in my thoughts do defile me wholly - even as dirt being laid in a napkin would defile it & render it unfit for use: Dearest Father to thee I owe this great blessing, that after all my aberrations[sic], my crimes & my follies, I do long with inexpressible ardour to be purified, to be justified, to be sanctified, to dwell on earth, uncontaminated by earth, to act for thee, for thine honor, to live for thee, to obey thee, to dwell with thee & finally to be thine for ever! - if words could effectuate<sup>3</sup> my wishes, if



my pen might delineate truth -Oh! how would I declare, solemnly declare, to do no evil, to attend to the motions of thine Holy Spirit unceasingly & watchfully, to sin no more with my tongue, nay, but I will no more smite my neighbour secretly, I will no more pollute my inward parts by harbouring evil thoughts of any, I will not trespass with my tongue, so shall I find acceptance with thee & hasten my salvation.

1. Echoing Ps 23:5 - 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies'.
2. See previous journal entry, '1st Mo 28th 1806', first paragraph. Christ enjoined His followers, 'condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned' (Lk 6:37).
3. **effectuate** - accomplish.

### 3rd Mo 18th 1806

Why is it, O Thou that art fairer than the sons of men, that I am not yet altogether what I would be, surrounded by thy precious temporal gifts, I languish after the possession of the one thing needful,<sup>1</sup> thou hast enlarged our borders & increased our store, thou hast given me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning & the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;<sup>2</sup> my heart & my affections are clothed with ineffable peace, my inestimable companion, my lovely boys - my pecuniary wants abundantly supplied - these afford me an inexpressible source of joy, fountains of gardens with streams from Lebanon as precious odours of sweet smelling woods;<sup>3</sup> gifts of the almighty, highly prized & dearly valued, yet unavailing & insufficient to quench my thirst after invisible good - The glow of maternal love, the endearment of conjugal affection, excite the tear of gratitude & create in my soul a sensation of rapture - but these are not my God - I look beyond them to Him, Oh! for that enjoyment with him which would be the crown of my life - the summit of my hopes! I look on my comfortable allotment with fear, lest even now I should stop by the way & fall short of the prize at last.

1. See note 1, journal entry '6th Mo 11th 1805' above.
2. Is 61:3 - 'To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.'
3. Echoing Song 4:15-16 - 'A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon./Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.'

### 3rd Mo 24th 1806

I feel exceedingly, Oh! how exceedingly, earnestly desirous to be wholly purified, to be cleansed from all bitterness & gall, from evil speaking, evil surmising, evil judging of any one; I am a sinner! the thoughts of mine heart are evil continually, Lord God Almighty I implore thee make me wholly pure; "Draw me, we will run after thee"<sup>1</sup> into the secret chambers into the pavilion of thy presence, where alone is safety & where destruction may not enter, "draw me, we will run after thee", from the mountains of the Leopards,<sup>2</sup> from the



forests of Lebanon, from every high hill, from every exalted thought, place us in an establishment of humble dependance[sic] upon thee & of reconciliation & peace towards all our brethren & if it be consistent with thine Holy will & for the glory of thy name, my soul doth covet to be reconciled with those who once caused us suffering, to be at peace with them & to have them at peace with us, even united in the bands of gospel fellowship, as fellow travellers Zionwards<sup>3</sup> - Amen - Amen -

1. Song 1:4.
2. Song 4:8 - 'Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, [ . . . ], from the mountains of the leopards.'
3. Zionwards - heavenwards.

#### 4th Mo 30th 1806

["] I thought that the voice of lamentation might be mingled with hope seeing that we sorrow not without hope in the ability of that almighty arm which hath gather'd us & will preserve us a people"<sup>1</sup> under the exercising feeling of duty,<sup>2</sup> was I enabled to utter the above at the close of the yearly women's meeting,<sup>3</sup> & my covenant is with the Most High, let him keep me & feed me & let me be his for ever. MC

1. Mary is quoting the words she spoke aloud at Meeting.
2. The call to speak in the ministry was considered a duty, something that one had to do regardless of any personal feelings or sensation of inadequacy to the task.
3. Women's Yearly Meeting for Ireland was usually held at the end of April. Mary's name appears regularly in the minutes from 1807 and she was appointed to a number of committees.

#### Dublin 7th Mo 11th 1806

Conceit, presumption, arrogance & Pride beset my tortured soul, united they attack me, I turn & turn, but still they pursue me, the battle rages furiously, hath not Hell devised my overthrow, it hath pierced me & I am vulnerable; pride prevails often, Oh! wretched that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death<sup>1</sup> - ah! sure there is help laid on him who is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto him<sup>2</sup> - on him who loveth us & who hath laid down his life for our sakes - He is powerful to make me conquer all my souls enemies & my cry is to him for salvation from sin & complete redemption from all evil. Amen MC

1. Rom 7:24 - 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' From a passage in which St Paul discusses the flesh versus the will - his tendency, like that of other human beings, to do the things he knows he ought not to do while leaving undone those things he should do, despite his best intentions.
2. Heb 7:25 - 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.'



Dublin 7th Mo 15th 1805[?1806]

"Take heed that you do not your your<sup>1</sup> alms before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is [in] heaven"<sup>2</sup> here in this tender council lies the cure of self complacency, my tormentor, to this, as to the River Jordan the prophet sent Naaman the leper,<sup>3</sup> I turn & find relief & this like that river hath often appeared to me of too little moment let the past suffice & for the present & future - my soul coveteth secrecy, to check the delusive pleasure which arises on seeing that our deeds are observed, shall I say applauded, I covet secrecy, my will is to obey & follow the counsel emphatically given by unerring wisdom "take heed etc." Oh! that I had always taken heed, then would my peace have been now as a river & my darkness as the noon day, but I will now take heed & conceal from the eye of the vulture,<sup>4</sup> from the left hand of self, that which my right hand performeth,<sup>5</sup> so I shall starve the disposition to self complacency, which is the root of pride & pride creates anger conceit, presumption, & arrogance within me; & here I see that by unwisely rejecting the Saviours counsel, many lose the benefit of their alms deeds, by seeking & accepting the praise of men, they lose the reward, which otherwise certainly would await them, they engender the seeds of vanity & draw hurt upon their own souls even so, that many accounted charitable, have more hardness of heart towards the Saviour than some who profess not that disposition - & the mist occasioned by inattention to the Divine "take heed" rises between their souls & the kingdom of life - even to the often obscuring of the view of that humility which leads to Life Eternal. MC

1. your - written twice in manuscript.
2. Mt 6:1 - 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.'
3. 2 Kgs 5 relates how Naaman, commander of the Syrian army, was cured of his leprosy by bathing seven times in the River Jordan as the prophet Elisha instructed him.
4. Job 28:7 - 'There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen.'
5. Mt 6:3-4 - 'But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth;/That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.'

It was common for Quaker diarists to recall a period in childhood when they felt a call to serve God, or experienced a keen sense of His presence, to which, however, they did not attend sufficiently. This was usually followed by the expression of great regret - had the early message been attended to, much time would not have been wasted in fruitless or godless pursuits which delayed religious awakening. Howard Brinton says the years between seven and twelve were the most frequent ages in childhood for this experience of a sense of divine revelation (Brinton, *Quaker Journals*, pp.6-7). For example Mary Hagger (1758-1840) - 'In my early age I was sensible of the tender impressions of divine love', and Clarkson who, at age eleven, was 'surprised with an inward comfort', a sense of 'an external glory in the room' and felt he was being 'called upon to a holy life'. Mary follows this pattern, though she was slightly younger when she felt God's 'visitations extended to' her - only about five years old, according to her own recollection. (See also journal entry '11 Mo 14th 1812' below.)

7th Mo 15th 1806

Oh! that I had known the value of the crucifying<sup>1</sup> conduct held over me when young, oh! that I had availed myself of it as I might have done: The Lord placed



me in a crucible for the very purpose of refinement, but I like unprepared clay flew off & brake & would not yield fully to Divine manifestation which yet inwardly instructed me to yield for I knew well that the Almighty Power could have order'd other conduct towards me in my childhood, & in my youth if he had pleased - yet thro' disobedience thro' impatience & thro' outward communications with unprofitable companions, I fear render'd vain much of my sufferings - Oh! that I had always kept my mind to myself that I had never placed confidence in mortals, whose advice & counsel whose sympathy & ill-judged pity helped to obstruct my progress Zion-ward<sup>2</sup> - The Lord was inwardly at work, he commandeth secrecy & I for disobeying him have suffer'd deeply, methinks had I my life to live over again I would bear without repining the chastisements which were all little enough & too little, because not rightly managed by me - Very early were his visitations extended to me, even when a little child, perhaps not more than 5 years old when his restriction upon my thoughts was well known to me & then when I wander'd in imagination & my childish fancy depicted pleasant things of the Earth, even then I felt his rebuke & a consciousness that my thoughts ought to be all center'd in him, yet did the Revolter within me<sup>3</sup> strive hard & by subtilty overcame inflicting[inflicting] a doubt of the necessity of always staying my mind on God - Oh! that then my soul had been directed in the straight & narrow way,<sup>4</sup> of which I had a little glimmering in those days, what now remains but that for the remnant of my life, I observe his directions recorded in holy writ, "Take heed etc etc."<sup>5</sup>

1. **crucifying** - mortifying. It was thought desirable to learn to subdue one's passions and subject the will in youth.
2. **Zion-ward** - heavenward.
3. **Revolter within me** - the spirit of rebellion fuelled by pride and prompted by Satan who, as rebel angel, was first to resist God's authority.
4. Mt 7:14 - 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'
5. This would seem to refer back to Christ's injunction regarding almsgiving, quoted in Journal entry '7th Mo 15th 1805' [1806] on the preceding page, and yet this does not quite fit the context here which has more to do with being faithful to first intimations of 'the light' or not allowing oneself to be led astray. Other sayings that Mary may also have had in mind include: Mt 24:4 - 'And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you' (similarly Mk 13:5), or Lk 11:35 - 'Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.'

### Dublin 10th Mo 11th 1806

With sincere desires to be divested of impurity, I am yet impure, longing after humility - I have still an haughty spirit. Oh! that I could appeal with David "thou knowest that my heart is not haughty"<sup>1</sup> - but I cannot dear & Beneficent Creator - on the knee of my soul I bow down & implore thee to form me after the fashion which thou revealest in the mount,<sup>2</sup> thou knowest all my weaknesses, my infirmities my besetments thou art the giver of every good and perfect good - give me, I entreat of thee the gift of obedience, then shall I grow before thee & my docility shall be pleasing unto thee -

How wearisome hath been of late my load of life! how happy are they who are landed safely on the shores of Eternal rest! - weary & rugged is this wilderness of a world - my Soul boweth down with anxiety, which often chaseth away the slumbers of my nights - doubtless & yea surely much occasion'd by stepping out more extensively in outward affairs<sup>3</sup> than resigned Christians ought to have



done.- For if our conduct were regulated by the law of the gospel & our desires bounded - surely few are our wants often do I covet to be out of the way of all accumulation to have neither to buy nor to sell.

1. Ps 131:1 - 'Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.'
2. Mt 5 - Christ's Sermon on the Mount.
3. Almost certainly meaning trade and business rather than social engagement with 'the world', though the term 'outward affairs' could cover both aspects.

### 1st Mo 5th 1807

It is now almost three months since our meetings were abundantly favor'd with the sensible manifestation of thy love<sup>1</sup> - during the period of a quarterly meeting<sup>2</sup> - Oh! most Holy Omnipotent & awfully wise Lord since then my mind in these had been painfully divested of what I most covet, has appeared barren of good & prone oh! how prone to wander amongst my earthly affairs, foolish thoughts, vague ideas & temporal concerns, all, all present themselves in the[?thy] solemn assemblies<sup>3</sup> & I at times seem incapable of gathering to the precious gift,<sup>4</sup> but the precious words of hope flowed swiftly from the anointed lips of S. Hill<sup>5</sup> yesterday & they have before flowed from those of other servants in days that are over & gone & I exist in hope of better days, when the Lord shall hear & answer my frequent petition of deliverance from an inward subjection to earthly cumbers,<sup>6</sup> which I abhor while they oppress me, at one time distress anxiety & pecuniary cares seemed nearly to overwhelm me - I prayed to the Lord for bread, I was filled nearly with dread my arms hung down, my countenance was heavy - & now I much fear lest prosperity entangle me & my mind be led to forget past exercises - oh! my Father if it be thine holy will towards me - divest me I implore thee - of the unnecessary entanglements of life - having by thy great goodness food & raiment for us all, teach me to feel that emptiness of mind which qualifies for the fulness of thy Divine gift - it is the earnest desire of my soul to be wholly pure - naked & empty before thee - I mourn my infirmities, my transgressions - Oh! give me to be ever with thee & to go no more out;<sup>7</sup> for I long to be delivered from the captivity of this Earth & to offend thee no more at all.

1. Mary may be referring to particular ministry given, or to the spiritual response of those present at a Meeting for worship. The word 'sensible' in this context means 'feeling', being sensitive to, rather than reasonable or having to do with common sense.
2. Mary's Quarterly Meeting was the one for Leinster Province, which incorporated several Monthly Meetings besides Dublin.
3. **solemn assemblies** - Meetings for worship.
4. **gathering to the precious gift** - either centering thoughts on God, in modern Quaker parlance 'centering down', or speaking in ministry.
5. Mary's friend, the minister Susanna Hill. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.
6. **earthly cumbers** - worldly concerns or worries, burdens.
7. Rev 3:12 - 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out'.



### Dublin 2nd Mo 2nd 1807

For three days my soul supplicated thee in a particular manner - Oh! thou that dispensest every blessing to the work of thine holy hands, for as much as that my mind hath been of late rather lightened from the weight of worldly solicitude, therefore I petition thee on behalf thereof, that neither indolence nor carelessness may overtake me, but that I may be liberated by thy truth alone & secondly I long ardently & frequently that thou wouldst place me in an holy sinless state, that I may no more be contaminated with the spots of the world, but pass the days of my sojourning in innocency[sic] & fear, in ready docility to thy sacred monitions<sup>1</sup> & in prompt obedience to all thy commands, by & thro' the powerful workings of the quickening spirit of our Lord & Saviour thy beloved son - thirdly as I waste much of my precious time in the mornings & as thro' having yielded to evil my body is imbecile<sup>2</sup> & unwilling redily[sic] to obey the desire of my soul, so that I may redeem some of the valuable powers which thou lendest me & which, appropriating them to no good purpose, I abuse & lay waste, therefore Oh! thou without whom I have not strength to do the least good - give me power over my body to rise early every morning, that thereby I may acquire victory over my evil propensity to sloth & gain an additional portion of time to serve & glorify thee Oh! thou desired & most desirable Lord for assuredly I do thereby feel more invigorated more possest[sic] of health in body & mind, than when in silent inactivity [I pass] my morning hours.

1. **monitions** - inner promptings or guidance.
2. **imbecile** - weakened, debilitated.

### 2nd Mo 10th 1810

The latter part of this request<sup>1</sup> has been marvellously granted may my soul ever commemorate Divine goodness which enables me to rise early.

1. **latter part of this request** - see journal entry '2nd Mo 2nd 1807' immediately above. Note that this 1810 entry must have been inserted in the diary at this point to link it with the previous 1807 entry, showing that Mary's journal was subject to revision, in all likelihood by Mary herself.

### Dublin 3rd Mo 22nd 1809

To what shall I compare the sweet silence of our solemn assemblies<sup>1</sup> - can language delineate the ineffable rest of the soul, when gather'd from the cumbers<sup>2</sup> of outward occurrences & center'd in quietness of body & mind - Is it not like to a refreshing sleep which reanimates to act with health & vigour (different far from that state of stupor which often portends & preceeds[sic] death) for as in sleep, we feel no want, no craving, no thirst, yet receive more refreshment & strength than the art of man can devise or give - so in this peaceful silence, the diseased, weary mind experiences a gradual restoration



to spiritual health - Forms & will worship,<sup>3</sup> the vain auxiliaries of active thought - may be introduced as food or medicine to a sleeping invalid - but ah! instead of contributing good, they but tend to counteract the efficacious[sic] agency of repose - perhaps it was in this state that the church cries out "I charge you Oh! ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes & by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my love, till he please"<sup>4</sup> here is no want of a man-made ministry - no appetite for forbidden fruit - no thirst for the rivers of Babylon<sup>5</sup> - the muddied streams of creaturely exertion<sup>6</sup> every thought & every wish are at rest - while the grace of the Most High - as the dew on the tender grass, revives, invigorates & renovates the heart. MC

1. **solemn assemblies** - Meetings for worship.
2. **cumbers** - burdens.
3. **forms & will worship** - outward ritual or formal prayer, regarded as man-made, not of the Spirit.
4. Song 2:7.
5. Ps 137:1 - 'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.' Babylon (where the Israelites were taken in captivity from Zion, the holy city of Jerusalem) was a metaphor for pollution.
6. **streams of creaturely exertion** - thoughts, or activities, centred in the self, one's own will and worldly desires. These need to be stilled to facilitate the action of Divine Grace.

### 5th Mo 9th 1809

After a most favour'd yearly meeting<sup>1</sup> in which the life giving virtue of truth was felt from sitting to sitting, I feel myself very low, & on the bended knee of my soul - do I supplicate thee O! God to grant unto me two things which I do very earnestly beg of thee, deny me not, Oh! Father of mercies, but preserve me by thy power & goodness that so I may never make an unsavory[sic] appearance<sup>2</sup> in meetings - running, while I am not sent & secondly that we may never fail in the payment of our debts - these things - this last especially lies heavy on my mind & I implore thee stretch[sic] out thine upholding arm, that we may not stumble here, but that in all things thou mayest be glorified in us & we preserved within thy holy limits.

1. Ireland Women's Yearly Meeting, otherwise known as Women's National Meeting.
2. **make an unsavory appearance** - speak in Meeting in a manner which, to use a Quakerly term, would not constitute a 'sweet-smelling savour' to God or to others. If one spoke from one's own will or desire, not waiting sufficiently upon the spirit (hence as Mary says, 'running, while I am not sent'), the resulting ministry would be unwholesome, of no real use to its hearers.

### 7th Mo 11th 1809

O Thou to whom belongs dominion if it be thy good pleasure, give us dominion over the things of time, for why should we be in captivity to the prince of this world,<sup>1</sup> why should our minds be oppressed with a continual care & anxiety, that things honest may be by us provided for all with whom we have dealings - liberate us according to thy holy will from this great slavery; give us I pray thee inclination & ability to be diligent in business, that thro' thy blessing thereon, we



may obtain a sufficiency to relieve our minds from the entangling effects of pecuniary wants. - Ah! why should we who covet to live devoted to thy service, be obliged to yield much of our thoughts to temporal engagements - It surely is not thy Divine intention, but that the labour of the hands, the sweat of the brow & a moderate portion of care & attention (which are no ways incompatible with religious dedication) that these should suffice to supply our necessities - & that we labour to be content in our stations - but surely it cannot be acceptable in thy pure sight, Oh! thou who art jealous over us, that the prime of our thoughts, the bent of our minds & the summit of our desires, should be to obtain that good which perisheth;<sup>2</sup> Ah! no nor is thy blessing the result of unjustifiable speculations<sup>3</sup> - it is patient, careful, honest industry which obtains the crown of peace & happy competence.<sup>4</sup> Oh! that my children may never indulge - or turn aside into mercantile speculations, whereby tho' money may be sometimes made - yet Oh! how dearly, even mostly with the loss of a simple & humble dependance[sic] on Divine aid in business & consequently an alienation from his presence which can only be retained by close watchfulness! Oh! may my dear boys be brought up in habits of early industry, to rise betimes in the mornings, to conquer a slothful & drowsy disposition - to attend to a business moderately productive, out of the way of extraordinary accumulation - I desire that they may be led to look at the Divine hand underneath, which only can safely support them thro' time & administer an entrance into a joyful Eternity May they avoid the poison of a superfluous education<sup>5</sup> and breathing after the fountain of wisdom & knowledge - may they excel in heavenly rather than literary acquirements - I long that their association may be very select, much dreading their intercourse with many of the youth of this age. & I believe that industrious habits, moderate learning & a deep rooted practice of silence & subjection - (I believe best learned by a close and diligent attention to religious meetings) bid fairest for felicity even in this world & I covet for my darlings the possession of all real enjoyment & the absence of all unnecessary[sic] trials & sufferings - Oh! may they treasure up the counsel of their mother, may they shun all mixed company that they are not necessarily obliged to associate with - may they closely attend meetings - & when there to wait diligently for the goings forth of the presence of the Lord - may they prize their precious time & shun idleness - may they grow in his fear & abound in good works - to the praise[sic]- of the Lord their beneficent Creator.

**[Undated, but reproduced in manuscript between '7th Mo 11th 1809' and '2nd Mo 12th 1810' so almost certainly written between these dates.]**

When the blessing of our heavenly Father is earnestly craved, where we are preserved in his fear & are diligent & careful in trade, there the harmony of the mind is not broken - & (tho there may be trials & difficulties, yet they are not intolerable) all goes on well even temporally; then if we avoid the snares of heavy engagements - to fulfil which many neglect the valuable priviledge[sic] of week-day meetings;<sup>6</sup> if we enter not into speculations irrelevant to our calling, inconvenient to our property & strongly attractive of the strength of our minds<sup>7</sup>, but follow our calling circumspectly, industriously & in the Lords fear - then sure there can be no danger of dealing dishonestly, by failing of due payments, which more than any evil on Earth I dread. - May the chastisements which Divine wisdom sees necessary for us - be secret & not public in that way, may



the small stripes<sup>8</sup> be found sufficient for us - & never oh! never I trust shall we so widely deviate as to receive the overflowing scourge - the rod of his fierce wrath - the drying up every channel of outward good, the being number'd (justly) with transgressors - owing money & not having wherewith to pay - dreadful, very dreadful does it seem to me for any under the profession of our name to indulge even small gratifications while they or their husbands are availing themselves of the legal privilege[sic] of composition<sup>9</sup> - but oh! that any so circumstanced should wear or clothe their children in superfluous apparel - bring them up delicately & expensively & themselves be surrounded by luxuries, while their creditors are deprived of what is justly their due, that any of us should be so depraved is surely an abomination in the Divine sight. May He give us all to see more clearly, may he purge away the dross of Jerusalem,<sup>10</sup> & leave neither spot nor wrinkle in the members of his church.

MC

1. **prince of this world** - Satan.
2. Jn 6:27 - 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life,'.
3. **speculations** - risks taken in business in the hope of financial gain. Although risk was increasingly becoming an aspect of any business as industrial capitalism took hold, and Quakers were excellent business people, playing the markets or taking unnecessary risks with investment was frowned on as being informed by greed and leading, if the speculation failed, to an inability to pay creditors or maintain dependants. Speculation was also regarded as akin to gambling, where unwarranted gain is made from little effort.
4. **competence** - enough to live on without luxury (though ideas might vary as to what constituted a 'competence').
5. **superfluous education** - an education that concentrated on 'superfluities', things considered unnecessary for a useful and religious life. Music and many areas of literature, including any material that might undermine faith and texts regarded as frivolous such as novels, could come under this heading.
6. Quakers held meetings for worship on some weekdays as well as Sundays (First Days).
7. **if we enter not into speculations [. . .] strength of our minds** - again referring to speculative business activity. Interestingly, it is best avoided not only because it is incompatible with a Quaker religious vocation and consumes energy that should be devoted to God, but also because it may result in financial loss.
8. **small stripes** - lesser punishments.
9. **legal privilege of composition** - with creditors, an agreement to pay an amount in lieu of a larger one or another obligation. Though legal, this was a form of deferment, or prevarication with regard to debt, which Quakers held to be equivocal or dishonest.
10. **dross of Jerusalem** - impurities within the Church.

## 2nd Mo 12th 1810

Oh! thou whose goodness & whose love hath brought us into being & whose mercy upholdeth us every moment! unto thee, thee only do I appeal, unto thee make known the desires of my heart - Oh! that I possessed a portion of thy Divine sweetness, that my mind were so clothed therewith & all my faculties so cover'd with its precious virtue, that the savour thereof might flow forth thro' all my thoughts & actions, I mean not a natural sweetness of disposition or an affability which like our garments may be put on & taken off - but I mean an holy sweetness which thy sacred spirit communicates. Cover me therewith oh my Redeemer & let the healing odour thereof cleanse my soul from all bitterness, from hastiness of tongue, from anger, & the painful propensity to wrath! blessed be thy holy name! I know that thou art able by the outpouring of thy invaluable sweetness, which flows & spreads as the oil of the sanctuary,<sup>1</sup> to gradually redeem & cleanse me from the dregs of human



nature. I commemortate[commemorate] thy goodness for the unmerited favors, for answering petitions made in days past, oh! that this may also be granted - that my nature be so changed, as to become like the well prepared clay in the hand of the potter - So be it, saith all that is within me (of good).  
MC

1. See for instance, Ex 40:9 - In Jewish ritual, the tabernacle and vessels of the sanctuary were anointed with holy oil.

### 2nd Mo 15th 1810

My heart returns thee thanks O Lord for thy manifold unmerited mercies handed forth to me every moment, I covet to be grateful for all thy bounties - health to my family & a daily supply of the bread which perisheth<sup>1</sup> - I number amongst them highest outward blessings - being solicitous that we may have wherewithal to provide things honest in the sight of men - but above all O Lord thou knowest that I crave from thee a continual portion of heavenly sustenance, whereby my soul may grow! & Dearest Father leave me not I pray thee, but thy sacred presence go with me, thro' the boundaries of Time & center me safe in the blessed regions of which thou art the light & glory - & in which O that I may be favor'd to know an unfading inheritance - tho' as it were in the lowest place - that my spirit may be safe from the devourer<sup>2</sup> & partake of the emanations of thy mercy for ever & ever- MC

1. Jn 6:27. - 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.'
2. the devourer - the Devil, who feasts on human souls.

### 2nd Mo 18th 1810

What a propensity do we feel, like Uzza to put forth our hand to the Ark,<sup>1</sup> when we think we see that it needs support - Oh! that I may be preserved from meddling when the Divine requiring is not known - that I may leave to the Lord his own work & not seek to defile it with my busy interferences. MC

1. 1 Chr 13 - Uzza and Ahio drove the cart carrying the Ark of the Covenant towards a gathering of the Israelites called by King David, but Uzza touched the Ark when the oxen stumbled and, for this crime, was struck dead by God. Here, Uzza's action is a simile for doubt and presumption in engaging in activity prompted by self-will rather than waiting in trust for God's will to be made known.

### 10th Mo 13th 1810

It afflicts me that my progress in religion is so small, that I have not attained to a great possession of Godliness - what hath retarded me? Oh! Why am I not more moulded into unity with thy Divine will? on looking back I feel that I have



been many years a pilgrim on the way to Zion<sup>1</sup> & tho often, very often, I have wander'd out of the way, yet my heart hath longed after the attainment of perfectness, yea I am sure that I have prefer'd & do prefer Jerusalem before my chiefest joy. I have not "Said to the Gold thou art my hope nor to the fine gold thou art my confidence"<sup>2</sup> & I have put my trust in the Lord, my hope & my confidence are in the God of my Salvation! from him & in him are all my fresh springs & to him do I look so to direct all my outward affairs as that our minds may be kept from those cumpers<sup>3</sup> which are the almost inevitable consequence of heavy engagements - I think we are getting from under them, our outward business seems more steadily fixed than in years past and the income arising thereby tho' fluctuating yet eventually is more permanent - I covet to possess a sufficiency to trade on, without making any engagements by passing bills<sup>4</sup> - the fulfilling of which divert the mind from close attention to that God who alone ought to occupy it - my mind dislikes trading on the property of others & would fain<sup>5</sup> dwell in simplicity & in all things walk in reverent fear before him. Oh! dearest father! let my heart contain no thought, no desire, but what is of thy own forming - let all be sanctified! all what thou wouldst have it to be - give me I pray thee more weight more gravity, & more solid deportment, a continual circumspection<sup>6</sup> - season with thy spirit the sittings with my children & family<sup>7</sup> & let thy presence bless us, when it pleaseth thee, I thank that thou hast thus far enabled to establish the reading of a portion of scripture after breakfast, feeling it to be good to do so - I thank thee for thy continued extension of temporal blessings enable me to employ the money with which thou entrusteth me, as most may be agreeable to thee<sup>8</sup> - that I may not covetously retain more than I bought in bargaining or buying, neither foolishly waste what might be better disposed of, but keep me carefully abiding in thy will that I may not expend any thing on vain things, either in dress or furniture, that I may not follow the fashion of a perishing world, but that I may ever dwell in simplicity and lowliness of mind

MC

1. Zion - Heaven or the Holy City. Mount Zion was the hill at Jerusalem on which the Temple stood.
2. Job 31:24 - 'If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence'.
3. cumpers - burdens.
4. passing bills - deferring payment.
5. fain - gladly.
6. circumspection - more than care and attention, rather constant vigilance to ensure appropriate behaviour.
7. sittings with my children & family - gatherings at home for worship, or Bible study.
8. This could refer to some financial responsibility that Mary held in the family business, but it is more likely that she is speaking about the housekeeping budget and her own allowance.

### Dublin 10th Mo 25th 1810

Oh! Lord I pray thee grant me to attain a state of holy watchfulness, introduce me I beg it of thee, into a close and constant circumspection,<sup>1</sup> let me feel that guard which ever should attend those who fear thee; more and more by[be] thou pleased to hedge<sup>2</sup> about my way, that I may in no wise go out<sup>3</sup> - Oh! that my conversation may be order'd aright, then surely thou wilt shew me thy salvation! I long after circumspection - Oh that it may seem good unto thee to grant it me, of myself I cannot attain it - MC



1. See note 6, journal entry '10th Mo 13th 1810' immediately above.
2. **Hedge** - protection or shelter. 'Hedge' was a word much used in the Society of Friends at this time to denote the protection from temptation, or 'the ways of the world', afforded by membership and by customs - in dress and speech for instance - which separated Quakers from other people. It could also be used in a much broader sense. Here God 'hedges' the way as a form of guidance as well as protection.
3. Rev 3:12 - 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out.'

### 11th Mo 15th 1810

Surrounded with axieties[anxieties], keep my head above the waters Oh Lord! this hour I make a solemn covenant with thee - I will be only thine - I can be but in one right place at once - I can do but one thing rightly at a time - I will not give place to the enemy - Avaunt Satan<sup>1</sup> - thou shalt not seize me wholly - I have nothing to do with thee - Lord God Almighty I beseech thee keep me from evil & if anything in my way of life offend thee, make me to give it up - Lord God Almighty forsake me not in this time of trouble - but do I doubt thee? no not in the least

I think it is in a low degree like the temptation of Christ in the wilderness - Thro thee will I keep patience, thro' thee will I wait for deliverance - do all thy will with me only keep me from evil - keep my tongue from sin. -

I had much rather be thus tried - than with the high flow of natural spirits (which is often my torment) if thou wilt bring me through.

1. Mary appears to be thinking of Christ's words to the Devil during His temptation in the wilderness, 'Get thee hence, Satan' (Mt 4:10), and this is confirmed in the ensuing paragraph.

### 12th Mo 4th 1810

To comfort myself in all things as thy disciple is my fervent wish - I bless thee for the opening which thou hast given me! To live with the unsubjected - bear with christian patience, insult and reproach & to keep within the canopy of the divine presence - this is good for me, this is tribulation which availeth - this seperates[sic] my chaff from my wheat<sup>1</sup> - this refines me - I feel it, it is like a file, it takes off my rust bravely MC

1. Mt 3:12 - John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus before baptizing Him, 'Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' Similarly Lk 3:17. John's prophecy is usually taken to be speaking of the Last Judgement, but here the notion of separating wheat from chaff is a metaphor for the way in which trials and difficulties are seen as God's way of preparing or purifying the soul. Hence the similar idea of rubbing rust off metal.



**3rd Mo 8th 1811**

Am I not thy care & keeping? Dost thou not watch over as a shepherd over his flock - yea! thy goodness is very marvellously manifested towards us & my soul longs after thee - encrease[sic] Oh! dearest Father, my dedication, my intimate union with thee, let nothing seperate[sic] me from thee, I long for more opportunities for religious growth, I long for more frequent meetings, always the time seems very long between meeting days, with alacrity my mind rejoices every meeting day, thereby possessing an opportunity of religious growth.

**Dublin 8th Mo 24th 1812**

This disease of my liver still clings to me & how it will terminate I do not know! when the awful portals of the grave seem extended to receive me, my frame is almost trembling with fear lest I am not purified enough for an admission amongst the saints in Light. I have not within me a wish but to do thy will on Earth, as it is done in heaven;<sup>1</sup> I long to be sanctified in Body, Soul & Spirit, to glorify thee my Redeemer, in every action of my life, in my eating & my drinking, in my lying down & in my rising, in my attention to business & in my dutiful conduct towards my husband, in bridling my tongue, in bearing patiently the rebukes of others, in watching over my words & my actions, in taking every opportunity to advocate the cause of humanity, in using my influence with others, to lessen the sufferings of my fellow creatures & of animals, in bearing my testimony faithfully to the plain language, to using stamp receipts,<sup>2</sup> the latter of which has not been attended to by me as it ought, feeling that I ought not to withhold a being faithful therein, above all in employing every moment that I can reasonably extract myself from necessary cares & acts in secret worship presenting myself many, many times in the day, before the door of his inward habitation & waiting,<sup>3</sup> whether I receive or not the enjoyments which my soul delights in; & truly my mind turns to its centre continually long after abstraction & feels pain in being drawn away, even dressing my body is very painful at times, thro' the longing that I have to give that time to adoration. - But O! my temporals!<sup>4</sup> take them I beseech thee O my Father into thy care & keeping, let us never be incumber'd with debt, let our income be sufficient for us, let our expenses be regulated by thee: why should we blemish the name of thy truth, why should we live in any way contrary to thy will! Oh! no, no, no!

This pain in my side brings very near me, the situation of my beloved children - my three eldest are not one of them situated as I wish to leave them - they are not in the way to have their minds drawn to truth & godliness & who will help them when their mothers head may be laid in the dust - Oh! God Almighty hear the prayers of thy poor servant & raise up mothers in Israel<sup>5</sup> who may be qualified to nurse the little ones - & let all mine be thine, I pray for all mine - Oh! may they all be thine!

MC

1. Mt 6:10 - The Lord's Prayer.

2. **stamp receipts** - omitting to stamp receipts was a form of tax avoidance. Quakers were advised to ensure they were honest in this regard, even when quite small amounts of money were involved.

3. **door of his inward habitation** - the inner self, God's dwelling place.



4. **temporals** - things of this world, particularly cares and everyday matters or worries.
5. **mothers in Israel** - a term developed in the early Quaker church that encompassed several roles taken on by women, particularly women who commanded respect in the movement. It came to be associated mainly with nurturing and caring, spiritual counselling and organisational aspects. Mary is not thinking of leading Friends, but of women Friends who might care for her children spiritually after her death.

### **8th Mo 24th 1812 [second entry with this date]**

I feel mostly (but especially when alone) a very powerful attraction of my spirit to the Divine spirit, which repels all thoughts, ideas or reprehensions whatever - & I am often favor'd with a certain sense or covering of the shadow of the sacred presence which draws me quietly & deeply more & more into the interior - I exercise myself in this inward school by giving way, when solitude allows me, to the blessed attraction, in which I feel nothing but serenity & peace - & yet how various are my conflicts, how depressed am I at times - how yielding to temptations especially in speaking incorrectly - an evil for which I do fervently implore the Divine assistance to overcome, but surely the state most to be dreaded, is when fleshly care & comfort lift up the spirit & carry it above the pure life; Oh! then it is that danger surrounds & a feeling that it is hardly possible to hold the reins of the thoughts, the seeds of vanity do secretly insinuate themselves into the heart & having obtained entrance, no human power can drive them out! I know well the painful state - this state without apparent trouble or temptation into which I have been plunged when our Redeemer, even the God of my life hath granted my continued prayer for daily bread (for he giveth liberally as it pleaseth him) then hath my mind been elevated, even like a spirited horse which requires more than a moderately skilful rider to restrain with bit & bridle - I have been[sic]<sup>1</sup> bemoan'd myself in this state, being conscious that I possess not ability to curb myself & I hope & trust yea I know that my heavenly Father's care is extended towards me - but perhaps soon, he is pleased to lay his holy hand of chastisement on me, either in the visiting some of my family with sickness or the withdrawing of his plentiful daily gifts of outward sustenance & then, the height of my spirit comes down & I feel my feet, being humbled which brings me into a state of preparation again to receive of his blessings & then again I perceive the recurrence of that dangerous state, - the elevation from that rational spirit, proceeding from ease & outward comforts, so that now I am desirous to sink down in secret acquiescence & perfect resignation neither wishing nor hoping for any thing - save ability to provide things honest in the sight of all - which he is pleased to grant us - The flow of youthful spirits is like a fever in which the delirious patient is incapable of sober reflection - but when He the great Physician is pleased, as it were to let blood or scarify or purge,<sup>2</sup> then tho' the painful operation[sic] excite the lamentings of the natural part,<sup>3</sup> yet blessed forever be his great & holy name, the soul knows & feels a mitigation of her disease & by a wise yielding to all the necessary modes of purification at length experiences the heart rejoicing sensation of renovation & complete restoration of spiritual health!

I know & feel that declining the use of wine etc. assists me in this great work, that while my body is cool & low, it is more tame & manageable, but when I have taken wine or strong drink, the fumes have so added strength to



nature that I could not at all curb myself, indeed without it, there are times when the effervescence of nature is very hard to be kept down.<sup>4</sup>

1. **been** - probably copyist's error.
2. Referring to common medical practices of the day - blood letting by leeches, purging with emetics - to purify the blood and so, it was thought, eradicate disease. A scarificator was a surgical instrument with a number of sharp points released at once by a trigger in order to scarify (incise or remove a layer of) the skin.
3. **the natural part** - the body.
4. Quakers at this time drank alcoholic beverages at home, and socially. But some were beginning to be involved in temperance as the harmful effects of drink, particularly, it was felt, on the poor, were increasingly coming to be recognised. Mary's son Nathaniel and her brother George Harrison Birkett were both to become active in temperance work. She shows concerns here about the detrimental effects of even moderate drinking, concerns that would become common amongst Quakers generally a generation later. Many became teetotal.

### Dublin 9th Mo 14th 1812

Lord God Almighty I beseech thee turn to me "a pure language"<sup>1</sup> let mine heart be pure, let my words be pure, I covet it from the center[sic] of my soul, I implore it of thee earnestly -- turn to me "a pure language"! I know that the inestimable gift of truth in all its various manifestations is thine & thine alone - & on thee only do I rely - to thee only do I look - give me "a pure language", let no equivocation or exaggeration[sic] proceed from my mouth, let not the lurking venom of jealousy or enmity or vanity go forth from the door of my lips, but do thou who judgest by our words & by our words condemnest - Oh! thou most holy, do thou be pleased to bind my words in thy covenant of life, let me not use an unsavoury expression, let me not utter an unguarded thought, let my words proceed straight from my heart without crookedness, let me use no evasions which militate against purity! purge my words O Dearest Father! so shall I be nearer to thee.

1. Zeph 3:9 - 'For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.'

### 9th Mo 14th 1812 [second entry with this date]

The many species of equivocation<sup>1</sup> tho' commonly used, are all evil & as I very earnestly long to be redeemed from all evil, I implore divine assistance to resign them all! It is an equivocation to sign a receipt above £2 without a stamp<sup>2</sup> - it is not correct for a servant of the Lord to do so, to avoid doing it requires circumspection<sup>3</sup> & a belief that the blessing lies in obedience, reason may whisper that it is unnecessary & costly - but faith replies that the hundred fold is returned to the single heart<sup>4</sup> - the blessing of the Lord will attend faithful obedience - & money gained or saved by unfaithfulness may well bring with it a mildew which will spread over the rest. Turn me to a pure language<sup>5</sup> in the breathing of my heart.

Mary Card



1. **equivocation** - departure from faithfulness to Quaker witness or testimony, particularly, here, in business dealing.
2. **stamp receipts** - omitting to stamp receipts was a form of tax avoidance. Quakers were advised to ensure they were honest in this regard, even when quite small amounts of money were involved.
3. **circumspection** - vigilance. In Quaker parlance, a careful guard on behaviour to ensure it kept within the principles of faith.
4. Mt 19:29 - those who leave all, even family, to follow Christ will 'receive an hundredfold', even 'everlasting life.'
5. Zeph 3:9. See note 1, first journal entry for '9th Mo 14th 1812', on preceding page.

### Dublin 10th Mo 2nd 1812

"Thou shalt not covet"<sup>1</sup> Oh! this coveting of the outward daily bread, of outward sufficiency, how it sticks to me, O! that it might die the death! if the Lord is pleased to require it. - & why do I feel so depressed when the business is insufficient for our expenses - ah! surely my soul & all within me longs that we may never stop payments, that we may never pass bills,<sup>2</sup> that we may be out of debt & live so in the way that he thinks best for us, but there is a state beyond that, which I see, which I ardently long for, tho' I have not attain'd it, a state of total dependence on him not even coveting daily bread! Oh! that I might possess that state, if consistent with thine Holy will - if not - I desire to bear the present painful feeling without a shadow of mourning - there is that within me which would (as it were) demand outward sufficiency, shall I say insist on being fed daily for the bread which perisheth<sup>3</sup> - My Father it is too strong for me, I cannot conquer it! but thou Oh my Father art able to do all things.

1. Ex 20:17 - the tenth commandment.
2. **pass bills** - defer payment.
3. Jn 6:27 - 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life'.

### 10th Mo 12th 1812

At the quarterly meeting<sup>1</sup> last second day,<sup>2</sup> my spirit was raised & I ascended as into the will of my heavenly Father, I almost forgot care for a season - but oh! when I descended to the painful toilings of pecuniary wants, to the thirst for business, to the aching hope for daily bread, how did my heart droop - in all this do I sin? I am sure I long to live without sin, I ask but to feel myself in the place allotted me by his sacred direction & there to remain all his pleasure -

The Book of Nehemiah is a little open'd to my understanding - the wall of my Jerusalem is building<sup>3</sup> - thou Lord dost prosper the work, it is growing stronger and stronger soon the foxes shall not leap over it,<sup>4</sup> neither may the enemies push it down; the gates shall be set up, & all the breaches repaired so that my soul shall repose in safety - & in safety fulfil his divine requirings.

1. The Leinster Quarterly Meeting was the one to which Mary's Dublin Monthly Meeting belonged.
2. **second day** - Monday.
3. 'The Book of Nehemiah' relates how the prophet Nehemiah, inspired by God, led the people of Israel to rebuild the



walls of Jerusalem. For Mary, a metaphor for the way in which her separation from those things that militate against her faith is being built up.

4. Song 2:15 - 'the little foxes' invade the vineyard and ruin 'the tender grapes'.

### 10th Mo 19th 1812

What have I to record? imperfection unsanctification! outwardly I am pressed by the withdrawing of business - by anxiety about needful things, inwardly the language of my heart flows let thy will & not mine be done;<sup>1</sup> I had rather be thus, if it be in thy divine arranging, than to have plenty without thy approbation - but oh! if it be consistent with thy holy will - be thou pleased to open a door whereby we may be sustained without danger of injuring others! be thou pleased to spare me not - Oh! may the remaining portion of my time be wholly thine - may I come to the solid experience of peace with thee - to live & to die in a state of acceptance with thee is the fervent breathing of my soul!

Most Holy Father! thou art not bound to maintain us in what spared[sic]<sup>2</sup> thou art not bound to give us the sum necessary for our living in this way, having a house & others to support! No, but dearest Father if thou wilt deign to point out any other way, or if thou wilt condescend to shew me what to give up, wilt thou not also give me strength to yield to thee! this day I was oppressed under a sense of pecuniary wants, of the withdrawing of his portion of temporal good, mine eye O Lord was to thee & I said, look & see if I murmur - I do bear patiently, but yet I feel the thorn, many of my days have been thorny & troublesome! Oh! if I could believe that the present allotment was in the ordering of divine wisdom - I think it would gladden my heart, alas! my poor heart, how it is stung & torn by the briars of the desert<sup>3</sup> - do I murmur - dearest Father? I hope not!

1. Mt 26:42 - Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, before the crucifixion. Also the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:10 and Lk 11:2).
2. spared[?] - unclear in manuscript.
3. Briars, or thistles, were abundant in the wilderness through which the Israelites wandered prior to their arrival in the Promised Land. In Isaiah, references to God punishing the people of Israel for their infidelity to Him by laying waste their land with briars and thorns are frequent (for example, see Is 5:6, and Is 7:23-25). So here Mary struggles to believe that the monetary difficulties the Cards are experiencing have some purpose in a divine plan.

### 10th Mo 26th 1812

I believe the fervent prayer of my heart is, do with me exactly as it pleaseth thee! regard not the pusalinimity[sic]<sup>1</sup> of my spirit! turn not to the right or to the left for me - but do with me exactly as it pleaseth thee, let it be poverty or riches, let it be health or sickness, let it be life or death, command thy will that it go straight forward & without delay accomplish my sanctification - tho' temporal increase is withdrawn, I trust it is a dispensation for good, I would rather have it so; than to be puffed up with vanity - I long to love thee my Lord as well as any creature ever loved thee! to get within the canopy of holy dependence & there to abide for ever -



This secret coveting of daily bread, this dread of beggary, is it not a snare of the enemy, I think it is & yet its appearance is so plausible, that it has taken root in my heart & has drawn me, what if I say has helped to draw me near to the grave - but there is one who has overcome the world & the pursuit of that beloved one is felt at times within me, he will conquer for me all mine enemies & my soul I hope will triumph over Death, Hell and the grave! Amen.

My darlings, my tenderly beloved children William & Nathaniel Mary & Hannah!<sup>2</sup> my spirit is drawn forth in fervent desires for your temporal & far, far more for your everlasting good. Oh! that your anxious mother might prevail by tender counsel to turn your attention to the light of Christ Jesus, availingly found in the secret of your hearts to your exceeding comfort - Oh! seek after it I pray you, delay not to wait for it, turn to it always & on all occasions, so will you have a sure guide & leader, a never failing friend, a counsellor, a powerful helper a refuge in the day of trouble & an arm on which to lean in every devious way - my concern that your eye may be single turned to this & this alone is greater than I have language to express - you are dear to me by the ties of nature but you are vastly dearer to me by spiritual ties - I thirst after your salvation! I long for your abiding within the enclosed walls of the new & heavenly Jerusalem,<sup>3</sup> that the Lord may be your portion for ever & the God of your life your salvation & joy - my darling children I hope you will never have so much to unlearn, as I have had; for your benefit I express it - in my youth I was fond of reading vain & foolish books which awaken'd in my mind most hurtful ideas - destructive of good, & injurious to the tender plant as the locust - when the spirit of the Lord hath pleaded with me to lay them aside, some attractive tale hath caught my attention & as a fly in the web of the spider, I have made some faint struggles of resistance but was generally conquer'd by the snare, Yea, even long after my heart was drawn in tender love to my pitying Redeemer - I strayed in this way & I counsel you my darlings to shun this danger, for however flowery & seducing this path may appear, it leads as surely to the bottomless pit as any other bye way[byway] whatever - we are allured off our watch by narratives or sentiments perhaps called innocent - but oh! they are not so - our heads are filled with idle imaginations, the avenues of our hearts are opened to impure affections, disobedience is glossed over, religious restraints seem very hard to bear & we are incited to break thro' them - as an horse that kicks to be unharnessed, we look outward with an eye of reason, instead of inward with the eye of faith, we feel the daily cross irksome, pant after more liberty - & if God Almighty in his tender compassion, interfere not by some powerful stroke of his Divine Providence, we may be inevitably lost, in this way & in many others I your mother am a brand plucked out of the fire - I caution you to beware how you read newspapers - I know they lead off the mind from the true watch & they excite conversations about politics - which I insist that you meddle not with . . . Novels & idle tales plausible narratives dressed up with fine sentiments & elegant expressions, essays specious but unsound, lying poems, sonnets, rhapsodies exciting impurity - shun all these, but keep close to the principle of truth in all things, read the holy scriptures daily - there - is fine morality drawn from a source purer than the classic page, there - is a narrative more pathetic, more interesting, more beautiful than ever enter'd the brain of a novelist[sic] - there is history which deeply concerns you, the history of the people of God & the type of your own inward experience as you march on in the highway to the heavenly Canaan, the land of promise the City of rest, the throne of the Great King! read friends[Friends] books, they



contain sound & solid truths, they are like finger posts on the way - they will help you as you go on - they will point safely - If you like chemistry, gardening or any useful art & that you can afford it, I am not against it, but let them not engross your attention, else they also may become hurtful, do you go on straight forward in the narrow way that leads to life<sup>4</sup> & do not mind the applause of men, whose praise is but air, unsolid, unprofitable at best - but if suffer'd to enter within us, it puffs up the mind, which like a ship without ballast, or a balloon unmanageable & extremely dangerous, are liable to be dashed to pieces or overset, such is the effect of the praise of man - do you seek the praise of God & do not be even lifted up with the praise of God's people.-

My dearest children on the grand subject of marriage, how can I say enough to you, look first & last to Him<sup>5</sup> who made the first marriage, to Him<sup>6</sup> whose first miracle was wrought at a marriage which he sanctioned by his blessed presence - may He be an invited guest at yours, may he sanctify your choice, unite & bless you & give you an increase of all that is good - Be you sure that you love those who love the Lord above all & beware of being deceived - there are [?those]<sup>7</sup> who will dress plain & go to meetings for an husband or a wife,<sup>8</sup> who will be orderly & circumspect before you - who will compose their countenance to gravity & wear the semblance of Religion - but who know nothing of its work in the heart - such will never help you they will clog your feet with fetters of clay, should you be unwise enough to yield to their enticements - Oh! my soul loaths[sic] intercourse with these - I have seen some who could readily adopt plainness in order to gain their point, I have seen such succeed in their wishes & I have pitied the ensnared ones, for never yet did I observe that they received spiritual help from such outside worshippers - you may find it hard to discern if you are not careful to keep the right eye open & the heart cool & disentangled then you will see plainly whether the thing be order'd of the Lord yea or nay should any of you by addressing to the life of truth in secret, be made useful either by ministry or by wisdom to any individual<sup>9</sup> - such individual may love you & draw forth the natural affection Now here is great danger, greater than I can describe for when the precious visitation is over (for it comes & goes like a shower of rain) then the old inclinations strive to return, the old habits which lay dormant & unseen, awake & attract with powerful influence affections & inclinations which were thought to be dead, revive with all their force - the unclean spirit returns & finding the chamber swept & garnished, he taketh to him of even other spirits (I know what I write it is not merely from the letter, but from experience) & they strive to enter! there is a power against which no power can prevail & if the individual keep to this there is safety & you may be happy together - but oh! how many suffer'd loss here, have returned in heart & conduct to the leeks & onions of Egypt<sup>10</sup> or have gone on murmuring almost all their days - some have been very sorry that they have given in their names to the cause, because that blindness in part hath gone over them & they cease to see the beauty of the Lords discipline - & some, when the tenderness of seed-time is over, being strongly drawn by the cords of fleshly kindred are desirous to introduce that intercourse which may injure you & make you & yours half Israel half Ashdod<sup>11</sup> - these, if such as these should be your uncomfortable choice, how heavily will you go along, how often will you be torn by the briars & thorns from which such a companion will not protect you, how many secret pangs will you endure, how many hours of mourning when no eye but the eye of him who pitieth you can pierce the deep recesses of your anguished mind - yet still keep your heart to



him & he will open the way before you, that way which the vultures eye hath not seen<sup>12</sup> & into which no ravenous beast of pride or passion, discontent or disobedience can enter or annoy you! thus without sweet unity & heavenly fellowship, you may slowly tread the painful uphill steps that lead to Zion<sup>13</sup> & at last solitarily attain the end of your hopes - but oh! may never your eye be blinded by the blindness of a partner, may you keep all you can, may you draw all that can be drawn - but never never turn aside, lest you fall by little & little! Often during the course of my frequently dreary, weary pilgrimage have I looked round & seen with silent astonishment, the unequal yokes with which my contemporaries have chosen to be bound - I have seen young men lovely & hopeful as the apple blossom attracted by unsolid females whose shine was all tinsel<sup>14</sup> & whose beauty was all outside - I have seen them united in the lasting bond of marriage & I have generally observed the religious mind suffer loss & be insensibly drawn aside from the strict & careful watch may you my precious ones be preserved from this most dangerous rock & may you first seek the Kingdom of heaven by the light of the glory of which you will clearly discern the crooked paths of darkness. Mary Card

1. pusalinimity - modern spelling 'pusillanimity', meaning timidity.
2. William, Nathaniel, Mary and Hannah would have been aged ten, seven, three and six months respectively.
3. See note 3 to Journal entry '10th Mo 12th 1812' above.
4. Mt: 7:14 - 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'
5. Him - God the Father, who created Eve as a companion for Adam.
6. Him - refers to God the Son. Jesus wrought His first miracle at Cana in Galilee, when he attended a wedding and turned the water into wine (Jn 2:1-11).
7. Word missing in manuscript.
8. Young couples often made each other's acquaintance at Meetings, Yearly Meetings in particular as they were large social as well as religious gatherings.
9. should any of you by addressing [. . .] to any individual - exact meaning unclear. Perhaps, when open to the Light in contemplation or prayer, one might find oneself led to minister to the needs of another or counsel them.
10. Num 11:5. - The Israelites, wandering in the wilderness, bewailed the plenty they left behind in Egypt, 'We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick'.
11. Neh 13:24 - 'And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people'. Nehemiah was railing against intermarriage between the two peoples which he saw as defiling the Israelites' special relationship with God. The people of Ashdod were Philistines who at one time stole the Ark of the Covenant, for which crime God punished them with tumours (1 Sam 5). They worshipped the idol Dagon.
12. Job 28:7 - 'There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen.'
13. Zion - Heaven or the Holy City. Mount Zion was a hill at Jerusalem on which the Temple stood.
14. tinsel - all show without real substance.

### 10th Mo 29th 1812

With thankfulness do I acknowledge thy condescending goodness! more & more release me if it please thee from the cares of this life, & let my dwelling be in the interior, these two days past thou hast been pleased to open thine hand & to supply mine outward & inward necessities - the sense of thy sacred & soul sustaining presence is with me & my spirit pushes forward for an enlarged possession of thee - yet I think I can truly say, not my will but thine be done.<sup>1</sup>

MC



1. Mt 26:42 - Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before the crucifixion. Also the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:10 and Lk 11:2).

### 11th Mo 14th 1812

As this morning my mind was impressed with the painful recollections of past misdemeanours mistakes, infirmities, deviations, temptations, weaknesses, follies, cares, sins & a vast burthen<sup>1</sup> of corruptions so heavy, so fearful & so awfully depressive, that my life seems to have been an entangled thread which only the Divine power can unravel or as a tree of which every branch & the very trunk have grown knotty & crooked, so knotty & so crooked that hardly can the sap flow rightly thro' it, I feel the necessity that the axe should hew away all this unprofitable growth, should cut off whole the productions of a life, so much of which has been mispent - should leave neither leaf nor stalk, but lop away even down to the beginning - to about my fifth or sixth year,<sup>2</sup> when the visiting influence of restraining love was felt, when it stove<sup>3</sup> with me & I knew it not, that it might reign in my thoughts in meetings, where my foolish imagination framed pleasant pictures of future enjoyments - then did the spacious[specious] serpent insinuate that such thoughts were not wrong - & then the reachings of my heavenly Fathers love convinced me that they were wrong - here was the time - here was the die cast - here was the lot drawn - perhaps if here the warning voice of any around me had pointed out the way of truth & like another Eli said "Surely it is the Lord that calleth thee"<sup>4</sup> perhaps then, this bitter, deep & pungent regret had been spared me & I had moved beneath divine direction an instrument of good to others, to the comfort of my redeemed soul- but alas! I knew not that it was life & death that were set before me & that so much depended on my right choice at that important crisis - alas - alas I strove for many, many years against the circumscribing witness,<sup>5</sup> to my own irreparable loss & damage, to the stunting of my growth in God - my portion lay as in even scales<sup>6</sup> - alas - alas that flesh & blood with vain allurements of bewitching fancy should weigh me down - down where? Ah! thro' the adorable & condescending regard of the friend of sinners - not down to the gloomy and silent grave, nor yet to the yawning pit of Hell - blessed & for ever blessed be the name of the Most High he hath plucked me, a brand out of the fire, this brand, thus drawn out of the fire, he hath planted & watered & visited over & over - times without number - & he hath raised to life the sap within it, having quickened it by his power & now it remains a monument of stupendous mercy - mercy - mercy mercy, all is of mercy -

I have heard some under a sense of deviation, express the language "Oh! that it were with me as in days past, when the candle of the Lord shine'd[sic] round my head etc."<sup>7</sup> I have heard them covet states in which their rest & their enjoyment perhaps were complete - but for me, I cannot trace the time sooner than my very early childhood to which I would recur - & which I would give the universe for, if I might, that I had then chosen the path of self denial because I should thereby have escaped the evils & the sorrows which have thronged around me in this thorny pilgrimage & vale of tears - I am now near 38 years old - & I go back with reluctance & pungent regret to about my fifth year - all



the intermediate acquirements of my life are but as an entangled skein - wearisome have been many of my days, sleepless not a few of my nights, anxiety hath preyed on my heart & my health & planted wrinkles on my cheeks! O life how heavy at times is thy burthen & all the consequence of having set out wrong, of having chosen the flowery, the imaginative way, by which a door was opened to many seducements, against which the stifled witness at times bore testimony.- adored be that goodness! adored thro' time & in Eternity that immeasurable goodness which brings me back to the everlasting beginnings before the mountains of sin were brought forth & before the hill of vanity were made, that brings me back to my early days, visits me as then, but with superadded power, & O for ever praised be the name of the Lord makes me quite willing to be as clay in the hand of the potter<sup>8</sup> unformed & unresisting.  
Mary Card

1. **burthen** - archaic form of 'burden'.
2. See headnote to journal entry '7th Mo 15th 1806' above. In that entry, Mary describes how she first felt aware of the Lord's visitation to her and restraining influence, aged five.
3. **stove** - abided, stayed, hid.
4. 1 Sam 3 - tells how the child Samuel, training in the priesthood under the tutelage of the prophet Eli, heard a voice in his sleep three times in the course of one night. On each occasion, thinking it was Eli calling him, he answered, 'Here am I'. But Eli had not spoken. Eli told the boy that the Lord was calling him. Samuel duly answered the next call, 'Speak, for thy servant heareth', whereupon God spoke in a vision of his judgment against Eli and his descendants. Samuel dutifully told Eli of the vision the following morning, and Eli accepted God's judgment while Samuel went on to be 'established' as a prophet in Israel. Mary regrets that, unlike the young Samuel, she had had no-one in her youth to advise her of the Lord's calling.
5. **circumscribing witness** - living one's life in accordance the principles of the Society of Friends (witnessing to those principles) necessarily involved curtailing aspects of life which did not conform to them - hence 'circumscribing'.
6. **my portion lay as in even scales** - the future direction life might take was evenly balanced between two paths, to follow God's leading or divert from it.
7. Job 29:3 - 'When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness'.
8. There are several Biblical sources for this image, for example Is 64:8 - 'But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.' or Jer 18:6 - 'O House of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.' In journal entry '7th Mo 15th 1806', mentioned in note 1 above, the image of 'unprepared clay' also features.

### Dublin 12th Mo 2nd 1812

I am thankful that I feel strong desires after perfect restoration & entire union with the Lord my God, I feel resignation to his allotment & I covet to be found doing his will - the limiting power of divine truth is over all my words reproving me for evil, pointing to singleheartedness, bless the Lord oh! my soul for all his benefits, bless him for he hath not taken away his holy spirit from me, temptations in conversation continually await me & I painfully know that I often yield tho' I ought not, sometimes by prevarication or by exaggeration[sic] which all are branches of the corrupt tree, which shall be hewn down & cast into the fire,<sup>1</sup> Oh! how I hope that by & tho' his power I may strive & obtain conquest.

I think I never (since my heart was awakened) lost the relish for going to meetings, I think I have often looked forward to meeting days with delight & have felt alacrity to attend meetings, yet have I neither as early nor as fervent



as I ought, having often found the enemy as busy there as at other times Oh! for full & perfect conquest over his insinuations - Oh! for a renewal into the image of my Saviour in which is safety - to be restored to all that was lost in Adam<sup>2</sup> & to obtain a permanency in the Church of God, to be a pillar that shall no more go out<sup>3</sup> Amen!

MC

1. Mt 7:17-19 - 'Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit./A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit./Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'
2. **lost in Adam** - by Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, humanity became alienated from God.
3. Rev 3:12 - 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out'.

### Dublin 2nd Mo 22nd 1813

Tho it pleaseth thy Divine majesty to withhold & greatly to contract our trade, tho' in thine enerring wisdom it is permitted me to feel anxiety almost continually, because that the channel of our business is so much turned away, yet surely it is no proof that thou hast withdrawn from me thy fatherly care & therefore I will lift up my head in hope & yet will I look up unto thee, tho' thou chastise me, yet wilt thou not utterly cast me off, thou surroundest me with many blessings & my heart adores thee thro' all, thou hast given health to my family, thou hast lengthened out my life & more by far than all these thou art pleased to make me sensible of thy indwelling presence in which I can at seasons experience the gleam of tranquillity, tho tossed on the boisterous wave. Thy will be done, thy kingdom come<sup>1</sup> Amen! and let all within me be put down which would arise against thy holy dispensation, let myself die, let self will be rooted out, no matter by what instrumentality, by famine, fire or sword my time is short & I earnestly intreat for an eternal inheritance for that I do plead with thee - I ask, I seek, I knock<sup>2</sup> for this possession & recurring to the affairs of this life, do what seemeth good in thy sight only make me to be honest, condescend to bring down my mind to thy divine allotment & if it be that I must thus sail on troubled waters thro' time, thy holy will be done!

MC

1. Mt 6:10, Lk 11:2 - the Lord's Prayer, but these two phrases are reversed.
2. Mt 7:7 - 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:'.  
Also Lk 11:9.

### 5th Mo 29th 1813

So painful have been & are my feelings on account of outward things, so deep & so heavy the secret stings which are sapping my existence - that in this moment I would hope [?for] right resignation, I feel desirous to record my feelings, anxious for the honest support of my family, I have hitherto craved comfortable bread, from thee, thro' those whom I look upon to be thy instruments to convey the blessing<sup>1</sup> - now thou hast withdrawn it & thou hast



an undisputed right to give or to withhold - Blessed be thy holy name! I feel not at this time a desire for business, which is bread, if that desire be out of thy divine wisdom: I wish I may receive ability to retain that disposition with an hope that thy hand is over us for our good! do what thou wilt exactly what thou wilt with us, thou hast delivered me out of many troubles let this now be sanctified to me & let me be thoroughly purged & fitted for an Eternal admission into thy Kingdom of rest. M Card

1. It is not clear who Mary looked to as 'instruments to convey the blessing', by which she presumably means material well being. She could be referring to her husband or, possibly, her parents.

### 5th Mo 30th 1813

Distress prevails - inward pain and heaviness of heart - O! may the Lord in the riches of his mercy, condescend to grant that our movements may be right may our efforts for outward bread be according to his will - O! most holy Father keep shut thy heaven if such be thy divine determination, if thou hast order'd shortness, almost to insufficiency - blessed be thy name! let thy perfect will be done - I hope I murmur not, to man I will not complain-

### 2nd Mo 26th 1814

How dear to my heart is the sense of thy indwelling presence with which I am favor'd, possessing that - I at times cannot feel calamity or evil - I feel it as my true riches I long for its increase & tho I am sometimes borne down by pecuniary cares - & often weary of the toils of life - yet oh! the enjoyment of this wine of the Kingdom<sup>1</sup> is meat & drink to my soul. MC

1. **wine of the Kingdom** - at the Last Supper with his disciples, after instructing them to eat the bread which was His body and the wine which was His blood, Christ said, 'But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom' (Mt 26:29). (Also see Mk 14:25 and Lk 22:18.) Jesus spoke of his own death and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Here, Mary speaks of the Kingdom as it exists in the present - an experience of the 'indwelling presence' of Christ as Holy Communion with Him.

### 2nd Mo 28th 1814

I pray thee, Oh! my Father, let me have a constant sense of thy indwelling presence, which is every thing to me, for having that, I feel power over every trouble. MC



During the course of 1814, the Cards suffered another business reversal. They engaged in a venture which proved unsound, though it had not appeared to present any risk.

### 10th Mo 18th 1814

I clearly perceive & feel, that we have been as between the upper & the nether millstone<sup>1</sup> & why have we not been crushed? why when so many around us have failed in their affairs, why do we stand? O mercyl stupendous mercy evidently indeed is the goodness & the mercy of the Lord our God manifested in this our preservation & my mind recurs to the prophets servant - who tho' an imperfect character & one to whom the leprosy of Naaman cleaved for ever,<sup>2</sup> yet seeing that his abode was near & with the prophet of Israel, he with him experienced full preservation & saw the mighty encamping of the heavenly host around them, whereby their enemies could not prevail & in that protection he with his master amply shared - so has it been with us - no human power - no guarded foresight, no circumspection<sup>3</sup> of ours prevented, but he whom the winds & seas obey<sup>4</sup> had mercy on us & hath not suffer'd us to fall - tho' losses may be our portion, yet are they one are what we can bear, & therefore while I endeavour with thankfulness to bow beneath the gentle stroke - I think I can say with Job naked came I into the world & naked shall I return - blessed be the name of the Lord, the Lord hath given & the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord<sup>5</sup> & I believe it is of the Lord & I yield thereto with some resignation, when I recur to the commencement of this business about 14 months ago, it open'd cheerfully as a channel of moderate profit, an agency in which it was represented there was no risk, we were drawn in, payments were to be made, & bills sent for that purpose, on which an endorsement was necessary, the chief spoke in the wheel gave way - the great were crushed & we who appear least of all & were as in the center liable to every crush, we escape with our lives for a prey,<sup>6</sup> with what is most dear to me, the reputation, the reality of honesty - but oh! nature feels & distress, secret hidden distress & painful anxiety pervade at times - while at others I am upborne by the belief that we shall get thro' all & be preserved, blessed be the Lord for ever! MC

1. **between the upper & the nether millstone** – pressed on all sides (as corn ground between two millstones to extract the grain).
2. **2 Kgs 5 and 6** - Naaman, the Syrian general, having been cured of his leprosy by following the prophet Elisha's instructions to bathe seven times in the River Jordan, wished to give Elisha presents in return. The prophet refused to receive any gifts but Gehazi, Elisha's servant, ran after Naaman and extracted some money and clothing from him, asserting he did so on the prophet's orders. On his return, Elisha knew intuitively what Gehazi had done, and told him, 'The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.' (2 Kgs 5:27.) Despite this, a servant was also with Elisha later when, surrounded by a hostile Syrian army, they saw a vision of a heavenly host of horses and chariots of fire. God granted Elisha's request to blind the Syrians, so that the prophet could lead them astray into Samaria, and thus avert danger. Though the servant in this later episode is unnamed, it is clear from later in the text that Gehazi, despite his leprosy, was still retained as Elisha's servant.
3. **circumspection** - vigilance. In Quaker parlance, a careful guard on behaviour to ensure it kept within the principles of faith.
4. **Mt 8:27** - Christ's calming of the storm.
5. **Job 1:21** - Job, after hearing news of the deaths of his sons with their servants and livestock, said, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'
6. **prey** - Biblical expression (for example Jer 21:9) meaning, 'what one brings away safe from contest' (OED). Hence to 'escape with our lives for a prey' is just to survive.



**11th Mo 16th 1814**

Is there in [?]<sup>1</sup> appointed a way for every individual to walk in, in which as we carefully & circumspectly move along neither turning to the right nor to the left, we witness safety & an encreasing[sic] growth in the truth of God, Oh! that I might be kept within the holy precin[c]ts of that living way that I might know an high wall to surround me on either side that so when crosses assail me & nature shrinks from the dreaded presentations I may not be able to evade the necessary strokes of the divine providence, having yielded up my strength & my will to his sacred disposal! may the will of my heavenly Father be fully accomplished in me, may I not miss of one drop of the bitter draught<sup>2</sup> poured out for my refinement, but may I be wholly cleansed both within & without - I long for more intercourse with my Redeemer for an undiminished uninterrupted communion with him, to dwell in his presence for ever, but yet seeing that that is not my case, that I may but walk straightly & strictly in the living way, I think that gratitude will cover me - A friend in a religious opportunity<sup>3</sup> when visiting our family said, she had been considering the different parts of a building & that which much dwelt with her was a stake to which she evidently compared me, now a stake is not for ornament or beauty, & the more hidden, the more obscure perhaps the better - if it bear to be pressed down & retain its soundness, its firmness, its strength, then is its value known to the master builder & it is sufficient that he estimate it rightly, if a stake could desire as I have desired to come forward to be seen & noticed, would not its worth & its usefulness be diminished - may I then be a stake or anything else in thine house O my Lord, may I learn more & more to depend upon thee, may I draw all my consolations from the fountain of thy goodness as indeed I think I do, for what is there in this life without thee worth having? I know not, I hope my dependence is encreasing[sic] & the nearness & sufficiency of divine help is more experimentally<sup>4</sup> revealed. MC

1. Word missing in manuscript.
2. In the garden of Gethsemane before the crucifixion, Christ prayed, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt' (Mt 26:39, see also verse 42).
3. **A friend in a religious opportunity** - Quaker elders, ministers or overseers sometimes made visits to the homes of individual families to pray with them and/or minister to their spiritual needs.
4. **experimentally** - experientially.

**11th Mo 8th 1815**

After seasons of bitterness, in which the inward feelings of my mind are anxiety & care, my heart this day bows down in reverent thankfulness to commemorate his gracious goodness who hath enlighten'd me by forming in me this prayer "Feed me well with food convenient for me"<sup>1</sup> & as I feel permission to pour forth this supplication my load is lightened & I lean for support for food & nourishment on Him who hath done so very much for me! how numerous are my blessings, how amazing our deliverances feed me with food convenient for me - I will be thine for evermore!- MC

1. Prov 30:8 - 'Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me'.



Dublin 8th Mo 30th 1816

Most holy Father my soul would fain<sup>1</sup> covet that by an act of faith & dedication I might become wholly thine, might wholly cease from willings & runnings & dwell with thee in the inner temple<sup>2</sup> being seperated[sic] from all that defileth, I long to be sanctified I long to be thoroughly washed & cleansed, I long to know the whole ground of evil removed from my soul & Oh to come into that most desired childlike state in which thou art not offended - O Dearest Father be pleased to deliver me from the captivity of the Devil, in which I groan from every sin - from all that is opposed to thee, for sure my soul is very sick, it labours under heavy diseases, which thou alone Oh thou friend of the friendless canst cure! Compassionate<sup>3</sup> me yet once more O my Redeemer & give me to feel & to know an indwelling with thee without which I cannot rest, I acknowledge my manifold transgressions - they are more than the hairs of my head, I loathe my sins, I feel the misery of them, but I am not delivered, I am weary with my oppressors the world, the Flesh & the Devill I am beset with sins, the sin of eating too much, the sin of speaking too much, the sin of lying in bed in the mornings these are very very grievous! & from these three sins which so frequently beset me, I beg of thee deliver me, by thy mighty power & for the sake of thy dear son the Lamb immaculate!<sup>4</sup> & these three sins retard my progress, yea baffle me & buffet me - Dearest Lord thou knowest my secret conflicts, my anxious cares, spread around me - as a spiders web & I cannot go forth, till thou omnipotent art pleased to set me free - thou hast delivered me from many thraldoms, from sore sickness & from beds of pain, crown I implore thee thy numerous acts of goodness & wash me wholly from all sin! I long to be wholly clean! to be exactly what thou wouldst have me to be - to have my name written in the book of life!<sup>5</sup> & then come what will come - life, death or conflict, I hope no murmuring thought may arise within me - Oh! Dearest Father set me free from the bondage & sore captivity which weighs down my spirit! why am I not like one of the holy ancients, walking ever in thy presence & fulfilling thy commands, why is it not our house, an house where thou art more honor'd where thy name is magnify'd, where thy glory is known, why are not our seasons of worshipping thee, more solemn more convincing - why are not my children more turned to thee, more cultured by thy discipline, more trained in thy holy law - ah! I know too well! sinner that I am - my own abiding ought to be in the true light & then would the whole family, partake thereof! alas! alas! is it thus with me - after so long a lapse of time? I will bemoan my captivity, I will weep bitterly, because the Lord hath not yet, accomplished his work in my Soull

Magnified for ever be the name of my most compassionate redeemer, who hath very often delivered me from death, Oh! he hath saved me as with two legs & a piece of an ear<sup>6</sup> - sure - sure - sure - he hath hold of me & oh may he not let me go till his whole work in me is accomplished, till I be wholly deliver'd from the very ground of sin & till my name is written in the book of life Amen & Amen M Card

1. fain - gladly, willingly.

2. cease from willings [. . .] inner temple - to stop the chatter of the mind, the workings of one's own will, in order to commune with God in the sanctum of His temple - the inner self. This is to be preceded by 'an act of faith & dedication', a practice which echoes the practical advice of mystics such as St Francis de Sales who advocated



seeking time alone during the day for private communion with God where one began by making a profession, or act, of faith.

3. **compassionate** - have pity on or befriend.
4. **the Lamb immaculate** - John the Baptist hailed Jesus as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' (Jn 1:29).
5. **to have my name written in the book of life!** - to be numbered amongst the Elect or the saved, whose names are, according to the account of the Last Judgement in the Book of Revelation, written in the Book of Life to be opened on the Last Day.
6. **Amos 3:12** - 'Thus saith the Lord; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch'. Amos was prophesying concerning the few who would be saved when God punished Samaria for the violence, dishonesty and complacency of its people.

### Dublin 11th Mo 26th 1816

The evil nature still predominates! Lord God Almighty! remove it altogether if it be thy blessed will - I am steeped in tribulation, by inward conflict, by anguish arising from many causes, by my unclean, unsanctified tongue, by pride, my own pride, by distresses, by keen reproaches which doubtless are due to me, by hardness of heart, often in myself & those around me, by anxiety for punctuality, which disturbs me day & night at times & most of all my own ingratitude for thy countless favors - Oh! immaculate & ever adorable Redeemer - through whose altogether unmerited love & compassion I am still in the land of the living & am secretly sustained & nourished by the hidden manna,<sup>1</sup> a ray of thy sacred presence, I feel it still, my dependence is in it, in it is my confidence & my strength - I know that all power is in it & that it will yet operate & form & transform my soul & Spirit into its own image & likeness - if the resistance of my will prevent not -

I think of the process of my Lord when in the wilderness he was tempted of the Devil - & if a reptile, a filthy reptile may compare with him, tho' at an infinite distance - am not I even so? "Command these stones that they be made bread"<sup>2</sup> was the sore temptation with which He fought & conquer'd - the inward inspeaking word of God upholds me or I should sink for ever - O Tribulation & secret Anguish I could not do without them, they are ballast to my weather beaten bark,<sup>3</sup> which amidst many a violent storm has still been graciously cared for & helped & when the hurricane has beset me on all sides, then has the wonderful power & goodness of a faithful Pilot - Captain & Director been evinced, how often have we been as poor complaining Israel, pursued by the Host as of Pharaoh & his company, with a sea of trouble before us & no way open for our escape,<sup>4</sup> yet has he always opened a way for our deliverance, so that we have never yet been dashed in pieces or quite crushed by the enemy - Well! he hath hitherto delivered us & he will yet deliver us is my faith - to him I hope to cling for I have no other refuge! I am well content to bear anxiety, if thou wilt be pleased to cause that we pay all that is due with punctuality and truth - this- this is my prayer (the thoughts thereof kept me awake thro' some hours of last night - & this morning overcame me in the meeting - so that I did not enjoy as I ought the sacred silence, so favourable to the ear of the soul!)).

Last 7th day the 23rd<sup>5</sup> was a day of great bitterness (my husband had a Bill to pay & with difficulty he accomplished it) it has been for many years sealed on



my mind that we never ought to extend our payments in that way & now I am rencivedly[sic]<sup>6</sup> convinced of the truth of that intimation which if attended to would have prevented many a secret pang) yet did I retain a confidence in our unfailing helper & was also comforted by a dream the preceding night the substance of which is much as follows - I thought I was in a religious meeting - & heard a voice say "come up hither" I obeyed & went forward, ascending very high, to the uppermost form which appeared filled with Ministers & Elders<sup>7</sup> - I passed them & sat down at the end where was a vacant seat - the meeting house had no ceiling but the canopy of sky & our form & another under it ascended a very great height - the seat whereon I sat was firm & so was the foot board, but there was no arm to the end of it, I looked down & saw & knew that if I fell, I should be dashed in pieces irretrivably[sic], I then leaned back & heard one behind me caution me, that the back of the form was not to be depended on & turning a little to examine, I saw the part behind my right side crack'd thro' just above the seat, the same voice then desired me to link my right arm in the arm of the friend who sat next to me, I did so & felt no fear, no dismay but perfect peace & confidence - tho' still ascending & in a most perilous situation - this dream was permitted to strengthen me & it comforts me a little in this hour of great anxiety & trial - O what a thorny maze has the world been to me - if I may obtain Heaven at last, what signify these briars, let them tear my skin & my clothes, if so be my soul be preserved.

1. **hidden manna** - manna, a wafer-like food provided by God for the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness, becomes a metaphor for the spiritual sustenance provided by God's presence within the individual.
2. **Mt 4:3, Lk 4:3** - when Christ retired to the wilderness to fast for forty days and nights, He was tempted by the Devil who tried to make him break His fast by performing a miracle - turning the surrounding stones into bread.
3. **ballast to my weather beaten bark** - trials and sorrows are seen as weights which help provide stability on the bark, or ship, of life's journey.
4. The Israelities, pursued by Pharaoh and his army on their exodus from Egypt, found their path blocked by the Red Sea, whereupon God parted the waters so that they could pass through (Ex.14:10-22).
5. **last 7th Day the 23rd** - Saturday, 23rd November.
6. **Word unclear** in manuscript.
7. **uppermost form [ . . . ] Elders** - the Ministers and Elders of a Meeting sat on a raised bench facing the rest of the congregation.

### Dublin 1st Mo 8th 1817

I awoke yesterday morning with an awful fear of offending the Lord, in thought word or deed & I feel the abiding of his goodness which still excites that fear & I pray for preservation thro' the necessary intercourse of life & that I may by close adherence to his continued direction, in no wise sin against him any more. MC

### Dublin 2nd Mo 6th 1817

Still the conflict between flesh & spirit is felt for surely the unregenerate nature is often putting forth its hateful head - that I abhor it, is not my justification - ah no, why am I not wholly redeemed from it, & transformed by obedience to the



power of the Lamb of God<sup>1</sup> - thro' unspeakable mercy, the divine light is not wholly withdrawn, but alas! I do not enough co-operate therewith, it is awfully open'd to my view that he who had the talent committed to him - who did not occupy with that talent, but returned it to his Lord without increase, incurred its forfeiture thereby<sup>2</sup> - surely I am almost that wicked & slothful servant, in whom the talent of grace is often hid ineffectively, & why ineffective? because of my unwatchfulness or surely I would not ere now be captive in the Enemys power, often like a fly beneath a spider.- Dear & most gracious Father! Lord! who hast all power, I beg it of thee, grant that all resistance of my will be done away, that I may be made patient in suffering & mightily to endure purification - that thou mayest perfect thy work in me, & consume as the stubble, the chaff, the dross, the reprobate silver,<sup>3</sup> may I be wholly & altogether thine, for truly thou art rich in mercy & dost marvelously[sic] condescend to the work of thine hands - tho' thou hast tried us closely, thou dost not forsake us in the hour of extremity - but dost always prove faithful to deliver in the time of need - Blessed be thine Holy name for ever & for ever Amen saith my soul. M Card

1. the Lamb of God - John the Baptist hailed Jesus as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' (Jn 1:29).
2. Mt 25:14-29 - Christ's parable of the talents, whereby the man who did not make use of the talent of gold given him by his master incurred the master's wrath and so had it taken away from him.
3. Combining the refinement imagery of separating wheat from chaff, and silver from its impurities. reprobate silver - silver ore of insufficient or impure quality.

### Dublin 5th Mo 17th 1817

My tears & supplications are this morning poured forth before thee, Oh! thou my tenderly compassionate Redeemer - cast me not off I beseech thee - but enable me to remain persevering all thine appointed seasons of crucifixion, sorrow, inward poverty, & death, if it be consistent with thy holy will - I desire that thy purifying operation may not at all cease, until the dross & the reprobate silver,<sup>1</sup> of which I possess much be all consumed! Thou hast been pleased dearest Father to suffer me to move in the way that is full of thorns & I feel that crucifixion & death are my lot - when I was young, my thoughts & my actions were too unreserved, I knew not enough the bridle of thy will, therefore I chalked out my own path & sorrow encompassed me therefore-

Oh! that thou wouldst accept of this my late & daily repentance, Oh! that thou wouldst forgive my iniquities & cleanse me thoroughly from my sins! Oh! that thou wouldst sanctify unto me the afflictions, the heavy chastisements which are permitted as Gall & wormwood<sup>2</sup> may I call my allotment Oh! let me drink the very dregs of the cup<sup>3</sup> which thou seest necessary for me is not my strength withered! are not my days near consumed & yet the work is not done - I have not been diligent in the morning of my life, or it had not thus been with me now! Oh! thou who knowest my many deviations take pity on me I beseech thee & heal my grievous malady - for my wounds stink, my breath is corrupt[sic] - my words are many of them unclean - & I dwell among a people of unclean lips<sup>4</sup> - yea I am beset with the sword of contradictions & I seem like stupid with all!



have pity on me, Oh Lord for indeed I do acknowledge, that my own transgressions, they witness against me & my own wilfulness, the wilfulness of my youth, that hath punished me!

1. See note 3, journal entry '2nd Mo 6th 1817', immediately above.
2. Bitterness and anguish are seen as divine punishment, as for example in Jer: 9:15 - 'Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.'
3. In the garden of Gethsemane before the crucifixion, Christ prayed, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt' (Mt 26:39, see also verse 42).
4. Is 6:5 - 'Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'

### 5th Mo 26th 1817

An humbling & deeply sorrowful retrospection of past omissions! A view of the snares of the evil one into which he beguiled me - as Eve - & for which cause my soul hath been a captive in a sore & long captivity - these thoughts force from me the heartrending acknowledgement that I have been a grievous sinner & that for my transgressions thy rod has been & is administer'd - I long for thy judgments on the erring part in me - Oh! that thy fire might burn as an oven, might burn & cease not till all my dross<sup>1</sup> be wholly consumed & done away.- & here let my feeble record bear testimony to thy great & wondrous condescension towards a stinking worm,<sup>2</sup> for notwithstanding all my filthiness & the offensive odour of to myself my unseen & unrepented sins. notwithstanding all my fallings short, my disobedience & my ignorance - yet Oh! stupendous mercy! hitherto thou hast heard my prayer! & granted my petition for outward bread & hast delivered us thro' many dangers & difficulties, yea tho' numbers around us here have failed of paying their debts, yet Oh! let me commemorate thy undeserved goodness! it hath not been so with us, to thee & to thee only be ascribed the glory & the praise, for thine is the work, & thine is the power & to thee for ever belong honor & dominion.<sup>3</sup>

Amen M Card

1. **dross** - the impurities extracted in the metal refining process. Therefore, impure waste or rubbish.
2. **worm** - a common cliché. See note 1 to journal entry 'Dublin 11th Mo 2nd 1796' above.
3. Echoing the Lord's Prayer, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.' (Mt 6:13) and ending phrases of letters by the Apostles, for example 1 Pet 5:11 - 'To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.' or Jude 1:25 - 'To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.'

Mary's journal ends here, five months before her death on 24 October 1817.



**THE**

**LETTERS**



There are forty-three letters in the collection. As Mary was a prolific writer, with a wide acquaintance and relatives in England as well as Ireland, she must have produced a much larger volume of correspondence. It is likely that these few letters were preserved for their edifying and religious content. They are in the main devoid of personal detail and the names of those addressed, or information that could lead to their identification, are frequently omitted. Mary's purposes in writing these particular letters were to exhort, encourage, or comfort, and, quite often, to censure.

This undated epistle to a friend appears in manuscript amidst miscellaneous prose pieces or meditations, mainly undated but with one, immediately prior to this letter, dated 1797. The letter is reproduced here, therefore, as it may have been written around that date. It calls for the extension of gentleness and understanding toward those considered spiritually benighted.

## LETTER 1

[To a friend]

[Undated]

I have not a doubt in my mind that the period is hastening in which the vail[sic] of deception which miserably covered our opticks[sic]<sup>1</sup> will (yes! in spite of every effort of those who plead its utility & its necessity will) be rent away - I cannot doubt the truth of this any more than I can disbelieve my own existence nor am I fearful with regard to the propriety of laying waste every creaturely scaffolding<sup>2</sup> as soon as the building is erected. But oh my friend is there not a tenderness to be exercised towards those whose early education and deep laid prejudices have lull'd them to sleep on the brink of a precipice - yes I know that thou wilt unite with me in sentiment - they are to be awaked with a gentle hand - or why, if the gracious impulse of redeeming love be not felt, attempt to awake them at all - Is not his love towards them infinitely more compassionate and condescending than ours? doth he not exert every method to reclaim them - but he forceth not their free will neither should we - Christ when on earth said - "I have many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now".-<sup>3</sup> let this be our example, let us be certain that we move in the line of divine requiring,<sup>4</sup> that we speak no more on these interesting subjects which be so near our heart than the limitation of Truth will allow of:- we feel a warmth we think we feel that our peace is concerned, let us wait to be sure that it is not the eagerness of the natural part,<sup>5</sup> the fullness of the earthly vessel which longs to overflow, nor the delightful consciousness of a brighter illumination which seeks to display its brilliancy before those whose dim eyes, long wrapt[sic] in thick darkness are as yet altogether incapable of receptivity - If we have sat awhile in a dark room, the moment a light is brought our eyes are distressed, we voluntarily lift up our hand to prevent the too great effulgence of light - ah - let this teach any endowed with more illuminated abilities to bear with the weakness of his blear eyed brethren let him throw the vail[sic] of love and compassion over their heads, let him wait till the appointed time and then the evincing power of Eternal Truth will manifest itself - It will bring forth fruits according to its own pure nature, holy faith and inerring wisdom sparks of that Fountain of light and life whence all may drink and drinking thirst no more after other waters. For what can delight or inebriate a soul that hath once drunk of the water of Life short of the same immortal spring? it is in vain to tell such an one of the Orthodoxy of this or that, of the beauty of any external medium, all is dross<sup>6</sup> in comparison of that after which they cannot but pant. And now I have thought respecting these astonishing displays of the spirit and power of the Most High who hath graciously



condescended to lead thee in an unbeaten track where the fool[foot] of man is unknown, and where all creaturely guides<sup>7</sup> fail - that as thou sufferest him to lead thee and art cautious of weakening the feeble ones, he will evince his own power, he will own his own work, the stamp of his holy hand will be seen and the light of the Lord bursting forth with immeasurable splendour will enlighten the whole Tabernacle:<sup>8</sup> then shall those who have condemned thee hide their faces in darkness unable to quench or to resist the torrent of brightness whose cause they imagined they warmly defended as did the Pharisees who persecuted Christ<sup>9</sup> -----

1. **opticks** - eyes.
2. **creaturely scaffolding** - man-made structures of support.
3. Jn 16:12 - Christ's words to his disciples, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now'.
4. **divine requiring** - God's will.
5. **natural part** - worldly, or earthly, self.
6. **dross** - waste or rubbish.
7. **creaturely guides** - human teachers.
8. **Tabernacle** - dwelling place or habitation. The Tabernacle was the sanctuary tent carried by the Jews on their wanderings before they settled in Israel. It was re-erected wherever they pitched camp.
9. **Pharisees** - Jewish sect characterised by strict adherence to the written law. Christ incurred their wrath by charging them with hypocrisy.

This letter, dated 2 August 1799, is the only one in the collection written before 1804, apart from the undated one above, which may belong to 1797.

## LETTER 2

To . . .

8th Mo 2d 1799

Indeed my friend I verily beleive[sic] that this is a day in which Lord God is making a separation between the precious & the vile<sup>1</sup> & he will assuredly, I believe, make it wider and wider for the wintry blast beats high and the waves are dashing as against every foundation sound or unsound - Be it ours then to obey the call of Divine unerring Wisdom which is affectionately uttering the compassionate language - "Come out from amongst them and be ye separate, & touch not the unclean thing and I will be with you".<sup>2</sup> Let us indeed seperate[sic] ourselves more & more from the spirit of the world and from the influence of those who dwell in that spirit, for what unity of action can there be between those two? or what comfort in being connected with those who not knowing the delicacy of the sacred impulse would continually and even involuntarily wound the feelings of the mind - Canst thou want the Divine blessing in an humble line of life, if thou be faithful to God? assuredly those who honor him he will honor and those who confess him before men will be by him acknowledged in a day which is approaching.

I rejoice that thou art more and more withdrawn from all those who would but be as snares to thy feet, as thorns in thy side - May, O! may thy conduct manifest thy simplicity & deep humility which holds in utter abhorrence even the semblance of Pride in thyself as well as in others -----



1. Jer 15:19 - 'Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.'
2. 2 Cor 6:17 - 'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.'

This is the first of five letters to Mary's cousin, Catherine Birkett (Kitty), born 10 November 1784, the daughter of Mary's paternal uncle Henry and his wife Mary, née Sharp. (See Letters 6, 10, 11, and 33.) Kitty's 'giddy' and unquakerly behaviour caused a great deal of concern. These fears might have been intensified by the fact that she was not the first member of the family to experience difficulties in living according to the required standards. Her elder brother Israel Sharp Birkett (b.1781) had been disowned in 1802 for 'the sin of fornication' (Certificate of Disownment, Dublin Monthly Meeting, 12 October 1802). Kitty was eventually disowned for being 'joined in marriage by a priest, to a man of a different religious profession, and without the consent of her father'. The Certificate of Disownment from Dublin Monthly Meeting, dated 15 March 1814, goes on to state that this was 'in order to support our testimony against such marriages' and 'undutiful conduct'.

Monthly Meeting of Women Friends, Dublin, appointed a Friend to visit Catherine after her marriage and also her sister Ann Card Birkett because she attended the wedding (Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting, 16 November 1813). Ann Card Birkett subsequently regretted her 'inconsistent conduct', stating that she had not been fully aware of the 'impropriety thereof' (Dublin Monthly Meeting and Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting, 15 February 1814). As Mary was clerk of the Women's Monthly Meeting at that time (1813-1816), the issue must have been an embarrassing one for her.

In her letters, Mary sometimes contrasts Kitty's behaviour with that of her more amenable sister, Sarah Sharpe Birkett. In this first letter, however, she concentrates on her initial worries about Catherine's spiritual condition - that she is not dedicated enough, something is wanting.

### LETTER 3

To: C . . .

10th Mo 21 - 1804

My spirit hath been so often and so weightily exercised on thy account, that I think I may freely take the liberty of addressing thee. Painful very painful are often the views and the feelings which surround me when thou art presented to my inward sight, because I know that the Lord who has visited thee and who has his eye over thee for good is requiring more dedication, more singleness, more retiredness of spirit and more solemnity of heart than thou I fear art always yielding unto him, and it is sealed on my mind as certainly as the truth of my own existence that thou art appointed unto honor in the church militant if those[thou] on thy part do not quench the kindlings of that holy flame which would burn without ceasing and utterly eradicate all that is contrary to the divine Will. O my feelings as I write are truly maternal and I long for thy perfect sanctification, and it seems to me that I should hardly be clear of thy blood if I forebore to admonish thee something is wanted I am sure more than thou art offering and the Lord abhors a lame sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> more holiness of heart is necessary for it is not enough that the mind be open to him it must be shut to all beside, Thy thoughts must know what it is to be under his dominion, and thy high and lofty imaginations must be laid in the dust. Charity must cover thee as a mantle that thou thinkest evil of no one - no not even of those who deserve it, for saith God "Vengeance is mine I will repay"<sup>2</sup> and who art thou that wouldst assume the prerogative of Omnipotence, thinkest thou



that he will hold thee guiltless? Verily nay and more bitter is their portion who have known the leadings of the inward Monitor<sup>3</sup> & who have not fully given up - than that that<sup>4</sup> of the poor ignorant creatures who walk by the outward only. Thou see'st thy calling, it is not hidden from thee & I say again that the Lord abhors a lame sacrifice. Give up altogether I beseech thee yield implicitly to his leadings, let the sword & the famine utterly consume and lay waste all that is appointed to destruction & be thou content to resemble a rose tree in Winter whose sap is in its root, tho all its leaves be withered. and tho' ignorant people may number it with the dead & say wherein differeth it from any other dry stick: yet bear willingly the different operations of the various seasons, Let the storms beat against thee, and the black tempests howl around thee they cannot touch thy life for that lies hid in the root and safely buried till the appointed return of that season when beneath the cheering influence of the verifying[?vivifying] rays of the sun of Righteousness,<sup>5</sup> it shall bud & blossom and its scent shall spread the garden & shall ascend a pleasant odour in the nostrils of The Most High - O - I am pained at heart for thee I am strait[e]ned for want of expression<sup>6</sup> - I cannot communicate my feelings as I would. I long to address thee in the most emphatical[sic] & forcible[sic] language "Come out of Babylon and be not a partaker of her pleasures least[lest] thou be of her plagues,<sup>7</sup> come away come away from every defilement - from every unseasoned word from alllevity & frothiness - from all pride and vanity, from all bitterness & evil speaking and from the spirit of judging - Come away I entreat thee from every impurity & whether[sic] wilt thou go? Ah surely into the solitary wilderness to mourn as a Dove<sup>8</sup> till thy Redeemer comes thy souls Bridegroom the Messenger of the Covenant in whom thy soul delights he will suddenly come into his Temple"[sic] he will illuminate thee with his brightness - he will strip thee of thy filthy rags, he will clothe thee in the robes of his righteousness:<sup>9</sup> he will be to thee a diadem of beauty<sup>10</sup> for methinks he longs to say unto thee "Thou art all fair my love there is no spot in thee".<sup>11</sup> In taking an outward view of thee I have wondered why it is that I am so concerned on thy account and were it not that I am[have?]<sup>12</sup> a Secret hope that thou wilt be kept faithful my mind would sink in the prospect, but I know that he who hath called thee is faithful and abundantly able to perform in thee his blessed will. Work then I beseech thee while the day is for the night assuredly cometh in the which no man can work & Oh that I had sufficient fervency[sic] of expression effectually to impress thee with the necessity of close attention to this inward unerring principle - this Heavenly guest who will not be mocked nor trifled with and to whose gracious monitions<sup>13</sup> if we yield not we may seek a place of repentance in vain surely it seems to me as if thy God had prepared for thee wings with which to fly out of Babylon and quickly to do it Oh! go on then without stopping till thou arrive at Jerusalem that quiet habitation<sup>14</sup> where nothing can disturb thee nor make thee afraid where thy name shall shine with brightness and thy lamp never be put out - and my prayer is that thou may go far beyond thine outward connexions[sic] and be enabled to strengthen thy brethren pointing out to them the quicksands & the shoals which thou has[t] escaped & finally directing them to that blessed Mansion wherein thy soul shall rejoice for ever.<sup>15</sup> "He that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God & he shall go no more out["]"<sup>16</sup> Farewell M:C

1. Deut 15:21 - 'And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God.'



2. Rom 12:19 - 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.'
3. inward Monitor - Quaker expression for the Inner Light as guide or prompt.
4. that - written twice in manuscript. Probably copyist's error.
5. Mal 4:2- 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.' Malachi was speaking of God's blessing, but the term 'Sun of Righteousness', by punning on 'sun', also refers to Jesus, the Son of God.
6. straitened for want of expression - at a loss for the right words.
7. In Rev 18, an angel announces the fall of Babylon, then, 'And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues' (v.4).
8. mourn as a dove - from Is 38:14 - 'Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.'
9. he will strip thee [. . .] robes of righteousness - an image of being created anew in Christ. Being clothed in righteousness is a biblical image, for example, Job 29:14 - speaking of his own righteousness when he lived in the Lord's blessing, Job said, 'I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.'
10. Is 28:5 - 'In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, ' See also note 9 above - Job refers to his righteous judgment as a diadem.
11. Song 4:7.
12. am - is clearly written in manuscript, but this is probably a copyist's error.
13. monitions - promptings, guidance.
14. Is 33:20 - 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, [. . .]'
15. Jn 14:2 - Christ's promise that 'In my Father's house are many mansions'.
16. Rev 3:12 - 'Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: [. . .] and I will write upon him my new name.'

This is the first of two letters to Mary's sister Elizabeth Birkett (born 1783), destined to become Elizabeth Hudson on her marriage to Robert Hudson of Dublin in 1806. (See also Letter 8.) At the time this letter was written she, like her cousin Catherine, would have been a young girl of twenty or twenty-one. This is also a letter of exhortation and remonstrance. Like the other letters in the collection, it does not give us much background - we are not told what Elizabeth did in 'opposition to sweet simplicity'.

Elizabeth, like Mary, later served on the Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting, and took on various jobs such as that of doorkeeper, as well as serving on the Committee of the Poor for the organisation of poor relief (Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting, 14 December 1813). So she could be said, perhaps, to have become a 'Mother in Israel' (see note 6).

## LETTER 4

To E . . .

10th Mo 24 1804

If thou my Dearest Sister didst by a secret and continued attendance on the Most High so encourage his blessed visitations as that he evidently was alluring thee into the wilderness there to speak comfortably unto thee.<sup>1</sup> If the purity created by the glimpses which thou hadst of his most excellent beauty did inspire thee with a wish to be altogether separated from what thou saw to be vain and unprofitable? Canst thou hope to attain the summit of that holy mountain by opposition to sweet simplicity that holy humility - that quiet & patient faith that unresisting meekness & indifferency to externals which have often excited my admiration most surely believing that they were the precious fruits of thy attentive silent waiting for the renewals of strength and that they were evidences of thy reposing in the green pastures of life.<sup>2</sup> Cans't thou think that by pulling down what thou once under the guidance of Divine light didst build up, that thou shall grow wise unto Salvation? O let thine inward eye take a retrospective view of past impressions - Time was when thy carnal judgment



being laid in the dust & thou being humbled by Grace wert annointed with eye salve to discern aright between the precious & the vile<sup>3</sup> between that which attracted to God and that which repelled from him Yea I may acknowledge how much I have felt abased in observing how far beyond me thou wert in spiritual attainments in graces and in admirable integrity & such was the beautiful consistency which marked many of thy words & actions such the weight and authority with which thou reproved'st the levity of thy giddier cousin<sup>4</sup> - that her soul will long remember it, and haply<sup>5</sup> may yet have to bless thee for it .... O my Sister it was not for nothing that thou wert thus early visited, it was not to waste in perishing vanities the prime of thy youth, that thou didst receive those very precious impressions - No it was to raise thee up a Mother in Israel;<sup>6</sup> to purify and redeem thee from the spirit of this world: that thou mightest be rich towards God and have to give to him or her that needeth not only a cup of cold water pure unsullied water, but also often to administer of the wine of the Kingdom<sup>7</sup> - which should comfort and strengthen, animate & encourage the poor feeble weary travellers Zionward:<sup>8</sup> thereby experiencing the truth of that sentence "It is more blessed to give than to receive"<sup>9</sup> And now how hast thou fulfilled the intention of the divine Regulator who apportioneth to his Servants and hand maidens their particular provinces? How art thou enriched by Industry so as to be able to impart of thy Spiritual Wealth to the poor of the flock? Thou hast begun well, what hath hindered thee? Thou hast drank of the pure waters which flow from the presence of the Most High & ah my Sister how is it that thy taste can now relish the polluted streams of Babylon? O come out from thence & partake not of her pleasures lest thou do also of her plagues.<sup>10</sup> & what are her pleasures? they are delusive & vain: her fruits tho' seducing to the taste are exceedingly bitter when swallowed down: & thou knowest well thou wilt be a gainer by the change. I pray thee enter once more into nothingness of self, close thine eyes to error, & the avenues of thine heart to vanity, so shalt thou be exalted in true judgment & thy Spirit shall be enabled clearly to discern those things which make for thy peace - those things which thou now see'st not, or dimly: & those which now thou prizest shall then be stained in thy view for thou shall see things as they really are - & thy purified judgment shall reject all impurity, & thou by reason thereof shalt dwell in a secure & quiet habitation,<sup>11</sup> beside the still waters of life<sup>12</sup> - & the Lord thy God shall have regard unto thee, having I believe appointed thee to be a Mother in Israel. MC

1. Hos 2:14 - 'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.' Hosea was prophesying the renewal of God's covenant with His 'wife', the people of Israel, despite 'her' unfaithfulness. This is also a quotation found in the extract Mary takes from *The Spiritual Guide* by the quietist Miguel de Molinos, see p.169 in this volume.
2. Ps 23:2 - 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures'. See also note 12 below.
3. Jer 15:19 - When God called the prophet Jeremiah to prophesy concerning the sins of the Jewish people and the imminence of the Babylonian captivity (as their punishment), He said to him, 'and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth'.
4. Here probably referring to Catherine Birkett - see Letter 3 above.
5. haply - perhaps.
6. Mother in Israel - this was not a formal title but a term that encompassed several roles taken on by some women within the Quaker church: organisational and ministerial roles, nurturing and caring for the needs of others, spiritual counselling.
7. to administer of the wine of the Kingdom - to minister, or to act as a source of spiritual sustenance for others. At the Last Supper with his disciples, after instructing them to eat the bread which was His body and drink the wine which was His blood, Christ said, 'But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.' Mt 26:29. (Also Mk 14:25 and Lk 22:18.) For Quakers,



who deny the need for the outward sacrament of Holy Communion, 'the wine of the Kingdom' is a spiritual metaphor.

8. Zionward - heavenward.
9. Acts 20:35.
10. See note 7 to Letter 3 above.
11. See note 14 to Letter 3 above.
12. Ps 23:2 - '[. . .] he leadeth me beside the still waters.'

The addressee of this letter remains unidentified.

## LETTER 5

To . . .

4th Mo 10th 1805

I have been thinking a great deal about thee, my estimable friend & the current of Sympathy with which thou so lately & so affectionately cheer'd[sic] my agonized, my injured mind, flowed warmly towards thee; that I am deeply grieved at the depression visibly engraven on thy features is only the natural consequence of that interest which I feel for thee, of that reciprocation - the privilege[sic] of friendship, which alternately receives & communicates the sentiments of each - of that vital sap which circulates from the root Christ Jesus, thro' all the members of his Body & which causes us to feel as bone of his bone & united in the same flesh to Him & to each other.- Under the influence of that near affection, let me ask thee, my beloved friend why shouldst thou so positively say, that thou wilt not or cannot be happy here? is happiness dependant on the fluctuating concomitance of exterior circumstances, or is it not only & alone to be found in the enjoyment of the Divine Presence? Yes! I trust thou wilt be happy, because thou art seeking after its source the unfathomable Ocean of Supreme Good which none ever rightly sought in vain Oh! my dear Friend I trust & hope that thou wilt be happy, even in this vale of tears, that the Sun of Righteo[u]sness arising with healing in his wings,<sup>1</sup> shall gild the horizon of thy depressed mind, shall cheer & vivify, shall cause the birds to sing, the flowers to spring up & the beautiful fruits of holiness to pour in rich abundance for thy Master's use from trees of his right hand planting,<sup>2</sup> which may yet ornament the garden of thy heart my dear friend tho' thou & I have suffer'd deeply, suffer'd the galling wounds inflicted by perfidy & unkindness, yet why should that wholly depress us, when the reverses thereof, even all the kindness & fidelity of the whole world, would not could not convey to us the delicious balm of happiness - Friends may comfort us, foes may irritate us & false brethren cause our steps to move heavily along but they, not all of them can add to or deduct from that solid peace which like the sun its best visible resemblance shines forth thro' the clouds which hover around it & which cannot affect its stedfast[sic] reality, tho' they may cause a temporary extinction of its shine - May thou & I my estimable friend be more & more conformed to the pure principle of light & life, which can alone sweeten every bitter cup, illuminate the dark regions of sorrow & dismay & finally introduce us into that heavenly inheritance prepared for the followers of the immaculate Lamb<sup>3</sup> - Tho' at this moment my overflowing heart seems to wish to pour forth its effusions into thine, yet I feel the weight of my late sorrows so forcibly,<sup>4</sup> as to depress me considerably but Oh! that all may work together for good, may tend to refine us & prepare us for that glorious mansion



of immortal rest<sup>5</sup> in which I trust we may meet & rejoice together in the fullness of unadulterated joy -

MC

1. Mal 4:2- 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.' Malachi was speaking of God's blessing, but the term 'Sun of Righteousness', by punning on 'sun', also refers to Jesus, the Son of God.
2. trees of his right hand planting - one possible source is Is 61:3 - 'To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.'
3. the immaculate Lamb - title for Jesus Christ, believed to be without sin.
4. Mary's second son Nathaniel had died the previous year (April 1804). Early in 1805, the Cards had almost crashed in business, and both her husband and elder son, William, had been severely ill.
5. Jn 14:2 - Christ's promise that 'In my Father's house are many mansions'.

The next letter, like Letter 3, is addressed to cousin Catherine (Kitty) Birkett. It urges Kitty to conform to Quaker plainness in dress, the adoption of which marked the wearer's serious intention, their denial of self and adherence to the full Quaker discipline. Friends who dressed in this way were called 'plain' Friends, whereas those who did not wear the Quaker grey were termed 'gay' Friends.

## LETTER 6

To C B

6th Mo 20th 1805

An emotion of gratitude which arises in my heart to the great Shepherd & Bishop of Souls, for thus far bringing thee on thy way safely, induces me to address thee, if peradventure<sup>1</sup> my pen more forcibly than my speech, may prevail with [thee] to act consistently with the requirings of the Divine will & with the continued practice of his faithful people - It is a very unusual thing with me my beloved Kitty, to press any one to an outward conformity with that self denying plainness, which ever did & ever must be one of the exterior badges or marks of the disciples of Jesus Christ - yet I feel it right earnestly & awfully to beseech thee to take up thy cross in this little thing, in the which as thou art faithful greater things will be made known unto thee, I know not why but indeed I am and have been of late exceedingly solicitous that thy garb & thy dress should be according to the living of the servants of Christ - arguments what need I use? There is a witness in thy breast which supercedes all arguments, I may simply say that I feel weightily concerned to press upon thee what I verily believe thou seest to be right, but art most grievously tampering with, consult no longer with flesh & blood, put down all reasonings, I request & entreat it of thee, attend simply & singly to that blessed principle, which as given way to, will lead thee into all truth, it will increase thee in Heavenly & earthly good, it will comfort thee, it will bless thee, be the crown to thy terrene enjoyments,<sup>2</sup> thy guide & thy leader to those which will never fade away, finally be faithful, be vigilant, knowing that our adversary the Devil goeth about like a roaring lion & like a subtle Serpent seeking whom he may devour,<sup>3</sup> be obedient to divine manifestations (for such is the strength of the impression with which I write, I cannot think but that thy mind knows the same manifested) farewell, dear Kitty, may Israel's God be thy Keeper the Rock of ages<sup>4</sup> thy preserver, thy refuge from the storm & the blast of the terrible one; & I pray from the bottom of my heart that the Lord God Almighty may dispose thee to prompt obedience to his



will & that he may raise thee up an able & thoroughly sanctified instrument to his glory in this degenerate & perverse generation,<sup>5</sup> to whom thou mayest be a witness to the power of godliness which can raise from Death unto Life & restore the Soul to perfect union & communion with God the Father thro' his only Son Christ Jesus & to ineffably delightful fellowship with all those, thy fellow heirs of this glorious gospel, & faithful companions in the road to never ending peace. MC

1. **peradventure** - perhaps.
2. **terrene enjoyments** - pleasures enjoyed while on this earth.
3. 1 Pet 5:8 describes the Devil as a 'roaring lion,' who 'walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:' and Gen 3:1 delineates him as a serpent 'more subtil than any beast of the field'.
4. **rock of ages** - title for Jesus Christ.
5. Deut 32:5 - 'They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.'

The following is an example of letters of encouragement written to one already committed to progress in the spiritual life.

It could have been addressed to either one of Mary's brothers still living, William Birkett or George Harrison Birkett, but George is the likelier candidate. It was George who later became most active within the Society and to whom some of Mary's other letters are addressed (see Letters 25, 26 and (possibly) 42.

## LETTER 7

To . . .

7th Mo 15th 1805

A salutation arises in my heart to thee, thou flower in the garden of God - for indeed I hope of thee that the scent of thy fragrance shall ascend in a sweet smelling savour in the nostrils of the Most High. I covet for thee a dwelling in the quiet center where storms or where tempests cannot make afraid, but where the pure rays of the Sun of Righteousness<sup>1</sup> sweetly & unobstructingly descending, vivify, fructify & cause to bring forth the plants of his right hand planting.<sup>2</sup> It is not a light thing my dear brother that thou hast dedicated thyself to the Lord, having taken hold of the plough, thou must not look back, thou must persevere patiently & hold on thy way, undismay'd by the dangers & difficulties of the often rugged & always narrow path, unabashed by the sad concurrence of evil examples which surround thee in this awful day of departure of heart in the which the love of many hath waxed cold & many who have begun will have turned their backs upon Zion, the City of our Solemnities,<sup>3</sup> saying we will have none of her restraints, we will put away her yoke, we will enjoy ourselves in fleshly liberty, we will recreate<sup>4</sup> ourselves while it is called today, thus they idly pass away their time & slide along until they reach the awful gulph[sic] of Eternity down whose precipice they must fall, but thou my dear brother art not so, thou hast begun well, oh! persevere & the Lord who delights in an early sacrifice will be with thee, strengthen & animate thee to go forward in the work & service as a light burning & shining with the flame of holiness in the midst of a crooked & perverse generation.<sup>5</sup> Oh! the great purity in which we ought to live, we who know this holy calling, who have heard the voice of the true shepherd & who have steadily refused to listen to



the voice of a stranger, we should keep our garments clean unspotted from the world, that so the exemplary uprightness of our conduct & conversation may operate as a stimulus to stir up the pure mind in the obedient & as a sword to that which disobeys, which may cut off & sever the impure from that which is pure, keep I pray thee much to inward silence in the midst of thy outward occupation,<sup>6</sup> it is there that we hear the sound of his voice, it is there that we see him, & sweet is his voice & his countenance is comely, labour after perfect purity, that thou mayest live without sin, so shalt thou grow in grace & in stature & in favor with God & Man. Keep to the simple & single openings of divine life within thee, uncontaminated by much vain discourses & may the Lord who loves thee, bless & keep thee steadily & perfectly in his holy way.  
Thy affectionate  
sister M

1. Mal 4:2- 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.' Malachi was speaking of God's blessing, but the term 'Sun of Righteousness', by punning on 'sun', also refers to Jesus, the Son of God.
2. **plants of his right hand planting** - one possible source is Is 61:3 - 'To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.'
3. Those who have 'waxed cold' and turned from 'Zion, the City of our Solemnities' (i.e. the Quaker Church) are those who left the Society in Ireland following the deist controversy, as well as those who, though still Friends, were falling away from the Discipline. The source is Is 33:20 - 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken'.
4. **recreate** - amuse.
5. See note 5 to letter 6 above.
6. **inward silence in the midst of thy outward occupation** - Mary is urging her brother to the Quietist practice of cultivating a capacity to enjoy God's presence inwardly while engaged in daily activities.

'E' was Eliza, Mary's sister Elizabeth Birkett, later Hudson. See headnote to Letter 4 above. This letter is undated, but its place in the manuscript collection indicates it fits here chronologically.

## LETTER 8

### To E

I cannot easily express to thee my dear Eliza, the affectionate solicitude with which I desire thy attainment of that solid good by which alone thy life will be permanently happy, for altho' the daughters of folly who frequent the circles of dissipation & luxury may look down with contempt on that placid serenity which is the fruit of the simplicity to which I recommend thy attention, yet widely different will be thy hours of solitude & reflection from theirs if thou steadily perseverest in the straight & narrow path which leads to the mansions of immortal rest;<sup>1</sup> let me invite thee my dear girl to make an early dedication of thy all to the heavenly Father, let me entreat thee to enter the path of truth & abide there patiently journeying on undismayed by the difficulties, the tinsel<sup>2</sup> & transitory amusements which youth, health & vanity may present to thy view - be assured dear Eliza that the beautiful prospects of everlasting happiness, the unspeakably glorious views of immortality which abound there, will infinitely compensate for the ruggedness of the road & many a time cause thee to forget



that the briars & the thorns have wounded thy feet - unfeignedly coveting that we may mutually attain that pure felicity which is the result of an undivided attention to the source of all good. thy affect. Sister M.C

1. Mt 7:14 - 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'  
Jn 14:2 - 'In my Father's house are many mansions'.
2. tinsel - attractive but without solid value.

'DK' remains unidentified.

## LETTER 9

To DK

8th Mo 21st 1805

My Dear Friend

although I have several times felt an inclination to offer thee the salutation of sisterly affection<sup>1</sup> yet I have hitherto suffered myself to be kept back, by reasoning about the propriety or necessity thereof but firmly believing that thy mind is sweetly turned towards Zion the City of our Solemnities<sup>2</sup> & that her testimonies (tho trodden under foot of man) are very precious in thy view, I think I feel the vivifying current of dear fellowship flowing towards thee with desires for thy preservation & strengthening in dedication to the Lord thy God, may he who hath visited thee by his rod & by his staff<sup>3</sup> more & more refine thee as silver is refined, thereby increasing thy attraction of heart for the things of his heavenly Kingdom! And what is there on earth worth living for, but that we work out our salvation with fear & trembling for we may see daily how unsubstantial is every sublunary hope of happiness, how fragile! how fleeting is every mundane enjoyment, how short is time, how tremendous the never ending length of Eternity! An awful feeling of these great truths hath raised in my heart an ardent wish, that we may do our days work in the day time & not procrastinate like slothful servants, but use all diligence seeing the end of our days hasteneth; be not offended my dear Friend with the plainness of my expressions for I think the Lord hath sown his good seed in thine heart & Oh! I covet that it may grow, it will then assuredly bring forth fruit for "there is none barren amongst them".<sup>4</sup>

MC

1. **sisterly affection** - sisterly in a religious not literal sense.
2. **Zion the City of our Solemnities** - the Church. Is 33:20 - 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken'.
3. Ps 23:4 - 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' In Mary's imagery, however, the rod is usually emblematic of correction and the staff of comfort or support and this is the sense here, evidenced by the image of refinement which follows.
4. The quote matches Song 4:2 - 'Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins and none is barren among them.' But the meaning - that all those who have the seed of God in their hearts will not be barren, but will bear spiritual fruit - has more connection with 2 Pet 1:8 - 'For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' See also Deut 7:14 - 'there shall not be male or female barren among you.'



Catherine Birkett's behaviour continued to give much cause for concern. (See Letters 3 and 6 above.) The following two letters to her are intriguing. Both contain some personal information about Kitty's situation, even her finances, though a pound sign followed by a row of x's is written instead of the actual sum involved at one point. Kitty seems to have enjoyed considerable independence for such a young woman. She had only just turned twenty-one years of age, yet she seems to have a house to sell and the mention of collecting debts and being entrusted with the property of others may mean she was involved in some form of business. She may have inherited property, though her father - who at one point ran a business in earthenware, at another was employed in merchants' houses (Letter Men's Monthly Meeting Dublin to Men's Monthly Meeting Hardshaw, 14 August 1780) - was still living.

The second letter was copied out as an exercise by descendants (Mary's granddaughters Lucy Anne and Mary Card, in other family papers) so it must have been considered suitable, for at least three generations, to serve as a cautionary example for young women.

## LETTER 10

To CB

11th Mo 27th 1805

I have been expecting these two evenings that thou wouldst have called on me, for thou must surely think that I am very anxious about thee, after our last conversation, yet so poorly is my little one that I cannot comfortably leave him to go to thee. - It seems very strange to me that thou shouldst feel any pinch to make up £xxxxxxx I have turned it over & over in my mind & the more I think, the more I fear thou hast not (bear with a sincere friend who loves thee dearly & who dares hazard offending thee for thy good) been sufficiently watchful over the earthly as well as heavenly goods; about the latter subject, I know not that I should have ever again to speak to thee, because thou hast not blindly fallen into vanity thou hast gone from the center into the unsteadiness having both thine eyes open, thou hast known thy Lords will, & thou hast not done it, therefore thou knowest the sentence incur'd[sic], my ferfent[fervent] secret prayer has been "gather her O Lord & let her be number'd with thy saints";<sup>1</sup> but thou hast not been faithful to the light manifested.- He hath given thee strength as a Sampson, to rend away the cords of the Philistines from thee.<sup>2</sup> - Why O why hast thou lain as in the lap of Delilah & art suffering the uncircumcised to rob thee of that strength which God will require an account of from thee,<sup>3</sup> for he giveth no gift in vain - I have looked on thee as a silly fly, most wilfully & shamefully suffering thyself to be entangled in a spiders web. - Oh! be induced to turn inwardly to the Redeemer, while yet there is hope, that so he may overcome the strong in thee & bind him lest thou be utterly cast off - Remember Lots wife - also those words "He that hath put his hand to the plough & looketh back is not fit for the Kingdom of God".<sup>4</sup> - That thou art lamentably unsteady is obvious, may I hope that thou wilt yet again betake thee to deep repentance & renew thy covenant with God for I think I may say that he who deliver'd Daniel out of the den of Lions<sup>5</sup> & the three holy children out of the burning fiery furnace,<sup>6</sup> will not be wanting unto thee, if thou cleave unto him with full purpose of heart & oh! I think that now there is a gracious visitation extended to thee as an arm of help, yield to it I pray thee, it will save thee, it will buoy up thy head above the billows - it will land thee safely on dry ground, oh! that thou hadst been faithful, then would thy God have been thine hedge<sup>7</sup> round about thee, thy protector & thy rise-ward,<sup>8</sup> he would have confounded thine enemies he would have glorified himself in thee & thou shouldst have shewn forth his praise.- Well! it is not yet too late, he is still seeking to gather thee - first by his mercy & again by his judgments - so the



sooner thou binds to him the better for every neglected opportunity makes thy way harder as an old tree taketh root very ill - with regard to thy pecuniary wants, I am quite shocked, for as godliness is profitable for all things, so we by its reverse generally accumulate all kinds of distress; I hope thou wilt be careful to do nothing unadvisedly for the Lord, if thou look & keep thine eye steady to him, can bring thee thro' all & he always opens a door for the sincere hearted.- should a proper offer occur for thy house, I should deem it a providential interposition & should it not, oh K turn thyself to him who is mighty to save & he will never forsake thee - he will redeem & bless thee & his blessing maketh truly rich & adds no sorrow with it. MC

PS I feel as I write a secret hope that thou mayest yet suffer the gathering arm of the Lord to redeem thee from pollution, by which as thou art faithful & obedient, thou shalt experience deliverance from thy present & future troubles, for "Jerusalem is a quiet habitation"<sup>9</sup> but "there is no peace to the wicked" they are like the troubled sea.<sup>10</sup>

1. The words of Mary's prayer, not a direct quote from scripture.
2. Judg 15:9-15 - it was actually the people of Judah who tied Sampson in order to hand him over to the Philistines but the 'Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him,' and the cords 'became as flax that was burnt with fire,' and fell from his hands (verse 14).
3. Judg 16 tells how Sampson was betrayed by Delilah who nursed him to sleep in her lap so that the Philistines (non-Jews and therefore uncircumcised) could cut off his hair, the source of his strength, and capture him.
4. Lk 17:31-32 - part of Christ's warning of events that will occur on the Last Day or Day of Judgement, comparing them to God's destruction of Lot's wife who was turned into a pillar of salt, and of the people of Sodom on whom He poured fire and brimstone for their sins. 'In that day, [. . .] and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back./Remember Lot's wife.'
5. Dan 6 - when thrown to the lions by the Persian King Darius for disobeying a royal order prohibiting prayer, Daniel was miraculously saved unharmed.
6. Dan 3 - Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were miraculously saved when thrown into a furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar for testifying to the one God.
7. hedge - protection or shelter. 'Hedge' was a word much used in the Society of Friends at this time to denote the protection from temptation, or 'the ways of the world', afforded by membership and by customs - in dress and speech for instance - which separated Quakers from other people. Here, God Himself forms the protection.
8. rise-ward - meaning obscure.
9. Is 33:20 - 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, [. . .].'
10. Is 57:20-21 - 'But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt./There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'

The name of the addressee is not given in the salutation, but the text reveals that it is Kitty, once again, who receives a reprimand.

## LETTER 11

To . . .

Dublin 6th Mo 14th 1806

Once more & much against my will, I take up the pen to remonstrate with thee - Oh! foolish & unwise,<sup>1</sup> to tread under foot the precious impressions with which thou hast been favor'd, to prefer the unsubstantial amusements of vain company, before the solid good of waiting for the blessing of the Most High, - how truly was I shocked to hear where thou wert yesterday, verily I fear (if thou dost not take great care) thou wilt entail ruin on thyself, thou canst not prosper, whilst thou pursuest such wicked ways, thou canst not obtain the blessing &



dwell in the curse,<sup>2</sup> it is contrary to reason to think of it, thou hast lost much of the dew of thy youth, thou art trampling on the Cross of Christ, thou art treading under foot the precious blood of the covenant & accounting it as an unholy thing, thou art slaying the precious life within thee, thou art sinning against the Holy Spirit, Oh! Stop & pause I pray thee, retire for a little & consider how shameful, how inexcusable is thy behaviour, how rebellious against God, how dishonest towards man, yes! dishonest in an high degree, as thy own conscience if thou wilt let it speak, will inform thee - what! thou who are encumber'd with heavy engagements, surrounded by people who would take from thee by theft not thy own property, but the property of others with which they have trusted thee & weighed down as thou ought to feel with debt - for thee to ape fashion & ramble about with parties on a first day,<sup>3</sup> instead of seeking for Divine help to get thro' thy difficulties is most truly shameful & believe me sober people are ashamed of thy conduct besides - walking the streets without a female & with several impudent looking fellows, when thou ought to have been down in thy bakehouse or collecting in thy debts, what more can I say, I am ashamed of thy conduct, where is thy sense of honesty, justice not to say religion, whose spark thou art extinguishing with mad career - & oh! how little soever thou mayest lay these things to heart, thou wilt yet be brought to a severe account for all - I wonder at thee Kitty, I am astonished more than at many because thou knowest the difference between good & evil, clean & unclean & inasumuch as thou knowest[sic] the Father's will & doest it not, thou shalt receive many stripes<sup>4</sup> - Farewell from one who loves thee, but abhors thy sinful ways, who covets thy society when truth prevails in thy mind, but at this time seems to dread to see thee; I am angry with thee for plaguing thy poor Father who is so good to thee. MC

1. Deut 32:6 - 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?'
2. **thou canst not [. . .] curse** - it is not possible to obtain salvation or reward if you make no effort, but live according to humankind's fallen nature - cursed by God for Adam and Eve's sin (Gen 3:14-19).
3. **first day** - Sunday. The sabbath was reserved for worship and rest.
4. **stripes** - strokes of the rod, punishments.

Addressed to a servant, only identified in the text as 'poor O', this letter is a prime example of the way in which the background to events is excluded in Mary's preserved correspondence. Is the servant leaving of her own volition, or has Mary dismissed her? What was the nature of her crime - the 'unjust act'? How had she been spending her 'leisure hours'? We can only conjecture. But however judgmental, condescending, even sanctimonious, its tone may seem to many twenty-first-century readers, the letter was probably preserved as an example of genuine concern for a servant who, in Mary's view, had behaved extremely badly.

## LETTER 12

To a servant (at parting)

12th Mo 5th 1806

Altho' I am very truly sorry for the occasion of this our parting, which is to me a cause of unexpected grief on thy account, yet I may just say, that tho' I do abhor an unjust act & cannot countenance it, bleiving[sic] that if I did, I also should be guilty, still however I am very desirous that thou shouldst seek after repentance, that thy sins may be worked out & forgiven by Him who alone is able to forgive sins; I know that thy opportunities of religious improvement are



very, very few, may the Lord draw thy poor benighted soul to seek him within thyself, mayest thou bear the awful judgments of his holy power which abhorreth a lie, nor will permit any who commit injustice, in that state to enter his blessed Kingdom; I have often wished to read to thee the holy scriptures, which thro' faith in our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ are able to make us wise unto salvation: The time is now come in which it concerns my interest no longer how thy leisure hours are passed, but I beg it of thee for the sake of thy never dying soul, turn the thoughts of thy mind towards Eternity; shun idle talk & idle company, I beseech thee read the Scriptures in humily[humility] & fear & come before thy Judge & Lord, even as a poor culprit solely dependant[sic] on his mercy - & he is not wanting to forgive penitent sinners, witness - Mary Magdalene & the thief upon the cross:<sup>1</sup> but then we on our part must repent & do so no more - or else the Kingdom of heaven (which no more can open or shut) will never be our habitation; it is in love to thy poor never dying soul that I write these lines - Oh! prize the time & seek for mercy before the pale faced messenger of death stare thee in the face & seize upon thee - then oh! then what will become of thee, if thou art not prepared the judgment seat of the judge of quick & dead, whom no art can deceive, or hide from the penetration of his all-seeing eye - oh! consider the state of thy soul, which can never be redeem'd from the jaws of Hell, unless thou repent & which with my own soul must shortly give an account of the deeds done in the body & receive a reward accordingly - Farewell poor O - my heart aches for thee - my soul covets that thou mayest in secret pour out thine earnest supplications to the Lord who is ever merciful & willing to forgive penitents - oh! that thou thro' heart felt prayer mayest obtain an hope of mercy & that finally thou with mine own soul mayest obtain forgiveness & an habitation for ever in that pure Kingdom where nothing that maketh a lie, where nothing that is unjust or any way polluted can ever enter.

I am thy injured friend

MC

1. Mary Magdalene, of whom Christ said her sins were forgiven because she loved much (Lk 7:47), and the thief crucified with Jesus who asked to be remembered when Christ came into His kingdom (Lk 23:39-43). Jesus replied to the thief, 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' (v. 43.) The fallen woman and the thief were perhaps chosen as appropriate models - their crimes might have been thought similar to those of 'poor O' in some way.

No mention of the Gafnies has been found in the Irish Quaker registers, so perhaps they were not Quakers. However, a John Gafney put his mark, presumably because he was illiterate, as witness to the will of the Quaker Joseph Leybourn of County Carlow in 1703. (*Abstracts of Quaker Wills*, ed. by Beryl Eustace and Olive Goodbody (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1957), p.131.)

## LETTER 13

To The Gafnies

8 Mo 1807

I trust my dear friends that the expression of heartfelt sympathy which predominates within me when my thoughts are turned towards you will not be unacceptable to you Bitter indeed were the sensations occasioned by the recital of your sore and deep affliction which the Lord alone can heal. May you



not only be enabled to bear with fortitude and resignation the allotment of his Holy hand but may you experience him to be a God nigh at hand - and not afar off in every needful time, always remembering that our extremity is his opportunity and that we are never nearer nor dearer to him than when we are plunged in the sea of sore affliction; for that is the season in which it often pleaseth him to manifest his power and the strength of his almighty arm for our deliverance; not according always to our will, but rather to the enerring judgment of him who cannot err - who knows what is best for us, who careth for us more tenderly than the tenderest parent; who engraveth us as on the palms of his hands and numbereth the very hairs of our head.<sup>1</sup> He it is who calleth forth the first place in our affections for the first fruits of all our increase,<sup>2</sup> for the entire dedication of all that we name ours, for the whole heart. And what giveth he in return? He the munificent and rich rewarder - He who delighteth to bless and to communicate of his inexhaustible treasures of felicity to the beloved workmanship of his holy hands. Giveth he not that peace which the world and the things of it can neither give nor take away, that peace the precious earnest<sup>3</sup> of our eternal inheritance the pledge of Divine favor and the result of obedience to his sacred monitions<sup>4</sup> revealed in the secret of all our hearts, for every soul is his and though we sin and like disobedient children revolt from him, yet hath he opened a fountain for iniquity thereby to purge away the filth of the children of spiritual Israel, so that none need despair of his goodness or sink down beneath the hope of his mercy and forgiving love, for the work of the Redeemer is our salvation, and the work of the spirit is our sanctification - and Oh! that you and I my dear friends may so wrestle as to prevail, not with flesh and blood, but with the ominipotence of God - who hath ordained us to strive and to fight for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus - and as your minds and my mind are center'd here we shall not be of those who sorrow without hope<sup>5</sup> even though it please him to rend from us the right hand or the right eye<sup>6</sup> - ever believing that our enduring felicity is the object of his most tender care and that his will must ultimately promote our highest gratification, tho' we who see dimly and but in part<sup>7</sup> cannot always think so - I pray you look unto him who hath chastened and who alone can heal you - who hath wounded and also comforted you and who, as your dependance[sic] is singly placed upon him will surely shew himself gracious unto you and bless you beyond what you can ask or think - I much desire that you may be drawn nearer to him and that you may look to him alone for help and protection. then shall you experience a rich stream of Consolation of which no outward separation can possibly deprive you but which will unfailingly conduct you to the kingdom of rest, where that you may all meet again in mutability<sup>8</sup> is the heartfelt desire and prayer of your affectionate friend.

M Card

1. Lk 12:6-7 - 'Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God:/But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.'
2. Ex 23:19 - 'The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God.' See also Neh 10:35.
3. earnest - foretaste.
4. monitions - promptings, guidance.
5. sorrow without hope - echoing words Mary spoke at Meeting, recorded in journal entry '4th Mo 30th 1806', above in this volume: ["I thought that the voice of lamentation might be mingled with hope seeing that we sorrow not without hope in the ability of that almighty arm which hath gather'd us & will preserve us a people".
6. Mt 5:29-30 - 'And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell./ And if thy right hand offend



thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.' See also Mt 18:8-9 and Mk 9:43-48.

7. 1 Cor 13:12 - 'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'
8. In mutability - in transformed state.

'W.A.' remains unidentified.

## LETTER 14

To W. A

8th 30th 1807

In that which purely coveteth thy soul's salvation & which soaring beyond sublunary objects, seeks to attract & be attracted to all that belongs to the Source of Everlasting good, I feel freedom to express the secret thoughts which impressed my mind as it was turned towards thee in the hour of silent waiting, "see that thou go not too far out lest the day of thy visitation pass over"<sup>1</sup> & thou be not gather'd, He who hath formerly visited thee, who hath loved & long striven with thee, who with much patience hath waited for thee, He will peradventure<sup>2</sup> now hear thee & give thee to drink of the water of life whereby thy soul shall grow - oh! remember I pray thee, what time passeth away but Eternity endureth for ever! & that all the refinements of nature & art, all the enjoyments of luxury with every gratification of reason or sense, leave an unavoidable vacuum in the breast of man because that seat they were never intended to fill, nor can any thing short of the Divinity thoroughly satisfy that part which it was intended he only should occupy, thou knowest whether the aspirations of thine heart ascend the throne of his grace as frequently as in past days & thou also knowest if thou art yet wrestling for the blessing,<sup>3</sup> which is as precious & as worthy to be sought for in this day as in any other, or whether thou hast suffer'd any thing to occupy that chamber which the master order'd to be prepared for his own use? Thou knowest - & if so, I pray thee trifle not with him who tho' graciously condescending & most patiently forbearing yet will not be trifled with - The day is advancing, the morning is past - the evening hastens - Oh! be thou ready, that when the curtain shall close, when those who now see thee, shall see thee no more, thou mayest be permitted to obtain that rest which then it will be too late to purchase & it is worth while to consider, that tho' we may bolt the doors of our hearts against conviction & swim in the Ocean of riches & pleasure, tho' we may this way lose our eternal inheritance, yet how soon are we forgotten by the multitude whose adulation was dear to us; how incessantly will the same giddy circle revolve when we are laid in the silent grave & how soon will our places be filled up by others /whether[sic] or no we have been unwise/[sic] enough to idolize the things of time - They are not cannot be the proper objects of primary pursuit, which under any pretence draw away our minds from the simplicity of truth for in that simplicity rests our perfect happiness, the true food of the soul, the unfeigned water of life which springeth up continually, a never failing source of joy & consolation, ineffable quietude & unutterable rest Oh! then be entreated for thy own soul's sake, to turn inward & to seek diligently, that so thou mayest obtain the pearl,<sup>4</sup> for the longer the work is put off, the harder it will seem, even as a tree that takes root easily when young, but when matured it is done with



more difficulty - may the Lord almighty aid & strengthen all thy efforts, hear all thine aspirations & effectually attract thee to himself: so prays thy friend.

MC

1. **day of effectual visitation** - the 'day of visitation' was a concept promoted by the Quaker theologian Robert Barclay (1648-1690). It was believed that there occurred in the life of each individual a special time, 'a period in which the opportunity of repentance and response to the light was on offer. It could be at any time, but it was temporary; once lost the opportunity was gone, never to recur' (John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p.125).
2. **peradventure** - perhaps.
3. Gen 32:24-32 tells how Jacob wrestled with an unknown man until dawn and received from him a blessing: 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as prince has thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed' (Gen 32:24).
4. Mt 13:46 - Christ's parable of the man who sold all he had to buy the pearl of great price.

Here, Mary seeks to reconcile a young girl, Louisa, with her mother. Louisa's devout frame of mind, which has led her to reject the making of artificial flowers and 'other vain ornaments' as a means of earning her living and to avoid frivolous or irreligious conversation, seems to have precipitated a quarrel with her mother resulting in Louisa leaving home for private lodgings. This, in the early nineteenth century, was regarded unfavourably. It could expose a young single girl to risk, particularly risk to her reputation. Mary tries to persuade Louisa's mother to take her back under the maternal roof, but also to help her see Louisa's point of view.

## LETTER 15

Dear Friend

5th Mo 1808

Believing that thy mind is not unacquainted with sensations of tenderness & sympathy & that thy affections for thy beloved daughter Louisa will lead thee to excuse the freedom of this address from one who is interested in [the] welfare of you both, I take the liberty of throwing before thee a few thoughts which have impressed my mind on your account, hoping that thou wilt be candid enough to receive them as they are meant.

When I invited thy dear girl to my house, it was because my heart was attracted towards her, having observed her solid deportment & reserved turn of mind, & on being more intimately acquainted with her, my regard for her has not decreased; but on looking towards thee her honor'd parent & thy lonely situation, that her living in a lodging separate from thee is not eligible or respectable, especially as her filial care would add much to thy domestic comfort, by liberating thee to attend thy own meetings & visit thy friends: I see & know that thou art a very tender mother & I am sure I desire the increase of thy welfare every way; wilt thou then allow me to make a request which I hope may not be deemed impertinant[sic] or intrusive, which is that thou in great kindness & compassion to thy dear child (who as she increases in religious experience will assuredly become an increasing blessing to thee/[sic] who as she is but in a tender state & cannot bear much mixed conversation wilt thou not shelter her from unprofitable company & condescend to bear with her dislike of such? & as I do believe that her aversion to making flowers & other vain ornaments, proceeds from a desire to hold herself guiltless of thereby dishonoring her maker, surely my dear friend the Lord will richly reward thee, if thou bear with her in this also & as she wishes to be employed usefully, tho' the profit less, will not the difference be made up to her in a contented mind?



& will it not be a source of joy to thy breast, that thou hast thus contributed to protect & succour thy little lamb in the thorny wilderness of this world? I feel I love thee & the confidence that thou wilt not be offended by my plainness of speech, for we mothers are most assuredly accountable for the discharge of the important duties of our station & that we guard from harm the susceptible minds of our children - I earnestly [?]<sup>1</sup> that He who hath thus entrusted us both will enable us so to fulfil his will therein, as that we may finally receive the answer of "well done"<sup>2</sup> & now having thus freely written to thee, may I again report my dislike to her going back to the lodging & if thy judgment coincides with mine, will not thou in the overflowings of natural love invite her to live with thee again; I think you will be happier together than ever you were & may the God of peace & concord bless you both - may she be the staff<sup>3</sup> of thy declining years, thy pillow in sickness & thy rejoicing in health & mayest thou be [to]<sup>4</sup> her a crown of honor, a shelter from the storms of life, a watchful protector & a faithful friend! - thus may you be united thro' time, steadily following on in the way of divine requirings, that when arrived at the closing scenes, your spirits with mine & many, many more will be prepared for that undefiled habitation where nothing polluted or unclean can ever enter.

I am with much respect  
thy affect friend MC

1. Word possibly omitted in manuscript, probably 'hope' or 'pray'.
2. Mt 25:21 - Christ's words to the good and faithful servant.
3. staff - support.
4. Word possibly omitted in manuscript.

The next letter is to an unidentified cousin, commiserating on an 'afflicting event' - in all likelihood the death of the cousin's husband, although, typically, this is never actually stated. It was written at Rathmines, an area to the south of Dublin and then still in the countryside, to which Mary had retreated 'for a change of air' with her children because they were suffering from whooping cough.

## LETTER 16

**My dear Cousin**

**Rathmines 7th Mo 16 1808**

Will the expression of heartfelt sympathy occasioned by the late awfully afflicting event, seem to intrude on the hour of thy sorrow, for what can sympathy avail to console or alleviate but as Jobs friends to sit down in silent astonishment at the stroke of an omnipotent hand<sup>1</sup> - & he only who in unerring & inscrutable wisdom saw meet to divide the intertwined bands of affection - He only my beloved cousin can administer the efficacious[sic] balm, may thy wounded mind be favor'd with a near approach to that source of comfort for Oh! what other can blunt the edge of the sword of anguish? & I doubt not thou wilt be supported with dignified resignation & thankfulness for the many blessings with which thou above many others art favor'd - Thy infant charge whose tender yet forceful claims urge & arrest thy maternal attention, thy valued parents of whose declining years thou & thy little ones, are I believe the staff<sup>2</sup> & the delight; these will surely have their due place in thy feeling breast & check the indulgence of unavailing grief, which will only injure thy delicate



frame & provoke[?prevent]<sup>3</sup> thy more enlarged fulfilment of filial, maternal & social duties, from whence we know that a purer & calmer joy overspreads the devoted mind than the possession of all the transitory & fluctuating pleasures of luxury can ever bestow -

Tho' the long chasm which has occur'd in our epistolary intercourse seems to infer a decay of affection, yet my feelings on this occasion convince me that its traces are not at all obliterated & the tablet of memory<sup>4</sup> yet records the pleasant hours we passed together, when neither thou nor I knew ought of maternal joys or cares - the latter have been my portion of late - my three children are indisposed with the hooping[sic] cough & I have removed to this place for change of air, I wish to hear more about thee & thy dear little flock for I feel much interested about you, my mother also expresses the feeling of sympathy & love to thee & to thy dear parents, in which with that of our whole circle - I remain thy affc cousin

MC

1. Job 2:11-13 - three of Job's friends came to comfort him after the deaths of his sons and servants and the loss of his goods. Seeing his grief was so great, all they could do was sit with him in silence for seven days and nights.
2. staff - support.
3. provoke - clearly written in manuscript but 'prevent' would make more sense. Perhaps an error.
4. tablet of memory - an expression used frequently in eighteenth/early nineteenth-century poetry and therefore found more often in Mary's verse. A tablet is a stone on which an inscription is written, or, less well known, a thin sheet of wood or ivory for writing on. Several could be strung together to form a kind of book. The memory is thus envisaged as a site on which memories are inscribed without easy erasure.

This epistle congratulates Mary's niece Elizabeth Rebecca Card (d.1872), the daughter of Nathaniel Card's brother Thomas Ligon Card, on her move to the house of Mary's close friend Sarah (Sally) Hoare. Sarah Hoare, a minor poet and amateur botanist and conchologist (see Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card', and Letter 18 below), ran a school in Dublin mainly for Quaker girls. As the letter stresses the intellectual and spiritual benefits Elizabeth will gain, it is probable that she was to attend this school. *The Annual Monitor* (1856, pp.88-89) records that Sarah Hoare 'was gifted with superior mental powers, and possessed much refinement of mind, and sensibility of heart; her literary and scientific attainments were also considerable [. . .]. She loved the society of young people of all classes, to whom she was a very interesting companion, and she delighted to encourage a taste for those pursuits which improve the mind, and tend to raise the thoughts to the Great Creator'. Also, 'The style of her conversation was strikingly delicate and edifying'.

## LETTER 17

To Elizabeth Rebecca Card . . .

2d Mo 1st 1809

If I have thus long delay'd congratulating thee on the very favorable change in thy situation, it has not been for want of feeling that affection which stands not in need of external expression - but which coveting purely the good of its object is content to be unknown & unobserved in passing through this chequer'd<sup>1</sup> scene. It has convey'd to my heart a sensation of enjoyment not easily delineated, that thy Judgment & inclination have led thee to embrace the present opportunities of intellectual improvement with which thy residence at Sarah Hoare's must naturally abound - as I believe that next to the possession of the Divine Life inwardly reveal'd, the pleasures resulting from a cultivated



and well regulated mind are materially conducive to our felicity; because as rational beings we are capable of progressive improvement and our hearts and our understandings are continually enlightening or they must be sinking towards a state of degradation altogether dishonourable and inconsistent with the will of Heaven concerning us - and as such entailing its own punishment by awakening a Legion, the offspring of Ignorance - Pride, Passion and Vice - which with all their concomitant miseries incessantly torment their unhappy victims! - May'st thou dear Girl in all thy future steppings invariably pursue the path of rectitude and true wisdom, for therein only wilt thy mind experience solid peace. Futile indeed as the bubble upon the wave, is every hope of lasting happiness, whose foundation is not in Immortality. The human mind is continually thirsting after it - & it is in vain that we endeavour to appease that thirst & quench it in the muddy streams of vanity and folly. Short and swift[?]<sup>2</sup> are the moments allotted us here and when once flown away they never will return but fleeting as they are, they are given to us not to waste in idle pleasures and fruitless pursuits, but to do an important work; which, if left undone, misery - Eternal misery and unavailing remorse must be our portion - Ah! then, let us carefully shun every allurements to waste our precious time - let us avoid, as snares of death, that company and conversation whose delusive influence steals away our inward strength - let us often retire in secret to implore that help without which we are lost and which is ever ready to sustain the dependent mind. "The friendship of this world", we are told is Enmity against God"<sup>3</sup> - & "she who liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth"<sup>4</sup> - What then but blind infatuation can induce any to forsake the sweet and simple - tho' narrow path of Truth, for the broad bewildering mazes of Error, - when the awful consequences are so clearly denounced! And though I know that it is very difficult to disentangle ourselves from those to whose trifling conversations we have been accustom'd yet it is well worth making the effort; & every little act of self denial will bring its own reward of peace into the bosom. As sure as there is but One God - so sure is it, that there is but one source of happiness; and one way, and no other - to attain that happiness - tis in vain to imagine[sic] that we will love the World a little and Religion a little. He who created us for himself spurns at the lameness of such an offering<sup>5</sup> - & has forbidden it, neither will it at all avail us in the awful hour of death that we have followed the examples of our nearest earthly connexions[sic]. We have a pattern to copy laid down in the New Testament - and nothing short of an entire dedication of ourselves, with an humble endeavour to imitate his blessed life will do for us - For when the curtains of the evening are drawn over us - when time shall close and Eternity appear to our trembling vision when all the gay scenery of each transitory allurements shall have faded & disappeared as the dreams of night then dear Eliza to have an enduring Inheritance - an abiding habitation an unfailing anchor will be of more worth and consequence to us than the favour or the possession of the whole world! and let us not imagine in the folly of youthful presumption that such an inheritance is attainable without striving after it - without diligent endeavours to gain it Ah no! - dreadful at last must be their disappointment who think to purchase Heaven so cheaply - who during life would flutter round the ring of tinsel brilliance<sup>6</sup> and then politely glide into a Mansion of Immortal Joy<sup>7</sup> - It cannot - cannot be!

But what do we lose by the sacrifice of a train of insipid acquaintances, who while they steal from us that time and attention which is of such inestimable value, give us nothing in return or worse than nothing? nothing solidly useful either in this life or that which is to come: they debase our ideas



to covet tinsel instead of gold; and shew instead of substance: they clip the wings of the mind and thereby prevent our ascent into the regions of purity and Truth - they gain - how strange yet how true! - they gain our affection because we are unguarded and unsuspecting: but when we are languishing on the pillow of debility or when the gates of Death have open'd and have closed upon us - how little impression will the recital make on any of their minds - how carelessly will they hear the intelligence how quickly will they forget that ever we existed on the face of the Earth and how readily will the giddy circle be filled up without us, and not a trace of us remain. But oh! how different even here is the portion of the Children of Religion? how steady are their friendships - how sincere is their regard - In every hour of trial, when the butterflies of the day are fled, how soothing is the voice of a true friend! It alleviates what it cannot altogether remove - It makes palatable[sic] the bitter cup of aff[li]ction - while it heightens every scene of joy; & far from alluring to the Labyrinths of Error and laying snares for our unwary feet, it points with the finger of Hope to a land of Purity and its angelic accents teach the way:- This is the province of Friendship - a principle which exists not in an impure mind - a light which burns not in tainted air - a felicity as inexplicable to the worldly minded, as colours to a blind man or sounds to a deaf one --- Then think not dear Eliza that the path of Truth & Rectitude is less joyous, though less noisy, than the whirlpools of Vanity - the one is all shew the other is substantial - the one conceals miseries with a vacant laugh; the other is full of blessings which it desires not to exhibit Be it thine and mine also to press after the possession of enduring riches - to "forsake the foolish and live"<sup>8</sup> - to dwell within "the garden enclosed"<sup>9</sup> - whose soil would enrich & beautify us - and whose hedge<sup>10</sup> would protect us from the inroads of "the little foxes which spoil the tender grapes"<sup>11</sup> - and as we carefully guard against whatever might injure us (for who that had a precious plant would expose it to every contagious blast?) our roots will grow as by the riverside, and we shall know of a truth that - "the hand of the diligent maketh rich"<sup>12</sup> ---

1. **chequer'd** - changeable.
2. Word difficult to read in manuscript.
3. Jas 4:4 - 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?'
4. 1 Tim 5:6 - 'But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.'
5. Deut 15:21 lays down that no blemished offering must be sacrificed to God - no animal that is blind or lame for instance.
6. **tinsel brilliance** - superficial attractions.
7. Jn 14:2 - 'In my Father's house are many mansions'.
8. Prov 9:6. - 'Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.'
9. Song 4:12 - 'a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse'. Usually taken to refer to the church as bride or sister of Christ.
10. **hedge** - protection or shelter. 'Hedge' was a word much used in the Society of Friends at this time to denote the protection from temptation, or 'the ways of the world', afforded by membership and by customs - in dress and speech for instance - which separated Quakers from other people. Although the meaning here is broader, perhaps encompassing religion as a whole, the image, linked with the 'garden enclosed', is once again of separation.
11. Song 2:15 - 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.'
12. Prov 10:4 - 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.'



'SH' is Sarah Hoare (c.1767-1855), one of Mary's closest friends from 1805 onwards, mentioned in her diary and poems. (See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.) Sarah was a convinced Friend who ran a school in Dublin for Quaker girls (which Mary's niece Elizabeth Rebecca Card probably attended, see Letter 17 above) and then another in Frenchay, Bristol, when she moved there in 1815. (Mary helped prepare the certificate for her removal to Frenchay - Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting minutes, 11 July 1815.) She afterwards lived in Bath. The lengthy entry for her in *The Annual Monitor* for 1856 (pp.88-89), tells us, besides the information already quoted in the letter above, of her lifelong interest in education, her philanthropy which was 'proverbial', particularly in working 'for the outcasts of society', and her 'tender compassion' for animals. She published some poetry reflecting her interests in education and natural history: *The Brother or a few Poems intended for the Instruction of Very Young Persons, by A Friend to Youth* ([n.p.]:Harvey and Dutton, 1827), *Poems on Conchology and Botany* (London: Simpkin and Marshall; Bristol: Wright and Bagnall, 1831), *A Poem on the Pleasures and advantages of botanical pursuits, with notes; and other poems* (Bristol: Philip Rose, [n.d.]). *A Poem on the Pleasures and advantages of botanical pursuits* also appears in Priscilla Wakefield's *Introduction to Botany* (London: Harvey and Dutton, 8th edn 1818, 9th edn 1823). Priscilla Wakefield was a Quaker, aunt to Elizabeth Fry and Samuel Gurney.

This letter should be seen as one of mutual encouragement, exhortation and support when the correspondents knew one another well. Sarah would have known what 'outward enemy' Mary was referring to, that needed to be 'cast off'. Possibly Sarah wrote to Mary in a similar vein.

## LETTER 18

My dear SH

10th Mo 25th 1810

I am pleased to hear that you had so good a passage<sup>1</sup> under all the unfavorable appearances of the weather and I hope that thou now in the bosom of those friends to whom thy heart is so strongly attracted art quietly enjoying the sweets of mental and corporeal rest: how often have I coveted rest for thee my dear friend, rest from the various vexations and unquiet occurrences[sic] which troubled thee, rest in that quiet habitation<sup>2</sup> & place of safety which the Lord designs his church shall be thou & I have known his gathering arm extended towards, sweetly & strongly attracting us from all visibles and coveting our undivided attention to him & him alone, we have both known something of his visiting our souls in seasons past when we have believed that he was infinitely lovely & it was our delight to sit beneath the shadow of his presence, then in that day would we not have yielded up all to him? would we have suffer'd any terrene object to eclipse from our mind the sun of Righteousness?<sup>3</sup> did we not then covenant with him "if thou wilt give me bread to eat & raiment to put on, then shalt thou be my God"?<sup>4</sup> He hath fulfilled his part of the contract & hath borne up our heads in the day of affliction but we - have we also kept pace with it? have we continued to love him above all? have we suffer'd no false love to enter in to alienate our thoughts from the One? have we not rather opened the avenues of our hearts to the "little foxes"? & they have spoiled our tender grapes,<sup>5</sup> let us look within let us solidly consider the state of our spiritual senses - so may we come to know whether our souls are in health Is our eye opened to the beauty of holy sanctity? & do we see as we have once seen, the deformity of deviation from those Christian testimonies which his visible Church are given to bear? is our taste preserved pure? do we covet what may be compared to the leeks and onions of Egypt? & despise the manna which he appoints for our food?<sup>6</sup> for if so have we not great reason to fear, that his love and his mercy will be evinced by chastisement & that he will give us to feel the emptiness the misery of all we have coveted out of him. O! dear Sally, that we might be willing to give up all,



to resign all, to take up the cross, made doubly ponderous by disobedience, to deny ourselves & above all thro' his grace, let us turn from every other object of love, being assured that the end of those things is death - a death most deeply to be deplored, not a dissolution of this frail tabernacle,<sup>7</sup> but an entire alienation from all that is good - I know that it is an hard matter to turn out an inward enemy, after we have cherished & encouraged him - it is like cutting out a right eye or lopping off a right hand, but it is better that we do it than that we perish utterly<sup>8</sup> & I know that it is required of thee (thou wilt understand me) & while thou retainest it, thou art sucking poison, which undermines thy mental and bodily frame Perhaps I have exceeded in plainness of speech, but I do heartily covet that our remaining portion of time may be devoted to him, who alone is worthy, that dwelling deeply dependant[sic] on him, thou mayest come to experience that true rest which is prepared for the Righteous & a cessation nay a total annihilation of all those sorrows which have pierced thee. MC

1. Either passage to England or return to Dublin.
2. Is 33:20 - 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken'.
3. Mal 4:2- 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.' Malachi was speaking of God's blessing, but the term 'Sun of Righteousness', by punning on 'sun', also refers to Jesus, the Son of God.
4. Gen 28:20 - 'And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on'.
5. Song 2:15 - 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes'.
6. Num 11:5-8 - the Israelites, starving in the wilderness, looked back with longing on the comparative plenty they had known in Egypt. 'We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick'. They were sick of the manna, the wafer-like food resembling coriander seed that God had provided for them: 'But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes'.
7. frail tabernacle - the human body as receptacle or dwelling place of the spirit.
8. Mt 5:29-30 - 'And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell./ And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of they members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.' See also Mt 18:8-9 and Mk 9:43-48.

'MG' remains unidentified.

## LETTER 19

To MG

11th Mo 1st 1810

I have seen several annotations on the bible & some (particularly Henrys) which are much approved of, but I ever found that they detached[sic] my thoughts from the substance itself & that the spirit of truth is the only key to the mysteries contained in them - peoples opinions do generally lead us astray, it is safest for us to rely on those openings which are invariably manifested to the waiting soul;<sup>1</sup> - not but that the experiences & judgements of others who have trod the path of life is very helpful to us - there is then a bearing witness with our spirits that it is the truth. I am more and more convinced that a belief in the Soul saving efficacy of the Divine principle called "Christ within the hope of



glory"<sup>2</sup> will yet be abundantly professed and possessed that all other possessions may be shaken but that teacher will never be removed - surely it is now waiting for obedience to known requirements, that it may grow and increase, I believe there is no other way for any of us to obtain an increase in this precious inheritance but by faithfully following what we feel made known do we any of us perceive that anything in our words or actions is inconsistent with purity? with scripture? let us deny it - let us not follow the blind world - but dare to be singular, when we feel the pointings thereto - then the reward of peace will be ours & perhaps a greater service a more difficult cross marked out to which if we are faithful, peace will ensue, & then another act of duty, till by degrees we become leaven'd into the spirit of Christ - the process is very simple it is the same in all, little more is necessary than a close attention [to]<sup>3</sup> the Divine light & a faithful obedience to its discoveries, for without great care a young plant may be easily rooted up & it is not so easy to plant again - Remember me to thy friend W - personal acquaintance signifies little - I beg his acceptance of the little book which accompanies this - Tho' far from instrumental aid, you are not far from the great minister of ministers, who teaches as never man taught & who is able and willing, as we permit him to form us into members of his militant church - where every spot is done away & the fogs & mists of prejudice dissipated as by the vivifying rays of the Sun of Righteousness.<sup>4</sup>

### Thy friend MC

1. Quakerism, particularly in the quietist tradition, attached priority to the leadings of the Spirit, the inward teacher, as revealed directly in personal experience. The scriptures were to be interpreted in the Spirit.
2. Col 1:27 - 'To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.'
3. Word missing in manuscript.
4. Mal 4:2- 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.' Malachi was speaking of God's blessing, but the term 'Sun of Righteousness', by punning on 'sun', also refers to Jesus, the Son of God.

The friend addressed here is named as Harriett in the text of the letter.

### LETTER 20

**My dear Friend**

**2nd Mo 20th 1811**

Were I not convinced of thy candour as well as thy affection, I should not easily be induced thus to address thee, atho' I acknowledge that the great advantage of social intercourse is to rub each others rust off<sup>1</sup> with sisterly tenderness & the true proof of real friendship lies in the sincere endeavour to promote the best interest of those we love - I believe that thou art not unacquainted [with] the source whence flow the treasures of wisdom & knowledge & all consolation therefore in any degree to point out to thee what may appear to be an error - does it not require great courage? shall I say presumption? But my beloved friend, art thou careful not to be hasty in uttering thy judgment of others? does nothing like the appearance of asperity (tho' the reality be far from thy heart) mingle with the expression of thy sentiments: try thyself dear Harriet by the unerring standards & if it be wrong



forgive me: Alas when we censure, when we condemn, are we qualified to bear the burthens<sup>2</sup> of the feeble minded? & to fulfil the law of love? I am persuaded that as we yield to the influence of Divine truth, our minds will partake of his heavenly benignity & we shall diligently watch our lips, lest any unsavory expression escape us - I have often desired for thee & myself that all occasion of stumbling might be done away, that every let & hindering thing may be remov'd & that being humbled by a just sense of our own manifold infirmities, we may be clothed with love and sweetness & feel nothing but the prevalence of goodwill to all.

1. **rub each others rust off** - a metaphor derived from cleaning metal, and therefore linked to the notion of spiritual purification often represented in Mary's work and other contemporary religious writings by the image of metal refining. But in an age when great importance was attached to the art of conversation, the notion that one of the functions of friendly social converse was to 'rub the rough edges off' one another was a generally prevalent one. For instance, Lord Shaftesbury, writing about conversation and wit, announced, 'All Politeness is owing to Liberty. We polish one another, and rub off our Corners and rough Sides by a sort of *amicable Collision*. To restrain this, is inevitably to bring a Rust upon Mens Understandings'. (Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), ed. by Phillip Ayres, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), I, 39-40.)
2. **burthens** - archaic form of 'burdens'.

'EA' probably stands for 'Elizabeth Alexander'. An Elizabeth Alexander served at the same time as Mary on Ireland Women's Yearly Meeting and Dublin Women's Monthly Meeting. She was involved in the Committee of the Poor (Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 14 December 1813), sat on the Committee of Leinster Provincial School (Dublin Women's Yearly Meeting Minutes, 10 September 1816) and at Ireland Women's Yearly Meeting was appointed to the group drafting epistles for Ireland and London Yearly Meetings (Ireland Women's Yearly Meeting Minutes, 1 May 1809). However, there was an Elizabeth Alexander Senior and an Elizabeth Alexander Junior. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.

## LETTER 21

To EA

5th Mo 14th 1812

The receipt of thy very affectionate note awakened in our minds those dormant sensations of sympathy & friendship the reciprocation of which, comprizes[sic] some of the most refined enjoyments of human life, we are rejoiced to hear of thy restoration to that valuable gift of our munificent Father, health, it being very trying to me, to be thus deprived of the pleasure of that peaceful intercourse with thee in which I have so often delighted: I am gratified to find that dear H Hull<sup>1</sup> has again addressed thee, I am sure it must comfort thee when a rightly commissioned servant is thus dipped into a sense of thy state & united to thee in the fellowship of faith;<sup>2</sup> I believe we are often very incompetent judges of our own state & it is generally the humble & sincere disciples who are first to say "Lord is it"?<sup>3</sup> my dear Eliza, I have often thought that thy diffident mind, suffers itself to be deprived at times of the sweetest of all consolations, perhaps by listening to the accuser, who as to thee will I have no doubt, as thou firmly perseverest in the narrow way - be finally cast out - Do we not believe that he never did nor ever will permit the wrestling seed to "seek his face in vain"?<sup>4</sup> why then do not we feel encouraged amidst every storm & tempest to believe that the Sun of Everlasting Righteousness<sup>5</sup> is as



certainly in the firmament of his power, as the outward Orb of light? tho' obscured amidst the conflicting confusion of Elements beneath: & tho' the very feeble testimony, which I who know that I am less than the least, may not have even the weight of a straw in thy mind, yet may I say that I have no more doubt of thy being in & underneath the protecting care & love of thy everlasting Redeemer, than I have of my own existence - How do I wish thee to rise above the mists & fogs of this beclouded horizon that so thou mayest effectually partake of that Divine consolation which surely is in store for thee & finally to that soul sustaining evidence, that having to the best of thy ability, endeavoured to keep thy conscience void of offence thou mayest attain to a well grounded hope that the reward will be thine at the end of the race.

Farewell my beloved friend may thy confidence in the adorable condescension of Israels Shepherd be strengthen'd & encreased[sic] & may He whose compassions fail not - renew his precious visitations to thy spirit & prove himself thy present helper in every needful time is the sincere desire of thy affc friend  
MC

1. Henry Hull, a travelling minister who visited Dublin in 1811 (Minutes, National Yearly Meeting of Women Friends for Ireland, 29 April/1 May 1811).
2. When ministers addressed a meeting, or made a visit to a family, they were sometimes able to sense the inner state of mind of someone present and minister accordingly - this was called 'speaking to states'.
3. Mt 26:20-25 - Jesus, at the Last Supper, announced that one of the disciples would betray him. 'And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?' (v. 22). Then, to Judas's query, 'Master, is it I?', Jesus answered, 'Thou hast said' (v. 25). See also Jn 13:25 where, after Christ's statement, the beloved disciple 'lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?'. Jesus then identified Judas.
4. Exact quote untraced. 2 Chr 7:14 promises - 'if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.'
5. Mal 4:2- 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.' Malachi was speaking of God's blessing, but the term 'Sun of Righteousness', by punning on 'sun', also refers to Jesus, the Son of God.

The next letter is to an uncle. Mary addresses him as one who, like herself owing to the liver complaint that she mentions in her spiritual autobiography at this time (see journal entry '24 August, 1812', above in this volume), is 'hastening to the awful confines of the grave'. The uncle could have been Henry Birkett, Mary's paternal uncle who also lived in Ireland. If so, he must have recovered pretty well, as he did not die until 1834. Uncle George Harrison, the British slave trade abolitionist, was by now a widower in his sixties, and had moved from inner London to Wandsworth (Jennings, *Business of Abolishing the British Slave Trade*, p.118). He did not die until 1827. It is unlikely he is the addressee, however. His status and the remonstratory tone of the letter do not seem compatible.

## LETTER 22

Dublin 7th Mo 7th 1812

In addressing thee my dear & much respected uncle with the expression of cordial regard, I have yielded to the freedom which I hope & trust may not give offence & with which I have many times desired to address thee, but have thus long been withheld by a fear that a simple communication of affectionate desire for thy welfare, might be deemed impertinent or unavailing; we are both



of us hastening to the awful confines of the grave & we ought to deal plainly with each other as those who are in earnest to put away all hindering things & every besetting sin, that so we may be comfortably liberated to run with alacrity the race which is set before us & so to run as we may obtain, having confidence in him who is able to give us the victory as we manfully resist, striving against sin & as we labour to watch unto prayer & to retain our integrity in sincerity & uprightness of heart: Oh! but this life is a conflict! I feel it so, & may he who hath called us both, who hath visited us both, availingly assist us to shun every bait of the envious Enemy, that so eventually we may become of the number of his chosen - that our death may be that of the righteous & our latter end like his! let us not forget that he hath his way in the whirlwind, that he rideth upon storms,<sup>1</sup> that troubles spring not of the dust<sup>2</sup> & that his holy arm is underneath,<sup>3</sup> supporting thro' trials & lifting up the head in the needful time, yes surely I have believed that the Lord God of thy fathers, even the God of thy upright mother,<sup>4</sup> hath visited thee now, in this the decline of thy life, hath called thee to a full surrender, to a perfect dedication, hath made sin appear sinful in thy view & drawn thee by the cords of his love, saying inwardly to thee "Come out of Babylon!"<sup>5</sup> O pray! my dear uncle, that thou mayest be preserved! that thou mayest keep thine heart diligently, for out of it are the issues of life - I long, I fervently long, that thou mayest stand thy ground in the midst of a corrupt & perverse generation<sup>6</sup> & surrounded by numerous temptations: ah! my dear uncle it is an hard warfare by which we shall obtain victory, it calls for all our strength & for all our power, even for the giving up of a right hand or a right eye!<sup>7</sup> but what matters it if we are favor'd to obtain the inestimable reward of an everlasting crown, which is most surely laid up for all those who have faithfully borne the cross & I think that we have both need to use all diligence that we fall not away to the right hand or to the left, nor by any deviation from the straight & narrow path,<sup>8</sup> cause his holy light to be withheld from our dwelling, which verily is the case with those who by many acts of disobedience have hardened their hearts & provoked the Lord of Glory, so that he hath withdrawn from them - but I trust better things await us, for we know & are sure, that we are not forsaken of him because we feel the striving of his gracious spirit within us, which hath attracted our hearts to follow him & to leave for him the vain & elusive pleasures of a transitory world; O that we both may be more in earnest to bow down before his inward appearance, to watch the avenues of our hearts & the thoughts of our minds, lest at unawares the unwearied Enemy may entrap us, finding us ready like poor headless<sup>9</sup> fish to swallow his baits! & this I can say from experience that I have found great spiritual benefit by abstaining from wine etc, my head & my heart have been less clouded & I have felt more alacrity to follow him in the right way & I do believe that if thou wouldst courageously decline the use of what many would call moderate drinking, thou wouldst be greatly benefited:<sup>10</sup> I do humbly trust that this addressing thee may not wound thee, because I do highly regard thee & sincerely covet thy establishment on the immovable rock<sup>11</sup> - therefore do not be offended with me, or consider it a little thing - that cannot be a little thing which darkens the heavenly light within - nor can those associations be innocent which tend draw us off from the self denial & holy restraints of the Cross of Christ Jesus our Lord, whom that thou and I may follow with a more perfect heart than we have yet done is indeed the prayer of thy affectionate niece M Card



1. Nah 1:3 - 'The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.'
2. Job 5:6 - 'Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;'
3. Deut 33:27 - 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.'
4. If the uncle is Henry Birkett, this would be Catherine Birkett of Liverpool. If George Harrison, then Sarah Harrison of Kendal.
5. In Rev 18, an angel announces the fall of Babylon, then, 'And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues' (v. 4).
6. Deut 32:5 - 'They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.'
7. Mt 5:29-30 - 'And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell./ And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.' See also Mt 18:8-9 and Mk 9:43-48.
8. Mt 7:14 - 'Because straight is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'
9. headless - brainless, stupid.
10. Quakers were not yet so heavily involved in temperance as many of them were later to become. For instance, both Mary's brother, George Harrison Birkett, and her son, Nathaniel Card, became very active in this area. But here Mary already reveals a view of even moderate drinking as possibly harmful. See also her journal entry '8th Mo 24th 1812', particularly note 4, above in this volume.
11. the immovable Rock - perhaps thinking most of Lk 6:48, Christ's likening of the man who hears His sayings being 'like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock : and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock.' Also Mt 7:24-25. But Mary is also possibly thinking of Christ Himself as the Rock. See 1 Cor 10:4 where, speaking of the Israelites' kinship with the Christians who were to follow them, St Paul says, 'And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ'.

'SR' remains unidentified. One possibility is Sarah Robinson, daughter of Thomas Robinson of Killarney and his wife Elizabeth, née Alexander, but this is little more than conjecture.

## LETTER 23

To SR

Dublin 7th Mo 1812

As my mind hath often visited thee in thy distant habitation, I feel inclined to address thee with the language of sisterly affection, believing that as we both move on in our journey Zion-ward,<sup>1</sup> the expression of feeling sympathy has a tendency to strengthen & encourage the best life & therefore ought not to be withheld when freedom is allowed to impart it; I have often reflected with what exemplary care thou fulfilled that branch of the divine law "Honour thy father & thy mother" & I covet for thee the enjoyment of its unmix'd blessing "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee"<sup>2</sup> & I have believed that he designs to apportion an inheritance in that land which the vultures eye hath not seen,<sup>3</sup> neither may any ravenous beast dwell therein,<sup>4</sup> but the redeemed of the Lord shall inhabit there and encompass his holy mountain with songs of joy!<sup>5</sup> let us however remember that the way to the Kingdom is a thorny way, surrounded with difficulties which at times are permitted to assail the Christian traveller, with trials suited to our peculiar state & that many times it is through & only through tribulations, that our robes are washed & made white in the Lamb,<sup>6</sup> therefore we have no reason to be discouraged at the besetments of the Enemy, nor draw back even tho' we are tempted to give up, for He who is the Captain of our Salvation is able and willing to give us the victory, if we on our part are steady in our adherence to manifested duty - I have several times reflected with great pleasure on thy



faithfulness & thy dear husbands condescension in putting away the hounds<sup>7</sup> - go on my dear friend, be diligent in doing what thou feels to be right & thou wilt know an increase in heavenly knowledge which is well worth its price - thy situation in some respects is peculiarly trying & my sympathy is excited on thy account, but do not be discouraged my dear friend, let thy actions be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary<sup>8</sup> & then thou need not be careful of the rest, if the love of thy heavenly Father be drawing thee unto secret covenant with him, doubtless the Enemy of all good will also endeavour to ensnare thee & lead thee off from watchfulness & self denial - I have believed that much of our religious safety consists in our keeping our minds to ourselves & asking counsel for best wisdom for our friends may look outwardly to our external comforts, but He who searcheth the heart knoweth best, what medicine or what food will most suit our poor diseased states & he doth not always administer that which is most agreeable to our natures - but this we are sure of that if our eye be steady to him & our wills subjected to his will - all will work together for our good & all will contribute to our purification. MC

1. Zion-ward - heavenward.
2. Ex 20:12 - The fifth commandment.
3. Job 28:7 - 'There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen.'
4. Is 35:9 - 'No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there.'
5. Resonant of Is 56:7 - 'Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer:' or Is 30:29 - 'Ye shall have a song, [. . .] as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord'.
6. Rev 7:14 - '[. . .] And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'
7. Quakers were generally against fox-hunting and other blood-sports, considering them cruel, even at this early date.
8. **balance of the sanctuary** - The balance, or weighing scale, in the Jewish sanctuary was used to weigh monetary offerings toward the upkeep of the sanctuary or temple. Mary might also have been thinking of Job 31:6 - 'Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity'.

'CE' remains unidentified.

## LETTER 24

To CE

Dublin 8th Mo 21st 1812

My long Respected friend

The pleasing remembrance of early intercourse in which I experienced thy kind condescending attention to the follies of childhood & the affection excited by thy fostering tenderness, which then found its way to my heart & seemed to be indelibly impressed on my mind - have prompted me to salute thee by the hand of thy beloved partner with the expression of cordial regard, rejoicing that you enjoy the unspeakable blessings of "health, peace & competence"<sup>1</sup> & much desiring that you may ever possess the fruition of every enjoyment, which in allotments of Infinite Wisdom may be designed for you & truly we are all under the canopy of his divine instruction & are tender objects of his fatherly care & goodness who desires to do us good & who wills the happiness of all his dependant children; who have none in heaven but him nor in the whole Earth that they desire in comparison of him, which I believe my



dear Friend is thy case, & that thou art going forwards in a good degree of integrity, having thine eye and thine hope towards a better country, a city that hath foundations whose builder & maker is the Lord, I have often as in mental retrospect my thoughts turned towards thee, I have often been led to think that the blessed extension of heavenly regard, which eminently preserved thee from many of the worlds pollutions & which hath drawn thee to the love of retirement, that thou mayest be freed from the entanglements of a vain & corrupt world, is yet more & more alluring thee to search yet deeper for an inheritance in an everlasting Kingdom, when time to thee shall be no more! mayest thou my dear friend be encouraged to press forward in the spirit of thy mind & not to cease till thou obtain thy petition - Indeed it is an heart work<sup>2</sup> & an hard striving for victory, but Oh how well worth the conflict, how rich the reward for every pain, I know that outward forms & professions<sup>3</sup> will do little for us, it must be a daily waiting in secret silence before the throne of the Most High & a daily dying to the many propensities which so frequently arise within us, excuse me my dear friend that I have thus let my thoughts flow into expression etc etc.

MC

1. Source untraced. A 'competence' meant sufficient income for comfortable living without ostentatious luxury or the need to worry unduly about money.
2. an heart work - possibly work of the heart, or emotions, as 'heart' is clearly written in manuscript, unless this is a copyist's error for 'hard'.
3. outward forms & professions - external forms of religion such as ritual, and creeds or dogmas.

Mary's youngest brother, George Harrison Birkett (1792-1848), became a tallow-chandler like his father. He worked hard in the business and later employed Mary's son Nathaniel as an apprentice. He was a vegetarian (mentioned in R. Harrison's biography of *Richard Davis Webb: Dublin Quaker Printer 1805-1872* (Skeagh, Co. Cork: Red Barn Publishing, 1993), p.52), and a keen worker for temperance - 'the first to lecture in England in favour of the temperance cause' according to a press cutting announcing the death of his nephew Nathaniel Card in 1856 (family papers in possession of James Clarke). He helped to set up the first temperance society in Manchester in 1830. A devout and prominent Quaker for most of his life, he left the Society in 1837 when he was disowned for non-attendance at worship. (See R. Harrison, *Biographical Dictionary of Irish Quakers*, p.34). Perhaps he joined another denomination or became disillusioned in some way with the Society.

This is the first of two letters definitely addressed to George (the second follows as Letter 26). Others written to a brother, unnamed, in 1805 (Letter 7) and 1817 (Letter 42) may also be to him. His fondness for his eldest sister is revealed in his account of her last illness and death, included in this volume, p.188.

## LETTER 25

**My beloved Brother George**

**10th Mo 31st 1812**

In a sense of that precious feeling of tender affection which unites the Children of our heavenly Fathers family in the bond of heavenly unity, do I at this time yield to the desire which has long influenced my mind to throw before thee a few of the thoughts which have often occur'd to me when with the eye of mental retrospect my heart hath visited thee.

I am persuaded that the Lord hath drawn & is yet seeking more to draw thee into the inner court the temple of his holiness, where alone he will be



worshipped & where he hath set up his altar & established his covenant of light & life & very great is my concern for thee that thou mayest yield in this thy day to his divine requirings, that having enrolled thy name in the list of his valiant ones, thou mayest very steadily adhere to his counsels, whereby thou wilt be abilitated to maintain the warfare & fight the good fight of faith & finally to receive the Everlasting Crown - the promised inheritance of all who persevere & without fainting abide to the end & that we may the more readily arrive at this attainment, it is very necessary that we should be watchful over our own spirits & that we carefully put away every hindering thing, lest in any way the great work of our complete redemption be marred; He knows, who knows the secrets of all hearts what mysterious dispensations are most necessary to accomplish this great end & if he see it best for the subjugation of thy will & of my will to place over us a crucible in which the dross may melt away,<sup>1</sup> should not our hearts bow in gratitude for his condescending goodness & must we not be very careful that we revolt not neither look with an eye of reason,<sup>2</sup> receiving[?]<sup>3</sup> only the outside & judging that such trials of our faith & patience of our faith is necessary, here is the snare & surely all that is within me covets that thou & I may escape it, let us not in word only, but in deed, give up our wills to the yoke of Christ, let us allow him to choose what way he pleases to bring us to glory, let us not chalk out a path for ourselves, seeking for ease & fleshly liberty, but let us patiently endure the sorrows of the night & joy shall [?]<sup>4</sup> in the morning of Gods salvation - perhaps my dear brother we both partake of a disposition that dislikes restraint, that is ready to complain & to murmur - but oh! let us check it - [it] is assuredly a device of our souls enemy it will entangle us in Egyptian bondage, it will leave the work imperfect & we never shall be able to press forward in this great warfare till we know a death to pass over this propensity - Oh! that we may be careful not to protract our stay in the unsettled wilderness, by giving way to the cunning devices of our cunning & envious enemy, who plausibly insinuates that we are not well treated that we deserve better, whereas if the secrets of our hearts were unveiled if our ingratitude & neglect were exposed to our view, as it is to the eye of him with whom we have to do, surely the diseases & the infirmities within would appear so great, that we should be ready to cry out, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death"<sup>5</sup> indeed his ways are not as our ways, he tries us & proves us by means of instruments, that he may fit us for the purpose of his own Glory, he chasteneth he purgeth us, he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth - Oh! be thou willing patiently to endure his refining hand - do not murmur, but bear for the Lords sake all that he shall think best for thee - then all will work for thy good, all will promote the great end for which he gave thee being & neither heights nor depths neither afflictions nor deprivations nor disappointments shall be able to separate thee from the love of Christ, but contrariwise[sic] they shall largely contibute to refine thee & promote in thee the blessed designs of Everlasting good - much could I add from the living feeling that thou art near & dear to thy Redeemer - Oh! mayest thou reward his love by a meek & patient submission to his law reveal'd in thy heart, his law which points to thee to conquer thy natural tempers - to humble thee, to curb thy desires, to restrain thy words, to seal thy lips often, to mollify thy actions & calls for that strict discipline which thro' faith will fit thee for an inheritance with the saints in light, to which that we may each attain & on the way, walk in sweet unity & holy fellowship is the desire of thy affectionate sister

M Card



1. to place [. . .] melt away - familiar image of the heating process used in the production of metal to remove impurities, the 'dross'. Suffering is the crucible in which self-will is dissolved.
2. look with an eye of reason - to question Providence according to human reason.
3. receiving - word difficult to read in manuscript, 'receiving' seems most likely reading.
4. Word/s omitted in manuscript.
5. Rom 7:24 - 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' From a passage in which St Paul discusses the flesh versus the will.

This letter to George Harrison Birkett is placed here, following on from the letter to him immediately above, because, though undated, its position in the collection indicates it may have been written near the same time.

## LETTER 26

To my brother George

[Undated]

How unspeakably dear to each other are the children of our heavenly Fathers family, how precious is that unity which nothing earthly can break, how intimate is the fellowship into which they are introduced even a fellowship with the Father & with his beloved son, thro' the ineffable communication of the spirit of truth, which leads & guides into all truth, which brings our words & our thoughts as well as our actions into a conformity to the pure truth into which I long that we may be baptized again & again & then shall we know the joy which the world can neither give nor take away! but verily my dear brother, there is no entering rightly into the land of Canaan without first passing thro' a waste howling wilderness<sup>1</sup> where the beasts of passion dwell & the thorns of care surround, there must we abide till nature or self be quite subdued, till the will gets broken & all perverseness be done away & Oh! blessed & praised be the name of our God, he hath provided a laver<sup>2</sup> in which we may work until our sins are washed away, he hath provided a medicine (bitter indeed & hard to take yet) sufficient to heal the diseases of our souls, to purge away all our dross<sup>3</sup> & restore us to a state of spiritual health & soundness.

1. Deut 32:10 - 'He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.' From the song of Moses, extolling God's greatness and His special relationship with the people of Israel.
2. laver - metal vessel used in the ritual ablutions of Jewish priests.
3. dross - impurities.



'A R' appears to be 'A Robinson', the addressee of the letter immediately following this one. One theme running through both epistles is the need to attend meetings for worship. In the first, Mary stresses how, though Christ's 'light & life is confined to no place', He has said He will be present when 'two or three are gather'd together in his name'. The second urges 'A Robinson' to 'keep close to meetings'. Another related theme is that of good and bad shepherds. In the first, Mary wishes that 'the extended crook of the shepherd of Israel may gather us', while, in the second, 'A Robinson' is addressed as one led astray by 'false shepherds'.

## LETTER 27

To A R

Dublin 12th Mo 25th 1812

My dear Friend

The recollection of thy kindness & attention to me, when lately beneath your hospitable roof, has frequently excited those pleasurable sensations which are naturally produced by reciprocation of regard & so sweet is the recurrence, as I feel it engraven on the tablet of memory,<sup>1</sup> so delightful is the intercourse, an intercourse founded on disinterested love, that it caused my heart to overflow with thankfulness to the munificent Author of every blessing, believing that his glorious design for his noble creature Man, is that Man might partake of his unspeakable felicity - I have fervently wished for us both my dear friend that the extended crook of the shepherd of Israel<sup>2</sup> may gather us from the unfruitful hills, where I am persuaded we both have wander'd, may allure us into the low valley, where the fructifying dews rest long & where the flocks lie down in safety from the teeth of the devourer,<sup>3</sup> for truly we can have no repose till we are beneath the shadows of his presence, nor rejoice in the soundness of spiritual health, till our appetite for the food of his table is restored, & tho' I am convinced that the irradiating influence of his divine light & life is confined to no place, is enclosed in no profile,<sup>4</sup> yet assuredly there, where the two or three are gather'd together in his name<sup>5</sup> for the very purpose of receiving renewed refreshment, there he has promised to be & there I have no doubt thou hast known him to be & I do believe that as thou art brought into a willingness to take up the cross, to despise the shame, that there thou wilt yet be favor'd to feel him who remains to be the healer of breaches, a restorer to paths to dwell in. It is no new thing for such as we children to have missed our way when the way marks were removed - to have followed into snares of danger, when those beacons, whose office it was to discover shoals & rocks, that so the experienced mariner might avoid them, refused to give their light, but can we be enough thankful that the day of our visitation<sup>6</sup> is not passed over, that while with some their summer is ended & they are not gather'd,<sup>7</sup> that we are again reached to, again are we put into a capacity to seek for his indwelling presence without which no comfort, no happiness, no joy can penetrate the heart - oh! may we both seeing so much of our day is spent, use all diligence to make our calling & election<sup>8</sup> sure, may we press forward thro' the croud[sic] of vain suggestions, futile speculations & confounded reasonings - till we touch with our hands the hem of his garment,<sup>9</sup> till we feel ourselves healed of all our infirmities & partake of the vivifying virtue which goeth forth out of him, the saviour of the world.

My beloved friend I ardently wish to impress on thy mind a sense of the preciousness of the day of visitation - like that of the outward creation we cannot cause it, we may be enclosing ourselves in a dark place, be deprived of



the sunshine & thereby we may frustrate the design of our existence, but we cannot protract the period of light or cause the showers to descend at our pleasure, we must wait for the returns of each morning we must often endure a tempestuous night & we can only be diligent when ability is afforded to obtain the evidence that an Eternal inheritance is in store for us when these transient seasons shall cease to roll over our heads, our companions, like the falling leaves in autumn, drop off one after another, thou & I ere long will follow them & perhaps ere long will be forgotten, of what importance is it that we now embrace every opportunity of obtaining an everlasting reward - every moment in which he may be availingly sought & every help which he assuredly hath been pleased to ordain in the assembling of ourselves together, humbly & diligently to feel after him.

M Card

1. **tablet of memory** - an expression used frequently in eighteenth/early nineteenth-century poetry and therefore found more often in Mary's verse. A tablet is a stone on which an inscription is written, or, less well known, a thin sheet of wood or ivory for writing on. Several could be strung together to form a kind of book. The memory is thus envisaged as a site on which the memories are inscribed without easy erasure.
2. **shepherd of Israel** - Jesus in the persona of the Good Shepherd.
3. **the devourer** - the Devil who devours souls as the wolf does sheep.
4. **profile** - outline or boundary.
5. Mt 18:20 - 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'
6. **day of our visitation** - the 'day of visitation' was a concept promoted by the Quaker theologian Robert Barclay (1648-1690). It was believed that there occurred in the life of each individual a special time, 'a period in which the opportunity of repentance and response to the light was on offer. It could be at any time, but it was temporary; once lost the opportunity was gone, never to recur' (Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p.125).
7. **gather'd** - harvested.
8. **election** - being chosen as one of the saved, or elect.
9. Mt 9 tells how a sick woman was cured after touching Christ's clothing - 'And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with the issue of blood twelve years, came behind him and touched the hem of his garment' (Mt 9:20).

See letter 27, to 'A R', immediately above.

## LETTER 28

To A Robison

5th Mo 21st 1813

My dear friend, In & under a feeling of near sympathy & heart tendering affection, am I again induced to pour forth the effusions of my mind, being almost afraid to withhold the expression of unfeigned concern, which at times has assisted my inmost thoughts & yet unwilling unnecessarily to intrude on thee, O my beloved friend I do believe that the Lord God Almighty is now visiting thy spirit, that his healing balm again salutes thy contrite heart saying come away from every defilement of flesh & spirit from every false allurements from the mixtures & the fallacy of that which is not God, & from every luminous appearance<sup>1</sup> which is alike unsound & unsafe, ah! could I convey to thee my ardent wish that now while ability is given to thee, thou mayest obey his heavenly call & follow him tho' he may lead thee thro' the dreary ways of secret desolation, tho' he may hide from thee the light of his countenance, tho' he may try thee in the furnace of deep inward affliction, tho' he may seem at times ready to repel thy mournings, oh! I trust thou may be enabled to press thro' all - to persevere - to lie down as at his feet, to condemn thyself before him as in



dust & ashes & to hold fast even wrestling as did Jacob, till the day broke & God blessed him!<sup>2</sup> so when thy night of tribulation & inward purification shall be passed over, then shalt know the dawning of the day of Gods Salvation, thou shalt taste of the joys prepared for those whose robes are washed & made white<sup>3</sup> & thou shalt know the winter to be over & gone & the storms & tempests of thy tossed mind, to be all removed & done away, thou shalt rejoice with thanksgiving & thy felicity no man may take from thee, I am thankful in believing that an open door, a fresh extending of the gathering arm, is known by thee my beloved friend let nothing obstruct thy growth, Oh! consider thy all is at stake, it may the last time do not then let thyself be robbed, may I say again robbed & spoiled; do not be prevailed upon to omit meetings, they are as thou knowest opportunities of spiritual growth - come out of the mixture, out of the decivableness[sic] - come saith the Lord wash make thee clean & I will receive thee & thou shalt be to him a daughter, one dearly beloved!<sup>4</sup> Oh! my dear friend do keep close to meetings, for if thou do not the enemy may introduce lukewarmness, & what wilt thou do then? alas! thou mayest frustrate the designs of our heavenly Father! but let me not think of it, I trust no such cup of awful dereliction may ever be thy portion - No - I believe thou wilt yield, I believe that thou art in earnest & that thy God is in earnest with thee! Oh! may his divine power strengthen & be with thee thro' the perils of time & lead thee into an happy Eternity, where sorrow & sighing flee away,<sup>5</sup> but my dear friend do not be discouraged, tho' conflicts, fears & doubts may sometimes be permitted, be patient, be faithful & rest assured that thy compassionate Saviour hath had pity upon thee - he hath seen thy aberrations, he hath been grieved for thy outgoing, like that of a lamb, turned aside from the flock turned by false shepherds, who should have nurtured thee & have comforted thee, who should have cherished the growth of thy innocent life! but alas they deceived thee, they let[led] thee away from the safe pasture, they brought thee out among briars and thorns & they left thee in the waste howling wilderness<sup>6</sup> - Return then dear friend, now while thou canst, be willing again to resume the yoke of Christ again to bear the overturnings of his holy hand & he who with a pitying eye hath seen that thy outgoing was not thro' malice, but that they who should have taught thee have caused thee to err, he will yet heal all thy backslidings, he will love thee freely bear with me then if in the earnestness of sincere regard, I venture to remind thee that it is only in his time that we can be willing, that it is not for us to accept when we please, we must use the Lords opportunity, not our own, he knows best what is best for us & when he calls, he will accept, but not in our own time, it must be in deep submission May He continue to work in thee till all that his controversy is with, be thoroughly purged away, till thou attainest to the full regeneration & dost become a new creature & dost feel thy title to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God,<sup>7</sup> let me then plead a little with thee of the dangers which surround thee, look where wert thou injured? there might an Enemy enter again, hath thy wall of defence been broken down? be it thy concern to build it up again by the way that thou wentest forth, by the same shalt thou return & may thy returning be blessed & prospered:- I could enlarge for my heart is drawn forth towards thee in love & sympathy - but I only wished to plead with thee a little in the cause of thy God & my God, to whom in his most precious manifestation in the secret of thy heart I commend thee & am thy friend

M Card



1. **luminous appearance** - the image is that of the Ignis Fatuus or 'foolish fire', often called the will-o-the-wisp. This was a phosphorescent light sometimes seen above bog or marshes that shifted as travellers moved toward it, leading them astray. It was sometimes attributed to the work of a wicked sprite.
2. Gen 32:24-32 tells how Jacob wrestled with an unknown man until dawn when he received a blessing: 'Thy name shalt be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed' (v. 28).
3. Rev 7:14 - 'And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'
4. Source untraced.
5. Is 35:10 - 'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'
6. Deut 32:10 - 'He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.' From the song of Moses, extolling God's greatness and His special relationship with the people of Israel.
7. Gen 3:24 - the way to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, the fruit of which conferred eternal life, was barred to Adam and Even as punishment for their sin in eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The next letter, to a young woman identified in the text as Maria, is one of counsel and encouragement to a novice in the spiritual life, exhorting her to 'greater conformity' to the Discipline, particularly as an example to other young people.

## LETTER 29

**My beloved friend**

**2nd Mo 26th 1814**

My mind has so frequently recurred to thee & thy remembrance has so sweetly dwelt within mine heart, that this venture to address thee, trusting thou wilt receive it in the love which drew it forth for I do earnestly covet that thou mayest be more & more sensible of the preciousness of the day of divine visitation<sup>1</sup> which I am satisfied has dawn'd in thee, that that thou mayest carefully dwell within that light, which gradually is arising in thee whereby thou wilt indubitably discover the beauty & the brightness of that true way, which our forefathers found to be the highway to the kingdom of heaven; O! dear Maria, how inestimable is the value of the day of visitation - a day in which one may work availingly to the sanctification of our never dying souls & in which we may attain to a near union with our glorious creator, & become gradually transformed into his image & renewed up into that everlasting possession which was purchased for us by the blood & death of an immaculate Redeemer<sup>2</sup> - & verily there is no other way, the cross leads to the crown, we cannot invent an easier passage - we cannot invert the order of Providence - it was once truth & it will ever be truth, that self denial is absolutely necessary in the Christian race, & is it not well worth while to yield obedience to the monitions of wisdom,<sup>3</sup> whereby we shall be fitted for the company of saints & angels & dwell for ever in that pure felicity which is prepared for us, bear with me dear Maria (for indeed it is not every one who will bear the truth & it is a mark of humility to receive it) when I have seen thee beloved & lovely, encircled amidst thy young companions who look to thee, & many of whom would almost follow thy example (so prevalent & forcible is affection in youth) how do I desire that thou mayest clearly evince by thy steady conduct & close adherence to the divine principle within thee, that the power is at work in thee, thus wilt thou happily promote the great cause & the hands of thy dear Mother will be strengthened to labour amongst the youth who tho' perhaps clear of



what the world might call evil, are yet far from obeying the truth & surely the truth requires that we should put away all foolishness of dress as well as conversation, that we should be separated[sic] in appearance & in reality from the spirit & temper of the world & that we should be daily, nay hourly pressing after the more full enjoyment of union & communion with God - which when once known is so sweet to the soul, that we can no longer relish the transitory pleasures, which once might have had power over us & which will assuredly fade as a leaf - while the peace which is given by obeying the truth grows more permanent & we feel the avenues of enjoyment extend, yea & thro' Eternity they will endure when every other hope has forsaken us - I hope my dear friend thou wilt not be offended with my plainness for I do indeed long to see thee come into greater degree of conformity to the dictates of truth, I long that thy valuable Mother may be strengthened & help'd to labour & I do think that the precious union between you will add much to thy felicity.

1. **day of divine visitation** - the 'day of visitation' was a concept promoted by the Quaker theologian Robert Barclay (1648-1690). It was believed that there occurred in the life of each individual a special time, 'a period in which the opportunity of repentance and response to the light was on offer. It could be at any time, but it was temporary; once lost the opportunity was gone, never to recur' (Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p.125).
2. Here the concept of the 'day of visitation' is linked with a notion of the atonement which bears resemblance to evangelicalism.
3. **monitions of wisdom** - inner guidance of Divine Wisdom.

This epistle, like the one to Maria above, stresses the importance of the day of visitation which is here called 'the precious day of the Lords visiting power', and urges its recipient, identified in the text as Mary, not to let this opportunity pass her by.

## LETTER 30

To M A

Dublin 3rd Mo 12th 1814

My beloved friend

I have so long & so frequently had thee in sweet remembrance in the uniting influence of our heavenly Fathers love, that I hope thou wilt excuse my addressing thee, for I desire not to intrude on any, thou hast been brought very near to my best life,<sup>1</sup> & I have had a sense that the precious day of the Lords visiting power has arisen in thine heart & I have longed to charge thee to prize it, it is a day of inestimable value, in which we can acceptably work out our souls salvation, in which we can draw nigh unto God & feel him to draw nigh unto us - in the light of this day, thou seest the beauty of holiness & the emptiness of temporal enjoyments - mayest thou more & more press thro' the croud[sic] of opposition which the unwearied adversary<sup>2</sup> will ever raise to impede our progress - nor rest until the soul obtain its full desire of union & communion with God for which glorious purpose it was called forth into being. Oh! come my dear Mary, come away from vanity & folly, from every fading enjoyment, from every vague amusement, from the muddy waters which cannot quench the thirst of thy immortal Soul - yea, come & have fellowship with us, for truly our fellowship is with the Father & with his son Jesus Christ & in that blessed communion which is abundantly to be known in the state of being, there is no sorrow nor the feeling of any trouble - for the soul was



created to rest in the bosom of its God & there only can it find felicity, no earthly possessions can reach to it, they can only touch the animal with which it is encircled<sup>3</sup> - oh why are any so foolish as to be deluded with the tinsel glare<sup>4</sup> of temporary goods, to waste that time every moment of which we must account for, and for what? for a bubble on the wave, a flower that fades as it is culled[?] - an hope built on imagination which never will be realized, I trust it is not so with us, let thine eye my beloved friend be singly & closely attentive to the arisings of the divine light within thee, suffer not thyself to be allured off thy watch by any terrestrial object, remember thou art working for Eternity, what thou sowest now, thou wilt reap for ever, & if thou art wise enough to forsake all & follow the true light, it will infallibly lead thee beyond the grave to an enduring habitation where thou for ever mayest rejoice - I desire not to enlarge, but I intreat[sic] thee, that thou hesitate not to yield to the gentle intimations which are made known to thee, put away every thing which he requires, give up fully & freely (for he loves a cheerful giver)<sup>5</sup> grieve not that spirit of purity which is requiring of thee to be pure as he is pure, so shall thine heavenly visitant delight to be with thee & thou wilt find his company repays thee infinitely[sic] for all that thou hast forsaken - thus thou wilt grow in grace & be amply replenished with the divine presence, which thou wilt know & possess in great serenity & peace - I do believe that thy example will be a blessing to thy sister Lucy & that she will also be drawn by the cords of love, which I feel to flow towards her. MC

1. **best life** - innermost, spiritual and therefore dearest life.
2. **the unwearied adversary** - the Devil, tireless in seeking to entrap human souls.
3. **the animal with which it is encircled** - the human body, seen as an outer covering of the soul or self.
4. **tinsel glare** - attraction without real substance or value.
5. 2 Cor 9:7 - 'Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.'

The addressee of this letter remains unidentified.

## LETTER 31

**My precious friend**

**Dublin 3rd Mo 12th 1814**

While I was meditating on the heavy accusations of thy unwearied Enemy<sup>1</sup> & how he has endeavour'd to cast thee down & if possible to sink thee below hope - those words of the prophet Jeremiah came so before me & I believe them to be so applicable to thy case, that I hope I may be allowed to quote them for thee "In those days & in that time saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for & there shall be none & the sins [of] Judah & they shall not be found for I will pardon them whom I reserve["]-<sup>2</sup> MC

1. **thy unwearied Enemy** - the Devil.
2. Jer 50:20 - Mary reproduces the biblical text exactly apart from some punctuation. In Jer 50, Jeremiah foretells the destruction of Babylon, and the return of the Israelites to their own land. As the Babylonian captivity was a punishment for Israel's sin and unfaithfulness, so return to Israel signifies redemption.



The initials of the addressee are not clearly written in manuscript. 'JP' seems most likely.

## LETTER 32

JP[?]

Dublin 3rd Mo 23rd 1814

Impressed by the belief that thy kindness will induce thee to receive these lines favourably - I thus venture the expression of sentiments, which for some time past have rested on my mind as it has been turned with affectionate solicitude towards thee my respected friend, for we know that very swiftly in[is] the period of our temporal duration extinct & that the time of performing the great work for which we were brought forth into existence, will soon be passed over & that then the attractive influences of temporal enjoyments will have no power to amuse or to cheer & the certain evidence of the possession of an interest in the kingdom of heaven will be of more worth in our view than all the pleasures or the wealth that Earth can bestow, I have earnestly desired that thou mayest closely apply thine heart unto him who is I believe disposed to be very favourable unto thee & that thou mayest not be ashamed - in this day of deviation to walk consistently with his requirings & to yield thine heart more fully to that Divine power which is able to lead thee safely thro' time & will be to thee an earnest of that glorious Eternity, where those who have escaped shall unceasingly rejoice why then should we forfeit the inestimable priveledge[sic] of communion with the Most High, for the meaner gratifications of perishing indulgence, let it not be our case! but let us assert the nobility & dignity of our high immortal nature & let us not shrink from the way, which he is pleased to mark out for us, as members of a Society professing to be led & guided by the spirit of truth - let us be found among those who are yielding to the cross, are putting away all the defilements of flesh & Spirit & are drawing nearer & nearer to the footsteps of the flock - our friends[Friends] in former days were many of them gifted with high intellectual endowments, had very cultivated understandings & had doubtless polished manners, suiting their ranks in life, but when they seperated[sic] from the spirit of the world & dispensed with its allurements, when the strength & vigour & energy of their minds were turned to the light within - what noble advocates were they in their masters cause, how magnanimously did they soar above the sphere of man! how bright was their fame how inestimable their example & having turned many to Righteousness they shine as the stars for ever & ever -1

I am persuaded that the care & visiting love of the Most High is extended to many of the young people in this City<sup>2</sup> & I trust that they will yet [a]dorn their high profession<sup>3</sup> - mayest thou my dear friend be one of the foremost to range thyself on the side of Religion & to devote thy fine abilities to the noblest cause in which man can be engaged! hast thou not felt the emptiness of worldly pursuits & hast thou not longed after superior & durable enjoyments intended for us, if we on our part to not unwisely frustrate the gracious purposes of Omnipotence - hast thou not known the vacuity of temporal indulgences, that they cannot satisfy the thirst of the Soul - Oh! then while it is in thy power mayest thou be willing to bow to the cross which unfailingly leads to the crown to stoop down & drink of the river of the water of life, whose streams make the heart glad, I would not willingly intrude on thee my dear friend & I hope thou wilt bear with my thus addressing thee & that the freedom of friendship will allow it - I know that in the estimation of the world thou would'st shrink from what is dishonorable thou would'st not say one thing & do another - thou



woulds't not promise payment & break thy promise & is it not more dishonourable to profess the pure living truth - & to possess any practice opposite to its interests - we class ourselves with those who are led & guided by the Holy Spirit, friends of God & friends of man - with those who by reason of the inwardness of their spirits & of their trembling beneath the power which made agrippa tremble<sup>4</sup> - were called Quakers<sup>5</sup> - & do we not lie in our hearts if with this high profession we are conformed to the world? try I beseech thee by the words of our Saviour, by the doctrines of the apostles & see whether they do not require a renunciation of many things which young people indulge in but which are certainly marked out as steps of the broad way that leads down to the chambers of Death - the enerring standard of Gospel truth is lifted up for us, by that let us regulate our lives, for by that we must be judged & there will come a day to thee & to me when it will be of inestimable value to us that we have shun'd[sic] the snares of the evil one - thro' watchful & humble dedication to manifested duty! mayest thou yield obedience to the drawings of thine heavenly Fathers love, may the brightness of thy mind be devoted to his cause & mayest thou fully preponderate on the right side - not remaining in the skirts of the Camp<sup>6</sup> - so mayest thou become a polished shaft in his hand & be eminently useful to promote the help & salvation of many is the desire of thy sincere friend M Card

1. Mary is referring to Friends in the early years of the Quaker movement as exemplars.
2. **this City** - Dublin.
3. **[a]dorn their high profession** - be a credit to the Society of Friends.
4. Herod Agrippa I (Marcus Julius Agrippa), d. AD 44, grandson of Herod the Great who, according to the Biblical account, ordered the slaughter of all children under two years old in his kingdom so that the infant Jesus would not survive. Herod Agrippa I ruled in north-east Palestine and persecuted some of the early Christians. According to Acts 12, he had James, the brother of John, executed and imprisoned Peter. But Herod Agrippa himself came to a very unpleasant end - he was smitten by an angel of the Lord who caused him to be 'eaten of worms' (Acts 12:23).
5. Mary is referring to the ways in which Quakers are said to have obtained their name. When early Friends attended their meetings, they were observed to tremble, or 'quake', when filled with the Holy Spirit. Another version is that George Fox, when arraigned in court on a charge of blasphemy, bid the judge 'tremble at the word of the Lord'. The judge, by way of a retaliatory jest, called Fox and his followers Quakers and the name stuck.
6. **in the skirts of the Camp** - outside the main body of Christ's army, not fully committed. This battle imagery is reiterated in the wish that the friend should become a 'polished shaft' in the Lord's hand. A polished arrow or spear flies faster.

Mary's cousin Catherine (Kitty) was disowned by Friends on 15 March 1814 for marrying outside the Society in a service conducted by a priest. This did not mean, however, that she was completely given up. Mary, though aware Kitty might scoff at her letter, nevertheless writes to express her sorrow at the separation which she compares to that felt on 'the death of one of [her] own children', and to hope that Kitty will still find 'access tho' a different access to the house of prayer'. In all probability, Kitty would now be attending the services of the denomination to which her new husband belonged.

## LETTER 33

To C

Dublin 4th Mo 30th 1814

If the thirst wherewith I have thirsted after thy souls salvation & the bond of strong affection which rivetted my soul to thine, may apologise for this intrusion I would entreat thee, let not the light that is in thee become darkness,



lest thou be left in darkness like the world & its deluded votaries; reflect I pray thee when the spirit of the Most High deigns in unutterable condescension to draw thy mind from surrounding vanity & grant an access tho' a different access to the house of prayer, that thou in days that are over & gone wert preciously visited by the Shepherd of Israel, thine inward eye was open'd to see his beauty & the desultory pleasures of time were stained in thy view, thou felt & thou bowed to the power of truth & thou wert determined to bear his yoke whereby thou wouldst in due time have been made free from the captivity & bondage of sin, have been indeed "a Kings daughter all glorious within["]1 & become worthy of that immortal crown, which in the vision of the night was shewn thee, with that of our precious grandmother<sup>2</sup> who is now gone to her everlasting mansion<sup>3</sup>- oh! my Cousin ought I to give way to my feelings in thus addressing thee: thy levity may prompt the indiscreet exposure of these lines - but if thou knew the depth of anguish, the sorrow as for the death of one of my own children, which pervadeth my mind as the intertwined fibres of our tender love broken - if for one moment thou wouldst feel as I feel, thou wouldst not lightly treat nor foolishly expose these lines - ah! who can tell the matchless mercy of our God! his crook of love<sup>4</sup> may yet "allure thee into solitude & there speak comfortably to thee"<sup>5</sup> he may yet purify thy soul & create it a fit receptacle for his Divine presence whereby thou mayest enjoy communion with him & fellowship with those whose fellowship is verily with the Father & with his son Jesus Christ - then wilt thou take delight in secret contemplation, in continual aspiration of heart to him who hath called thee & who yet remains in thee a light to enlighten thy darkness, a Redeemer full mighty to save, full powerful to deliver, to him I recommend thee for to him have been my secret supplications on thy behalf, that he may be graciously pleased to extend to thee a day of effectual visitation,<sup>6</sup> that all thy levity & all thy vanity may be extinguished by the cross of Jesus, which ever was & ever will be the alone way to that Kingdom where I fervently pray that we may meet when time & the things of time shall be to us no more. thy affectionate MC

1. Ps 45:13 - 'The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.'
2. our precious grandmother - their paternal grandmother, Catherine Birkett of Liverpool.
3. her everlasting mansion - derived from Jesus' promise that 'In my Father's house are many mansions' (Jn 14:2).
4. crook of love - the shepherd's crook was used to guide sheep back to the fold.
5. Hos 2:14 - 'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.' This passage is quoted in the extract Mary copied from the writings of the continental quietist Miguel de Molinos, reproduced in this volume, p.169.
6. day of effectual visitation - the 'day of visitation' was a concept promoted by the Quaker theologian Robert Barclay (1648-1690). It was believed that there occurred in the life of each individual a special time, 'a period in which the opportunity of repentance and response to the light was on offer. It could be at any time, but it was temporary; once lost the opportunity was gone, never to recur' (Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, p.125).



This letter congratulates Sarah (Sally) Sharpe Birkett (b.1787), Mary's cousin and Catherine's (Kitty's) younger sister, on her marriage. Its tone, however, is very serious. It offers 'sympathy' on a 'solemn' change and emphasises the obligations that marriage entails. It also concentrates on the advantages of Sally's situation in comparison with Kitty's. In this letter and the previous one to Kitty, Mary touches on how, she felt, they might perceive her. Kitty might consider her letter a joke and show it to her friends, while Sally might wonder why Mary could not leave her children to attend her cousin's wedding when she was able to do so to attend religious meetings.

## LETTER 34

To S Birkett

9th Mo 7th 1814

My beloved Cousin

Since the last few lines with which I addressed thee I very frequently felt inclined to sit down & affectionately salute thee, not only to congratulate thee on the pleasing prospect which has thus agreeably[sic] open'd & which I trust will animate & cheer thy path of life, but also to express sympathy with thee, on the approaching change which even in the happiest allotment, to me appears solemn - a covenant which only death can dissolve, a bond which no human power may cancell for thee, my dear Sally, the thorns seem conceal'd by the flowers & thy companion (by all that I hear) well adapted to shelter thy head from the storms of life & afford thee that comfort which sweetly soothes the poor tired pilgrim as he walks along the devious way;<sup>1</sup> I rejoice that he is older steadier & riper in experience than thou,<sup>2</sup> because I think he will direct thy judgment in the choice of thy friends & that thy good sense & good nature will readily yield to propriety & rectitude, thus thou wilt be strengthen'd & supported in the right way & many a rugged step will be avoided, which has been the lot of those less guarded: but why need I offer the effusions of heartfelt solicitude? when thy abode is beneath the maternal roof of thy inestimable friend & mistress;<sup>3</sup> to whom I verily believe thou owest most of the temporal & even spiritual blessings which have been shower'd down remarkably on thy head, how different dear girl is thy allotment from that of thy poor sister C:<sup>4</sup> she, led off by the evanescent glare of vanity & folly while thou art held as by a divine hand within the bands and wholesome restraints of self denying discipline - she daily surrounded by votaries of incincerity[sic] & fashion, who flatter from self love & offer adulation unaccompanied by a spark of affectionate regard, who while they occupy her thoughts & her attentions, deprive her of the invaluable privildge[sic] of her time; but thou art encircled by faithful associates & thy mind left at liberty to pursue the best avocation,<sup>5</sup> even to cultivate an intimate acquaintance with the monitor within - the spirit of truth by whom thou knowest that we, as a people do particularly profess to be lead & guided & often when I have reflected that we are so much less bright than our forefathers were<sup>6</sup> - that we are so stripped of the gifts & graces, those beautiful ornaments worn by them, I cannot but conclude that the fault is in ourselves, that we do not as they did watchfully endeavour to retain that indwelling spirit, by which we gradually become transformed into its image & likeness & possess[sic] of power over every corruption - may we & all ours by taking heed thereto, become mesurably[sic] to experience a redemption from the bondage of sin & the possessing of an enduring inheritance, which we know to be infinitely more valuable than all else that the tongue of man can name - I received thy affectionate letter yesterday & am much obliged by its kind contents - I fear it will not be in my power to attend thy presentation<sup>7</sup> tho' I do



wish & much desire to pay thee every mark of respect & approbation in my power; but my little children so strongly claim my close attention, that I very seldom leave them but to go to meetings thou wilt not I trust attribute my declining to go to disrespect or negligence, but to the difficulty of breaking thro' my domestic chains - thou mayest probably remark that I sometimes go from home to quarterly meetings - yet remember the proverb that "hunger breakes thro' stone walls"<sup>8</sup> & I generally go in the hope of obtaining a morsel of bread - I am with desire for thy happiness thy truly affc cousin MC

1. **the devious way** - a term for the path of life seen as tortuous and full of temptations.
2. Sarah, at twenty-seven, was hardly young by early nineteenth-century standards, but Mary's expressed view of the marital relationship is a traditional one – a wife should let herself be guided by her husband.
3. Catherine and Sarah's mother, Mary Sharpe Birkett, had died in 1794 when they were small children. The 'friend & mistress' with whom Sarah lived therefore stood in place of a mother.
4. **C** - Catherine (Kitty) Birkett.
5. **avocation** - occupation or calling.
6. **less bright than our forefathers were** - contemporary Quakers are considered to have lost the powerful spirituality and conviction of the early Friends.
7. **presentation** - marriage. A Quaker marriage was, and still is, a simple affair in which both parties present themselves at the Meeting for worship and make their declarations to one another, after which the certificate is signed by both parties and witnesses.
8. "Hunger," they say, "breaks stone walls." George Chapman (1559/60-1634) with Jonson and Marston, *Eastward Hoe*, V. 1. 1605. Also 'Hunger pierceth stone wall.' John Heywood (1497-c.1580), *A Dialogue containing all the Proverbs in the English Tongue*, Pt. I, ch.12, 1546.

The aunt to whom this letter was written has not been identified.

## LETTER 35

**My most tenderly beloved Aunt**

**Dublin 4th Mo 21st 1815**

My heart overflows with gratitude to the giver of every good, that I am thus again permitted to address thee & that notwithstanding the severe affliction with which he in his wisdom, hath seen meet to visit thee, yet he hath dealt by us with mercy in thus restoring thee to us, I wish to be sufficiently thankful for this unspeakable favor, whereby he hath been pleased to turn our sorrow into joy, for truly my soul rejoices in his almighty goodness, thus extended in the lengthening of thy precious life, whereby he hath manifested that he can bring down to the gates of the grave & that he can redeem & reanimate therefrom at his pleasure - My dearest aunt, to whom at this moment I feel closely bound in near & unspeakable affection, yea so near that without thee & a few others the world is to me but a wilderness - may He our adorable Master condescend to instruct us more fully in the things that belong to our everlasting peace - May He open our eyes to see that all but him is lighter than vanity & that whatever tends to promote the great work of regeneration is to be received with thankfulness however bitter to the creature<sup>1</sup> & O it is my fervent prayer that thou & I may be favor'd to draw nearer & yet nearer to the throne of grace, that we may drink of the water of life eternal & partake together of living bread feeling humble & unspeakably precious access to that Sacred presence out of which there is no enjoyment, we have both dearly beloved aunt experienced a reprieve from the jaws of death,<sup>2</sup> may we rightly estimate the invaluable favor & be more fitly prepared for an entrance



into an happy Eternity, yea & to receive an evidence that our transgressions are blotted out & our sins washed away by the precious blood of a compassionate saviour - I feel as I write an earnest solicitude for our progress & furtherance in the right way that we may both be more dedicated & singly attentive to the light which shineth graciously upon us & Oh if ever I be permitted to see thy face again it is what I have greatly coveted, but whether or no, let us draw near to him & he will grant what is but for us even an inheritance in his holy kingdom where we may for ever sing for joy - I feel my love greatly increased to dear Mary -----<sup>3</sup> & all those who have been so kind to thee & I trust they will feel the reward attached to every act of love & duty - My dear parents intend setting out to see thee as soon as the yearly meeting<sup>4</sup> is over-

1. the creature - the self, particularly one's own will and desires.
2. Mary may be referring to the liver disease mentioned in her diary (see Journal entry '8th Mo 24th 1812', above in this volume) or, perhaps, might have been ill following the birth of her last child, George, in February 1815.
3. Surname omitted.
4. Ireland Yearly Meeting usually took place in April.

The initials of this letter's addressee are unclear in manuscript. 'JE' seems most likely. Mary is writing after receiving a letter from this individual's nephew informing her of his aunt or uncle's severe illness (their gender is not indicated).

## LETTER 36

**My much respected & beloved friend JE[?]      Dublin 6th Mo 10th 1815**

The perusal of thy nephews very afflicting communication, has encouraged me to address thee having frequently & particularly of late thought of thee & thy dear partner with affectionate solicitude & heart felt concern, nor can I easily express our feelings on receiving the afflicting intelligence of thy increased indisposition, for truly the prospect of losing a valued friend, is as the breaking of the cords which fasten our desires to Earth, & tho' I deeply feel the awful information, yet doth my soul bow in reverence & gratitude to the father of all our sure mercies, that he hath been pleased in adorable condescension to cause thine heart to seek him more closely than heretofore, I earnestly desire thy encouragement in pressing fervently after mor[e] communion with him who is life & light & without whom all is darkness & as a waste howling wilderness,<sup>1</sup> where there is no safe standing for the feet - "Strive to enter in" is the divine injunction<sup>2</sup> - "Strive" my beloved friend & the Lord will help thee, he will grant thee an increase of strength he will refresh thee when thou art weary & will in his own time administer to thee those precious consolations of the spirit, which invigorate the poor traveller & enable him to pursue his journey Zionward<sup>3</sup> - but these are not always administer'd there are times of close proving seasons<sup>4</sup> in which the enemy of mans happiness would persuade us that it is in vain to maintain the warfare between flesh & spirit, but listen thou not to his lying suggestions Rely on the omnipotent arm of thy Lord & Saviour, who having called thee will not forsake thee, as thou cleavest to him with thy whole heart he may try love with deep probations<sup>5</sup> & thy sincerity by the withdrawing of his sacred presence, but as the sun is not removed, the clouds may obscure it from our vision, so neither will he depart nor withdraw his loving



kindness from thee, as thou waitest for him, to all such, the unutterably gracious language is sent forth "Can a woman forget her sucking child, yea they may forget, but I will never forget thee"<sup>6</sup> be not discouraged dear friend & companion, if thou find that thorns & briars beset thee in the way, troublesome thoughts & often inability to address him, sometimes darkness & frequent fears, these are what all experience, but they exist only for a season, they will all pass away; The accuser<sup>7</sup> ever seeketh to prevent our progress & if possible keep us back from an access to the throne of grace - but be not dismayed, let not past sins discourage thee - the Lord is infinitely gracious & willing to save, his tender compassions, nay his delight is with the sons of men; if he delay to grant thee the evidence thereof is it not for thy further purification? is it not that thou mayest more closely seek him? & as thou watchfully waitest for the manifestation of his son in the secret of thy heart, in entire silence with dedication & resignation, he will at length appear to thy unspeakable joy, he will convince thee that thou art His, & that nothing can pluck thee out of his hand, that he hath loved thee & redeemed thee & that he will be thy joy & song for ever - then shalt thou know as thou hast never known, the delights of spiritual communion & the purity of divine worship - My dear love to my dear friend Kitty from whom & from your affectionately remember'd nephew, a few lines to inform us of thee & I hope of thy improved health (if such be consistent with the divine will) would be very truly acceptable to thy sympathizing & sincere friend MC

1. Deut 32:10 - 'He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.' From the song of Moses, extolling God's greatness and His special relationship with the people of Israel.
2. Lk 13:24 - 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.'
3. Zionward - heavenward.
4. close proving seasons - times of testing.
5. deep probations - searching tests or trials.
6. Is 49:15 - 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' The Lord's reply to the accusation of Zion, or Israel, that He will forget His chosen people.
7. the accuser - a name for the Devil.

'MW' and 'MG' remain unidentified.

## LETTER 37

To MW & MG

Dublin 10th Mo 7th 1815

My very dear friends

I can truly say that I frequently in my thoughts [?]<sup>1</sup> & that my fervent desires for you as for my own soul [are]<sup>2</sup> that we may be preserved in the path of safety, journeying forward to an heavenly habitation, prepared for all the faithful followers of the dear Redeemer & that finally we may have an admission there & truly my beloved sisters, for such in the love of the gospel I feel you to be, I am convinced that the work of sanctification in your hearts & my heart, will only go rightly forward, as we yield to the divine impressions of his sacred spirit in the secret of our own souls & that the more we wait upon



him in humble dependance[sic] for his holy help, the more shall we receive of those divine influences which are verily the heavenly manna,<sup>3</sup> the true bread which cometh down from above & as we are concerned above all things to retire from every entangling thing to this safe center, we shall know a growing in grace, an increase from stature to stature, our teacher will never be removed into a corner & the inward virtue of his ineffable communications, will silently flow into our souls as we patiently & diligently sit at his feet (like Mary formerly) making us truly rich,<sup>4</sup> thus shall we be made fruitful in the fields of offering & joyful in the house of prayer,<sup>5</sup> thus shall we be taught that the prayers which he heareth & answereth are of his own preparing, not performed in the will of man, nor in the time, nor at the command of man, but from the effusion of the holy Spirit within us, by which we can alone acceptably worship him, I covet earnestly that we may not only persevere but that we may obtain the precious evidence that we are his children & that by walking in the light we may be thoroughly sanctified in body, soul & spirit - I trust we have one badge of discipleship that we love one another & that we evince our love by desires for each others promotion in Eternal good - Oh! that we who know & value the precious priveledges[sic] which our Lord hath purchased for us, may never let go our hold, for sure I am that Satan doth often most severely buffet those who resist him in his dark mysterious worship of spiritual deceit - but thanks be to God, thro' the son of his love, a christian is armed at all points & no temptation of the enemy can finally seduce us, while we keep our hold on the gifts of God which is the son of God manifested in his own temple - the temple of the heart My Soul salutes you & prays the Father of all good to bless you more & more with the knowledge of him, to make you wholly his, to sanctify unto you every dispensation of his will, to animate you with abundant life & cause your light to shine in a dark land, where gross darkness covers the hearts of many, that others seeing your good works, your faithful humble walking in the presence of your God, may be thereby induced to glorify your heavenly Father!

I am your true Friend MC

1. Several words appear to have been omitted in manuscript.
2. Word possibly omitted in manuscript.
3. the heavenly manna - spiritual nourishment. Manna was the wafer-like food, resembling coriander seeds, supplied by God for the children of Israel when they were starving in the wilderness (Ex 16).
4. Lk 10:39-42 tells how Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened, while Martha busied herself with supper. On Martha's complaining, Christ answered that Mary had 'chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her' (v. 42).
5. Is 56:7 - 'Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.'

This letter is to David Sands (Sandys is Mary's spelling), a well-known and eloquent travelling minister from Orange County, New York State, who visited Ireland in the ministry in 1798. Its purpose is to inform him of the death of a mutual acquaintance - Susanna Hill, a highly respected minister in Dublin and a close friend of Mary's, on 23 August 1815. (See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.) Susanna had been one of those who had accompanied Sands on a courageous journey to Leinster Quarterly Meeting at Enniscorthy while the 1798 Irish Rebellion was in progress. The meeting took place two days after the decisive Battle of Vinegar Hill had been fought nearby. (See 'Some Account of Remarkable deliverances [. . .]', p.160 in this volume.) The Quakers who attended put themselves at great risk as the journey involved passing through countryside devastated by the fighting and still subject to some guerilla warfare. Although, in the event, no one in the



Quaker party was attacked, the journey was still horrendous. Sometimes they had to remove dead bodies blocking the road. It can be imagined that strong bonds would have been forged amongst the small group of Quaker travellers during their journey, and David Sands would remember Susanna well.

The letter is interesting in showing Mary's great admiration for Sands, who was strongly of the Evangelical persuasion. His actions had played no small part in the separation amongst Friends in Ireland in the late 1790s/early 1800s. He attacked the deism which he believed had taken root amongst some Irish Friends with a missionary zeal and was instrumental in the refusal of a minister's travelling certificate to Hannah Barnard, another American Friend, whose ministry he and some others felt was suspect. This decision instigated much antagonistic controversy.

See *Journal of The Life and Gospel Labours of David Sands, with Extracts from his Correspondence* (London: Charles Gilpin and Edward Marsh, 1848), pp.176-79 for a description of the trip to Enniscorthy and pp.202-03 for mention of Hannah Barnard.

## LETTER 38

Dublin 10th Mo 20th 1815

My honor'd & often remember'd friend D Sandys

So very frequent have been the affectionate recollections, which have long dwelt in my mind, as it hath turned towards thee, that I have for many years desired to intrude a few lines thereby to inform thee of the continued grateful regard of one by whom thy labours in this land of Ire<sup>1</sup> are not forgotten & I have hoped that impressed on the tablet of memory<sup>2</sup> there may have been moments when even I may have been presented to thy view, having much desired that at those seasons, when thy fervent supplications have been drawn forth for those to whom thou as a Father hast been helpful, we may be included for sure thou must remember the baptizing seasons<sup>3</sup> which we were permitted to partake of, when thy lot was cast in Dublin - seasons which will I think be precious to me while reason retains its seat<sup>4</sup> - I fear to enlarge because I would not be too troublesome, neither need I insert communications of which thou art in possession - it may have reach'd you that our nearly[sic]<sup>5</sup> beloved friend Susanna Hill has enter'd into that Eternal rest of which she had a remarkable foretaste & indubitable evidence - often when enjoying her sweet society we have conversed of thee & of that perilous journey to Enniscorthy in which thy faith was predominant & saw to the end of it, which she at that time was not able to do: her dear husband<sup>6</sup> is remarkably borne up in the seperation: if ever in the arrangements of Infinite Goodness, thy lot were again cast within our view, to see thee would be to us a cause of thankful joy, but this I must leave with earnest desire, that however seperated[sic] in the Militant Church,<sup>7</sup> we may be permitted to unite with thee in the triumphant one in Heaven! - I hardly dare presume to add that I have long wished to say that our house & our hearts await thee, but that would be a favour almost beyond our expectations! I desire to be remember'd with very near affection to our honor'd friend Henry Hull<sup>8</sup> also to Jesse Kersey<sup>9</sup> - many from your land have been our helpers in the Lord & yet we are lamentably behind hand with the work of the day - how often with regard to myself have I had cause to advert to<sup>10</sup> thy simile of a boiling pot for ever pouring forth the scum - I hope thou wilt forgive my boldness & even accept it as a sincere tho' late testimonial of that grateful love in which my husband unites with me as I subscribe myself thy very affec friend  
MC



1. Ire - Ireland, alternative for Eire.
2. tablet of memory - an expression used frequently in eighteenth/early nineteenth-century poetry and therefore found more often in Mary's verse. A tablet is a stone on which an inscription is written, or, less well known, a thin sheet of wood or ivory for writing on. Several could be strung together to form a kind of book. The memory is thus envisaged as a site on which the memories are inscribed without easy erasure.
3. baptizing seasons - times of spiritual renewal.
4. while reason retains its seat - as long as sanity remains.
5. nearly - closely. Manuscript reads 'nearly', although 'dearly' would make more sense.
6. Susanna's husband was Jonathan Hill. He was almost certainly the Jonathan present at Mary Birkett Card's deathbed - see George Harrison Birkett's account of his sister's death in this volume, pp.188-93, particularly note 16.
7. seperated[sic] in the Militant Church - the image of the 'Militant Church', one engaged in a battle for souls, has an evangelical ring. Mary appears to situate herself and Sands within this Church, surely referring to the physical separation between herself and other Friends in Ireland and Sands in America, not any ideological separation.
8. Henry Hull - an American minister who visited Ireland in 1811 (Ireland National Yearly Meeting of Women Friends, 29 April 1811). During his visit, he addressed Mary's friend 'EA' (probably Elizabeth Alexander) - see Letter 21 in this volume.
9. Jesse Kersey - an American minister who visited Ireland. In 1805 he 'finished his religious labour' there (Yearly Meeting Ministers and Elders Minutes and Certificates). He was present at the commencement of the inquiry into William Rathbone's account of the Irish schism, at Hardshaw Monthly Meeting in England in 1804. In Neville Newhouse's words, he 'point[ed] out that in his native land books were not published unless sanctioned by higher authority' (one of the charges against Rathbone), but 'he urged Friends to keep "their minds free from anything like warmth"'. He was critical of harsh personal attacks on Rathbone. (See Newhouse, 'Seeking God's Will', p.230.) Mary's conversation with Jesse Kersey, when she met him during his visit, is recorded in journal entry '4th Mo 5th 1805', above in this volume.
10. advert to - refer to.

The cousin to whom this letter was addressed has not been identified.

## LETTER 39

My dear Cousin

2nd Mo 1st 1816

Our conversation last third day<sup>1</sup> excited the conviction in mine heart that the soul created to enjoy its God cannot be happy without that enjoyment & that the thirst which nothing else can satiate, is indeed implanted in the very nature of our existence by our benevolent Creator, that thereby the secret bent & tendency of our minds might ever aspire towards him & this it is that enobles our human nature, that distinguishes us from the brute creation - amongst whom we find many amiable dispositions, warm affections, fidelity etc. etc. also a large capacity, perhaps larger than ours for many enjoyments which begin & end here, but yet without any fitness or capacity for those sublime pleasures which are at once the glory & the dignity of Man!

The Most High was pleased to create Man in his own image, "in the image of God made he him"<sup>2</sup> this embraces the whole human race without distinction & tho' we know & sorely feel, that our first Father<sup>3</sup> by transgression fell & thereby marred the beauty of creation, yet we as surely know that we have a redeemer who has evinced his tender love for us, by the most convincing proofs - & has expressed his strong desires for our final happiness - what has he not done to convince us of his love for us? & that we may by taking his advice escape the snares & the temptations of an enemy of whom we are told, that he is always lying in wait to deceive - what then do we want with sermons on the conversion of Paul or of any other man? what can such



do for us? what can words which are but air do for an immortal spirit? unless they spring from the fountain of life & point as did John the Baptist to him who was to come - Christ Jesus hath assuredly rent the vail[sic] which seperated[sic] us from the most holy place,<sup>4</sup> he hath invited us to follow him in that inward way which is the only way to the Kingdom, the spirit also beareth witness & is ever striving to gain us to himself - why then should we rest in an outside religion, which cannot save us, when we are inwardly called to partake of the communion with the Father & with the son - this - this is worship, not formal words but essential life & this is the true way to know our redemption sealed to us, which S Hill<sup>5</sup> said she knew to be her case, this is the only right ground of cheerfulness, dissipating every gloom & every cloud, refining our nature encreasing[sic] vastly our felicity & administering an abundant entrance even in this life into the joy of our Lord - But why do I thus address thee, when I know that thou art convinced that there is no acceptable worship out of the inward temple, the temple of the heart & that there we may experience the most delightful enjoyment of himself not imaginations: ah! but happy realities, sure & certain evidences that we are one in him as he is one with the Father & that neither life nor death nor devil shall seperate[sic] us in time or Eternity from everlasting bliss - & I know that thou art certain that no other foundation will stand us in stead in the great day of account - that to have cried "Lord Lord" will avail nothing,<sup>6</sup> but something deeper is requisite, a rock whereon to stand when the waves roll about us, a shelter from the blast when it bloweth keenly & a sure & certain refuge, an house an habitation, when we are dislodged from this tenement of clay,<sup>7</sup> which we know will soon crumble into its original dust -oh! then my dear cousin the sweet evidence may be ours, that as we have admitted him a welcome guest at our inward table - so he will also admit us to the Eternal participation of the joys of his Kingdom of which we on earth have the offers of a plentiful foretaste -

I wrote the above this morning by candlelight, for my mind was & is turned towards you in near affection & I was truly desirous that you may not turn to the right or the left but with my own soul press forward under the guidance of our heavenly High Priest, our Shepherd & Bishop, till we attain the certain evidence of an inheritance of which we cannot be deprived & are leaven'd<sup>8</sup> into the nature of that Kingdom whose law is the law of love & whose language breathes nothing but peace & good will - I am etc. MC

1. third day - Tuesday.
2. Gen 1:27 - 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.'
3. our first Father - Adam, the first man.
4. Mt 27:51, Mk 15:38, Lk 23:45 - at Christ's death, the veil of the Temple was split in two. Mary cites this as symbolic of the way in which Christ opens the path to God.
5. Susanna Hill, a minister and friend. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card', and Letter 38 to David Sands, immediately above, regarding her death.
6. Mt 7:21-29 - where Christ warns that not all who cry 'Lord, Lord', or claim they have prophesied in His name, will be acknowledged, or enter the Kingdom of Heaven - only those who do the Father's will. He compares the latter to a wise man who builds his house on a rock able to withstand storm and flood.
7. this tenement of clay - the earthly body, thought of as a building or structure housing the soul.
8. leaven'd - transformed, risen.



'JNM' and 'LD' remain unidentified. Mary writes to thank them for their condolences on her father suffering an accident. Typically, the letter does not say what the accident was, or give any details about it.

## LETTER 40

**My beloved Friends JNM & LD**

**7th Mo 13th 1816**

I have often wished again to acknowledge the deep sense I retain of your very gratifying affectionate remembrance & I thus intrude myself to say your most acceptable sympathy & frequent recollection of me & ours is very endearing & I should more often have told you so, had I yielded to the impulse of grateful affection, I can thankfully inform you that my dear Father is almost well & the shock which the accident occasion'd is done away in the astonishing kindness of providence that neither fracture nor internal bruise occur'd, I feel indeed that your cordial interest in these things, is vastly more than we deserve, but you oblige me to know & own that the children of our heavenly Father are of one family, the world over; my heart sympathises with thy affecting remark that thy mind wants rest & there is a rest for those who seek it, where the tempestuous waves of casualty<sup>1</sup> can never penetrate, where all is seen to work for good, to effectuate our alienation from perishable objects & to attract us to desire a permanency of enjoyment which cannot be found where every object is transitory - may you & my dear friends press after an entrance into that rest of which nothing can deprive us & by patiently fulfilling our duty, yielding humbly to every dispensation of adorable wisdom, as children who accept bitter medicine from the hand of a wise judging parent - let us believe that eventually we may obtain an inheritance amongst those who have passed thro' many tribulations - may Divine goodness enlarge your & my capacity in those things which are of highest importance & may he qualify us to join the general anthem of praise, when time to us shall be no more is the fervent desire of your faithful friend MC

1. casualty - accident, unforeseen circumstance.

No information has emerged concerning 'W Watkins'. It appears from this letter that he or she had committed some misdemeanours that Mary considered quite grievous.

## LETTER 41

**To W Watkins**

**3rd Mo 7th 1817**

The concern with which I have been imprest[sic] & the clear conviction that the visitation of Divine love & mercy is extended to thee again & again - have induced me earnestly to request that thou wilt earnestly turn thy attention to those secret checks of conscience - to those heartfelt reproofs of instruction, to those secret admonitions, which are indeed the way to life - I am persuaded that the Lord requires of thee that thou turn away from sin, that so thro' the power which he will give thee thou mayest repel the vague & deceitful allurements to which thou hast so frequently fallen a prey & surely if thou wilt not hearken now while [H]is Holy & powerful arm is stretched out for thy deliverance, while He thy offended Lord is willing to forgive thine iniquities, & to



love thee freely, thou mayest lament in vain, when the desultory pleasures of this world shall be wither'd in thine eyes & its intoxicating draught shall be bitterer than wormwood & gall<sup>1</sup> - I do entreat thee consider to what end thou art spending the accountable loan of life, it is not thine own, thou art but a steward, & must not waste nor disband<sup>2</sup> the great Master of his substance - I appeal to the unflattering witness in thine own heart for the truth of these assertions, to that witness from whom thy most secret sins have not been hid & who[se] unspeakable compassion hath beheld thee repentant & sorrowing, because of the seductions of a base & foolish World Trifle no longer with omnipotence! for God will not be mocked, such as we sow, such shall we reap! Our time here is very uncertain, our death is inevitable & after death the irrevocable judgment of a just unbiassed Judge, now is thy time my friend, the inestimably precious time in which thou mayest by earnest supplications obtain forgiveness of Him whom thou hast offended, yea I repeat it, now is thy time, for He the heavenly Physician waits to heal thy souls maladies, to impart to thee spiritual strength & health, to raise thee from the pit of destruction & make thee joyful in his house of prayer<sup>3</sup> - MC

1. wormwood & gall - biblical phrase for bitterness or suffering, gall meaning bile and wormwood being a plant with leaves noted for their bitter taste.
2. disband - rob, by not putting the 'substance' - the life lent by God which has to be returned to Him - to good use.
3. Is 56:7 - 'Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.'

This strong, exhortatory epistle - a rallying cry to press forward in the spiritual battle against Satan ('the Devourer', the Deceiver', 'the accuser of the Brethren') before it is too late - is addressed to a brother. He could be either William or George Harrison Birkett.

## LETTER 42

4th Mo 20th 1817

The painful feeling of my own defects & infirmities & how vastly I fall short of what I ought to be, so powerfully discourage me from offering any thing like a watch word to a beloved brother that were it not that I believe thou wilt accept even this feeble expression of affectionate solicitude, I could hardly venture at this time to intrude these lines on thee - My heart hath felt that unaffected sympathy, which prompts me to enquire, "Art thou in health my brother"?<sup>1</sup> art thou growing strong in the strength of the Lord? are thy faculties increasing in vigour & truth? is the work, the glorious work of thy redemption from the thralldom & bondage of corrupt nature going forward with increasing ardour? & art thou above all things diligent in pressing onwards towards the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus? for truly our habitation here is held by a most uncertain tenure & we are liable to be turned out at a very short notice! are we not then unwise indeed if we suffer any thing short of Eternity to occupy our thoughts, if we allow perishing objects to disturb us from centering down in the nothingness of Self? to abstract our thoughts into a multiplicity of external concerns? to excite cares & fears & hopes & despondences?[sic] which are the very thorns that obstruct the good seed sown in the heart & choke it, that it becometh unfruitful - If we have received with gladness, the joyful sound of the Everlasting gospel, let us be



faithful to follow its dictates let us turn from all that would oppress or grieve it! let us labour hard to attain a meek resigned self denying state, a state in which we may find acceptance with our crucified Redeemer! it is well worth labouring for! for the conflict will not last very long! & the reward is certain at the faithful & patient close!

I am jealous of thee lest thou suffer the snares of the Enemy to entangle thy soul - oh! I think I have seen it that he desireth to betray thee beyond even what thou mayest suspect! but surely there is a Redeemer nigh unto whom as thou art diligent in close & earnest application thou wilt experience deliverance as from the very teeth of the Devourer. Oh my dear brother! keep close, keep close to thy inward watch, for it is a deeply proving day,<sup>2</sup> a day in which Satan is striving to draw thee aside from the low valley of humiliation - but I beseech thee keep thine eye upon thy Teacher & He will point out the way in which thou art to walk, He will make thee more than Conqueror over the subtle devices of the crafty one - He will teach thee & console thee & when thou art weary & ready to faint, He will invigorate & Strengthen thee - come on then my dear brother - the warfare has begun! is it going rightly forward? to thy unspeakable joy! is the unsanctified house of Saul growing weaker & weaker & is the holy house of David growing stronger & stronger every day?<sup>3</sup> is thy dependence encreasing[sic] in that gracious power which hath early visited thee, feeding thee & nourishing thee, calling thee & restraining thee! alas! we have both great need to quicken our pace, for we have not been enough diligent in following our leader, we have need to apply closely for help to escape the snares which surround us - our feet slip as it were & at times we can hardly get along, yet verily he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities & pities his poor erring creatures! He knows the extent of our maladies & is able & willing to heal us & to bind up all our wounds, but we must bear the painful operation, we must take the necessary medicine, we must not shrink from the means appointed, or how can even He effect the care? for it is an awful truth that he doth not force the will of Man! we may suffer the Deceiver to beguile us of our inheritance, we may run well for a time! & yet if we take up our rest short of the mark we never obtain the prize! It is the desire of my heart that the holy influences of the spirit of Truth may draw thee more & more into quietness of Soul, give thee a stability of meekness & lowliness of patience & fortitude & fill thee abundantly with gentleness & grace, whence love & love only will emanate from thee, that love without which we are not qualified to associate with the heavenly host & join with them in that delightful anthem of "Peace on Earth! good will towards men"<sup>4</sup> I am sure I wish to experience that eye closed that would see & observe the faults of others, & to know the accuser of the Brethren cast out of my Soul! I long to imitate tho' at an unmeasurable distance our Holy Pattern who said "I accuse no Man"<sup>5</sup> but I feel a jealousy that the envious Enemy is at work by his earthly devices, by his subtle insinuations; by the entrance which he hath into that part which is not yet regenerated, to mar the lustre of thy glory, to cause thy steps to slide & if possible to beguile thee of the crown the immortal crown which is laid up in store for thee - Now is thy time, an important time to thee! let the Lord only reign within thy soul - let the Enemy have no advantage over thee.- watch in the light where his snares are discover'd & avoid them by the power of the Redeemer hath he at all entangled thee? wait then in the lowliness of self abasement, till the snare be broken by the Lord - hath the Tempter obstructed thy progress towards the Kingdom & hast thou at times sat in dry & parched places? Take courage for thou wilt yet know deliverance, if thou faithfully



labour after it! & nothing else will do: for the way is very narrow & is often (in stupendous mercy) hedged in as with thorns.<sup>6</sup> our pangs, our sorrows, our distresses are not hidden from the God of our life & he is willing to cause all to work for our good.- I pray thee, let nothing draw thee from humbly waiting on him, let nothing betray thee from the spirit of christianity; patiently endure the warfare of the Lamb<sup>7</sup> & the shout of victory will eventually be thine - Farewell. from thy affec Sister MC

The first motions of sin, like the fibres of a root in the ground are small & weak & whatever be the excitement there is strength at hand to repel them. -

1. Words spoken by Joab, a leader in King David's army, before he killed another leader, Amasa, who had prevaricated in the pursuit of Sheba, a rebel and deserter. 2 Sam 20:9-10 - 'And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him./But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died.'
2. a deeply proving day - a time of great trial.
3. 2 Sam 3:1 - 'Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.' 1 Sam 16 to 2 Sam 5 inclusive tells how David came to succeed Saul as King and united Israel and Judah into one Kingdom.
4. Lk 2:14 - 'Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'
5. our Holy Pattern - Jesus Christ as an example of how to live. Jn 5:45 may be the source of the words in quote marks - 'Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.'
6. hedged in as with thorns - this is in 'stupendous mercy' because the thorns afford guidance and protection, deterring us from leaving the path, even while they also make the path more difficult.
7. warfare of the Lamb - battle waged by Christ and his followers against Satan, in which Christ (the Lamb) is destined to be victorious. An image mainly derived from the Book of Revelation.

In this collection, the last piece of writing Mary produced before her death on 24 October 1817 is this letter to her husband Nathaniel Card. It can be seen as the culmination of her concern throughout their marriage for his spiritual welfare and perhaps his physical welfare also.

Nathaniel was eventually disowned for 'drinking to excess'. The Certificate of Disownment from Dublin Monthly Meeting dated 11 April 1826 states:

Nathaniel Card who was admitted into membership with our Society and for many years attended our religious meetings, through unwatchfulness and inattention to the dictates of truth in his own heart, which if attended to, would have preserved him in consistency of conduct - has so far deviated therefrom, as to be in the habit of drinking to excess - he has been laboured with to convince him of the danger of persisting in that great evil, without the desired effect.

Now in order to testify our disunity, with such conduct, we do hereby disown him, the said Nathaniel Card, to be a member of our Society. Nevertheless we desire, he may be favoured to experience that godly sorrow, which worketh true repentance, and amendment of life.

Nathaniel's alcoholism, or excessive drinking, may be at the root of the sorrows and sufferings that Mary shared in as his partner. She says in this letter, 'I am a partaker of thy sorrows and with thee am dipped into a sea of trouble'. Of course this is speculation. It is possible that Nathaniel only began to drink heavily after Mary's death, and then what the Society of Friends in Dublin considered 'drinking to excess' may not have been anything approaching alcoholism. According to Isabel Grubb, 'drinking to excess' was one of the most frequent reasons for disownment (*Quakers in Ireland 1654-1900*, p.126). But it is certain that Nathaniel had fallen



away from the powerful religious faith he had shared with Mary at the start of their marriage, and that she feared greatly for his future, a fear that is also apparent in her will - see p.186 in this volume.

The Card Family Bible records that Nathaniel later married Ruth, daughter of Jervais Johnson of County Antrim - probably the 'Jervis Johnston' mentioned in Mary Card's 'Account of Remarkable deliverances experienced by friends in the disturbances of 1796 and 1798' (see pp.160-67, note 26, in this volume), who 'was labouring in the Gospel in America' when 'the rebellion broke out' and whose family was remarkably preserved. Ruth died in 1841 near Belfast, having moved back from Dublin to Lisburn in 1830, and was buried in the Friends' Burial Ground near Antrim. Nathaniel died on 16 September 1842, aged 65, and was interred in the Friends Burial Ground, Cork Street, Dublin. Notes in the Family Bible make no mention of his disownment, stating that 'About the 23rd year of his age he was convinced of the religious principles of the Society of Friends, and was united to that body - in which profession he continued the remainder of his life'.

### LETTER 43

To

Dublin 8th Mo 16th 1817

When in the days of thy youth, it pleased the Most High to visit thy soul with the inshinings[sic] of his light & love whereby thou wert enamour'd of his beauty & thou longedst to follow him in the way of regeneration & as thou wert given up to cherish his goodness, he caused thee to rejoice in his presence with great joy - under the influence whereof thou forgot the pollutions & the frailties of thy heart & took thy flight as in the summer, into a vain imagination that the light & the life were thy portion for ever, even by inheritance when as they were but set before the view of thy mind to encourage thee to persevere & to labour in the field of thy own unregenerate heart, for this whole life is a life of warfare & it is only he that overcometh who will receive the Crown at the end of time - in this way didst thou open a door for thy souls enemy & didst relax from the daily watch & sufferedst the weeds again to grow (for they were not rooted out of thy garden, but only hidden or unperceived in the time of favour) then did the beasts of the wilderness multiply against thee, yea the serpent deceived thee, the wolf & the bear marked thee out for their prey - nor was thy grand Enemy the Devil awanting to blind thine eyes to the things that belong to thy peace, his dark insinuations were listen'd to by thee & he sought to persuade thee that thy sins are too great & thy chains too heavy to be removed, that thou art fast bound as in fetters of iron & that there is none to deliver thee, none to succour thee, none to help thee! But Oh! he was a liar from the beginning! and Blessed for ever be the name of the Most High, if thou my beloved & deeply mourned for! if thou wilt stretch forth thy wither'd arm surely it will be restored for thee, because he is willing to save to the uttermost,<sup>1</sup> & wherefore dost thou doubt? is he not all sufficient? is he not able? is he not willing? doth he not love & pity the work of his hands? why then wilt thou not be saved? why wilt thou resist his light? which shews thee the true, the straight & narrow way<sup>2</sup> of the daily cross the way of self denial - difficult only in the beginning but easy to the willing mind -

Oh! my heart, my heart is pained within me, whilst thou art a wanderer from the path of life! Return if yet thou wilt return, beloved & chosen companion of my life! Oh! look unto him & he will help thee, rely upon his Divine assistance & thou wilt grow stronger & stronger in this most necessary warfare! why wilt thou resist him & provoke him with thine iniquities? until that he have suffer'd thee to endure sorrow & distress in thy time of darkness, of



sore anguish bitterness & wol[sic] Oh! what hast thou gained by disobeying his inward manifestations? hast thou not entangled thyself as amongst thorns & briars which tear thee & rend thee on every side? hast thou not contracted a sore malady of soul which the Saviour alone can heal? & the Lord knows the sufferings of thy distressed & symathizing partner, as I am a partaker of thy sorrows & with thee am dipped into the sea of trouble! yet surely we may yet commemorate the matchless mercy of Israels God, in that we are not cut off in the midst of our transgressions & that he hath condescended yet again to offer to thee - Power! Power to resist - Power to fight - Power to overcome, Oh! do not slight him, lest he more withdraw from thee, do not quench the little spark of heavenly life, because that in that little is more strength than all thine Enemies possess! think not, as some do think, that because Christ has died, thou mayest be idle in this great work, no, it is not so - we must co-operate, we must deny ourselves in eating, in drinking, in spending money, in associating with unclean things in our tempers, yea in all things - our dear Lord hath open'd the passage which adam shut,<sup>3</sup> but we must walk in his steps & he will lead us along in safety.- Oh! surely we have no time to lose for the meridian of our life will soon be over! & the clouds of the evening gather round about us ere we are aware - shall we then risk an Eternity of torment & continue in sin, shall we plunge ourselves into the lake of fire which burns for ever!<sup>4</sup> shall we cherish the possession of the worm that dieth not when He the Redeemer, the Friend of sinners offers us free salvation - thro' our obedience to his manifestations; oh! let me say as said one formerly, "Resist" "Resist" (striving unto death the death of sin) "& the Devil will not again have such power to tempt!"<sup>5</sup> what I say is true! I know it is so, Divine power is offer'd to thee, do not choose darkness when thou mayest have light & he will help thee, he will bless thee, he will sustain thee, for he loveth thee, tho he abhorrest thy sins & he pitieth thy thraldom & offereth thee an arm of help! oh! dearest companion of my life may the Lord enable thee to fight, to conquer, to overcome, & to obtain the Prize immortal, saith thy most affectionate wife - M Card

1. Heb 7:25 - 'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.'
2. Mt 7:14 - 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'
3. our dear Lord [. . .] adam shut - Christ has cleared the way to eternal life barred by Adam's sin.
4. lake of fire - the lake of fire and brimstone reserved for Satan and the damned (Rev 20:10).
5. Exact quote untraced. Jas 4:7 - 'Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you' may be relevant.



**MISCELLANEOUS**

**PROSE PIECES**

**AND**

**MEDITATIONS**



## IRELAND

This piece was written during a period of great tension in Ireland. Open rebellion against the British, and against the Irish Government which represented the Protestant Ascendancy, would break out a few weeks later in May 1798. Although Ireland was enjoying a period of economic expansion, Britain had always restricted Irish trade to protect its own interests. Irish industry was affected badly by English competition with trading regulations weighted heavily in Britain's favour. Henry Grattan, leader of the Patriot party in Ireland, had obtained the lifting of many of these restrictions, and succeeded in gaining independence for the Irish Parliament - the years 1782 to 1800 were known as Grattan's Parliament. However, despite his efforts to restore some rights to Catholics, it was still a Protestant government that did not act in the interests of the Catholic majority and Ireland was still effectively ruled from Britain as the British king could veto any law the Irish Parliament passed. The American and French Revolutions had added much impetus to movements for independence.

From the 1770s, there had been a movement within Ireland encouraging Irish people to buy goods made from home-produced materials and support Irish manufacturing. It was thought this would increase economic prosperity, helping to stabilise the country and stave off rebellion by lessening inequality and want. In 1784 a Parliamentary Committee was set up to look into protective tariffs, but they were not implemented in case England then taxed Irish goods heavily (Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges*, p.235).

Mary, in line with this view, maintains that greater stability for Ireland and happiness for its people could arise from a realignment of the economic balance, active support of its own industries, and a refusal to spend currency on unnecessary luxury imports (a view much in keeping with the Quaker emphasis on simplicity), rather than by launching into a war with tragic consequences. She sees some forms of patriotism as mere fashion or delusion while asserting that the true inner principle that regulates conduct will always remain the same. Revealing a somewhat Rousseauesque influence, she suggests that human feelings, if allowed to be guided aright by Nature, will ensure an empathy with the situations of others in which oppression becomes impossible.

**[Untitled]**

**[date written below: 3rd Mo 23rd 1798]**

At a period so important as the present in which every man who loves his country must feel himself interested it is necessary to distinguish between Truth & Error between the vague love of novelty whose foundation is mere chimera and a noble singularity which springs from a regulated heart and which leads into the practice of every moral virtue - between the weak pretenders of a fashionable patriotism, those camelions[sic] of the day<sup>1</sup> - and those whose thoughts are the result of reason and who declare their principles more by actions than words - For it is not enough to breath the sentiments of those around us be they right or wrong - every man feels in himself a stamina to regulate his conduct independent of human contingencies - Empires may rise and fall! Cities may flourish and decay! The mass of mankind may be enervated by luxury or degraded by oppression, but the stamina the Principle will remain to be the same - Implanted by God as the infallible criterion of right & wrong we do well only when we act under its influence when we deviate we err - Legislators may create laws and coercion may be around to enforce them but never can the happiness of Mankind be restored till we attend to the dictate of Nature yielding to this we can never oppress because we involuntarily exchange situations with those around us - We cannot add to the miseries of unfeeling refinement nor indulge in the voluptuous delicacies with which a



barbarous civilization furnishes the opulent and which will ultimately destroy the felicity of individuals because we learn to weep with those who weep and only to rejoice with those who rejoice.

Thank Heaven! the reign of Priestcraft is nearly at an end<sup>2</sup> and with it all those enormous evils those varnished hypocricies[sic] which unfailingly attend it Men are not at this day so easily duped by mere pretensions they look for consistency of conduct - for actions the product of Reason - for sentiments warm from the heart - When we see those who stand forward as the defenders of Liberty act diametrically opposite to their public declarations satirizing themselves by their censure of others are we to suppose that these men are uninfluenced by the Love of Power, that the spring of their actions is pure and disinterested No! Truth is ever consistent with itself its aim is human happiness & its end is peace To you then whose bosoms have felt the sacred fire of Philanthropy, I address myself - Would you promote the prosperity of Ireland? Encourage her manufactures! Would you make the people happy? Repress foreign Luxuries! Dare with unimpeachable integrity, with noble singularity to discountenance oppression, by reducing into practice the principles you profess - nor clothe yourselves in the enervating produce of India - while your countrymen risque[sic] their lives to drain off your superabundance - Irishmen be just and you will be blest. Be you yourselves your own friends and Anarchy and confusion will gradually subside - Cultivate the land in which God hath placed you and its abundant fertility will create for you an happy independance[sic] Blush to be clothed by the labour of foreigners to fill your houses with furniture whose wood (not superior in beauty to your own) is with immense trouble convey'd to you, and your tables with viands which are not the natural growth of your own soil! Seek for felicity within yourselves and you will find it - for comfort in Domestic Life, for there only can it exist - You will thus learn to estimate the true value of lime[time] & be shock'd at the atrocity of plunging into Eternity by contributing to the execrable havoc of war. you will feel yourselves raised to the dignity of man and wonder that you ever sacrificed your felicity at the shrine of rapacious Ambition!

3rd Mo 23rd 1798

1. **camelions of the day** - those who change their beliefs, like the chameleon changes colour, according to the contingencies of the hour.
2. Probably referring to the abolition of some Penal Laws against Catholics and dissenters such as the 1778 Catholic Relief Bill.



At the Ireland National Yearly Meeting of Friends in 1810, it was noted that:

The minds of many Friends having been deeply impressed with a thankful and humble sense of the many mercies, preservations, and deliverances, which our Society experienced, during the commotions which prevailed in this nation, in and about the year 1798; it was thought desirable that some memorial of them should be preserved - as well in commemoration of those remarkable preservations, as to transmit to posterity some account of the signal mercy of the Almighty, who is indeed a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

It was in this spirit that the following account was written. Whether it was a response to the Yearly Meeting injunction or written soon after the events it describes, it is impossible to say, as it is undated. However, Women's Yearly Meeting minutes for 30 April 1810 do record that 'Some Account of the Sufferings and Preservation of Friends in this Nation in the Year 1798' was 'received and read out'.

One well-known account of Friends' experiences during the Rebellion is *The Principles of Peace Exemplified in the Conduct of the Society of Friends in Ireland during the Rebellion of the Year 1798; with some Preliminary and Concluding Observations* (London: William Phillips, 1825) by Thomas Hancock, a doctor from Lisburn. It was written to encourage adherence to the Peace Testimony by showing how Friends faithful to it were preserved from harm - being protected, Hancock believed, by Divine Providence, but also by the practical benefits of pacifism. For instance, because Friends relinquished weapons they held, such as 'fowling pieces' (hunting guns), at the start of the conflict, Irish rebels were less likely to raid their houses for weapons, or the Army to search them. Friends also refused to sell anything that could be used to support military purposes by either side, even, for example, rope to hang suspect rebels (p.64), and provided aid to victims, whether army soldiers, rebels or fugitives, equally. Thus they were seen by many not just as neutral, but worthy of respect and trust. Nevertheless, they still suffered a great deal themselves in the conflict. Surviving accounts show many Friends were threatened, had their property stolen and their houses taken over by soldiers or rebels. Also pacifism could be a disadvantage. When Quakers offered succour to fugitives, the army viewed them as traitors, and when they sheltered Protestants, rebels threatened them. However, only one Friend (named in Mary's account as Thomas Gatchell), who broke the Peace Testimony by taking up arms, was actually killed. Another account is Dinah Goff's narrative, 'Divine Protection', in *Six Generations in Ireland, 1655-1890*, ed. by J.M.R [Jane Marion Richardson] (London: Edward Hicks Jnr, 1893), pp.77-125. It relates the depredations and attacks suffered by her parents, Jacob and Elizabeth Goff of Horetown in Wexford, and other Friends, chronicling events from a personal viewpoint. The Goffs' home, Horetown House, became a centre for Catholic and Protestant refugees, and food was distributed daily to people congregating in the grounds.

Mary's account includes some incidents recounted, or alluded to, by Hancock and Goff. But, whereas Hancock omits names to preserve participants' anonymity, she gives the names of those involved, and her brief description of the experiences of Jacob and Elizabeth Goff supports Dinah's narrative whilst adding a couple of further details to an incident involving Dinah's uncle and aunt, Joshua and Hannah Wilson of Mount Prospect.

### **Some Account of Remarkable deliverances experienced by friends during the disturbances of 1796 and 1798**

To Commemorate with humble gratitude the unspeakably merciful interposition of divine Providence To aid the memory of those amongst whom the following transactions are yet recent and to stand (for truth will stand) as a monument to our posterity of what the Lord hath done hath done<sup>1</sup> for their fathers how he hath made bare his holy arm for their deliverance - how he hath caus'd the floods that they overflowed not their bounds and set a mark on the people



through whom the principle of life and immortality is preached & by whom the doctrines of peace and good will to men are professed and held up, for this were these fragments collected and compiled, May we and our Descendants who have been so marvellously rescued from the devouring sword be thereby animated to pursue with alacrity the narrow path of truth in which so great deliverance hath been experienced & to Maintain with diligence those precious testimonies the support of which on many very trying occasions[sic] appear to be the appointed means of preservation. In the Year 1796 when the interior of Ireland was in a very disturbed state, when the populace who premeditated XXX<sup>2</sup> insurrection was convened in large bodies prior to the irruption[sic] which followed, In a quarterly meeting held at Mount Mellick<sup>3</sup> it pleased the Lord to impress on the minds of some of his servants the propriety and necessity of dispossessing themselves of every instrument of War, It was weightily laid before the Meeting & the destruction of all their fire arms was strongly recommended. Friends were advised not to sell them neither to give them away but totally to destroy them lest the forfeited life of a fellow creature should eventually follow. Great was the concern which overspread the minds of many and the proposition was united with and generally carried into effect. The solid part of friends[Friends] began almost immediately to demolish their death like X<sup>4</sup> weapons thereby evincing that their defence & confidence were in the divine Arm. Yet there were some who not seeing the necessity of such a Requisition objected to comply therewith. Soon after this matter was carried into effect an order was issued from Government to dispossess all private individuals of fire arms or other war like instruments & a deputation was Generally sent from house to house to search for and take them away, of course those who Refused to part with their guns were dispossessed of them without the satisfaction of knowing that they would never contribute to the effusion of human blood.<sup>5</sup>

Many instances occurred in which it appeared that the hand of Providence directed this movement of friends for when the rude multitude came to their houses to search for arms & found none they committed no injury on the persons of any while numbers of other families suffered very deeply from the Horrible atrocities of the insurgents - many respectable characters lost their lives in a barbarous manner. Nor was it merely life or property that were aimed at, personal revenge the gratification of wanton or malicious cruelty harboured resentment perhaps for years excited some of the most barbarous actions which perhaps ever stained the page of History - Yet amidst all this surrounded with danger not one friend was suffered to lose his life by violence with the exception of one young man who had violated our peaceable testimony<sup>6</sup> - Oh! why are not our hearts bowed within us in humble commemoration of this stupendous manifestation of divine protection, why are we not more closely bound to the law and to the testimony which so eminently delivered in that afflicting day! Friends houses as well as others were visited & plundered by the rebels who came to demand their arms & when assured that there were none in the house most generally believed what was said & went away, at one friends Jacob Hancocks<sup>7</sup> they were answered by a child "We keep nothing here to injure any one" they believed her word & went without further molestation, and during the heat of the rebellion when acts of cruelty were perpetrated in open day light, yet they were restrained by an invisible overruling power from offering violence to the persons of friends According to



the testimony of a deceased friend (Mary Ridgway)<sup>8</sup> who before the commencement of those troubles had to speak of their approach and that she believed, tho our property might suffer yet our lives would be given us for a prey,<sup>9</sup> and remarkably was her prophetic language verified. in the case of John Cozins who having been formerly a papist was the more obnoxious to their menaces & resentments, he belonged to x<sup>10</sup> Cooladine Meeting in the County of Wexford and was surrounded on all sides by angry and wicked people the house wherat he lived was often full of them and his life was continually in danger, they very frequently said that they would kill him and he expected that every day would be his last, yet his Mind was preserved tranquil and he acknowledges to have felt no perturbation during the whole time even the 3 weeks and 3 days that the rebel party held possession - amidst the most dreadful havoc and confusion - he attended meetings every meeting day going through multitudes of armed men who many of them spitefully taunted him saying they had him once and they would have him again - Yet they hurt him not. One morning in particular a great cloud came on his mind and he said to Thomas Thompson that he believed that mischief was intended that day, when the hour of meeting came he reasoned for a while that it was like tempting the Almighty to go out at all. However he was not easy to miss the meeting & therefore went, during his absence a gang of bloodthirsty men came armed, it appeared with full determination to take his life, but he being from home they were dissappointed[sic] & were gone before he returned. thus was he preserved in a remarkable manner and he yet lives to relate with gratitude those marvellous deliverances. Eminently remarkable and worthy to be recorded were many of the circumstances which occurred in the family of Samuel and Hannah Hudson likewise of Cooladine - Their house being in a sequestered spot about two miles & an half from Enniscorthy they with their son and three daughters thought best to quit it the day before the disturbance broke out and repaired to the house of their son in law Thomas Mason who resides in the town. While there they witnessed awful scenes of carnage & devastation[sic] - The house adjoining that in which they were was set on fire and the flames seemed every moment ready to consume it, the sparks flew round them, yet the house escaped. Thomas Masons servant who had lived some years in the family when she found the army repulsed, behaved very wickedly snatched an handkerchief off her mistresss[sic] neck and told her that she should not have a father over her seven children by that time to morrow.<sup>11</sup> She brought in many of the armed rebels to whom she gave her masters food, saying it was hers and the house too and she wanted them to fire out of the front Windows which they declined, had they done it the house would have been liable to be destroyed by the Soldiers. During the action of vinegar hill a ball perforated the wall and passing thro the curtains of a bed and a partition wainscoat broke a looking glass in another room, the family were in the lower part of the house and received no injury. In that awful crisis the besieging & surrendering of the town Hannah Hudson sat in silence and could not bear to have it interrupted, she said she believed that they would be preserved. Their removal from their own house at Cooladine displeased the rebels who ordered them to return thither again - dreadful indeed was the prospect of such a removal - yet they were obliged to comply. Accordingly they set out on foot and were several hours before they reached Cooladine being repeatedly stopt by Parties of rebels who would enquire of them whence they were where they were going etc, but hurt them not. At last they arrived at home and found the



house rifled their trunks etc broke open their linen and apparel all gone, their wine etc wasted or drank the place was thronged with people that had plundered & taken possession of their property and who destroyed the best of everything, very many of them continually consuming the provisions which the family durst not call their own. They often threatened the son with death & one day in particular said that he should be brought out for that purpose and that they would come again to fetch him & he expected loss of life might be the consequence yet they came not. One night a company of intoxicated Wretches came there staid a while and went from thence to Thomas Thompsons where they spoke of wicked designs which they said they would return to perpetrate and in a while went off, early in the morning came Thomas to them imprest[sic] with deep anxiety & enquired if they were all safe, and to the praise of the overruling power of divine providence be it spoken that Company had not returned to molest them so that they escaped unhurt. Their house which they durst not call theirs was the abode of great numbers who sallied forth to commit various atrocities and returned as it pleased them to eat and drink or sleep. They used to hear them shooting the Protestants on the hill with shouts of merciless triumph. But Oh! when the scene was reversed, when the army was victorious how abject how terrified were the unhappy creatures: how did they sink as it were into the very pit of misery and crouching at the feet of those whom they had robbed and spoiled, they implored that shelter which it was impossible to give, for the soldiers ran swiftly thro the houses in close pursuit of the defeated, some of whom took refuge under the hay and were run through with bayonets or swords, thus receiving that same measure which they had meted out to others. Great was the care and kindness of friends thro out the Nation to administer to their suffering Brethren and sisters, and collections of money to a large amount were made and from time to time distributed amongst those whose heavy losses deprived them of their accustomed necessaries for several who possessed houses and lands had scarcely bread to eat or raiment to wear yet truly their lives were given them for a prey, in all places whether they went. The family of Jacob and Elizabeth Goff suffered much at that dreadful period, their residence was so near where a battle was fought that dead bodies were promiscuously thrown into their grounds during the fight. The rebels frequently brought out Jacob Goff to the greatest anxiety of his wife and daughters who hardly could hope to see him return alive. Yet it seemed as if they had not power to touch his life though they spared not his property. They flattered him with promises that he should be the greatest man in the Country if he would unite himself with them and be a Roman Catholic and they threatened him with death if he refused to comply. One night the Priest had him brought out of his bed not allowing him to dress himself and took him away to the Camp but after some time he was permitted to return home. His wife was throughout all supported with uncommon firmness and undaunted resolution and when using the plain language one of them mocked her she had the courage to repeat the sentence in which the word thou was included<sup>12</sup> It was very remarkable that though the behaviour of many was brutally savage yet they offered no personal rudeness to friends - and that badge of plainness which is not always sufficiently esteemed was then considered a greater protection than can easily be imagined - insomuch that Jos Mack who was travelling at that time and taken prisoner by them said he would have given all the World if he had it to give that his dress had been plain. It was at this gloomy crisis that the quarterly meeting of the County



Wexford held at Enniscorthy fell in due course and such were the daily Accounts of diabolical cruelty practised without apparent remorse or fear that it was no small effort of faith for friends to attend it.<sup>13</sup> "When the Lord Chancellor Fitzgibbon<sup>14</sup> was applied to for passes I was told that he reasoned awhile about the impracticability of their going & wished them to postpone their meeting which it was told him could not be done he told them that the place was in the possession of the rebels and that therefore they could not enter the town the reply was the way will be opened this he gave them as a watchword and with it and their passes they set off.<sup>15</sup> David Sands went in company with those from Dublin whom he encouraged to make the effort expressing that he had faith to see the far end of the journey and believed that they would do well His recital of experiences something similar in his own Country was comforting to the minds of some who were with him who humbly endeavoured to support this testimony. When this little Band arrived at Carlow they heard that they could in no wise accomplish the journey, the army in Wexford having been put to flight. D. Sands encouraged them to persevere which they did and he went with them,<sup>16</sup> the way was opened wonderfully - for it appeared that the decisive battle of vinegar hill was fought the day before in which the army proved victorious and of course friends[Friends] had a free passage.<sup>17</sup> the road in some places was strewn with dead bodies and they had several times to alight to remove them lest the wheels should run over them.<sup>18</sup> They all arrived in safety to the joy and comfort of their deeply exercised brethren and sisters: and in safety they returned to their own habitations. To the Praise of the great name be it spoken! Nor was it alone in the County Wexford that friends were closely tried in person and property Various instances occurred in which the preserving care of Divine Providence was evidently extended. The house of Josiah & Elizabeth Manliff near Edenderry was fifteen times attacked by the rebels and they suffered much in their circumstances thereby. They were also above twenty times with Wm Hoore<sup>19</sup> near Edenderry - they plundered him sorely often threatened to kill him & once were in the act of going to shoot him the pistol was presented & they endeavoured to discharge it at him, but so it was that the ball did not go off nor were they permitted to touch his life. The Mansion of Joseph and Ruth Jumain<sup>20</sup> of Ballybrittain was assaulted by a gang of these Wretched beings he appeared at a front Window & spoke to them they demanded a certain sum of money thirty Guineas he threw it down to them and they immediately fired at him, the shot missed him and the ball perforated the wall of the room in which he was and where his wife was walking backwards and forwards waiting the event yet they both escaped and the friend who related this circumstance said that if Joseph Jumain had been suffered to lose his life she thought her faith would fail. Joshua and Hannah Wilson of Mount Prospect near Rathangan<sup>21</sup> were peculiarly inimical to the rebel party on account of the free expression of loyal principles he had said that no republican was welcome at his table and they both openly avowed their attachment to the present Government. One Evening after returning to her room she felt great uneasiness of mind like an awful forboding of what was to happen - she desired the Steward who was a friend to sit up and she waited in silent expectation. About Midnight eight men approached the back door and entered the house they asked to see the master of it & insisted on his getting up and coming to them which he was obliged to do, they demanded a sum of money which was given to them, they blamed him for sending his property to Dublin in the Spring which he had done to secure it and asked him why he did



it? they grew angry and some of them excessively fierce concluded to kill him One of them lifted up his Gun to shoot at him, and while in the act of just going to fire she darted between her husbands breast and the muzzle of the gun, saying the arm of the Lord is stronger than thine. the weapon fell at that moment from his uplifted hand and it appeared that their purpose changed for they spoke no more rudely but went into the kitchen eat and drank what they could get and were ever after civil and rather respectful to them. At Rathangan dreadful were the massacres and merciless the carnage of those days an officers wife who was relating it said that no one of their party durst appear in the streets lest they should be piked or shot yet Jane Watson<sup>22</sup> ventured to give cordials to the miserable sufferers endeavouring all in her power to administer to their relief. While the battle was raging and the balls flying around us <sup>23</sup> house seemed free from danger and a young man Robert Woodcock<sup>24</sup> being incautious enough to go to the Window received a bullet in his arm which occassioned[sic] him considerable pain but no other of the family nor any other friend was injured save Thos Gatchell<sup>25</sup> who having joined in with warlike practises[sic] altogether inconsistent with our peaceable profession and relying on the arm of flesh which many had experienced to be ineffectual to deliver in the hour of dismay he fell beneath the desolating instruments of war, and was the only member of our society that lost their life by violence during the many troubles and dangers with which they in common with their neighbours were surrounded. Several friends were taken prisoners and held captive for some time threatened with instant death and no way of escape appeared yet so it was that not any of them was permitted to fall a prey to their enemies the last mentioned young man excepted. During the time that Jervis Johnston<sup>26</sup> was labouring in the Gospel in America the rebellion broke out and wonderful was the canopy of preservation which encircled his family and the few friends who resided at Antrim, death seemed to be almost inevitable, the clang of arms shrieks, groans, and cries of terror pierced their ears, the town was up in arms. They left their house which they thought would be pillaged & burnt and going out the back way sought for safety in the fields but finding themselves much more exposed to danger they soon returned the way they went and took refuge in their own habitation, their yard in which the battle was faught[sic] was thronged with armed rebels and in their great haste to enter the house they shut out their brother Wilson Johnston and a rebel slopt[sic] in along with them unperceived the latter was cause of great trouble by his boisterous expressions and it was with difficulty they prevailed on him to be quiet, reasoning with him the absurdity of destroying himself and them by his unavailing hostility at length when opportunity occurred they let him out but for some time after remained in a state of suspense and great anxiety on account of their brother whom they hardly dared to hope was yet alive, Here also was the goodness and mercy of divine Providence evinced for when he reached the house and found the door shut, deaths surrounding him almost without a way to escape or a moment to lose he turned aside & found shelter in a hay loft where unseen he heard the awful sounds of dreadful carnage and saw the gushing blood of his fellow creatures with which the ground was well nigh covered while many lay writhing in the convulsive grasp of death unpitied and without a friend to administer even a cup of water to their extreme necessity. There was a pump in the yard to which vast numbers flocked to quench their thirst in the heat of battle down whose bodies the vital flood ran like a torrent Among the numbers of those who fell that dreadful day was one



young man of rank in the army he was desperately wounded a ball had perforated his bowels and they burst out. Those around him durst trust him in no house save Jervis Johnstons there they knew he would be safe and their confidence was justified in the care and attention which was paid by the family to this poor sufferer during the few painful hours of his prolonged existence Doubtless that circumstance tended to encrease[sic] the respect and kindness with which the army treated them throughout the time, and when the order was issued to burn every house in the town it was carried into effect from that on their right hand, when the soldiers commenced that on their left hand where they slept leaving their house only unhurt and the rest of the town consumed - thus remarkably fulfilling the testimony of one who in the quarterly meeting prior to their father leaving home had to say that in his absence there would be wars and troubles would surround but that his family would be protected beneath the canopy of safety.

A young man who lived in Joseph Haughtons<sup>27</sup> family in the County of Wexford and was in the habit of attending friends meetings but not a member was travelling from Balletore (near Ferns) to Wexford on passing very road came up with a small party of rebels a few days after they had been defeated in the memorable battle at vinegar hill and in a careless manner said, "Well boys are you going to begin at the old business again" they made no immediate answer but talked a good deal amongst themselves rather in a tone of displeasure still following him he proceeded without altering his pace and in a short time heard the footsteps of one of them close behind him whom he supposed was going to do him some mischief his companions called very loud to him to which he paid little attention but before he got up to the young man some of the party behind fired at him and he instantly fell down lifeless they then suffered the traveller named Patk[sic] Kenny to proceed without further molestation - a singular instance of the interposition of Providence in saving the life of an innocent individual

taken from his own lips

1. hath done - repeated in manuscript. Probably copyist's error.
2. XXX insurrection - possibly 'bloody' insurrection.
3. Many Quarterly Meetings recommended that Friends destroy their weapons, and this was confirmed by Ireland National Meeting 1796, as a public testimony for pacifism and a precaution against breaking it or being the unwitting cause of harm to others. If Friends had no weapons they could not be tempted to use them when threatened or have them seized by others for violent purposes.
4. x weapons - possibly 'bloody' weapons.
5. There was a series of such orders aimed at disarming the populace, for example General Abercromby's Order, 3 April 1798, whereby local areas were given ten days to hand in their weapons or else have the army descend on them to live at "free quarters". The previous year General Lake had rounded up suspects for torture in order to discover the whereabouts of weapons - a frequent practice. Martial law was proclaimed on 30 March 1798. (Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The History of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London: Orion Books, 1992; repr. Phoenix, [n.d.], [first pub. 1969]), pp.59-63.)
6. Thomas Gatchell - named later in this account, p.165, see note 25.
7. John Hancock (1762-1823) of Lisburn, editor of the *Belfast Magazine* and author of a number of controversial religious pamphlets, was originally apprenticed to his uncle Jacob Hancock - possibly the individual mentioned here. (Harrison, *Biographical Dictionary*, pp.56-57.)
8. Mary Ridgway - Quaker minister. She travelled in the ministry in America accompanied by Jane Watson and returned in 1792 (Minutes of Ministers and Elders Yearly Meeting for Ireland, 1792).
9. prey - Biblical expression meaning 'what one brings away safe from contest' (OED), here meaning to escape with one's life. See, for instance, Jer 21:9.



10. x - meaning obscure.
11. This incident is mentioned in Thomas Hancock's *Principles of Peace* (pp.108-09), without giving Thomas Mason's name.
12. Full account given by Jacob and Elizabeth Goff's daughter Dinah Goff in 'Divine Protection'. For Elizabeth Goff's use of 'thou', according to the Quaker plain language, see p.96. Also see Hancock, *Principles of Peace*, p.103.
13. The Quarterly Meeting for Leinster province was held at Enniscorthy on 23 June 1798.
14. Fitzgibbon (1749-1802) was Lord Chancellor in Ireland from 1789 to 1802 and was created Earl of Clare in 1795. He was keenly opposed to Catholic emancipation whilst unsympathetic to those 'patriots' in the Protestant ascendancy seeking greater independence from Britain. He later supported the Act of Union with Britain in 1800, believing this was in the best interests of Ireland.
15. Hancock tells us how some said, 'the Quakers must be mad' to go (p.91). David Sands gives his own account in his journal, describing how he and the Friends with him stayed at Ballitore, where the Quaker Abraham Shackleton ran his school, and then at Carlow en route (*Life and Gospel Labours of David Sands*, pp.177-79). At Enniscorthy, they found houses burnt, most of the residents fled, and those remaining hard pressed for food and water. When army officers asked the Friends why they came, they said they came to attend the Quaker Quarterly Meeting. The soldiers asked how they had hoped to hold a meeting when only the previous day the town had been in rebel possession - 'Our reply was, that we believed way would be opened, at which they appeared satisfied'. Mary remembers this 'perilous journey' many years later in 1815 when writing to David Sands. See Letter 38 in this volume.
16. For David Sands's role see Dinah Goff, 'Divine Protection', pp.89-90. He also visited Horetown, the Goffs' home (pp.105-06).
17. Dinah Goff states the battle of Vinegar Hill - the decisive conflict in the Rebellion when the rebels were routed by the British army - took place two days before the Quarterly Meeting at Enniscorthy (p.89), and Isabel Grubb, *Quakers in Ireland*, corroborates this (p.77).
18. Referred to in both Hancock's and Goff's accounts (p.91 and p.90 respectively). Also David Sands mentions how he and others, after reaching Enniscorthy, went two miles further into the countryside to visit people. 'In our way we saw great numbers of dead bodies, that were slain the day before, some of which we had to remove, to make way for our carriage to pass.' (*Life and Gospel Labours of David Sands*, p.178.)
19. William Hooure was an active member of the Society. He sat on Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders and endorsed the certificate for Mary Ridgway to travel in America in May 1789.
20. Ruth Jumain represented Leinster at Women's Yearly Meeting in 1785, and frequently thereafter.
21. Joshua and Hannah Wilson were Dinah Goff's uncle and aunt. She recounts this incident, but does not mention Hannah Wilson's premonition, or Joshua Wilson's support for the Government (pp.113-14). The incident affected Joshua Wilson so much that he left Ireland, where he had lived for forty years, for England, never to return.
22. Jane Watson was an active friend who accompanied Mary Ridgway on her journey in America, 1789-92.
23. Space in manuscript.
24. Probably the unnamed Friend mentioned by Hancock in *Principles of Peace* as being too curious - looking out of the window he was wounded in the chest (p.141).
25. Hancock refers to one Friend who was killed but does not name him. He says the Society lost no members except for this one man who wore a military uniform, thinking it would protect him, and shot 'wantonly' at the rebels from a window. He hid in the chimney, but was removed and killed. His relations who kept to their pacifist principles survived (pp.136-39).
26. Jervis (sometimes spelt Jervais, Gervis or Gervais) Johnson was a minister (he represented Ulster at Yearly Meeting of Ministers and Elders 1796), who journeyed to Philadelphia and New York in the ministry. A Ruth Jumain, daughter of Jervais Johnson, became Nathaniel Card's second wife after the death of Mary Birkett Card, according to the Card family Bible.
27. Isabel Grubb says of Joseph Haughton that he 'found that the more he did what he felt to be right the more the rebels respected his conduct', and 'when the army entered Ferns the Commander took Joseph Haughton's word with regard to the innocence of those who remained in the town' (Grubb, *Quakers in Ireland*, pp.75-76). Haughton demonstrated his own pacifism by breaking his gun (a fowling-piece) into pieces publicly in the street before the conflict began. He remonstrated with people on both sides and ignored threats to burn down his house if he continued to shelter Protestant women refugees. (Harrison, *Biographical Dictionary*, p.62.)



## EXTRACTS

The collection contains six extracts copied from the works of others.

The first extract is from a letter written by Thomas Scattergood to Mary's friend, Hannah Wilson Forbes,\* on 24 December 1797. Thomas Scattergood (1748-1814), born in New Jersey but later of Philadelphia in the United States, was a travelling minister who journeyed in New England with David Sands and was friendly with other evangelical ministers, such as the British Mary Dudley. He visited England and Ireland in 1795-96. In Dublin he stayed with Thomas Bewley (August 1795) and visited many families, attending Meetings both at Meath Street and Sycamore Alley where Mary Birkett worshipped. He also stayed with the Shackletons at Ballitore. He left Ireland in May 1796 for Liverpool, and returned to America in 1800. (Sources: *Visitors to Dublin Yearly Meeting*, compiled by Thomas Webb (1874), and *Memoir of Thomas Scattergood*, compiled by William and Thomas Evans (London: C. Gilpin, 1845.)

\* Hannah Wilson Forbes, later Hannah Reynolds on her marriage to Thomas Reynolds in 1798, was Mary's friend from childhood. Numerous poems were exchanged between them, and Mary composed an elegy on Hannah's death. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.

### Extract of a letter from Thomas Scattergood to Hannah Wilson Forbes dated 12th Mo 24th 1797

"Remember me to Mary Birkett & tell her, that is equally true respecting the female as the other sex "That a faithful man shall abound with blessings"<sup>1</sup> adversity, trials, afflictions are blessings in disguise, when sanctioned by him who altogether knows what is best for us tell her to remember where the emphasis lay on these expressions "Well done good & faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things<sup>2</sup> - its not in knowing much or having an enlarged understanding, but doing the will in the present little openings of duty - I feel love flow towards her." TS

1. Prov 28:20 - 'A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.'
2. Mt 25:21- in Christ's parable of the talents, this was the praise given by a lord to his servant who, by wise investment, had doubled the original sum vouchsafed to him. 'His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'

Mary copied the extracts on the next few pages from the works of well-known religious authors. In the collection, they are sandwiched between sections of her journal dated January to May 1805 when she was distraught by a crisis in the family business. It is possible that these extracts held special significance for her at that time although, as the date when they were copied is not given, we cannot be sure.



The first author, Miguel de Molinos (1627-1696), was a Spanish monk and mystic who was influential in the evolution of quietism. Quietism advocated the cultivation of an inner passivity, an absence of conscious thought or will, to facilitate the experience of God's presence. The extracts are taken from de Molinos's best-known text, *The Spiritual Guide*, which publicised his 'new method', as it became known, of spirituality. First published in 1675, the work proved hugely popular and was translated into English by Cornelius Cayley of Leeds in 1685. This translation was reprinted in Dublin by the Quaker John Gough in 1798. It was this text that Mary used - Doctor Michael de Molinos, *The Spiritual Guide, which leads, by the inward way, through the veil, to perfect contemplation, and to the rich treasure of internal peace*. Continental Quietist works were much in circulation amongst Quakers at this time. For example, John Gough's brother James, a schoolmaster in Ireland, published the autobiography of Madame Guion (Smith's *Catalogue of Friends' Books*, p.853).

The 'method' of de Molinos eventually attracted the criticism of some within the Catholic Church, particularly the Jesuits, as its practice tended to diminish resource to church liturgy and the sacraments. De Molinos was arrested and interrogated by the Inquisition, then forced to recant to avoid being burnt at the stake. He died in prison some years later.

The text copied in manuscript appears as one paragraph, but consists in fact of two extracts run together. The first is from Chapter XII of *The Spiritual Guide*. It runs until 'the will of God may live in thy Soul'. The second, from 'Encourage thyself to repose in God', is from Chapter XI. The manuscript text follows Cayley's translation as printed by Gough exactly except for two differences in wording (see notes below) and some in punctuation.

### Extracts from Michael de Molinos

"Know that altho' exterior solitude doth much assist for the obtaining of<sup>1</sup> internal peace, yet the Lord did not mean this, when he spake by his Prophet "I will bring her into solitude & speak comfortably to her"<sup>2</sup> but he meant the interior solitude which jointly conduces to internal peace; internal solitude in the forgetting[sic] all creatures, in disengaging oneself from them, in a perfect nakedness of all the affections, desires & thoughts of ones own will.- This is the true solitude, where the Soul reposes with a sweet & inward serenity in the arms of its supreme Good. If in this manner thou wilt give thy Soul to God, taken off from the world, free & alone, thou wilt be the happiest creature upon Earth, because the Most High has his secret habitation in this holy solitude; in this paradisaical retreat is enjoyed the conversation of God; & it is only in this internal silence that his marvellous, powerful & divine voice is heard. If thou wouldst enter into this heaven on earth, forget every care & every selfish thought, get out of thyself that the will<sup>3</sup> of God may live in thy Soul.- Encourage thyself to be humble, embracing tribulations as instruments of thy good: rejoice in contempt, & desire that God may be thy only refuge, comfort & protector. None, let him be ever so great in this World, can be greater than he who lives in the love & favor of God; & therefore the truly humble man despises[sic] whatever there is in the World even himself & puts his only trust & repose in God."

1. Word 'of' added - it does not appear in Cayley's translation.

2. Hos 2:14 - 'Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.'

3. 'love' is written, not 'will', in Cayley's translation.



'Abbot Alfred' was Saint Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167), English Cistercian mystic and Abbot of Rievaulx in Yorkshire. Aelred emphasised the attainment of a mystical experience of divine love through the path of human love and friendship, and devotion to the person of Christ. The majority of this text forms part of the opening paragraph of one of his major works - *The Mirror of Charity (Speculum Caritatis)*, written in 1142-43. The suggestion for writing this book, and its title, came from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, Aelred's mentor.

Mary's quote was identified by reference to a recent English translation by Elizabeth Connor (Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1990) and the Latin text, taken from original medieval manuscripts, in *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia*, edited by Anselme Hoste and C. H. Talbot (1971). Mary's own source has not been traced. Several copies of *The Mirror of Charity* were available by the late eighteenth century. It was included in an edition of Aelred's works edited by the Jesuit scholar Richard Gibbons in his *Opera Divi Aelredi Rievallensis* (Douai, 1616, 1631, 1654), reprinted in *Magna Bibliotheca Patrum* (Koln: 1618) and *Maxima Bibliotheca Patrum* (Lyon: 1677), and in Bertrand Tissier's *Bibliothecai Patrum Cisterciensium* (1662). None of these, however, were in English. Mary's title for the extract suggests her source may have been a biography of Aelred. His biographer was fellow monk Walter Daniel, whose *Vita S. Aelredi* exists in a thirteenth-century manuscript at Jesus College, Cambridge. However, the only 'life' of Aelred traced as available in the eighteenth/early nineteenth century is J. Capgrave's in *Nova Legenda Angliae*, ed. by Wynkyn de Worde (London, 1516, 2nd edn. 1643), drawn from medieval manuscripts or based on Walter Daniel. Sources: Dom Anselme Hoste OSB, *Bibliotheca Aelrediana, A Survey of the Manuscripts, Old Catalogues, Editions and Studies concerning St. Aelred of Rievaulx* (1962), and F. M. Powicke, *Aelred of Rievaulx and his biographer Walter Daniel* (London: John Ryland's Library, Longmans Green, 1922).

It is probable, therefore, that Mary had access to a brief life of Alfred, no longer extant, containing excerpts from his works. Lives of some Catholic saints noted for their mystical devotion, with extracts from their writings, were in circulation amongst Quakers at the time - for instance, Francis de Sales in James Gough's *Select Lives of Foreigners Eminent in Piety*. A biography of Aelred written only twenty-eight years after Mary's death shows why *The Mirror of Charity* held a special attraction for Quakers who valued the inner spiritual life above the external trappings of religion, and particularly for quietists:

Aelred's *Mirror of Charity* therefore is intended to reflect an image of the love of God [. . .] 'The Love of God' he says, 'is the Holy Spirit within us.'

The love of God consists not in these external things [having referred earlier to paintings, church music and spectacle]; it does not consist even in the joys of the interior life, but in the conformity of the soul with the passion of Christ, in the crucifixion of the whole man. The soul must wait patiently upon Him, not forcing itself to feel joy and sorrow, but resting in faith upon God, ready to be filled with His joys, when He wills, and ready to remain in spiritual dryness as long as He wills.

J. D. Dalgairns, *Lives of English Saints: St. Aelred of Rivaux* (London: James Toovey, 1845), pp.82-83.

### Extract from the Life of Abbot Alfred

"May thy voice rays[raise] the sound in my ears, Oh! Good Jesus! that my heart may learn how to love thee, that the interior powers & as it were bowels of my soul & very marrow of my heart may love thee & that my affections may embrace thee, my only true good, my sweet & delightful joy! what is love? my God if I mistake not, it is the wonderful delight of the Soul, so much the more sweet, as more pure, so much the more overpowering & inebriating, as more ardent. He who loves thee, possesses thee, in proportion as he loves thee, because thou art love; This is that abundance with which thy beloved are



inebriated, melting away from themselves, that they may pass into thee, by loving thee - That yoke which oppressteth not but raiseth the Soull that burden which hath wings not weight."<sup>1</sup>

1. The last sentence, 'That [. . .] weight', is not from the beginning of *The Mirror of Charity*.

Saint Macarius the Great (d.circa 390) was a Syrian mystic to whom the authorship of a collection of spiritual homilies was traditionally attributed, though they may actually have been written by several authors. The homilies are practical and experiential in nature. They envision God in terms of fire and light, and advocate a life of constant prayer as the path to mystical experience and knowledge of God. First translated into Latin circa 1300, they only became influential in Europe after translation and publication during the sixteenth century, when they were much studied by Lutheran pietists and methodists. (See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism series (London: SCM, 1992), pp.142-44, and Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp.113-25.) John Wesley included twenty-two of the homilies in Vol. 1 of his *Christian Library*, published in various editions from 1750 onwards. However, this extract does not appear there, or in a translation of all fifty homilies done earlier in the century: *Primitive Morality: or, the Spiritual Homilies of St Macarius* by 'A Presbyter of the Church of England' (1721). Mary's source therefore remains untraced.

### From Macurius[sic] of Egypt AD 390

"Go & learn neither to be moved with injuries not flatteries, if you die to the World & to yourself, you will begin to live to Christ - receive from the hand of God poverty as chearfully[sic] as riches, hunger & want as plenty, & you will conquer the Devil & subdue all your passions."

Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622), the Bishop of Geneva canonised by the Catholic Church for work towards the revival of Catholic piety following the Reformation, was a mystic who stressed the value of mental prayer and published a practical guide entitled *The Devout Life* (*La Vie Dèvote*) in 1608. Mary's extract here, however, taking charity as its topic, is more likely to be from *A Treatise on The Love of God*, his more mystical work, first published in 1616. Both works were translated into English: *The Devout Life* first in 1613, followed by the Challoner translation in 1762 (the most commonly used version), *A Treatise on the Love of God* by Father Miles Carr of Douay Abbey in 1630. Comparing Father Carr's with later English translations of *A Treatise* by J. Knox Little (1902) and Vincent Kems (1962), and the French, revealed many differences, and the texts are highly repetitive, with several passages bearing resemblance to Mary's extract but none matching exactly. Kems's preface mentions that *A Treatise* was also translated by an anonymous Irish lady in the early nineteenth century and published by James Duffy in Dublin. This text has not been located, but it is unlikely to have been Mary's source as Duffy was a major Catholic publisher. The British Library holds a copy of a life of Francis de Sales in Vol. 42 of *The Christian Library* published by Duffy in 1854, and a Henrietta Louisa Farrer, later Lear, translated *A Treatise on the Love of God* in London (editions 1878 and 1888).

Francis de Sales's works were popular among some Quakers and other Protestants, particularly quietists, owing to their simplicity and mystical content. James Gough, a Dublin Quaker, included this saint in his *Select Lives of Foreigners Eminent in Piety* (2nd edn, 1796),



with thirty-one maxims drawn from his works. Mary's quote is not one of them, but she may well have copied it from a similar collection.

### From Francis de Sales

He said "truth must be always charitable, for bitter zeal does harm instead of good, reprehensions are a food of hard digestion & ought to be dressed on a fire of burning charity, so well, that all harshness be taken off: otherwise like unripe fruit, they will only produce gripings. Charity seeks not itself nor its own interests, but purely the honor & interest of God: pride, Vanity & passion cause bitterness & harshness: a remedy injudiciously applied may be a Poison. A judicious silence is always better than a truth spoken without Charity."

Mary's source here may be the J. Crook who was convinced by George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, in 1654. He was a Justice of the Peace and a Member of Parliament, a minister in the Society of Friends, 'very zealous in upholding its principles' through the publication of a vast range of testimonies and epistles. He died in 1699. (Smith's *Catalogue of Friends' Books*, pp.482-92.)

### Copied from the margin of the old Bible printed 1599 by J Crook

"When the mind thinketh nothing: when the Soul coveteth nothing & when the body acteth nothing contrary to the will of God, this is perfect Sanctification."



## MEDITATIONS

### [Untitled, Undated]

"Be ye perfect"<sup>1</sup> is as positive an injunction and pronounced in language as unequivocal as any that fell from the lip of truth - "Finally, brethren be ye perfect" - adds the Apostle.- perfect in every good word & work<sup>2</sup> - and indeed whoever carefully observes the whole tenor of gospel instruction that it is absolutely necessary for every Christian - not that our corruptible nature can by any means of itself attain to perfection or that by an exact performance of the moral law we acquire a legal right to that glorious Epithet for we know that we are weaker than a bruised reed<sup>3</sup> and utterly incapable of supporting ourselves but that by a deep and humbling consciousness of our own nothingness and a perfect yielding in all things to the Command of the divine monitor<sup>4</sup> we may by degrees put off the old man and with him all his corrupt Deeds & sordid inclinations<sup>5</sup> and prepare an highway in the wilderness for our God, and where this is manifested by living experience he is never found wanting to assist & comfort us to fill the void in our hearts and to nourish the good seed which his own right hand hath planted<sup>6</sup> and as the young man in the Gospel who having kept all the Commandments was called to a more purely perfect dispensation<sup>7</sup> so the soul that seeing the insignificance[sic] of every created thing comes to the fountain of life & light will there witness the drawings of divine love which if faithfully yielded to are able to make us whole and perfect. What should we say to that man who standing in a plain at midnight were to tell us that no orb of light could ever be sufficient to dispel the darkness - Should we not say, wait till the sun hath reached the Horizon & we shall have full & perfect day - Even so the benighted soul enveloped with the thick vapours of iniquity and surrounded with the dark shades of error can behold no way whereby the darkness may be dissipated & cannot even conceive the glory and the beauty of a blazing noon. But tho' an unenlighten'd sinner cannot conceive it nor believe the truth and faithfulness thereof yet it is no less certain that we may arrive at perfection thro' Jesus Christ than that night should yield to the morning Sun-

1. Mt 5:48 - Christ's injunction, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Christ was drawing on sayings from the Old Testament, for example Gen 17:1 - 'And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect' and Deut 18:13 - 'Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God'.
2. 2 Cor 13:11 - 'Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.' Part of the ending of St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Also relevant is 2 Tim 3:17 - 'That the man of God may be perfect, throughly[sic] furnished unto all good works.'
3. 2 Kgs 18:21 - 'Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.'
4. **divine monitor** - manifestation of God as a guiding principle within.
5. Eph 4:22 - 'That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.' See also Rom 6:6 and Col 3:9.
6. Is 61:3 - '[. . .] that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified' may be relevant.
7. Mt 19:16-26 - a young man asked Jesus what he should do to receive eternal life and was told to keep the commandments. On his answer that he did this already, 'Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions' (v. 21-22). See also Mk 10:17-31, Lk 18:18-30. In Luke the young man is a Jewish leader.



What virtue is most necessary to obtain Christian Perfection? This next piece leads on from the one above - humility is vital.

**[Untitled, Undated]**

Of all the virtues which are essentially necessary to Christian Perfection & whose precepts can never be too frequently inculcated - Humility - pure and unfeigned Humility seems to claim a very considerable degree of attention - Its language is so very different from that of the world that it proclaims its origin derived from a meek and lowly Saviour, and its lessons tend so evidently to change the proud heart of man from placing its affections on corruptible things to fix its hope on a purer happiness and to lay low the foundation therof:[sic] Very different indeed is the voice of Humility from that of its adversary - Pride - The one teaches us to despise the allurements of wealth and of grandeur and to tread under foot the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, the other tempts us with the joys of sensuality the indulgence of self & the gratification of earthly desires - the one bids us to mortify our members<sup>1</sup> lest they choak[sic] the tender seed and bring our bodies into subjection that our souls may not perish the other feeds and pampers - Those very tempers whereby we close on ourselves the doors of salvation which Infinite Mercy alone can reopen But herein is displayed the wisdom of our Creator and the riches of his grace which being yielded to counteracts the disorderly rebellion of Nature and frees the soul from the fetters of Pride Our inveterate enemy<sup>2</sup> ever watchful to gain an advantage over us and thereby to despite that power at which he trembles assaults continually in the weakest part displays every object through a false medium and allures us to break our allegiance to our Almighty Sovereign but while thro' the glass of Truth and resting on the rock which cannot be shaken<sup>3</sup> we attend not to his suggestions & resist his false insinuations beholding in its true colours his continual representations we are safe. But ah how often have we gone over to the Camp of the Enemy in spite of the warnings of infinite Love how often have we been wounded and beaten and abused by our malicious adversaries when there was none to deliver us out of their hands how often have we repaid with ingratitude that Benevolent Protector who when we were bruised & scattered thro' our own foolishness visited us brought us to a place of safety, healed our wounds and our bruises strengthen'd our feeble knees - forgave our backslidings and imprinted on our souls the stamp of Love - How often when freed from the terrors of desolation having been led by his hand to pastures of pleasantness and vallies[sic] of fruitfulness where we sat as by the riverside and listened to his persuasive voice, received nourishment from his bounty, and joy & gladness from his presence;<sup>4</sup> how often have we waxed<sup>5</sup> indolent and vain, forgetting the days of sorrow and tribulation & quitting the vale of humility for the steep & dangerous mountain of Pride from whose summit though so frequently almost on the eve of being hurled down the precipice of destruction or cast into the pit of Despair yet we have been sought after and delivered rescued as from the mouth of the Lion, and snatched as from the paw of the Bear - shall we then any more break the Covenant of Life shall we by walking with outstretched necks<sup>6</sup> bring ourselves under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air Grant Oh Lord that this evil may no more come upon us but that as Pilgrims who are travelling to a better country we may despise whatever allurements happen to present themselves - steadily walking on leaning each on his staff turning



neither to the right nor the left - and conscious of our own nothingness insensible to the derision or the contempt to the applause or the smiles of the inhabitants thro' whose country tho' we must pass yet we must beware of fixing our abode in,<sup>7</sup> lest by yielding to their solicitations, the spirit of supineness<sup>8</sup> seize us, and we neglect to press forward to the mark of the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus -----

1. **members** - parts of the body. The reference is thus to mortifying the flesh.
2. **Our inveterate enemy** - the Devil.
3. **the rock which cannot be shaken** - Christ said that whoever heard His sayings and did them was like a wise man who built his house upon a rock, enabling it to withstand wind, rain, and flood (Mt.7:24-27, Lk 6:47-49). The rock is also Christ Himself (see 1 Cor 10:4).
4. **How often [. . .] presence** - echoing elements of Ps 23 in which the Lord leads to 'green pastures [. . .] beside the still waters' and 'preparent a table before me'.
5. **waxed** - grown.
6. **walking with outstretched necks** - offering ourselves as easy prey.
7. This world is envisaged as a place in which the godly do not belong, an alien country of temporary sojourn.
8. **supineness** - indolence or lethargy.

Replying to those who questioned the validity and purpose of the plain Quaker dress, Mary's defence is that it 'is at least a negative virtue', part of that 'hedge' of protection which separated Quakers from the world's people and possible sources of temptation.

### [Untitled, Undated]

What advantages have you by this apparently affected singularity of dress? Many! How? Would you be worse Christians by complying in that point with the rest of the world? conform, and your example will be more prevalent more general. - Not so! - we might ruin ourselves by so doing - dress is at least a negative virtue - it preserves us from many temptations which we should be otherwise liable to - for instance - I am the owner of a small piece of ground - small indeed but nevertheless all my possession I hold this tenement of the Lord of the Manor as his Steward only he hath promised me that he will reward me amply if I am diligent in cultivating it and faithful in preserving it from the encroaches of invaders - Accordingly I planted an hedge round about it which though not of itself essentially necessary yet proved a great security from the little Foxes which would otherwise destroy the tender grapes<sup>1</sup> that I had taken such pains to raise and to cherish. It is true my contemporaries laughed at me and derided me for singularity - Why, said they, shouldst thou affect this singularity? pull down this hedge and let us have all things in common.- Not so, replied I, for this ground is committed to my care and if I subject it to be trampled on by you, you will not be accountable for my neglect, nor make good my loss - besides this hedge is necessary to preserve me from many temptations to which I should be otherwise liable & it thereby contributes to the security of my territory in no small degree -----

1. Song 2:15 - 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.'



Quietist Quakers were suspicious of any intellectual activity that might interfere with the direct experience of God as the Inward Teacher.

**7th Mo 8th 1797**

When the Lord God Almighty condescends to be the Teacher all other reading is an hindrance rather than an help

This meditation compares learning and seeing in the world of concrete reality with spiritual learning. It deploys two of Mary's favourite motifs, that frequently appear in her poetry: the natural creation as a 'book' in which the presence of God can be read and the emblem to learn most from - the seed in the ground subject to the loving care of the gardener or farmer.

**[Untitled, Undated]**

May we not observe an analogy or correspondence between the works of this outward visible creation and those which are invisible save to the eye of Faith and may we not trace a resemblance between learning temporal and spiritual. When an infant begins to speak we teach him the alphabet, that footstool<sup>1</sup> of Science that foundation on which we build the immense[sic] edifice of wisdom, we teach him to spell and read yet the spelling and reading are not the substance, the essence which enters into his mind, but merely a medium which serves to convey to his intellect the sentiment therein contained - So when the infant mind of man (whether his corporal frame be in the state of infancy or not) begins to expand, our all wise Creator (who lets slip no season of improvement) presents to his view the divine characters which serve, as an alphabet in science, to prepare the way before him - he sees the beautiful works of creation the moon and the stars, the trees and the flowers, the birds and the fishes; and these loud preaching creators these convincing ministers impress on his mind the acquaintance with their Omnipotent Source - hence he learns that this book of wisdom, though charming though magnificent is but a book a casket, a shell in which the seeds the essence of all good is in its embryo[sic] and that nothing but a close attention to and continual dependance[sic] upon the inspeaking[sic] word (which as the rushing of a mighty water bursts open the barriers of the mind) can ever confer on them the fullness of that felicity after which they cease not to pant. Oh my soul learn thou of the seed in the ground which after due preparation of the parent soil, after ploughing and moistening and carefully removing all the stony substances after having been turned and over turned becomes wholly amenable and yielding to the hand of the good gardener,<sup>2</sup> who, in the right time never fails to impregnate its bosom with the seed of life - Oh my soul remember thou to be silent passive & obedient knowing that though the soil appear dead cumbrous heavy and without form or comeliness yet by and bye[sic] the beautiful plant of his right hand planting<sup>3</sup> will arise and crown thy ardent hopes: and oh be not anxious of hastening the day seeing that the careful farmer covets not an early appearance rather desiring that his precious grain may appear short and its growth slow because he knows that thereby it is deepening at the root - Oh may I remember that those ears<sup>4</sup> which rise above their fellows and with light



and erect head wave careless to the passing wind that those triumphant and insulting ears are - oh, look and remember, are but chaff and not fit for the garner<sup>5</sup> while those who humble and un aspiring rise with one gradation<sup>6</sup> and proportionate to their depth, ripen at length under the mild prolific ray and bearing the precious burden submit to the useful scythe[sic], which is but an instrument for passing from one state to another,<sup>7</sup> and are gathered together into usefulness ----

1. **footstool** - ground or base.
2. **the good gardener** - God, creator of the Garden of Eden.
3. **Is 61:3** - '[. . .] that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified' may be relevant.
4. **ears** - i.e. of corn.
5. **garner** - gathering or harvest.
6. **with one gradation** - evenly.
7. The image is also of Death, traditionally represented as the Great Reaper carrying a scythe - death is the means of 'passing from one state to another', as the action of the scythe enables corn, eventually, to become bread.

### [Untitled, Undated]

The arguments for the infallibility of the Church appear exactly like those of an ingenious optician who would take pains to convince me of the utility of spectacles, of their clearness and beauty but above all their excellence to collect the visual ray - Now I have not a doubt that those spectacles may be of use to those whose sight is weakened by much reading etc but they certainly can be of no use to me so long as Providence shall bless me with the perfect use of my optic nerve; when this fails I may perhaps desire to substitute glasses but till then I prefer the use of my own eyes without thinking myself obliged to make use of other peoples -----

The aim of Quaker ministry was to speak as directly inspired by the Spirit and not in a premeditated way. Quietists emphasised this particularly. The minister was merely to be a channel through whom God reached others, opening up their hearts to receive Him.

### Ministry

How precious to the hearts of the children of our Heavenly Father is the flowing of the Ministry which is the effect of his immediate operation - So precious that many (considering its amazing power) have called it the bread of life which nourisheth the Soul! Nevertheless God is the alone Bread of Life - His word is the beginning and end of our Salvation - he hath referred to himself the prerogative of feeding his flock and jealous of his honour, he will not give his glory to another Ministry like medicine to a sick stomach, prepares for the reception of the true bread and creates an appetite for that nourishment which pervades every fibre in the body and strengthens the whole man.

Dublin 7Mo 18th 1798



The meditations often seem to lead on from one another. This one picks up the theme of medicine raised at the end of the passage above.

### Friendship

If there be a medicine to alleviate the ills of life, a cordial to support & strengthen under every change in this chequer'd scene<sup>1</sup> - that medicine - that cordial is the bosom of a friend, of an entire friend of one who participates all our sensations shares every emotion of the soul, and anticipates our will by their desire - Ah! the bosom of a friend hath healing virtue in it! 'Tis the inestimable gift of the Supreme to those whom he regards with peculiar tenderness - 'tis a refuge to which we fly on every swelling storm, a counsellor whose advice flows more sweetly than honey more precious than the riches of an Eastern World, But where are we to find such a Being? When shall we pillow our head with this invaluable donation? For, not they whose capricious temper can change with every novel face - nor they who fear to repose with confidence on the faithfulness of a kindred soul - nor they whose little minds could prompt them to betray that confidence and abuse the sacred bequest are worthy to bear the dignified name. Where then shall we find a friend? - In those[?thou]<sup>2</sup> whose face as a clear mirror reflects back our own image - who respire<sup>3</sup> our sentiments, whose charity for the imbecility of Man, yet whose judgment stands firm on its own base, nor yields but to the superior illumination of Truth.

8 Mo 3rd 1798

1. **this chequer'd scene** - this world of changeable fortunes.
2. **those** - probably copyist's error for 'thou'.
3. **respire** - breathes, therefore shares and understands our feelings as if part of ourselves.

### [Undated]

#### Beauty.

All beauty is founded in Nature but prettiness in mens fancies - the latter differs with different opinions, but the former changes not ----

### Philosophic Mind.

Most men can see and admire a just idea, a just sentiment founded in Nature - but few have the power to collect as in a prism the rays of truth - to stand at an elevated distance and trace the secret spring which moves that grand machine - the human heart, the former like a child sees every object by itself - the latter like a man comprehends the whole & simplifies all his ideas as proceeding from one grand source. How much more noble, more dignified then will be our minds, if instead of applying to the muddied streams of human literature to the perplexive[sic]<sup>1</sup> multiplicity of scientific knowledge we quench



our thirst only at the vast source from whence proceed all the treasures of Wisdom, & all the infinite branches of Truth which have given dignity to the mind of man have disseminated beauty and felicity wherever they have spread and have fallen on the Universe in a fructifying shower abundantly more precious than that which (according to fabled mythology) descended erst into Danaes Lap<sup>2</sup> -----

8 Mo 15th 1798

1. **perplexive - perplexing.**
2. In Greek mythology, Danae was imprisoned in a tower by her father, the King of Argos, because it had been foretold that he would be killed by his daughter's son. There she was impregnated by Zeus, the King of the Gods, who took the form of a shower of gold descending into her lap. (Their offspring was Perseus who, after killing the Medusa, returned home only to kill his grandfather accidentally.) **erst - formerly.**



Premature burial was a very real concern in Ireland at this period. James Jenkins (1753-1831), an English Quaker who lived in Ireland for a time, kept a journal in which he remarks that 'premature interment' was all 'too common in Ireland'. He recounts an anecdote about a Quaker doctor in County Cork who, when out walking, felt 'uneasiness' after passing a poor family's hut where a funeral wake was taking place. Insisting the coffin was reopened, he found the supposed corpse, a woman, to have signs of life. Once removed to a warm bed and rubbed with hot towels, she revived and subsequently made a complete recovery, after which she made the doctor a present of a pair of knitted garters on every anniversary of her lucky escape - some thirteen anniversaries in all! (*Records and Recollections of James Jenkins*, ed. by J. William Frost, pp.195-97.)

### On Interments.

Recurring to a topic which one evening engaged us in conversation I recollected thy request which had thus long lain dormant in mind; and feeling that I had incurr'd a debt which remains undischarged, I suffered the sentiment to influence my pen expecting that a more ample elucidation of a subject so important may be the consequence of this simple expression of the subsequent few unconnected ideas ----

As we advance in the progress of civilization our sentiments gradually refine and the dark clouds of Gothic Barbarism<sup>1</sup> which enshroud the uncultivated mind of man yielding to the bright influence of all illuminating Truth will at length subside and the eye trace with horror its once familiar scenes.<sup>2</sup> Ennobled by the expansion of the invigorating powers of the human soul, we learn to respect ourselves, and the casket<sup>3</sup> which once contained all that we deem precious we would preserve alike from the insult of savage brutality & the danger of suffering the most intolerable horrors which this covering of mortality can possibly experience.

How then can we reconcile the conduct of those who suffer the premature interment of those under their care with that refinement whose aim and end is to soften every ill of life. Let us charitably suppose that inconsideration of a subject so universally interesting has hitherto been the cause and let us not doubt that it will excite their attention in an age when every effort is exerted to emerge from the shades of intellectual gloom.

Alas! how many sad instances have we heard of in which suffocation has been the deplorable consequence of an hasty interment and how many do we know have been consigned to the silent tomb with a precipitance[sic] at once indecent and unseasonable assuredly if no line can be drawn to decide between the boundaries of life and death - if in a state of torpid stupefaction, the countenance has assum'd the apparatus of the latter,<sup>4</sup> it is then the bounden duty of survivors, the indispensable obligation which we reciprocally owe to wait till the evident and only just criterion of putrefaction has announced the dissolution of our parted friends: and if ever it were necessary to enforce the divine Law, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do, do ye even so to them,"<sup>5</sup> - it must certainly be when the object is reduced to an absolute incapacity of asserting its right. Oh! then let the voice of Humanity plead no longer in vain! let us place ourselves an instant in the situation of those who lie before us; let us suppose it possible, very possible that we ourselves may be entomb'd alive, and then let me ask if we should not ardently



desire to avoid an allotment so horrible: the inference is drawn - if we wish to avoid it ourselves how criminal must it be not to avoid it in others?

I am aware that the minds of suffering relatives are at those seasons more apt to dwell on their recent loss than to attend to the disposal of its remains which are therefore often left to the care of mercenary nurses;<sup>6</sup> but methinks the true impulse of affection is never inconsistent with itself and it ever must inspire that energy which a counterfeited fondness is but calculated to destroy. If the principle of action be pure as it ought to be it cannot forsake us at the most pressing emergency nor, having taught us to respect the temple of the divinity<sup>7</sup> will it suffer us to plunge its departure into an unknowable abyss of misery and horror.

The vital current<sup>8</sup> seems to freeze within me as I reflect that numbers of unhappy sufferers have thus been launch'd into a never ending Eternity! I have experienced the excruciating sensation of a living enclosure! and died in the agonizing struggle for existence and air -. while the weeping kindred mourning over the virtues of the Dear Deceased have perhaps consoled[sic]<sup>9</sup> themselves with the idea of having respected the remains by a pompous exhibition the poorest! and the most contemptible! that ever the vanity of mortals could suggest to expose the pride of the living by a senseless decoration of the dead! - Alas! the horrible consequences of sin admit of no alleviation, receive[?receive] no ornament from all the united efforts which an undertaker can bestow - Let us not then add to those horrors by rashly hurrying our friends to the grave, Let us wait with determinate<sup>10</sup> fortitude, till Reason and Justice allow us to inter them Let us dare to be singular when rectitude requires it; and ennobled by that which actuates us, let us stand alike unmoved by the applause or censure of the multitude and retain the inestimable reward of a consciousness, that though our example may avail but little, yet, that little will be remembered in the great day of account -

I cannot leave this subject without expressing a wish that these things may be more attentively considered than they generally are and that though the influence of the Legislature ought to restrain these abuses, yet the conduct of individuals, which arises from a much nearer source, can alone effectually prevent them and that till that conduct be regulated by the sacred standard of an unerring Principle we may vainly hope for consistency of Action.

10 Mo 1st 1800

1. The term 'Gothic' usually refers to a vaulted, arched and traceried style of architecture and art prevalent in Europe between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, but the name was originally a term of abuse denoting any style that was not classical. Mary thus links it with barbarism - a lack of civilisation, refinement, and knowledge.
2. Subscribing here to the Enlightenment view of the onward march of human progress.
3. **casket** - human body as casing, or outer shell.
4. **the apparatus of the latter** - i.e. the appearance of death.
5. Mt 7:12 - 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.' From Christ's Sermon on the Mount.
6. Nursing was not, at this time, a highly regarded profession. In the absence of training or organisation, nurses were often poor, unskilled women who could find no other way of earning a living. Some were unscrupulous.
7. **temple of the divinity** - the human body.
8. **the vital current** - the current of life.
9. **consoled** - comforted.
10. **determinate** - probably meaning 'determined', rather than distinct or definite.



This proposal for setting up a charitable home for sick and elderly servants is couched in language designed to appeal to possible subscribers, who are of, course, likely to be employers of servants. It thus highlights the dual purpose of such philanthropy which could bring benefits to the donors as well as the recipients of charity. The prospect of a home and protection from want in old age would stimulate female servants to work harder and encourage loyalty, particularly as they would need good references from their former employers to secure admission.

Dublin was notable for its charitable establishments - there were asylums, orphanages, penitentiaries, and the Magdalen Asylum for 'unfortunate females abandoned by their seducers' (Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges*, p.141). Funding was raised by donations, charity sermons (public events attracting large crowds) and some government grants. But most were initiated, like this scheme, by private subscription and women often played a leading role. Mary also wrote a poetic plea to the benefactress Elizabeth Dawson for funds. See 'To E. Dawson on behalf of the Aged and Infirm Female Servants', 23 April 1809, in Vol. 2, Poetry, p.420.

The idea bore fruit, although it took a few years to do so. Maria Luddy mentions it in her study of *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, p.192. The Asylum for Aged and Infirm Female Servants admitted its first inmates in 1817 and stayed open until 1839. Luddy quotes from the Annual Report of the female committee running the institution in 1818, which declared that the aim was 'not more to discourage the idle and profligate, than to reward the honest and faithful servant'. In a footnote she adds, 'The very existence of the home, the committee suggested, "must have a strong though silent effect on those, whose irregularities and want of principle, are but too frequently causes of complaint, interrupting the calm current of domestic happiness".' She also mentions other institutions with similar aims such as the Society for the Encouragement and Reward of Good Conduct in Female Servants begun in Belfast in 1836, which offered financial incentives to servants to remain a number of years in one household, and the House of Refuge in Dublin, set up in 1802 in Baggot Street, which aimed to prevent unemployed servant girls being tempted into vice.

It is likely that Mary Birkett Card's document was produced for public circulation. It might have been printed and/or sent to newspapers as an advertisement. It is similar in format to the leaflet produced circa 1809 as a public appeal by supporters of the House of Refuge in Ash Street, Dublin, founded by lay Catholic women for unemployed female servants. (Reproduced as Doc.18 in Maria Luddy, *Women in Ireland, 1800-1918: A Documentary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), pp.55-56.) Candidates for admission there also had to have good references to obtain entry.

### Asylum for Aged & Infirm Female Servants---

A few friends to the cause of Philanthropy and the extension of universal benevolence having long seen and lamented the deplorable situation of that useful class of our fellow-creatures, who reduced by age and decrepitude to undergo the extreme of human misery are left to famish in unnoticed obscurity, or to supplicate in the streets for a precarious subsistence, and being convinced that the House of Industry<sup>1</sup> is not an adequate asylum for those who have been accustomed to the comforts of life - to warm fires & nourishing diet. They have been led to think of an Institution solely for the reception of aged and infirm female servants which appears to them to be an object highly desirable and expedient - They believe that solid advantages will thereby accrue to society & that servants who have in prospect an home where their weary limbs may rest and where their minds unencumbered by pecuniary cares may repose in quietness and peace, preparatory to their final change



and be thus more fitted to appear at the great tribunal<sup>2</sup> - they believe that such a prospect will powerfully stimulate them to integrity and industry especially as certificates of good conduct from their masters and mistresses (signed by a subscriber) must necessarily be the mode of admission ---

In this humane & populous City so abounding with the extremes of dissipation and distress, the helpless infant, the sick and the wounded are provided with suitable receptacles;<sup>3</sup> and yet those hands whose servile drudgery reserve ours for ease and elegance, those limbs whose useful and domestic toil have left to ours the privilege[sic] of rest - and they whose thoughts (wholly occupied in attending to our corporeal comforts) have set us at liberty for sublimer pursuits, for more exalted occupations - that these having lost by age and infirmity their ability to be useful shd[sic] feel the iron grasp of penury and descend to the silent grave amidst the tenfold horrors of want and disease, surrounded too by accountable being[s]<sup>4</sup> who are alike subject to the casual vicissitudes[sic] of Life - that these in their latter moments should be thus deplorably situated must surely be for want of having rightly considered the Harmony of Creation. It is therefore earnestly requested that the friends of humanity will assist this desirable object by an adequate contribution.

The extent of this Establishment must be limited by its fund and its regulations be formed and conducted by a committee appointed from amongst the subscribers

It is intended to avoid the distinctions of religious denomination,<sup>5</sup> to occupy in sedentary employments<sup>6</sup> those who are able, and to give them the plain comforts of life unembarrassed by fatigue & anxiety.

Thus will a good character become an inestimable treasure, and the more favor'd classes of society be ultimately rewarded by the increased fidelity & attachment of those below them. ----

4 Mo 4th 1808

1. **The House of Industry** - originally the workhouse, erected by statute in 1703, to provide accommodation for the destitute and for deserted children. Conditions were bad. According to a government inquiry (1758), the building leaked, the inhabitants were poorly fed, filth and vermin were endemic and the children in particular suffered terribly. So in 1772, the workhouse was divided into two: the House of Industry (so named because its inmates were forced to work if able) situated in Channel Row on the north side of the River Liffey and the Foundling Hospital in St James's Street where children could be accommodated separately.

A few details are relevant to the background of the proposal for an Asylum for Female Servants. Beggars and homeless found in the streets were committed to the House of Industry - a vehicle known as the Black Cart, driven round for this purpose, was so much hated that its appearance sometimes initiated riots. It also housed the mentally ill and a boys' prison. 'In 1807, a year of unusual distress, 5900 persons were admitted - the average number in the House being 1862' - a fact which may have had a bearing on Mary's 1808 appeal for female servants. Conditions had improved little, mortality was high and the diet designed to be that obtainable under 'the lowest rate of wages by which the industrial labourer can subsist in his own habitation'. A report in 1809 stated the House of Industry 'had "only succeeded moderately in its original object" - the suppression of beggary' [but had succeeded somewhat in] 'the relief of the aged and infirm, and of those who laboured under temporary distress from want of employment'. (Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges*, pp.129-32.)

2. **the great tribunal** - the Last Judgement.
3. Referring to a number of established institutions. The Foundling Hospital for abandoned infants, originally part of the workhouse (see note 1 above), was where unwanted children from the countryside as well as Dublin itself



were left to be 'farmed out' to wet nurses until they were old enough for apprenticeship to a suitable trade. Most, however, died long before then. From 1784 to 1796, 17,253 out of 25,352 children admitted died (Maxwell, *Dublin under the Georges*, p.133). For a contemporary, and horrifying, account, see Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland Statistical and Political*, II, 423-40. Beside several general hospitals, specialist hospitals included St Patrick's Hospital for the mentally ill (1757) and the Lying-in Hospital (founded in 1745 by Dr Mosse), while wounded soldiers were catered for at The Royal Hospital, Kildmainham.

4. **accountable being[s]** - other people also accountable to God for the way they have conducted themselves. The inference is that respectable retired servants may end their lives in the company of those not so respectable, or people who have been subjected to the seamier side of life.
5. An idea also underpinning the foundation, by Quakers, of the Dublin General Daily Free School which aimed to educate children without denominational bias. See journal entry '4th Mo 4th 1805' above in this volume, particularly note 4, and Vol. 2, Poetry, p.375.
6. **sedentary employments** - work to be done sitting, involving little physical exertion.



Circulating libraries began in the early eighteenth century and soon spread across the country. Readers paid a regular subscription to borrow books - very useful at a time when they were often prohibitively expensive. Libraries were usually attached to booksellers, or run in conjunction with other businesses, to make a profit, though some had a philanthropic purpose. They aided the spread of literacy rapidly by making books more widely available and encouraging people to read. Though library stocks might include a wide range of books, the most popular genre was fiction, particularly romantic novels, which many young women read avidly. This was a source of concern to many seriously minded people, who considered such texts injurious to religious and intellectual development and felt the purpose of a circulating library should be to educate and improve, not simply entertain.

It is possible that Mary wrote this piece in connection with a proposal for a Quaker circulating library - the references to Friends, and to 'our forefathers', make this likely.

### Thoughts on a Circulating Library of approved Religious Books.

Of all the advantages with which the present period of refinement of mental culture is so abundantly productive, perhaps none appear more interesting than those by which the sources of useful information are widely extended and where is the medium more fraught with intelligence, or more prolific with the means of improvement than a well chosen circulating Library.

The consciousness of this power to excite interest & entertainment hath induced the world in its wisdom to adopt them; but, alas! thro' the depravation of taste, and the dereliction of sentiment they are too frequently replete with corrupt publications, which by presenting in fascinating language the gilded pictures of desultory pleasures, amuse the imagination while they injure the heart and assuredly lead off the attention from solid improvement and the pursuit of durable enjoyment ----

A Circulating Library furnished with moral and religious books, must prove of general benefit to Society at large - and those hidden treasures the vast labours of our forefathers of which many of us scarcely recognise the name being thus introduced into families would be cherished as rich sources of pleasure & profit - the fine morality of their pure principles - their bright examples - their patience in suffering - their close adherence to the divine gift - and the dignity with which they soar'd above the fear of man ought to be more known and read.<sup>1</sup> They ought to be classed first in the estimation of friends[Friends], and their influence would soon be felt - they would create a disrelish for light and trifling publications and would attract the minds of our youth to the peaceful paths of Piety & Virtue.

3d Mo 8th 1814

1. Referring to early Friends who endured persecution for their beliefs.



Seven months before her death in October 1817, Mary made her will. It is notable not because she had so little actual property to bequeath (many married women owned no property of their own and the Cards' home and business interests would almost certainly have belonged to her husband Nathaniel), but for its humility, even self-effacement. The few personal possessions she has - clothes and books - are unspecified, and even the choice of items (designated merely as 'little mementos' or 'tokens') for her parents, sisters and cousins is left to her husband. But the main purpose of the will is not to leave such material legacies. It is to record for her family the legacy Mary considers important above all others - her wish for them to continue to live and grow in their faith. She reveals a particular concern for her husband - fears that were perhaps, in the light of subsequent events, justified. See her last epistle, addressed to him (Letter 43 in this volume).

**Dublin 3d Mo 19th 1817 -**  
**Mary Cards Will.**

It is my fervent wish & desire that my beloved Husband may be careful to keep under the canopy of divine protection which alone is able to preserve him through the many snares which surround. And that my dear children be Religiously brought up. It is the sincere & pregnant<sup>1</sup> prayer of my heart that they may come under the influence of the Holy Spirit and by it be led into all truth. May the Lord Almighty by and through His Son Jesus Christ our Redeemer visit them again and again & make them willing to submit to his divine Operations that so they all may become heirs of his Kingdom of Heaven - I feel desires that my dear and Honored father and Mother and my Dear Aunt Bolton<sup>2</sup> may come nearer and yet nearer the blessed enjoyment of everlasting good - I request that they may receive some token of my regard either of my clothes or what they and my dear Husband may think suitable. I wish also that my two sisters Elizabeth Hudson<sup>3</sup> and Abigail Birkett<sup>4</sup> with my dear brother George<sup>5</sup> may receive some token of my true affection, likewise to my Cousin Catherine Tew<sup>6</sup> and Sarah Clark<sup>7</sup> and Anne Card Birkett<sup>8</sup> some little memento of Kind Relationship either out of my Books or Clothes or what may be thought most suitable. I do desire that my dear Husband will pay those little legacies soon after my death. May the Lord forsake him not but be with him and my dearly beloved children all four and with my dear parents and with my dear Brothers & sisters & their children and all mine through time and through Eternity  
Amen saith my Soul

Mary Card

1. **pregnant** - a word capable of a variety of meanings: full or entire, meaningful or significant, presageful of the future.
2. Mary's maternal aunt, Hannah Harrison, married Thomas Bolton of Warrington in 1779. He died in 1789 (see poem written on his death in Vol. 2, Poetry, p.68). This aunt in Warrington later received a £50 annuity under the will of her brother, George Harrison, the London merchant and anti-slave trade campaigner, on his death in 1827 (Jennings, *The Business of Abolishing the British Slave Trade*, p.124).
3. **Elizabeth Hudson** - Mary's sister, now the wife of Robert Hudson. See entry for Elizabeth Birkett in Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.
4. **Abigail Birkett** - née Knott, wife of Mary's brother, William Birkett. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.
5. **George** - George Harrison Birkett, Mary's youngest brother, who was to write up the account of her death - see the next piece in this volume. See also entry for him in Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.



6. **Catherine Tew** - exact relationship to Mary not yet discovered. Perhaps Catherine (Kitty) Birkett, daughter of Mary's paternal uncle, Henry Birkett, and his wife Sarah, née Sharpe. But she had been disowned for marrying outside the Society in 1814, and had been the cause of much family disquiet (see entry for Catherine Birkett in Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'). Her married name, according to handwritten information on the funeral card of her sister, Sarah (see note 7 below), was Morris, but that may have been a second marriage.
7. **Sarah Clark** - Mary's cousin, Sarah Sharpe Birkett, daughter of her paternal uncle, Henry Birkett, and his wife Sarah, née Sharpe, who married a Carlow schoolmaster named Michael S. Clarke, according to information handwritten on her funeral card (Friends' Historical Library, Dublin). Mary wrote to congratulate her on her marriage in 1814 - see Letter 34 in this volume and entry for Sarah Sharpe Birkett in Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.
8. **Ann Card Birkett** - another daughter of Mary's paternal uncle, Henry Birkett, and his wife Sarah.



Mary's final illness, possibly the culmination of the liver complaint she mentioned in her spiritual autobiography on 24 August 1812, although the obituary entry for her in the *Quaker Annual Monitor* (1819, p.14) states it was 'apopleptic' in nature, lasted thirteen days. *The Annual Monitor* states that she 'appeared in ministry' for the last time a month before being taken ill, and that she retained her 'faculties' in a 'remarkable' manner for the first week of her illness, 'discharging' her mind to friends and relations. During the whole time, events were noted and her words written down by her brother, George Harrison Birkett. The way in which someone died and the words they spoke were considered to be of great importance. They revealed the person's state of mind and spiritual condition which could be interpreted as evidence of admission into the Kingdom of God, of the individual's salvation. Such evidence could be a great comfort to their family and friends. It also provided confirmation of a life hereafter. Also when in such extremity, on the borderline, as it were, between two worlds and close to God, someone's words and addresses to individuals present were thought to have significant meaning for others.

Mary died surrounded by her family: her brothers George and William, her parents William and Sarah Birkett, her sister Elizabeth Hudson and sister-in-law - William's wife Abigail, as well as her children - William, Mary and Hannah, aged fifteen, eight and five respectively. Her other surviving son, Nathaniel, the later collector of her writings, is not mentioned. Aged twelve at this time, he was perhaps away at school. In addition, many friends came to visit and sit with her.

### Geo Harrison Birkett's Account of the last illness and death of his sister Mary Card.

My dear Sister Mary Card took to bed of her last illness on seventh day the 11th of 10th month 1817, was indisposed some time before she gave up, prior to which she told her husband that she did not think they would be long together and was overheard in different places, most probably when she thought herself from the reach of human ears, in heavenly like anthems, making sweet melody unto the Lord; she had a dream or vision sometime before her death, wherein she saw Susanna Hill,<sup>1</sup> a minister whom she loved in her lifetime, and who departed this life about two years before, on an eminence who told her that she was waiting for her. The next evening she expressed more than once I think I have not now to make my peace, and to her husband who was anxious about her, I am not careful how it terminates, but this I have that I never thought more about thee and my darling children, and less about myself; her daughter Mary at her request, read a chapter in the Bible, after a considerable pause, she thus broke silence, My dearly beloved brother, is it not an unspeakable favour, to feel ourselves under the protection of our Heavenly Father; all the trying and stripings and provings are well worth the conflict. I was beset tried, scoffed, mocked, set at nought spit upon, trampled under feet, but when the Lord took my captivity captive,<sup>2</sup> I was as those that dream then was my mouth filled with laughter, and my tounge[sic] with singing,<sup>3</sup> so great was my abasement and humilliation,[sic] that I was like the unbelieving lord, who said if the windows of Heaven should be opened, then might these things be<sup>4</sup> but indeed all and more than all was fulfilled when the Lord was pleased to introduce me more fully into the glorious Kingdom of his dear son whose Kingdom I may humbly say, I in some degree possess, and thy peace and comfort therein shall be greatly enlarged and the Lord shall make of thee in his Church what he pleases, whose sole prerogative it is" the same evening she advised me to keep to the teachings of Christ saying keep to it, keep to it, it is that will lead thee safely along, a short time after she said



immediately recollecting herself what do I say signifying that she did not wish for anything but desired that her will might be centered in the divine will, she also the same evening gave directions how her children should be settled, even how her clothes also should be disposed of. On second day morning she told her son William that she was drawing near her close, about 3 oClock this day, all that was about her thought she was going off, a trying day it was indeed to those present as was also third day about the same hour, she appeared likely to be taken away, this evening she was greatly exhausted could hardly speak intelligibly nevertheless she sent her love to SJ<sup>5</sup> saying I sympathise with her and children she said at this time that her head was very bad, I went up to her bedside and waited a little while quiet and retired, when she uttered a few sentences nearly thus, I have none but the Lord to help me, he only could support me now, now am I satisfied, I trusted in the Lord and he never deceived any; I waited patiently for thy Salvation O Lord" The Lord is my Shepherd"<sup>6</sup> The Lord is my portion. A short while after on my making myself known to her and asking her how she was, she said Nature is disposed to complain but the mind is easy and not disposed to complain; at another time she said My God my Father and my friend do not forsake me in the end. Sometime after this she said very intelligibly to me, Those Lines of Doctor Watts<sup>7</sup> have been resting with me this some time My God my Father and my friend do not forsake me in the End. I reply'd he never will forsake thee; On which she said no he never will. about this time she several times expressed an ardent desire for her Husbands welfare saying the Lord will help thee. some time after this she said I love him I love him and he loves me, speaking of the beloved of her soul 15th fourth day she said to me Godliness is profitable unto all things I think many have missed it in respect to outwards, if they would mind this all would be well, and a little while after Love, Love all is Love, and again I concluded there was a time appointed for man to die and I wished to trust in Providence. This evening on seeing me near her she called me to her Bed and desiring me to sit down raised herself up and being a good while in silence a kind friend that sat up with her that night rose when she stretched forth her hand to her and said Thou my dear friend as thou wast coming into the room a word arose with me who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed Garments from Bozragh, this that is Glorious in his apparel Travelling in the greatness of his strength,<sup>8</sup> He it is that loveth thee and hath given himself for thee, Thou hast come through some Trials and afflictions and he did not give his favorite to the Lions nor his darling to the power of the dogs,<sup>9</sup> the day spring from on high hath visited thy Soul, be thou faithful unto death and he will give thee a Crown of Life.<sup>10</sup> And in a short time afterwards I had something to say to some others but the wind bloweth where it listeth. I cannot command it nor I hope I never did.<sup>11</sup> About 1 oClock the next morning she thus Ejaculated O Precious Father Comforter" soon after which she took an extreme weakness and appeared to be near her close, and when under a severe conflict of body she said more than once O that the Lord would be pleased to send a change. After sleep expressing that she was a little refreshed it was observed to her that that was a favour she replied "all are favours that we receive from his hands we mar them by our own impatience" She several times during the night thus express'd herself "Peace Peace all is Peace and Oh how I am cared for" Her bodily suffering was indeed extremely heavy although through the entire of her illness I cannot recollect a frown on her countenance contrariwise[sic] her features were placid and benign. Oh the



patience and christian magnanimity she shewed forth during the whole of her sickness, I think it was early this morning she said to me George my pain is intense but I desire to bear it without complaining" She expressed some time after this to a friend "Thou hast had a great deal of trouble the Lord will reward thee for it" and several times on this morning "Come "Come to my Brother about this time she broke out to the wonder and admiration of those present, thus is that Wm Birkett my Brother the Devil hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, thou my dear brother hath in thy younger years known the visitations of the most high thou did in part yield thereunto but then thou stopped short of entire dedication but Oh! yield thyself wholly unto the leading and guidings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and thus my dear Brother thou should be enabled to proceed forward conquering and to conquer I have greatly desired that thou my dear Brother would attend unto the covenant of thy childhood for in thy younger years thou promised never to envelope or encumber thyself with too much business, take care therefore not to shackle thyself by a multiplicity of outward concerns, the love of the world got too great a hold of thy heart, but Oh! that thou might attend unto the covenant of thy childhood, and then the Lord Jesus christ[sic] his spirit would help thee, wilt thou attend unto what I have said I could repeat it over to thee again but I am too much exhausted, therefore I hope what I have said will be sufficient wilt thou mind what I have said taking him by the hand and kissing him.

16th the same day, she thus expressed herself to her mother "How awful must it be for any to have their peace to make on such a bed as this" & in a little time after "I had rather have one moment of thy presence Oh Lord! than of all the host of Heaven" at another time she said, one grain of religious experience is worth an host of science To me at another time she thus express'd herself "I fear I shall not be able to bear what I have to go through" At another time very emphatically "My Lord Jesus Christ" Sixth day Night she lay quieter than usual said very little until Seventh day Morning, when she sent for her three children & gave them very suitable and pertinent advice the impression whereof will not be I believe easily eradicated from their tender minds. Saying to her eldest son "Keep close to thy divine leader within thee and if thou dost not trouble will come upon thee as she " a minister in a family visit "hath said" telling her niece that "The world will bite thee as it has bit me if thou dost not take care of it also to be beware of what company she kept also Cautioning her of the vanity of a deluded multitude in respect particularly to dress. She desired her daughter to mind her sister Hannah who she said was a giddy little girl, desiring her also to read no book so much as the Bible and to read it constantly and to make her sister Hannah read it with more to the same purpose. She express'd a desire to see a particular friend who was very dear to her, he was therefore sent for and she was very much rejoiced to see him, she expressed that "It was not the light of the visible constellations she wanted But it is the light of that City that needeth not the light of the sun nor the light of the moon, but the Lord God is the light thereof and the Lamb doth enlighten it"<sup>12</sup> I cannot get these words out of my remembrance, the last enemy that he putteth under his feet is death "It is the Lord that doeth it "The Lord is the Champion that fighteth our battles. "I have been washed in Jordan" The Lord sayeth doth he not "Tho thy sins were red as scarlett[sic] they shall be made white as wool"<sup>13</sup> "My sins were many but I feel nothing to arise against me is



not that an unspeakable favour" "Thou and I" speaking to the same friend "Shall be on Mount Sion<sup>14</sup> with harps in our hands I am not afraid of being there, it is the Valley between the dark valley between" To me she saith "I was precious unto thee my Brother" to two friends that staid up with her "My Dear friends I missed you sore". At this time she complained of her head which was very bad. And a little after to her father she said "Father arise, arise Father shake thyself from the dust of the earth, a little is sufficient thou hast experienced the visitations of the Most High in thy younger years, and thou hast preserved a savour of it thro life, thou wants more refining,[sic] dont let the World hold thee any longer, a little father is sufficient" She expressed that she had not a cloud in her way. A faithful friend is the Medicine of life, he that feareth the Lord shall find him and I have found him this is a faithful friend" We are they who have come out of great tribulation and washed our garments in the blood of the Lamb.<sup>15</sup> Thou and I Jonathan<sup>16</sup> shall be on Mount Sion with harps in our hands" The Lord is my comfort and next to that my dear friends, and this to the same friend is a comfort "I hope he will be with thee in the day of trial, he hath tried thee sore, but thou knowest where to get clean feeding and be careful to give clean feeding to the people"<sup>17</sup> Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aarons beard that went down to skirts of his Garment<sup>18</sup> As the dew of Hermon<sup>19</sup> & as the dew that descended upon the Mountains of Sion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing even life for evermore out of this is sterility, barrenness, dryness" The Lord is my life & my shield " Stay me with flaggers[flagons] comfort me with apples for I am sick of love,<sup>20</sup> "I have greatly desired to be more with feeling friends I am with them. Jonathan tell E:A<sup>21</sup> she has a seed within her wholly a right plant, tell her it is high time that it should come forth, a noble plant but she leaves, to what shall I call it shall I call humility poor creature it is high time it should come forth, a noble plant it must not always remain a seed, tell her it must not always remain a seed "I bless the day I bless thee for lending me James Nailer<sup>22</sup> Oh that spirit that wills, that dreads the Cross, that dreads hard things, that spirit. Oh that she might feel that spirit cast out - Oh what a Unity I feel with her spirit. I hope I feel the accuser of the brethren<sup>23</sup> cast out. Thou and I Dear Jonathan have washed our garments in the Blood of the Lamb thou hast a little more to go through before thy robes are entirely white"<sup>24</sup> And you my three dear friends my two brothers & my dear William attend unto the leadings & guidings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and he it is that will make you fruitful in the field of offering and joyful in the house of prayer.<sup>25</sup> That wicked ..<sup>26</sup> can I call him wicked he maimed he lamed me, he put things into my head I never thought of. But I have been healed, I have been restored, I have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.<sup>27</sup> Oh! what I would have then given to feel as I do now". To Me, Never lay thine hand on the Lord in any, never hinder any from going to meeting I have long had a Wish to tell it to thee. I hope thou wilt not take it ill.

To Jonathan, "Thou art a kind faithfull Man the feeling of thy spirit is very precious unto me I love to feel your spirits friends, not that I depend in any thing short of Jesus Christ: your spirits helped me in the deeps" If I should live it would be to his glory, he wants faithful Witnesses, thou wast his Mouth at the Grave he will have a Mouth thou took the words out of my Mouth.<sup>28</sup>



To Jonathan, she said, This is a faithful brother Jonathan. To her sister A:B:29 Catch thy mothers spirit she was a kind Mother unto me can I call her a Midwife and because the Midwives helped the woman[women?] of Israel formerly The Lord God builded them houses to dwell in.<sup>30</sup> After this largely relieving her mind, she spoke very little afterwards. The next Morning which was first day, she expressed that she had a very uneasy Night that she had been as it were between Heaven and Earth. She was on this day removed to her fathers country seat at Killester.<sup>31</sup> Second day Morning = She fervently supplicated that the will of the Lord Almighty might be done concerning her. Third Day. To a friend who came to see her on enquiring how she was, she said "The body is under great affliction but it is the Lords will blessed be his holy Name" I asked her on going out to see her, did she know me, she replied "My darling Brother I know thee and I love thee" with more to the same purport. she put forth her hand to me and said, "Nature is very much exhausted"

This Evening I heard her express words like these. I prayed that he never would forsake me and he has not forsaken me. On my sister Elizabeth saying that her father was sorry to see her in that condition she intelligibly said "The Will of the Lord be done" Soon after to a friend that went out to stay up with her, she mentioned her name and said "I did not deserve this kindness at thy hands" On the 24th of 10th Month 1817 Sixth day Morning at half past One O'clock A:M the scene of conflict with her ended. I have refined thee but not with silver I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction<sup>32</sup> Yea: thus hath my dear sister been refined & chosen in the very furnace of affliction as Gold seven times tryed in the fire,<sup>33</sup> so that she came to Zion with Songs and everlasting Joy upon her head and sorrow & sighing fled away<sup>34</sup>

G:H:B

1. **Susanna Hill** - Mary's friend for many years, who had died in August 1815. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'. Also letter to David Sands, Letter 38 in this volume.
2. Eph 4:8 - 'Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' St Paul speaking of Christ's ascension into Heaven.
3. Ps 126:2 - 'Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.' This psalm links with the quote from Ephesians above as it celebrates the return of Israel or Zion from captivity.
4. 2 Kgs 7 tells the story of the unbelieving lord who mocked Elisha's prophecy that a flow of barley would soon be plentiful in famine-hit Samaria. The prophet answered that the sceptic would see the food but not eat it and, in fulfilment of this second prophecy, the lord was trampled to death in the rush of people at the city gate when food was brought in.
5. SJ - unidentified.
6. Ps 23:1.
7. Dr Isaac Watts (1674-1748), a pious nonconformist who wrote *Divine Songs for Children* (1715), many hymns and devotional treatises. One of his poems is 'Against Idleness and Mischief', which commences with the famous lines 'How doth the little busy bee'.
8. Is 63:1 - 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.' Frequently taken as a prophecy of the coming of Christ.
9. Ps 22:20-21 - 'Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog./Save me from the lion's mouth'. Psalm 22 links with the verse from Isaiah above as it contains texts thought to foretell the Messiah and fulfilled at the crucifixion - for instance, that they will 'part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture' (v. 18). It is also the source of Christ's words on the cross: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (v. 1). Ps 35:17 - 'Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions' may also be relevant.
10. Rev 2:10 - 'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison,



that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' John addressing the church at Smyrna.

11. What Mary is led to say now must come spontaneously from the Spirit, not of her own will, in the same way as her ministry.
12. Rev 21:23 - 'And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'
13. Is 1:18 - 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'
14. Sion - alternative spelling of Zion. Mount Zion was the hill at Jerusalem on which the Temple stood.
15. Rev 7:14 - 'And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'
16. Probably Jonathan Hill, widower of Mary's friend, the minister Susanna Hill. The emphasis on faithful friendship might arise in part from a connection being made with the Biblical story of the friendship between King Saul's son, Jonathan, and David.
17. **clean feeding** - pure spiritual nourishment.
18. Ps 133:2 - 'It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments;'. Aaron was the brother of Moses and a priest. Jewish priests were forbidden to cut their beards as other Jews did according to custom, for instance when mourning relatives, as it was considered unclean for priests to do so.
19. Hermon - a mountain in Israel.
20. Song 2:5.
21. E:A - possibly Elizabeth Alexander. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'.
22. James Nayler (c.1617-1660) was an early follower of George Fox, a devout man and a powerful speaker, who at one time looked like being an alternative leader of the new Society of Friends. He was cruelly punished and imprisoned for blasphemy, and died after being robbed, only a year after his release from prison. See Appendix 7, 'Individuals Featuring in the Writings of Mary Birkett Card'. His dying words, commencing 'There is a Spirit which I feel that delights to do no Evil, nor to revenge any Wrong', became a classic text among Friends. Later in the piece, he says: 'It's conceived in Sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it; nor doth it murmur at Grief or Oppression. It never rejoiceth, but through Sufferings, for with the World's Joy it is murdered'. Mary's words about the spirit 'that dreads the Cross', that fears to suffer, seem to form a contrast with this. See *A Collection of Sundry Books, Epistles and Papers written by James Nayler, Some of which were never before Printed. With an Impartial Relation of the Most Remarkable Transactions Relating to his Life* (London: J. Sowle, 1716), p.696.
23. **the accuser of the brethren** - the Devil.
24. See note 15 above.
25. Is 56:7 - 'Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.'
26. Probably the elder and teacher who interested Mary in deism in the 1790s, in all likelihood Abraham Shackleton. See 'Progress of Infidelity', pp.21-28, particularly note 14, in this volume.
27. See note 15 above.
28. Source untraced.
29. A:B - Mary's sister-in-law Abigail Birkett, née Knott.
30. Abigail Birkett's mother was Abigail Knott (b. 1762), daughter of John and Abigail Wright of Ballinclay in County Wexford. Though she felt called to the ministry from her youth, she resisted it owing to feelings of inadequacy for the task until the age of 62 when 'one of her daughters coming forth in the ministry, the call to her was renewed at that late hour; she yielded herself to appear and continued to the end of her life in short but lively communications in meetings and found true peace of mind'. She died at Rathangan in 1846 aged 84. (*Dictionary of Quaker Biography*.)

According to Ex 1:15-21, the Pharaoh asked the Hebrew midwives to kill male Hebrew babies, but they did not carry out his orders and God rewarded them by making them houses. In the modern Good News version, this is translated as 'the Lord was good to them and gave them families of their own'.

31. Killester is a suburb of Dublin, then still in the countryside.
32. Is 48:10 - 'Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.'
33. **Gold seven times tryed in the fire** - exact source untraced. Possible sources are Ps 12:6 - 'The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver refined in a furnace of earth, purified seven times', or Zech 13:9 - 'And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried'.
34. Is 35:10 - 'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'