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**Female Friends and the transatlantic Quaker
community:
'the whole Family and Household of faith',
c.1650 – c.1750**

by

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degree of

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Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university. No part of this thesis has been published prior to the date of submission. Material from Chapter One is discussed in a paper I gave at the Newberry Library Center for Renaissance Studies 2013 Multidisciplinary Graduate Student Conference and published in *Newberry Essays in Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 7 (2013).

Abstract

This thesis explores the lives and social interactions of Quaker women in the British Isles and American colonies between c.1650 and c.1750. The radical behaviour of women in the early years of Quakerism has been heavily researched. Historians, however, fail to give sufficient credit to those women who did not travel and preach as a way of life, but who used Quaker values and beliefs to organise their daily lives and give meaning to their experiences. This thesis offers a more accurate and comprehensive picture of early Quakerism, by examining how both ministering and non-itinerant women's identities were redefined as a result of their Quaker membership.

The chapters are structured around the relationships that women developed both within and without the Quaker community with the lens of focus shifting outwards from the family, to the local meeting system, then to the connections and friendships that Quaker women formed with other members of the Society, and finally, to their relationship with the non-Quaker world. In arguing that Quaker women's domestic identities helped shape both their ministerial careers and the wider outlook of the movement, it counters the view that the originality of Quakerism stemmed from women's ability to transcend their gender. Domesticity has greater historical dimensions than previously imagined, and the thesis shows how the private domain of the household could become entwined in the public concerns of the movement.

The period under discussion was one of enormous change in terms of how Friends were viewed and understood in wider society. It was also dramatically altered by the establishment of Quaker communities within the American colonies, especially in Pennsylvania. Utilising a broad source base within a transatlantic context, which includes correspondence, official epistles, Meeting minutes, and spiritual autobiographies, the thesis maps how women contributed to a 'cultural exchange' through their work within both the 'whole family and Household of faith' and early modern society more generally.

List of figures, tables, and maps

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Note to the reader

As far as possible all quotations from contemporary manuscript and printed works retain original punctuation, italicization, capitalization, and spelling, except in rare cases where confusion would otherwise arise. However, the use of ‘u’ and ‘v’, ‘i’ and ‘j’, and ‘ye’ and ‘yat’ have been replaced with their modern alternatives.

Modern spellings have been used to replace abbreviations with the contraction expanded in italics, e.g. ‘frd’ has been written as ‘*friend*’. Any alterations to the text have been presented in [].

Quakers called March ‘1st month’, April ‘2[n]d month’, and so forth. The Quaker system of dating has therefore been altered to conform to modern practice, whereby 1st month becomes March for all items preceding the change to the Gregorian calendar in 1752. All years have been taken to begin on 1 January, so an item bearing the date ‘11 12mo 1666’, has been transcribed as ‘11 February 1667’. Any reference made to 1st month after the calendar change in 1752, is presumed to mean January.

I use the terms ‘Friends’ and ‘Quakers’ interchangeably, although in early Quakerism ‘Children of the Light’ and ‘Children of God’ were the official terms by which Quakers described themselves collectively. Although the name ‘Quaker’ was popularised as a derogatory term by the movement’s opponents a number of Friends from the earliest years used it without qualification. ‘Friend’ was in popular use from the beginning. When referring to the collective group of Friends, I use the terms ‘Society’ or ‘movement’, but not the ‘Society of Friends’, which was a nineteenth-century development.

‘Public Friend’ was the formal name given to an individual, whether male or female, who was authorised by the movement to preach in other Meetings and to non-Quaker audiences. I also use the terms ‘ministers’, ‘missionaries’, and ‘preachers’, to denote individuals who travelled to speak about their faith and religious convictions.

Abbreviations

| | |
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| Besse, <i>Quaker Sufferings</i> | Joseph Besse, <i>A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers</i> (2 vols, London, 1753). |
| Clarkson, <i>Portraiture of Quakerism</i> | Thomas Clarkson, <i>A Portraiture of Quakerism, Taken from a View of the Education and Discipline, Social Manners, Civil and Political Economy, Religious Principles and Character of the Society of Friends</i> (3 vols, New York, 1806). |
| Crawford, <i>Women and Religion</i> | Patricia Crawford, <i>Women and Religion in England 1500–1720</i> (London, 1993). |
| fol./fols | folio/folios. |
| FHL | Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. |
| <i>The Friends' Library</i> | William Evans and Thomas Evans (eds.), <i>The Friends' Library: Comprising Journals, Doctrinal Treatises, and Other Writings of Members of the Religious Society of Friends</i> (14 vols, Philadelphia, 1837–1859). |
| HCQSC | Haverford College Quaker and Special Collection. |
| HSP | Historical Society of Pennsylvania. |
| <i>JFHS</i> | <i>Journal of the Friends' Historical Society</i> (61 vols, London, 1903–present). |
| Larson, <i>Daughters of Light</i> | Rebecca Larson, <i>Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700–1775</i> (New York, 1999). |
| LA | Lancashire Archives. |
| Levy, <i>Quakers and the American Family</i> | Barry Levy, <i>Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley</i> (Oxford, 1988). |
| LRSF | Library of the Religious Society of Friends. |
| Mack, <i>Visionary Women</i> | Phyllis Mack, <i>Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England</i> (Berkeley, 1994). |
| Mendelson and Crawford, <i>Women in Early Modern England</i> | Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, <i>Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720</i> (Oxford, 1998). |
| MS/MSS | Manuscript/s. |
| TNA | The National Archives, Kew, London. |
| sig. | Signature, letters or figures printed at the foot of the first page of sections to show the correct sequence for binding. |

Introduction

In September 1655 Margaret Thomas stood trial at the Bristol Quarter Sessions for disrupting a church service. The local Justices alleged that she had entered St Nicholas Church in Bristol during Sunday worship and interrupted the minister, Ralph Farmer, by saying 'Wo unto the Idol Shepherd, that devoureth and scatters my flock'. Thomas did not deny that she had spoken these words, but when asked whether she wanted her liberty, she replied that 'she desired to be at home with her three Children to work for them'. She was then asked 'whether she would be sorry for what she had done, and promise to do so no more?' But much to their outrage, she defiantly declared 'I will not'. The clerk then said that 'she must then go to Prison again', to which, she reportedly '*replied, content*'.¹ Her actions reveal the conflict that a female prophet could face as a mother whose natural urge was to be present when her family was in need. Yet in choosing to speak the 'Truth', she was willing to risk her domestic identity and return to prison.

This was not the first or last time that Thomas would face imprisonment for her actions, which encapsulated the zeal of the early Quaker movement.² It does, however, raise a multitude of questions that have hitherto gone unexplained. How were female prophets like Margaret Thomas able to balance the competing demands of their religious calling and their familial obligations? How far had Thomas's family supported her commitment to her Quaker beliefs?

¹ The account of Margaret Thomas's trial is recorded in George Bishop *et al.*, *The Cry of Blood* (London, 1656), pp. 128–29. Her indictment is also recorded in the Mayor and Aldermen's Committee Orders, Bristol Record Office, M/BCC/MAY/1/1 Mayor and Aldermen's Committee: Orders of Mayor and Aldermen, 1653–1660, fol. 28v.

² Numerous incidents of Margaret Thomas's imprisonment and harassment are recorded in Joseph Besse's compendium of Quaker sufferings: Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers* (2 vols, London, 1753), pp. 41, 55, 68 (hereafter cited as Besse, *Quaker Sufferings*).

It also raises the more general issue of how the radical activities of Quaker women could be balanced with their domestic identities.

This thesis explores the relationships and support structures that evolved within early British and American Quakerism. It aims to enrich our understanding of women's roles within the early movement, by assessing their relationships within both the conjugal family and the broader body of believers. By adopting a dual focus that contemplates the experiences of both ministers and ordinary members of the Society, it will contribute to the work currently being undertaken on religion and gender in the Atlantic world, by showing how women's experiences within the domestic sphere deepened their public roles and enriched their relationships. It will argue that female Friends' everyday lives and domestic exchanges helped shape the transatlantic Quaker community throughout this period.

It is nearly twenty years since Natalie Zemon Davis published *Women on the Margins* which argued that early modern women were particularly adept at managing multiple identities outside of official power structures and were thus able to transform the 'margins of society' into important social and cultural sites.³ This thesis will show that Quaker women were no exception to this rule. Yet, unlike other religious movements, Quakerism offered a formal and comparatively unrestricted public space for its female members without requiring them to be celibate residents of a cloistered community. Indeed, the Quaker belief in a universal God-given inward light provided important opportunities for women to participate in the public life of the movement. Expanding Davis's thesis on the expectations and experiences of women in

³ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (London, 1995).

different faiths and recognising the complex identity of Quaker women as prophets, elders, worshippers, friends, wives, and mothers, I seek to understand their changing experiences as the movement adapted to different social, economic, and political environments.

Blessed with unusually voluminous archives and a remarkably colourful history, the Quaker movement has attracted a wide variety of historians. The already vast body of Quaker history is continually expanding. The last twenty years in particular have seen fruitful attempts to explore the histories of Quaker business relationships, philanthropy, print culture, abolition, and asylum reform, among many others.⁴ Simon Dixon has recently warned of the inherent danger in entering such a crowded field, particularly when the most easily accessible source material has already been utilised by earlier researchers.⁵ The overt threat that female prophets like Margaret Thomas posed to seventeenth-century patriarchal conventions has made Quaker women a subject of fascination in the historiography. However, as I seek to show, there are still major deficiencies in our understanding of their lives, particularly when we

⁴ A good overview of the various strands of Quaker history is provided in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies* (Oxford, 2013).

On Quaker business relationships and philanthropy see: Deborah Cadbury, *The Chocolate Wars: from Cadbury to Kraft—200 Years of Sweet Success and Bitter Rivalry* (Bath, 2011); Douglas Gwyn, *The Covenant Crucified Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 2006); Matthew Niblett, 'The Death of Puritanism? Protestant Dissent and the Problem of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century England', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 6 (2008), pp. 251–59; Ann Prior and Maurice Kirby, 'The Society of Friends and the Family Firm, 1700–1830', *Business History*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1993), 66–85; and James Walvin, *The Quakers: Money and Morals* (London, 1997).

On print culture see: Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge, 2005); and Thomas N. Corns and David Loewenstein (eds.), *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1995).

On slavery, abolition and race see: Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC., 2006); and Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton, NJ, 1985).

On Quakers and Asylum reform see: Charles L. Cherry, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment, and Asylum Reform* (Rutherford, 1989).

⁵ Simon Dixon, 'Quaker Communities in London, 1667–c1714', Royal Holloway, University of London, PhD thesis (2005), p. 13.

look beyond the experiences of the first-generation English prophets. By taking a longer view of the 'origins' of Quakerism and exploring the place of non-itinerant women (those who never received a formal call to preach) as much as their travelling counterparts at the centre of the analysis, we can build a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the contribution that women made to the movement over its first century. Before explaining in more detail the methodology, sources, and objectives of this thesis, I will first outline how it fits within the current secondary literature. The next sections will therefore assess the historiography of Quaker women, with reference also to more general historiographical debates on the place of religious women in feminist and gender histories. The thesis also seeks to position itself within the broader Atlantic framework of early Quakerism. I will therefore also explore how recent approaches to early modern communities can have particular value for a study of the early Quaker transatlantic mission.

1. The Female Friend in Quaker history and historiography

The early Quakers' belief in the existence of an 'Inner Light' offered an ideal of social relationships that was universal in scope, premised on the equality of every human being in God's creation. This led them to reject traditional conventions surrounding social status, and create a culture which saw women in more prominent roles and in greater numbers than any other movement of the period.⁶ Historians are generally in agreement that the numerical

⁶ In addition to advancing women to positions of authority within the movement, they refused to perform the honour towards their social superiors, abandoned honorific titles, adopted the familial 'thee and thou' forms of address instead of the formal 'you and ye', and defined themselves by plainness and sobriety in their dress, customs and habits. This is explored particularly well in Krista J. Kesselring, 'Gender, the Hat, and Quaker Universalism in the Wake of the English Revolution', *Seventeenth Century*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2011), pp. 299–322.

significance of women within Quakerism, combined with the leading roles they played in the organisation's structure and in evangelising and missionary service, was unrivalled by any other movement or group in the revolutionary years. The ecstatic and evangelical nature of early Quakerism encouraged the appearance of public female prophets, for women's naturally inferior status as 'weaker vessels' could be used to argue for their greater receptivity to God and his divine message. As a consequence, numerous women left their families and domestic responsibilities in order to spread the faith, travelling as far as the Ottoman Empire, Rome, the West Indies, and the American colonies. Joan Brooksop spoke for many of her Quaker contemporaries when she declared: '[I have] forsaken all my Relations, Husband and Children, and whatsoever was near and dear unto me, yea and my own Life too, for his own Names sake.'⁷

There are a range of possible ways of thinking about the gendered experiences and relationships that evolved within early Quakerism. Those women, like Brooksop, who converted to the movement, wrote, preached, and undertook missionary work, have attracted many feminist historians, as their public activities could be viewed as protests against male power. A number of scholars have praised these public preachers for achieving social identities that were distinct from their position within families. Hilary Hinds, for example, suggests that their activities posed a threat to the male hierarchy as domestic concerns are 'marginalized' within their writings and family matters are only considered 'in an unfavourable comparison with the importance of their

⁷ Joan Brooksop, *An Invitation of Love unto the Seed of God, throughout the World, with a Word to the Wise in Heart, and a Lamentation for New England* (London, 1662), p. 12

spiritual obligations'.⁸ Others have suggested that women converted and preached to satisfy non-religious needs, seeking personal and intellectual independence by abandoning unhappy marriages and abstaining from their duties as wives and mothers.⁹ Mabel Brailsford in 1915 argued that Quaker women's public roles were not compatible with their duties as wives and mothers and should therefore be viewed as evidence of them craving freedom from household cares.¹⁰ It has even been suggested that this kind of activity marked the origins of the nineteenth-century campaigns for women's rights. Margaret Hope Bacon in *Mothers of Feminism* cited the struggles of early Quaker women in America as 'a microcosm of the long struggle for gender equality in society at large'.¹¹

The extraordinary activism of early preachers and missionaries, who stood apart in their social attitudes and defied patriarchal norms, cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, these feminist studies have rightly faced criticism for employing a conceptual agenda that makes independent female action the standard by which women's experiences should be judged. 'Had Quaker women been asked', argues Jean R. Soderlund, 'they could not have separated their role within the Society from their responsibilities as wives, mothers and sisters.'¹² It would certainly be misplaced to assume that the emergence of women as

⁸ Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 176–77.

⁹ Rachel Trubowitz, 'Female Preachers and Male Wives: Gender and Authority in Civil War England', in James Holstun (ed.), *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution* (London, 1992), pp. 114–118.

¹⁰ Brailsford argues that marriage 'buried [Quaker women's] talents' and 'stifled ambition'. Indeed, she notes, with reference to Dutch preacher Judith Zinspinning, that she was only able to find 'full scope for her natural abilities' after her husband's death. Mabel Richmond Brailsford, *Quaker Women, 1650–1690* (London, 1915), pp. 223–25.

¹¹ Margaret Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (San Francisco, 1986), p. 3.

¹² Jean R. Soderlund 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings, 1680–1760', *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, vol. 44, no. 4 (1987), pp. 722–23.

preachers was an early manifestation of feminism. Despite the progressive nature of Quaker attitudes towards women, their views are conspicuously absent from the writings of leading nineteenth-century feminists.¹³ In this respect, Quaker women's social prominence cannot be viewed in terms of a teleological progression towards women's political activism of the nineteenth century. Neither would it be correct to view early female Friends as approaching their religious beliefs and practices with a political agenda in mind.

The shift from Women's History to the more inclusive study of Gender History has given rise to more qualified interpretations of the place of women within the early movement.¹⁴ By far the most influential revision in this respect has come from Phyllis Mack's seminal work *Visionary Women*, which explores the experiences of the sectarian prophets during the Civil War period.¹⁵ Mack's main contribution has been her application of methods from Gender History and Post-Structuralist analysis as a means of better understanding female agency within religious frameworks. Through a close study of women's public expressions and prophetic language, she casts doubt on the notion that a stable coherent identity lay at the core of each woman's experiences.¹⁶ In divorcing their religious and political actions, Mack notes that the liberation enjoyed by

¹³ This has been noted by Patricia Howell Michaelson, who argues that for feminist writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Quaker mysticism was 'unacceptable as a basis for women's equality': Patricia Howell Michaelson, 'Religious Bases of Eighteenth-Century Feminism: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Quakers', *Women's Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1993), p. 292.

¹⁴ These have included: Elisabeth Potts Brown and Susan Mosher Stuard (eds.), *Witness for Change: Quaker Women over Three Centuries* (London, 1989); Bonnelyn Young Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism* (London, 1994); Helen Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities, 1770–1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', University of York, PhD thesis (2000); Soderlund, 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings', pp. 722–49; and Christine Trevett, *Women and Quakerism in the 17th Century* (York, 1991).

¹⁵ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, 1994), hereafter cited as Mack, *Visionary Women*.

¹⁶ Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 6–8.

Quaker women as prophets was part of a much broader radical tradition that came to fruition during the upheavals of the Civil Wars. Yet as she goes on to explain, unlike the other movements of this period, Quaker radicalism stemmed from a disengagement from social identity, or 'outward being', thus making the perceived attributes of men and women fluid and interchangeable.¹⁷ As a consequence, the Quaker emphasis on spiritual equality gave women unparalleled opportunities in the organisational structure of the early movement as writers, preachers, innovators, and organisers.

Despite the major contribution that Mack's study has made to the history of Quaker women, her analysis does not offer a fully integrated study of their lives and experiences. It is limited by her tendency to focus on a body of rather exceptional 'visionary' women, whose actions as travelling prophets and polemical authors were beyond many Quakers, mainly because of their familial and financial circumstances.¹⁸ Whilst it is almost impossible to calculate Quaker numbers with any certainty, since Friends kept no formal membership records during this period, it is evident from the surviving data that women missionaries formed only a tiny minority of the female Quaker population at any particular time; it was only on exceptional occasions that they were inspired to write and preach on behalf of the Society. Moreover, despite recognising that travelling ministry was a 'transient' experience that was integrated into other areas of women's everyday existences, she explores only one facet of their experiences: their actions as prophets.¹⁹ Mack's account of Quaker women thus fails to provide a satisfactory answer to how we can

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 174.

¹⁸ This is noted, but unaddressed by Trevett in *Women and Quakerism*, p. 70.

¹⁹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 214.

reconcile the extravagant and public facets of Quaker women's experiences with the more private and personal aspects of their lives, in other words, how competing forces had the ability to shape multiple identities.

Following the research trajectory set out by Mack, many recent histories of the movement have consistently focused on the beliefs and practices of women Friends in the seventeenth century when they first assumed a conspicuous and controversial presence as religious visionaries and preachers. The role of women within the Society was nevertheless highly fluid and changed with its evolving organisational and disciplinary structures. As early as 1680, Rebecca Travers, an influential figure of the early movement, remarked that 'Prophecy has and must cease'.²⁰ This statement encapsulates the impact that changing expectations could have on women's public roles within the movement, as Friends turned away from the radical sense of the indwelling light towards other forms of expression. The phase of preaching and ecstatic ministry was coming to an end. For the historian of Quaker women, this raises the issue of female autonomy in the face of a declining visionary outlook, especially when scholars like Mack have asserted that it was only in their roles as prophets that women were able to enjoy a 'taste of public authority'.²¹

It has often been argued that women were publicly active in the early days of the Society, but that their roles were diminished and their activities curtailed by the advent of an institutionalised Meeting system from the 1670s, which facilitated the rise of a hierarchy of male leadership. The founding of this multitiered Meeting structure, which included the establishment of separate

²⁰ Anne Martindell *et al.*, *A Relation of the Labour, Travail and Suffering of that Faithful Servant of the Lord, Alice Curwen* (1680), sig. A4v [pagination confused], Rebecca Travers's 'A Testimony concerning Alice Curwen'.

²¹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 5.

Women's Meetings for business, is viewed as a particular development of second-generation Quakerism that caused a decline in women's visibility. This is largely because the Men's Meetings assumed the right to define the power limits of the female elders.²² Moreover, their establishment heralded a change in the role of women within the Society, as it channelled their publicly extravagant behaviour into more socially acceptable conventional spheres. Whilst subject to geographical variation, the Women's Meetings were mainly accountable for overseeing the behaviour of the female members of the movement; granting financial relief and material assistance to poor Friends; and overseeing the complex Quaker marriage discipline procedure.

These changes in women's status were compounded by the introduction of an all-male censorship committee in the form of the Second Day Morning Meeting that, according to Patricia Crawford, chose to play down the prophetic elements of their members' writings.²³ This period also saw the introduction of travelling certificates, where ministers who felt a calling to preach were forced to seek approval from their local Meetings before undertaking religious service. Some scholars have suggested that this measure limited the opportunities available to women for independent travel, since they now had to request permission from the Men's Monthly and Quarterly Meetings and were evaluated, among other criteria, on the basis of their familial obligations.²⁴ A woman's responsibilities to her family could be judged by the movement as

²² 'With organisation', writes Patricia Crawford, 'female participation lessened'. Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500–1720* (London, 1993), p. 160, hereafter cited as Crawford, *Women and Religion*.

²³ Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p. 193.

²⁴ See Amanda E. Herbert 'Companions in Preaching and Suffering: Itinerant Female Quakers in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World', *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2011), p. 93.

more important than her divine calling. This stage in the movement's history has served as a natural cut-off point for many histories of the early movement, as it increasingly took on the trappings of the sect-church transition propounded by sociologists like Max Weber.²⁵

This sense that the loss of women's work as prophets equated to a real decline in their public status is best expressed by Mack, when she writes that:

Tracking the movement's evolution from sect to church, one watched prophetic women, once the bearers of considerable charismatic authority, slowly disappear behind the rising edifice of the new structure, their voices muffled by the clearer discourse of the proponents of new rules and values.²⁶

Whilst Mack consciously avoids the language of 'advance' and 'decline', this passage nonetheless echoes gendered histories of the Quaker movement that suggest that once the charismatic movement of the 1650s became subject to bureaucratisation and regulation, the opportunities available to women were progressively more restricted.²⁷ The accountability that female leaders owed to the male hierarchy within this system has led historians like Christine Trevett to conclude that the most remarkable feature of the Women's Meetings was 'the lack of power associated with them'.²⁸ Even relatively recent assessments, like Catie Gill's 2005 study of Quaker women's writings, have lamented the fact that

²⁵ Max Weber put forward this view about the transformation of loose charismatic sects into bureaucratic churches in his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. For a detailed study of the church-sect theory of Weber and his contemporary Ernst Troeltsch see William H. Swatos Jr., 'Weber or Troeltsch?: Methodology, Syndrome, and the Development of Church-Sect Theory', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1976), pp. 129–44.

²⁶ Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 274–75,

²⁷ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 412.

²⁸ Trevett, *Women and Quakerism*, p. 81.

compared to its early activism 'later Quakerism seems far more limiting in the roles it provided' for women.²⁹

One largely overlooked development within the movement's history, however, is the fact that women continued to occupy a public presence as ministers throughout the eighteenth century. Moreover, their visibility in this role actually increased as the movement continued to evolve. Whilst the number of Public Friends (both male and female) undertaking transatlantic missionary work declined sharply after the Society's first few decades, Rebecca Larson has shown that ministers continued to be viewed as religious leaders and were still an accepted and important component of the religious life of the eighteenth-century movement. Far from being marginalised, Larson argues that the proportion of female to male ministers actually increased between 1700 and 1775.³⁰ There were an estimated thirteen hundred to fifteen hundred active female ministers in the American colonies during this period.³¹ Data from the London Yearly Meeting alone records the deaths of six hundred and eleven female ministers who had undertaken transatlantic travel between 1700 and 1769.³² The fact that the ratio of female to male preachers was actually on the rise suggests the need for further research into the lives and experiences of eighteenth-century itinerant female Friends.

Despite the continued public presence of Quaker ministers, however, the eighteenth-century movement in general and the place of women within it have

²⁹ Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Political Identities, 1650-1700* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 186.

³⁰ Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophecy in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (New York, 1999), p. 63, hereafter cited as Larson, *Daughters of Light*.

³¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 303.

³² John S. Rowntree, *Life and Work* (London, 1908), p. 252, cited in Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 334 (Appendix Three).

received relatively little historiographical attention. It is a striking fact that only a few accounts of the early movement have ventured beyond the end of the seventeenth century.³³ It was not until Larson published *Daughters of Light* in 1999 that the female members of the eighteenth-century movement were addressed in any systematic manner. The period between 1700 and 1775 still remains the most under-researched in the movement's history. In part, this can be attributed to the traditionally uneven nature of Quaker historiography, which has viewed the early period and the political radicalism of the Interregnum and post-Restoration movement as more worthy of attention than the anti-climactic 'quietist' movement of the eighteenth century, with its inward focus and desire for isolation from the world. The period between 1692 and c.1805 has been commonly defined as the 'Quietist' period in Quaker history, where exclusivity and sectarianism took precedence over zealous expansion. Brailsford described the eighteenth century as the movement's 'dark ages' and lamented its 'drab uniformity' in the years following the death of the Quaker leader, George Fox, in 1691.³⁴ This view has been replicated by Quaker scholars who view the inward focus of the eighteenth-century movement and significant decline in numbers as developments unworthy of attention.³⁵ J. Punshon, for instance, pronounced eighteenth-century Quaker Meetings as 'lifeless' and

³³ The exceptions to this rule are: Larson, *Daughters of Light*; Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (Oxford, 1988), hereafter cited as Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*; and Jean E. Mortimer, 'Quaker Women in the Eighteenth Century: Opportunities and Constraints', *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* (hereafter cited as *JFHS*), vol. 57, no. 3 (1996), pp. 228–59.

³⁴ Brailsford, *Quaker Women*, pp. 328–29.

³⁵ This is partly owing to the continued dominance of the view of Quaker history put forward by W. C. Braithwaite and Rufus Jones, collectively known as the 'Rowntree histories'. These books, published in the early twentieth century, came out of an attempt to bring about another revival of Quakerism and thus saw the eighteenth century as a low point in the development of the faith. Noted in Gil Skidmore (ed.), *Strength in Weakness: Writings of Eighteenth-Century Quaker Women* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 5–8.

Friends' ministry 'uninspiring', and described the separation of Quakers from the world as 'one of the tragedies of English religious history'.³⁶

With quietism, however, came an increasing focus on the maintenance of the faith within the spiritual community. Richard T. Vann reminds us that by the end of the first century, as many as ninety per cent of Quakers were children of Quakers.³⁷ The family and household had thus come to be placed at the heart of the movement's organisational structure, highlighting the potential influence of the wife or mother in facilitating the movement's development in England and its growth in the colonies. Barry Levy's study of Quakerism in the Delaware Valley stresses the centrality of the Quaker trend towards quietism, with its emphasis on the family and 'birthright' Quakerism, in influencing modern views about American domesticity. It was also a development, he suggests, that benefited the movement's female members and strengthened their authority, since the Quakers were the first movement to incorporate domesticity into their religion.³⁸ Friends therefore offered a consistent social role for women within the organisational life of the Society. Although the Quakers' emphasis on the domestic sphere and regulated Women's Meetings stood in marked contrast to the early enthusiasm of female preachers, Levy's approach shows how Friends succeeded in projecting domestic values into the public sphere.

Clearly, the post-Revolutionary years cannot be viewed as a period of stagnation or regression in the movement's history and will be regarded in the following chapters as an important phase of Quaker 'beginnings'. Indeed, I will

³⁶ Quoted in Robynne Rogers Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism, 1692-c.1805', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, pp. 47-48.

³⁷ Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655-1755* (Cambridge, MA., 1969), p. 167.

³⁸ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 25.

show that the emphasis of eighteenth-century Friends on the home and family was not imposed by the male hierarchy as a means of limiting women's functions, but was shaped by the active participation of women within the movement.³⁹

2. The feminisation of religion: opportunities and constraints

The debate surrounding the changing status of Quaker women is tied to a more general tradition in Gender History, which questions the place of religion in women's social advancement. Religion has often been viewed by historians as something of a double-edged sword, at once potentially liberating and constricting for women. 'The Bible reinforced ancient notions of women's inferiority, yet gave them permission to operate in an expanding sphere of philanthropy, humanitarian campaigning, and missionary endeavour', writes Anne Stott. 'It empowered and liberated', she continues, 'at the same time as it constrained and suppressed.'⁴⁰ The make-up of religious culture in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic, in particular, has been described as undergoing a notable 'feminisation' during the eighteenth century. This development in both England and the American colonies was linked by scholars to changing patterns of worship, where the church was becoming an observably more feminine institution and the number of women in congregations increasingly outnumbered men. This process of feminisation was also

³⁹ This is something that Peters found in her work on the early printed tracts published in favour of women's preaching. Whilst we might expect these accommodating ideas to have attracted female converts, she argues that they were published in response to the fact that women had become an integral part of the movement's membership and leadership. Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, p. 150.

⁴⁰ A. Stott, 'Women and Religion', in H. Barker and E. Chalus (eds.), *Women's History: Britain, 1750-1850* (New York, 2005), pp. 117-18. Quoted in Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 27.

associated with what has been viewed as a more general 'domestication' of religion brought about by the Reformation, where the private space of the household gained increasing prominence in the practice of piety.⁴¹ As with those studying the effects of segregated Women's Meetings within Quakerism, a number of scholars interpreted this transition from public worship to domestic devotion as a sign of both the marginalization of religion and of women from the public realm. Lyndal Roper, for instance, argued that the Protestant Reformation was largely a force for conservatism and patriarchy that aspired to constrain women to the domestic sphere and inhibited their independence by 'reinscribing' them within the family.⁴²

However, scholars have increasingly come to recognise the importance of this 'domestication' of religion for women's social and political development. Janet Moore Lindman, for instance, has shown how the numerical advantage of colonial Baptist women enabled them to pursue their own devotional culture based in the family, friendships, and local community.⁴³ Thus, despite the fact that women were denied authority within the organisation of the church, the household, as a site of female piety, conferred spiritual authority upon them, as they became 'the lifeblood of the churches'.⁴⁴ Even research into the lives of women in the early modern cloister has highlighted the multifarious ways in

⁴¹ See Crawford, *Women and Religion*, pp. 38–52; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500–1800* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 347–63; and Steven E. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (London, 1983).

⁴² Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 1–5.

⁴³ Janet Moore Lindman, *Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 112–30.

⁴⁴ Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion*, p. 14.

which women were able to negotiate the barriers restricting active female participation in early modern Catholic affairs.⁴⁵

Some scholars have even linked religious ideas to the intellectual context of early feminist arguments. Building upon Barbara Taylor's belief that religion was the inspiration for Mary Wollstonecraft's political and feminist thought, Sarah Apetrei has convincingly demonstrated how religion was far from a constraining influence on eighteenth-century feminism. Instead, it provided a stimulus to new ways of thinking about the position of women within society. Despite accepting that the 'diffuse and loosely organised participation of women in seventeenth-century Quakerism' cannot be regarded as 'proper feminism', she nevertheless notes the central role of religious ideas, and thus female piety, in the evolution of feminist discourses.⁴⁶ The achievement of this research has been to reveal how women could continue to exercise agency within their restricted environments through the practice of piety.

One theme running throughout this thesis is that women's domestic devotions overlapped with other spheres of sociability and cultural exchange. This is linked to a more general historiographical scepticism about the validity of a notion of two separate spheres during this period. The belief that the rise of a bourgeois and male-dominated public sphere during the early Enlightenment was a constraining factor in women's social development dominated a number

⁴⁵ A good collection of essays showing the agency of both Catholic and Protestant women in the early modern Atlantic is provided in Emily Clark and Mary Laven (eds.), *Women and Religion in the Atlantic Age, 1550–1900* (Farnham, 2013), especially Robin Briggs, 'From Devilry to Sainthood: Mère Jeanne des Anges and the Catholic Reform', pp. 33–48 and Emily Clark 'When Is a Cloister Not a Cloister? Comparing Women and Religion in the Colonies of France and Spain', pp. 67–87. See also Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke, 2003). I am grateful to Amanda Herbert for this reference.

⁴⁶ Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge, 2003); Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion*, pp. 29–30.

of early feminist discussions about the place of women in early modern culture.⁴⁷ It was believed that the everyday worlds of men and women were definitively separated and women increasingly confined to the private space of the household, playing no formal part in public affairs.⁴⁸ This was echoed in the debate that the institution of gender-segregated Meetings within Quakerism removed female Friends from the real centres of power.

Gender historians, however, have come to question the validity of this argument, explaining that women's 'separate sphere' was socially constructed *for and by* women. It was affected by what 'men did', notes Linda Kerber, whilst women's seemingly 'private' activities influenced public life.⁴⁹ A number of influential discussions about the eighteenth-century household, including those of Amanda Vickery, Merry Wiesner, and Carole Shammas, have shown how women could accrue status both within and without the home through domesticity.⁵⁰ Wiesner was particularly influential in her call for historians to move away from the 'ghettoizing history of women and the family', which she argued was leading to a tendency to view the family as the sole determinant of women's lives and of only marginal importance to men.⁵¹ As these studies have shown, when research is conducted into men's and women's personal experiences, the sheer diversity of their encounters undermines the notion that

⁴⁷ A good overview of this debate is provided in Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History*, (2nd edn, London, 2010), pp. 55–72.

⁴⁸ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), p. 3.

⁴⁹ Linda Kerber, 'Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History', *Journal of American History*, vol. 75, no. 1 (1988), p. 18.

⁵⁰ Carole Shammas, *A History of Household Government in America* (London, 2002); Merry Wiesner, 'Beyond Women and the Family: Towards a Gender Analysis of the Reformation', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 18 (1987), pp. 311–21; and Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*.

⁵¹ Wiesner, 'Beyond Women and the Family', pp. 315–16.

their lives were organised around a dominant gender ideology.⁵² Indeed, Vickery argued in her study of eighteenth-century genteel families in Lancashire and Yorkshire that the ‘conceptual vocabulary of “public and private”’ had ‘little resonance’ in women’s everyday lives.⁵³ This development also reflects the increasing trend in Gender History to study men as gendered subjects. Scholars like Natalie Zemon Davis and Joan Scott have shown us how gender is constructed in a relational way and have stressed the instability of fixed gender categories in the context of everyday experience.⁵⁴ One aim of this thesis is to show how gender histories can be enriched by observing the interaction of women and men in public and private spaces.⁵⁵

This thesis also aims to contribute to the debate over the effects of the feminisation of religion by showing how post-Restoration Quaker women continued to find outlets for spiritual leadership through their religious relationships and activities in the household, Meeting House, and itinerant Quaker community. This builds upon a number of recent developments in the secondary literature, which question the extent to which the innovations of the late seventeenth-century organisation restricted women’s positions. Indeed, a number of scholars seeking to revise the traditional feminist argument that women lost status within the movement have demonstrated how female Friends were able to continue to occupy public roles and negotiate the

⁵² Karen Harvey, in her study of domestic authority, concluded that for eighteenth-century women ‘the connection between the home and the world had been reconceived rather than severed’. Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012), p. 7.

⁵³ Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘Women’s History’ in Transition: The European Case’, in Joan Wallach Scott (ed.), *Feminism and History* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 79–104.

⁵⁵ This was one of the aims of Susan E. Dinan and Debra Meyers’s edited collection on *Women and Religion in Old and New Worlds* (London, 2001), p. 9.

constraints of a patriarchal world.⁵⁶ The segregated Meetings, for instance, have been viewed as an important outlet for women to learn and use their domestic skills in a space that 'would otherwise have been denied them'.⁵⁷ Not only were women able to control their own agendas, allocate their own funds and exercise disciplinary authority over their members, but, as Mary Maples Dunn argued, they also had control over their physical space through the use of sliding partitions in the centre of the Meeting House. This provided female Friends with a separate space to conduct their business, serving as a reminder of their own autonomy within the local Quaker community.⁵⁸ This supports recent developments in Gender History by highlighting how a female-dominated separate sphere can be regarded as a positive influence in terms of women's advancement in the movement.

If we take into account the fact that female ministers continued to function in public roles throughout the eighteenth century, further doubt is cast on the constraining influence of a dominant 'separate spheres' discourse. The 'Public Friend', as Helen Plant has recently suggested, was not defined by the public dimension of his or her ministerial activities, but by the audience to whom this work was directed. Ministering women were able to carry out functions of official religious leadership across a range of spaces from the intimate setting of Friends' houses to mass public gatherings. All of this, as Plant reminds us, was permitted within an unrestricted culture, which was not linked

⁵⁶ 'The Quaker woman', as Trevett notes, was 'constantly asserting and re-negotiating her position, both within the group of Friends and in relation to the wider world.' Trevett, *Women and Quakerism*, p. 131.

⁵⁷ Trevett, *Women and Quakerism*, p. 115.

⁵⁸ Mary Maples Dunn, 'Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period', *American Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 5, Special Issue: Women and Religion (1978), p. 600.

to gendered spaces but rather to the exclusion or inclusion of individuals who were not Friends.⁵⁹ A distinction must therefore be made between women's activities within and their identities outside the Quaker community.

3. Contested communities in the transatlantic 'household of faith'

The thesis explores the experiences of Quaker women not only within a specific time, roughly 1650 to 1750, but also within a specific space—the transatlantic Quaker community. To do so, it engages with an important theme in recent social history, the early modern community. Until relatively recently, it was argued that the affective communities of medieval society, characterised by regular, personal interaction, gave way to the increasingly individualistic form of behaviour which accompanied the economic changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶⁰ In the early 1990s, historians such as Charles Phythian-Adams came to question the validity of a notion of community and suggested that it should be removed altogether from the vocabulary of the early modern historian.⁶¹ Recent contributions, however, especially Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington's edited collection *Communities in Early Modern England*, have come to celebrate its continued validity as a lens for studying the past. One particularly important outcome is their recognition of the polyvalence by which community can be defined. It was 'a process of symbolic production',

⁵⁹ Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent', p. 148.

⁶⁰ Keith Thomas describes the disjunction between the 'neighbourly conduct required by the ethical code of the old village community, and the increasingly individualistic forms of behaviour which accompanied the economic changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' in *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (Harmondsworth, 1991), p. 670.

⁶¹ Charles Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580–1850: Cultural Provinces in English Local History* (Leicester, 1996).

they write, 'by which relationships, artefacts, events and representations could become invested with meaning'.⁶²

Much of the recent work on community has related to the local community of parish or neighbourhood. But the Quaker 'community' signified not only those Quakers who lived in a particular locality, but also the imagined community of Friends, who were scattered throughout the Atlantic world. It is a central contention of this thesis that the symbolic or rhetorical sense of belonging to a religious community provided a powerful dimension to Quaker women's experiences. Early Quakers, as Larson has suggested, identified themselves globally 'as members of one community linked by shared beliefs, instead of geographical boundaries'.⁶³ The thesis argues that the 'imaginary' dimension of Quaker community enabled the formation of strong connections across great distances, as Friends remained emotionally invested in developments taking place on both sides of the Atlantic. The language they employed shows how they believed themselves to be united in spirit, despite the constraints of distance. They spoke, for example, of 'an invisible community' and of belonging to 'the household of faith and family of God'.⁶⁴ Friends saw the scope of their mission as spreading across the Atlantic, where the metaphorical family encompassed a shared sense of intimacy, obligation, and cohesion,

⁶² Phil Withington and Alexandra Shepard, 'Introduction: Communities in Early Modern England', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (eds.), *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000), p. 8.

⁶³ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 40.

⁶⁴ Library of the Religious Society of Friends (hereafter cited as LRSF), Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671–1753, fol. 25, from the Women's Meeting in London to the Women's Meeting in Barbados, 18 November 1672; 'An Epistle from the Women Friends in London to the Women Friends in the Country, also Elsewhere, about the Service of a Women's Meeting, 4 January 1674', in A. R. Barclay (ed.), *Letters, &c., of Early Friends; Illustrative of the History of the Society, from Nearly its Origin, to about the Period of George Fox's Decease; with Documents Respecting its Early Discipline, also Epistles of Counsel and Exhortation, &c.* (London, 1841), p. 345.

despite the highly dispersed nature of Quaker settlements. As the thesis will show, such expressions of community were vital in conferring public significance upon the domestic sphere and women's roles within the broader 'household of faith'.

A number of studies have drawn attention to the rhetorical or symbolic sense of community promoted by early Friends. Sarah Crabtree, for instance, argues that Friends utilised ancient Hebraic concepts of community to describe the connections among members of the Society and their relationships to the outside world. Collectively, they referred to members of their Society as 'God's chosen people' and a 'nation of Zion'.⁶⁵ Further examinations into the language of early Friends have led many to believe that their writings enabled them to create a community conscience. The objective of Kate Peters's influential study, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, was to show that the success of the Quaker missionary campaign was linked to their zealous engagement with the printing press. 'The sense of a nationally uniform "Quaker" movement', she argues, 'stemmed in large part from the ubiquity, and the consistency, of their tracts'.⁶⁶ Given that Peters discusses only the period 1650–1660 and allocates only a small section of her argument to the contribution of women, her survey is by no means comprehensive. Nonetheless, the conclusions she reaches are comparable to other histories of Quaker women's writings. Gill for example, in her book *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community*, establishes an agenda for the study of collectively authored printed texts. Drawing upon a corpus of some two hundred and twenty publications, Gill successfully

⁶⁵ Sarah Crabtree, 'A Beautiful and Practical lesson of Jurisprudence': The Transatlantic Quaker Ministry in an Age of Revolution', *Radical History Review*, vol. 99 (2007), p. 52. I am grateful to Cassandra Good for this reference.

⁶⁶ Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, p. 253.

demonstrates the central role of lesser-known female writers in shaping Friends' identities and participating in a community dialogue. Such writings, she argues, not only created positive roles for women, but also provided an impression of community by implicitly uniting Friends around an issue, or series of concerns within a single work. Quaker women, she observes, 'wrote *for* and *to* their religious community.'⁶⁷ These studies highlight a fruitful line of enquiry into the role of women's writing as a foundation for Quaker fellowship and unity, but are yet to be fully explored in the context of the eighteenth century and for women's non-printed writings.

Friends' lives were also inevitably shaped by their interactions within local communities. The thesis therefore also explores the lives of female Friends within particular geographical areas. Recent social histories of the movement have been influential in highlighting Quaker engagement with the local parish community, showing how Quakers did not inhabit a world that was completely cut-off from that of their conformist neighbours.⁶⁸ Indeed, they tell us that far from being isolated from the rest of society, Friends were much more integrated into their communities than has previously been imagined.⁶⁹ Adrian Davies has

⁶⁷ Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community*, p. 184.

⁶⁸ Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655–1725* (Oxford, 2000); Dixon, 'Quaker Communities in London'; David Scott, *Quakerism in York, 1650–1720* (York, 1991); Bill Stevenson, 'The Social Integration of Post-Restoration Dissenters, 1660–1725', in Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 360–87; and Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006).

⁶⁹ For Essex see Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*; for York see Scott, *Quakerism in York* and for London see Simon Dixon, 'Quakers and the London Parish, 1670–1720', *London Journal*, vol. 32, no. 3 (2007), pp. 229–49. For other local studies of Quakerism see also Carla Gardina Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1991); Richard Allen, 'Taking up her Daily Cross': Women and the Early Quaker Movement in Wales, 1653–1689', in Michael Roberts and Simone Clarke (eds.), *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 104–28; Mark Knights, *The Devil in Disguise: Deception, Delusion, and Fanaticism in the Early English Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2011); and John Miller, '“A Suffering People”: English Quakers and their Neighbours, c.1650–c.1700', *Past and Present*, vol. 188 (2005), pp. 71–103.

been central in this turn away from insular studies of the movement, favouring instead an approach that uncovers the relationships and shared experiences that Quaker followers had within their neighbourhoods and parishes.⁷⁰ Although Davies has been criticised for underrating the popular hostility that Quakers continued to experience, he has nevertheless qualified the traditional picture of post-Restoration Quakers living in self-imposed and embattled isolation from the wider world.⁷¹ A more recent attempt to analyse the impact of Quakers on their localities is Dixon's thesis on Quaker communities in London. Arguing that Friends at a local level did not subscribe 'rigidly to the movement's testimonies', Dixon effectively demonstrates how individual Quakers residing in London did not confine themselves to their own separate religious community, but instead negotiated a role for themselves within the wider London society, for example through obtaining entry into City guilds.⁷² Moreover, his research into the eighteenth-century diarist Peter Briggins shows that Friends were not too preoccupied with their own concerns to take notice of political, commercial, and financial developments around them.⁷³ This new focus on the lives of Friends at the 'grass roots' of the movement is an important development. It also leads us to question how far adherence to the movement affected women's engagement with their conformist neighbours, a matter that demands further attention.

⁷⁰ Davies, *The Quakers in English Society*, esp. pp. 191–215.

⁷¹ For criticisms of Davies's conclusions see in particular Miller, "A Suffering People", p. 73.

⁷² Dixon, 'Quaker Communities in London', esp. pp. 248–72.

⁷³ Simon Dixon, 'The Life and Times of Peter Briggins', *Quaker Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2006), p. 198.

4. Returning 'herstory' to colonial Quakerism: gender, religion, and the family in the early Atlantic

We are thus confronted with a picture of early Quakerism that shows us that Friends did not live solely within the confines of a specific local or religious community. Instead, their experiences and identities were defined by participation in a series of mutually interlocking and overlapping communities, each generating its own loyalties and intensity at specific times. Comparisons will therefore be drawn between the experiences of British and American Friends, investigating the extent to which frontier life impacted upon women's lives and exchanges in different contexts.

This 'trans-Atlantic' methodology, which draws attention to both broader Atlantic developments and distinct geographical variations, has been advocated by David Armitage as particularly useful for historians to view developments from a broadly international perspective, whilst enabling them to draw meaningful comparisons between specific locations within the Atlantic world.⁷⁴ This is because unified states and nations had not yet fully developed and continued to rely upon other influences, including social and economic formations.⁷⁵ Quakerism matured within a culture of exchange where American

⁷⁴ David Armitage, 'Three Concepts of Atlantic History', in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds.), *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 18.

⁷⁵ Armitage, 'Three Concepts of Atlantic History', pp. 18–19. Linda Colley has been particularly influential in suggesting that the sense of identity forged between inhabitants of the British Isles was defined by social and cultural factors, rather than political developments. It was the external threat of Catholicism, she argues, that solidified a collective Protestant national identity within eighteenth-century Britain. Her assessment, however, has rightly faced criticism for its tendency to overemphasise the level of harmony that existed between different Protestant denominations. Interaction between different groups was not uncomplicated and the Quaker case stands as testament to their continually fraught relations with other Protestant groups, which led to the development of a distinct Quaker (and not national) identity. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, new ed. (London, 2003), pp. 5, 22–23.

Quakerism was never isolated from its English past and its members retained close contacts with Friends in the British Isles.

Breaking down fixed geographical boundaries and placing women, domesticity, and religion at the centre of the discussion, the thesis will show how less-known women who did not travel could nonetheless also actively contribute towards a transatlantic cultural exchange and thus influence group identity. Indeed, the place of women in both the American colonies and the Atlantic community of Quakerism is only just coming to be acknowledged as a valid field of study in the historiography. Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf realised in their 2009 study of *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World* that little sustained effort had been made to ask what could be learnt about the Atlantic world 'through the lens of women, gender and religion.'⁷⁶ The chapters that follow highlight how women were both accountable and central figures in shaping the transatlantic Quaker community.

Much recent debate has revolved around the 'conceptual utility' of the Atlantic as a model for understanding issues of gender and the family. This has been facilitated in part by Bianco Premo, Karin Wulf, and Julie Hardwick's attempts to rethink the challenges of inserting the family and the study of gender into 'the Atlantic' as both a conceptual place and a historical practice.⁷⁷ As a result of their discussions, it has even been suggested that the concept of 'fluidity' in terms of understanding the exchange of peoples, ideas, and objects

⁷⁶ Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf, 'Introduction', in Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf (eds.), *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World (1600–1800)* (Toronto, 2009) p. 6.

⁷⁷ Resulting from a roundtable discussion at the 14th Conference on the History of Women, the essays that were published in a special edition of *History Compass* were intended 'to inspire debate about the conceptual utility of the Atlantic as a paradigm for understanding issues of gender, family and sexuality, as well as its ramifications for feminist scholarship'. Karin Wulf, 'Women and Families in Early (North) America and the Wider (Atlantic) World', *History Compass*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2010), p. 1.

'may be distracting us from the ways that stasis was a dominant experience and mode for women.'⁷⁸ A number of recent studies have nevertheless highlighted the importance of adopting an Atlantic perspective in assessing the place of women and religion in early modern life. Recent contributions, including those from Nora E. Jaffary, Susan E. Dinan and Debra Meyers, and Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf, have been effective in highlighting the complexities of the Atlantic world, as well as the places of divergence and continuity in women's experiences.⁷⁹ Emily Clark and Mary Laven's recent edited collection on *Women and Religion in the Atlantic Age, 1500–1900*, has shown the dynamic place of women within the Atlantic world, by mapping how confessional difference shaped gender roles, whilst also acknowledging that the ways women 'acted out their faith influenced the ways in which societies developed'.⁸⁰ Sarah M. Pearsall has been particularly influential in showing the key role of families in the eighteenth century, emphasizing their agency (as glimpsed through their letters) in shaping the political and economic language of the Atlantic.⁸¹ A similar approach has been pursued by Kate Chedgzoy in her study of women's writings, which she argues helped shape national identities by giving expression to the major conflicts and changes taking place within the British Atlantic world. An Atlantic perspective, she writes, 'allows the telling of more complex stories about the variety of ways in which people experienced the early modern period's transformative process of nation-building and state

⁷⁸ Wulf, 'Women and Families in Early (North) America', p. 242.

⁷⁹ Nora E. Jaffary (ed.), *Gender, Race and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas* (Aldershot, 2007); Dinan and Meyers (eds.), *Women and Religion in Old and New Worlds*; Kostroun and Vollendorf (eds.), *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World*.

⁸⁰ Emily Clark and Mary Laven, 'Introduction', in Clark and Laven (eds.), *Women and Religion in the Atlantic Age*, p. 2.

⁸¹ Sarah M. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008), esp. pp. 12–13.

formation'.⁸² It is therefore crucial that the lives and experiences of Quaker women are viewed in the context of the social and political developments occurring within wider Atlantic culture.

A transatlantic perspective, moreover, has specific value for a study of early Quaker women, for the mass migration of British Quaker converts to the American colonies from the 1680s, and the constant exchange of ministers and writing, provided an alternative space for Quaker women's experiences to be defined. Visiting Pennsylvania in 1754, the German traveller Gottlieb Mittelberger described the conditions that he found as 'a paradise for women'.⁸³ It is striking, however, that women's position within colonial Quakerism remains a largely neglected subject. In part this can be attributed to the general lack of interest that scholars have had in second- and third-generation Friends more generally. The absence of colonial women from the current secondary literature is nevertheless surprising, since the decline of Quakerism in England was paralleled by its dramatic growth in the American colonies from the 1680s. Following William Penn's royal charter in 1681, Pennsylvania became a haven for Friends facing persecution and suffering for their beliefs. The aim of settlement in the colonies was not for the improvement of individual fortunes, or simply as a means of escaping persecution, but to pursue a godly lifestyle, in a society where religious values firmly penetrated the colony's government. This became known as the 'Holy Experiment' and replicated many of the ways of life and worship patterns practised by English Friends. More than three thousand Quakers are estimated by Thomas D. Hamm to have settled in

⁸² Kate Chedgoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 7–8.

⁸³ Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750 and Return to Germany in the Year 1754*, transl. Carl Theo. Eben (Philadelphia, 1898), pp. 122–23.

Pennsylvania between 1681 and 1683, and by 1775 it is estimated that there were one hundred thousand Quaker inhabitants residing in North America—a figure which far outstripped the declining population of Friends in the British Isles.⁸⁴

Penn's 'Holy Experiment' has long been regarded as providing a model of social organisation where domesticity was placed at the very centre. Even contemporary observers came to admire the distinctive familial ideology propounded by the Quaker inhabitants of Pennsylvania, repeatedly praised for their orderly domestic habits and their rejection of wider cultural customs.⁸⁵ It is worth noting here that the peculiar brand of domesticity that characterised eighteenth-century Pennsylvania made the colony the most studied and certainly the most appreciated of all the British North American colonies during the early Enlightenment.⁸⁶ Of particular value was the fact that the settlers were able to live in harmony under the principle of mutual toleration without any ecclesiastical hierarchy or institutionalised authority imposed from above. In such a pluralistic society, the household was to occupy a central place in the reproduction of religious values and beliefs. Indeed, Levy suggests that it was in placing the domestic sphere at the heart of their faith that Friends were able to continue to maintain strong communities while tolerating the influx of a wide array of settlers into the colony.⁸⁷ This unique blend of domesticity and

⁸⁴ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York, 2003), p. 33.

⁸⁵ Chapter Four explores in greater detail the various ways in which non-Quaker writers and thinkers responded to the challenges posed by Quakers.

⁸⁶ Enlightenment theorists including Locke, Voltaire, Crèvecoeur, Brissot, and Rousseau viewed the 'Holy Experiment' in Pennsylvania as compatible with Enlightenment values and devoted some attention to the arrangement of family life and religious practices in their writings. See Chapter Four for a more thorough investigation of their views. See also Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, pp. 3–22 and James Emmett Ryan, *Imaginary Friends: Representing Quakers in American Culture, 1650–1950* (London, 2009), pp. 63–91.

⁸⁷ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 16.

religious authority, Levy argues, provided 'the animus' for Quaker dominance over Pennsylvanian government during this period.⁸⁸ The thesis continues this line of argument, by showing how Quaker views about the family permeated their attitudes about life within the metaphorical 'household of faith'.

For a survey focused on Quaker women's everyday lives and experiences, the strong domestic orientation of colonial Quakerism makes it a natural object of study. However, in order to manage a comparative transatlantic study of this scale, some limits have had to be imposed. Whilst the thesis makes some reference to female Friends living in Ireland and Scotland, the majority of individuals explored on the British side of the Atlantic will be English Friends. Further research is required into the changing nature of Scottish and Irish Quakerism and the impact that such developments had on women's roles, but this is beyond the scope of this survey. Similarly, the American context of Quakerism will be observed mainly through a study of the writings and exchanges of Pennsylvanian Friends. Although it will not form the sole focus of analysis, this geographical focus provides a useful framework for comparison with English Quakerism through the networks of trade, correspondence, missionaries, and migrants linking the two communities throughout the period. Pennsylvania was without doubt the Quaker stronghold of North America, and where the majority of English settlers came to reside. It also acted as the centre for the American Quaker mission, with Philadelphia serving as a point of transit to the outlying provinces.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸⁹ For a good demographic study of eighteenth-century Philadelphia see: Susan E. Klepp, *Philadelphia in Transition: A Demographic History of the City and its Occupational Groups, 1720–1830* (London, 1989).

5. Approaches adopted in the thesis

The general trend in the historiography has been to view a more rigidly-structured movement as limiting in the roles it provided for its female members. However, in contrast to existing studies of the itinerant ministers of Quakerism, the evidence presented in the following chapters will provide a crucial reinterpretation of their lives and experiences, which is no longer divorced from their domestic roles. This thesis argues that domesticity has greater historical dimensions than have yet been recognised, particularly when we focus on the Quaker household as a subject of analysis. It is organised around the various types of relationship that shaped both ministering and non-ministering Quaker women's identities.

As Jeremy Gregory warned with reference to the Church of England, historians of gender are in danger of paying more attention to the 'atypical', to the 'Joanna Southcotts who had overtly challenged the male clerical profession', than to studying ordinary women.⁹⁰ In the Quaker case, too, we run the risk of overemphasising the exceptional and extraordinary women who made a clear and direct attack on traditional social and gender norms. No history of the movement to date has explored the role of 'ordinary' women as central figures in early Quakerism, who used Quaker values and beliefs to organise their daily lives and give meaning to their everyday experiences. Moreover, no survey offers a comprehensive assessment of Quaker women's lives and responsibilities within the evolving organisation. Indeed, the archetypal second-generation woman—the non-itinerant homemaker—who Levy argues

⁹⁰ Jeremy Gregory, 'Gender and the Clerical Profession in England, 1660–1850', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *Gender and Christian Religion* (Studies in Church History, 34, Woodbridge, 1998), p. 256.

'indirectly but intimately affected' the developments within colonial Quakerism, continues to remain absent from the historical picture.⁹¹ This was the woman who characterised many of the activities of the evolving movement, when Quaker activity was focused on the home and the spiritual maintenance of the community. The thesis aims to deepen our understanding of these 'ordinary' female Friends and their importance in shaping the social and cultural outlook of the transatlantic Quaker community. 'Ordinary' in this context, refers to both non-elite women, as well as non-itinerant women.

It would be misplaced, however, for a survey of transatlantic Quakerism to overlook the vital role of the preacher in providing an alternative identity for female Friends. Unlike the positions of authority provided for women in other sects and churches, a ministerial vocation was never a permanent office for Quaker women, offering them remarkable opportunities to balance ministerial and domestic duties. Even the most radical of Quaker prophets were exhorted to serve God in ordinary ways, as ordinary people. George Fox declared in 1658 that whilst prophets 'may have openings when [they are] abroad to minister to others', their own spiritual or 'particular growth' would only occur by 'dwell[ing] in the life which doth open'.⁹² Each of the chapters seeks to reinterpret the experiences of these highly unusual itinerant women, by focusing not on their actions as prophets, but on their domestic identities and personal interactions.

Rather than adopting a spatial or chronological framework, I have chosen to structure the chapters around the more flexible category of women's

⁹¹ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 221.

⁹² George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 340–41, George Fox's Address to Friends in the Ministry, given at John Crook's house, 31 May 1658.

relationships, which facilitates discussion of women whose religious vocations were situated both within and without the physical space of the household.⁹³ This also enables attention to be directed towards their interactions with men in a variety of different social contexts and settings. The chapters are structured around the relationships that female Friends developed both within and without the Quaker community, with the focus shifting outwards from the family to the local meeting system, then to the connections and friendships they formed with other members of the Society, and finally, to their relationship with the non-Quaker world. These sites were not, of course, mutually exclusive, and as we shall see, female Friends moved seamlessly between them in their daily lives. By viewing women's experiences from the perspective of their social interactions it becomes possible to observe women contributing in both public spaces, like the pulpit or their published writings, and in less obvious places including the home and the Women's Meetings.

Chapter One begins this work by considering the home and family as key sites in the formation of Quaker women's public identities. The strong domestic outlook of the movement has been frequently acknowledged, yet little has been done to uncover the distinctive model of household order that evolved. Challenging the view that this more overtly domestic focus led to a decline in women's status, the chapter demonstrates the multiplicity of ways in which the private domain of the household could become entwined in the public concerns of the movement. Central to the discussion is the figure of the non-itinerant Quaker wife, whose fixed position within the household and local community

⁹³ Chedgzoy has recently observed that the meaning of particular locations and spaces is not determined by their physical boundaries or characteristics, but by 'people's social interactions' with them. Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic*, p. 11.

provided a powerful supportive accompaniment to the national and transatlantic missions. This included raising the next generation of ministers, as well as supporting the ministerial careers of their husbands. Even in the case of women who did undertake public ministerial work, their private correspondence reveals that this was carefully balanced by the obligations, duties, and responsibilities they felt for their families. Far from pursuing their own personal agendas, many women believed that they were undertaking such work for the spiritual benefit of their families. Assessing their printed and private correspondence, the chapter shows how the domestic sphere influenced the public character of the movement and in turn, shaped female Friends' relationships to the wider Quaker community.

The extensive overlap between women's domestic and public roles is well demonstrated through their involvement in their separate Women's Meetings. Whilst their minutes do not, at first glance, appear to offer much insight into their everyday experiences or relationships, Chapter Two shows how detailed case studies of particular Meetings can enrich our understanding of the position of female Friends in their local communities and the effect that settlement in the colonies had on their personal relationships. For practical reasons, the women who occupied the highest positions in their local Meetings could not undertake extensive missionary service, and their lives offer us a valuable glimpse of the public work of non-itinerant women in the movement. Through a comparison of the minutes of four Women's Monthly Meetings, two in the North-Western counties of England and two in the rural hinterlands of Pennsylvania and West Jersey, the chapter assesses the extent to which settlement in the colonies shaped Quaker women's experiences. In contrast to

existing histories of the Women's Meetings, which suggest that their introduction was linked to the decline of women's visibility and roles in the movement, it will show the positive ways in which family life and domestic harmony could confer authority upon women.

The pyramid-like structure of local, district, regional, and national Meetings provided female Friends with unparalleled opportunities in the organisational structure and governance of the Society at all levels. They also offer us further insight into women's relationships with other members of their religious community. The opportunities provided by the Women's Meetings for regular contact with like-minded pious women should not be underestimated. They provided a sense of purpose and identity within communities where Quaker women often continued to be shunned and isolated for their beliefs. Similarly, they also gave access to a wider community of Friends. By encounters with visiting ministers and trans-oceanic epistolary exchanges, women could enjoy contact with fellow-members they would often never meet in person. Chapter Three takes this further by exploring the friendships and personal connections that women developed in the 'real' and 'imagined' community of Friends. This chapter charts new territory in the history of Quaker women by arguing that friendship was at once a personal and spiritual relationship, and thus intrinsic to how the community was theorised and constructed. Building upon recent research on female friendships, the chapter explores both the unique definition that early Quakers (men and women) attached to their personal relationships and how connections within a 'Society of Friends' specifically shaped female alliance-formation. Rather than developing close alliances with their neighbours, they engaged in a shared spiritual mission with

their co-religionists, guarding one another against the dangers of the material world. The most distinctive feature of Quaker women's alliances was the vast distances over which they were often initiated and maintained. The spiritual connections between female Friends enabled an 'imagined' community of intimate friendships and close personal networks to emerge, with little physical contact. This, I suggest, played an important role in defining the transatlantic mission.

It is also necessary to expand the analysis to include interactions between Quaker women and individuals outside their religious community. Numerous studies have stressed that Friends did not live in a social or cultural vacuum, and the final chapter explores the ways in which Quaker women's particular denominational traits shaped their interaction with the wider world. The story of Quaker suffering and persecution is a familiar one to historians of the seventeenth century, as are the seemingly outrageous actions of many early Friends, which served to inflame these tensions further.⁹⁴ Following recent developments in the historiography, however, the chapter seeks to reassess the position of Quaker women within the wider community. Taking both popular and intellectual responses as its focus, it explores two distinct and largely unacknowledged facets of their relationship with the rest of society: their integration into local communities, and changing reactions to Quaker women as manifested in the popular press. The use of both printed and visual materials to understand the nature of anti-Quaker hostility during the pre- and post-

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Williams and Mary Fisher were stripped naked to the waist and whipped at the market cross in Cambridge, after they had called the scholars of Sidney Sussex College 'Antichrists' and 'a Cage of unclean birds' and the university 'a Synagogue of Satans'. This is recorded in Besse, *Quaker Sufferings*, i, pp. 84–85.

Restoration periods has proved especially productive in recent years.⁹⁵ These highly polemical sources reflect the strength of animosity towards the movement and form an important source base for this section. Rather than viewing the 1689 Toleration Act as a turning-point in terms of the relationship between Quakers and their neighbours, the chapter argues that it was developments within the movement itself, including the introduction of the Women's Meetings in the 1670s, which brought about a change in how they were perceived by the non-Quaker public.

As discussed above, one key objective of this thesis is to draw out the nuances and diversities of Quaker women's experiences and show how their membership of the Society shaped their social interactions. The thesis aspires to offer a more comprehensive history of early female Friends than has previously been attempted, whilst recognising that some of their other experiences still remain to be charted. The conclusion will therefore point towards an agenda for future research, highlighting too the need for further investigation of the lives of women in other dissenting movements. Some recent surveys have begun to address this historiographical omission, but this thesis is designed in part to encourage research into the less well-known and private experiences of the female (and indeed male) members of other movements. It offers some preliminary comparisons between female Friends' experiences and those of contemporary Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, and other Nonconformists. By

⁹⁵ Mark Knights's recent study of the Hertfordshire Quaker movement has demonstrated how popular anti-Quaker materials are a useful source for assessing the status of the movement's female members. In his defence on the charge of murdering the Quaker Sarah Stout, Spencer Cowper used popular anti-Quaker images to undermine her reputation. Together with John Miller's local study of popular hostility and Alexandra Walsham's reassessment of popular tolerance and intolerance, this micro-history makes clear the need for further research into popular reactions to Quaker women after the passage of the 1689 Act. Knights, *The Devil in Disguise*; Miller, "A Suffering People"; and Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*.

examining private and public cultures of religious dissent together, it shows how we can better understand the distinctive contribution that female dissenters made to the political, economic, and cultural life of early modern society and beyond.

To capture the essence of the private experiences and social interactions of female Friends, the thesis makes extensive use of letters. The information contained within personal and familial correspondence offers an important insight into their everyday lives and interactions, an issue that has largely been overlooked in the current historiography. Indeed, almost all the research that has been undertaken on Quaker women to date has relied upon their printed spiritual autobiographies and life accounts, which include very little information about their domestic relationships. These personal histories, which document travels, Meetings attended during visits, and the various spiritual trials they encountered during their lives, prioritise this kind of information over that of families or personal relationships.⁹⁶ As Hinds argues, it is only when these women compare God's demands to those of the temporal concerns of household and family that family is mentioned at all.⁹⁷

Whilst Chapter One will show that these accounts can still shed some new light on the effects of religious affiliation on household relationships, the historiography of Quaker women has depended too heavily on such sources. This is especially the case when the focus is turned towards colonial Quaker women, for the printed output of Pennsylvanian Friends remained very small.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, p. 66.

⁹⁷ Hinds, *God's Englishwomen*, p. 172.

⁹⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the printed output of colonial Friends see Betty Hagglund, 'Quakers and Print Culture', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, p. 482.

As Michael Warner reminds us, writing was a gendered practice: printed artefacts authored by American women were the exception, rather than the rule.⁹⁹ Moreover, these printed autobiographies, through their emphatically 'spiritual' nature, consciously removed women's focus from the worldly concerns of family life or personal relationships. Letters, by contrast, contain a much freer flow of emotion, information, ideas, and dialogue. Clare Brant has recently noted that 'where many journals were annotative or introspective, letters were explicitly communicative.'¹⁰⁰ Letters give us a sense of the women's shared concerns and experiences.

The thesis therefore draws on a wealth of recent scholarship on the social function of letters. The writing, reading, and dissemination of correspondence has been recognised as part of a broader cultural process, an idea that is pursued by Susan E. Whyman in her study of English letter-writers in the long eighteenth century.¹⁰¹ The role of letters also took on new importance as mobility and migration affected more people, a matter which David Cressy notes in his study of the seventeenth-century communication networks that developed in the context of emigration to New England. In his words, the 'expressions of love and duty, relayed and transmitted' through the letters exchanged across the Atlantic, 'provided an emotional lifeline to the distant side of the world.'¹⁰² It is through these personal writings that we are able to access the 'unpredictable variety of private experience' and observe how

⁹⁹ Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (London, 1990), pp. 15–16.

¹⁰⁰ Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 229.

¹⁰¹ Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800* (Oxford, 2009).

¹⁰² David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 263.

women could become participants in national and international cultural exchanges.¹⁰³

To achieve a more comprehensive understanding of female Friends' experiences, the thesis also utilizes a range of other printed and manuscript materials by both Quaker and non-Quaker writers. Records of the early itinerant ministers are easily available in the spiritual autobiographies, journals, and life accounts they penned during their lifetimes. Many of these were posthumously published during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and, as previously noted, continue to hold an important place in the movement's history. Valuable evidence also comes from the Women's Meeting minutes, diaries of non-itinerant women, published tracts, and testimonials recorded by local Meetings after the death of a Friend. Non-Quaker writings will also be used to show how Quaker women's experiences were shaped in part by developments outside the Society.

Collectively, the following chapters show us how female Friends' everyday lives were inextricably bound to a dynamic web of transatlantic interaction and cultural exchange. In arguing that Quaker women's domestic identities helped shape both their ministerial careers and the wider outlook of the movement, they question Mack's argument that the originality of the Quaker movement stemmed from women's ability to transcend their gender.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the thesis will show how their social identities within the 'whole family and Household of faith' shaped both their spiritual and everyday encounters.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2 (1993), pp. 390–91.

¹⁰⁴ Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 10, 173, 236.

¹⁰⁵ LRSF, MS Vol 335 Gibson MSS, vol. 2, fol. 3, Samuel Neale to Ann and Sally Kendal, Amsterdam, 10 September 1752.

After all, Quakerism would not have survived without the interaction of the family, the Meeting, and more distant fellow-members. The shape of these exchanges, in the home, Meeting House, neighbourhood, and the wider Atlantic community, is the subject of what follows.

Chapter One

Spiritual Housewives and Mothers in Israel: Quaker Domestic Relationships

*A wife I have but not at home
She's gone abroad and I'm alone
O that I had it in my power
To enjoy her company for one hour
But alas that's not to be had
The thought, it makes me feel quite sad.*

HCQSC, MS Coll 1100 Scattergood Family Papers, 1681–1903, vol. 9, n.d., c.1764–1794

Quakerism undoubtedly shaped, defined, and distinguished the domestic lives of its female adherents. The posthumous testimony of Mary Taylor, published by her husband James in 1683, highlights the striking effects of religious affiliation on family life.¹ Its main focus is the suffering that Mary experienced as a dutiful wife, forced to manage her husband's affairs during his incarceration. James tells how 'she did manage the same in such care and patience until the time she was grown big with Child [...] she then desired so much Liberty as to have my Company home two Weeks, and went herself to request it, which small matter she could not obtain, but was denied'. Though he was a prisoner, James judged his wife's sufferings 'far greater than mine'. For, as he explained, 'there was never yet man, woman, nor child, could justly say, she had given them any offence [...] yet must [...] unreasonable men cleanse our Fields of Cattle, rummage our House of Goods, and make such havock as that my Dear Wife had not wherewithal to dress or set Food before me and her Children.'²

¹ James Taylor and Jasper Batt, *A Testimony of the Life and Death of Mary, the Daughter of Jasper Batt, and Wife of James Taylor, of Holcombe-Rogus in the County of Devon* (London, 1683), in Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (new edn, with intro. by Amy Louise Erickson, London, 1992), pp. 45–46.

² Taylor and Batt, *The Life and Death of Mary, the Daughter of Jasper Batt, and Wife of James Taylor*, pp. 45–46

This poignant image of a wife unswervingly supporting her husband as a result of his religious testimony is worthy of note. Mary maintained her husband's business and financially sustained her small family during his imprisonment, in addition to travelling many miles on foot whilst heavily pregnant to petition magistrates for his release. Although not a preacher herself, Mary's commitment to the movement greatly affected her daily life and her outlook. This chapter examines the domestic identities of Quaker women like Mary Taylor and the changing social and institutional circumstances which affected their experiences as wives and mothers.

Mary Taylor's story was recounted in 1919, along with the experiences of other 'ordinary' women, in Alice Clark's pioneering *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*.³ While many of Clark's conclusions are disputed by modern scholars, her goal of restoring lower-status women to the historical record is still to be admired.⁴ Indeed, in her examination of women's everyday lives, Clark showed how 'the exacting claims of religion' could paradoxically give women opportunities for a greater economic role within the household.⁵ It is striking, however, that these lower-status women still remain an almost invisible element of Quaker history, and are often absent from Women's History more generally.⁶ Women like Mary Taylor were remarkable not for their travels,

³ Clark, *Working Life*, pp. 45–46

⁴ Scholars have been particularly emphatic in countering Clark's view that the rise of capitalism eroded women's economic status and position within society. For a good summary of the socio-political context of Clark's work see: Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History* (2nd edn, London, 2010), pp. 9–17.

⁵ Clark, *Working Life*, p. 44.

⁶ This is particularly the case in the scholarship on eighteenth-century women, which tends to be dominated by debates on the *Querelle Des Femmes* and dominant figures in the social and political worlds of the early Enlightenment. Some exceptions to this rule are: Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London, 1997); Diane E. Boyd and Marta Kvannd (eds.), *Everyday Revolutions: Eighteenth-Century Women Transforming Public and Private* (Newark, DE., 2008);

public confrontations, or prophetic gestures, but for their faithful obedience to the cause, loyalty to their husbands, and contribution to Quakerism within their own families.

The home was a largely female-dominated and managed space and thus a key arena where both men's and women's religious identities were formed. After the initial evangelical zeal died down after the Restoration, the household was increasingly placed at the heart of the transatlantic Quaker mission and was to become the chief instrument for the propagation of the faith. The household was also integral to the construction and development of Quakerism, where women's authority within the household indirectly but closely affected the experiences of men and children. Indeed, the 'radical child-centredness' of the early Quaker movement, as Barry Levy has argued, facilitated the growth of a strong religious community.⁷

This chapter explores the nuances of this relationship between Quaker women's daily lives and their public religious duties. It will argue that the religious life of early Quakerism was inextricably linked to the domestic sphere, where Quaker ideals were constructed, nurtured, and developed. Numerous spiritual autobiographies written by post-Restoration Friends explained how their childhood experiences had shaped their ministerial service. The eighteenth-century minister Samuel Bownas, for instance, was continually

Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500–1800* (New Haven, 1995); Mary Beth Norton, *Separated By Their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (London, 2011); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (Oxford, 1983); and Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800* (Oxford, 2009).

⁷ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 127.

reminded of his mother's counsel throughout his career as a public minister.⁸ The role of the Quaker wife and mother in this respect was central to how Friends viewed the world and understood their own roles within it. The family became a 'prism', to quote Rosemary O'Day through which Quaker values were perpetuated.⁹ How the domestic roles of Quaker women shaped wider views about family life is a theme that will be explored at length in the following discussion.

To understand how Quaker domestic ideals shaped Quaker women's experiences, the chapter focuses on the lives of both itinerant and non-ministering female Friends. It is structured in three parts, with the first exploring the distinctiveness of the Quaker understanding of family life. By comparing Quaker women's behaviour with contemporary ideas on the patriarchal family, especially those expressed in Puritan conduct literature, it will investigate how far the Quaker model of domesticity conflicted with contemporary ideals. It will argue that early Quakerism gave women a degree of equality and influence that was generally unavailable to their contemporaries, and show how the movement's emphasis on domestic relationships was an empowering, rather than constraining experience for women.

⁸ In his life account, he described how his Quaker mother 'had kept me very strict while I was under her care, and would frequently in winter evenings take opportunities to tell me sundry passages of my dear father's sufferings, admonishing me so to live [...] also putting me in mind, that if she should be taken away, I should greatly miss her both for her advice and otherways to assist me; and advised me to fear the Lord now in my youth, that I might be favoured with his blessing'. Moreover, on first experiencing a call to minister, he was reminded of 'what my mother told me some years before, that when I grew up more to man's estate, I should know the reason of that tenderness and weeping, which I now did to purpose'. Samuel Bownas, 'The Life, Travels, and Christian Experiences of Samuel Bownas', in William Evans and Thomas Evans (eds.), *The Friends' Library: Comprising Journals, Doctrinal Treatises, and Other Writings of Members of the Religious Society of Friends* (14 vols, Philadelphia, 1837-1859) (hereafter cited as *The Friends' Library*), iii, pp. 2-3.

⁹ Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 273.

The second section explores the various ways in which the domestic sphere shaped the experience of itinerant female Friends. Whilst the Quaker preacher has attracted more attention than her non-itinerant counterpart, her identity as a wife and mother remains somewhat neglected. This is surprising, since the experience of travel generally constituted only a small part of a much broader spiritual career centred within the home and local Quaker community. Feminist scholars have often viewed female converts as being attracted to Quakerism because of the opportunities it offered them to escape from their household concerns.¹⁰ Rachel Labouchere, for instance, has hinted that the Quaker minister Deborah Darby used her ministry to take extended leave from the demands of family life, which included coping with her husband's recurring mental illness.¹¹ Hilary Hinds praises Quaker women for refusing 'to be bridled and constrained' by contemporary ideals. Family matters, she argues, become only marginal concerns in their writings, with their spiritual obligations surpassing all domestic concerns.¹² Similarly, gender historians like Phyllis Mack have maintained that Quaker radicalism stemmed from women's abilities as prophets to transcend their gender, 'casting-off' their domestic and social identities.¹³ Their identities as wives and mothers become tangential when compared to developments in the wider movement. By returning the focus to the domestic setting, rather than women's public ministerial activities, this section counters the traditional view that the household was a peripheral

¹⁰ As noted in the Introduction, scholars like Mabel Brailsford have argued that Quaker women's public roles were not compatible with their duties as wives and mothers and should therefore be viewed as evidence of them craving freedom from household cares. Mabel Richmond Brailsford, *Quaker Women, 1650-1690* (London, 1915), pp. 223-25.

¹¹ Rachel Labouchere, *Deborah Darby of Coalbrookdale, 1754-1810: Her Visits to America, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England and the Channel Isles* (York, 1993), pp. 34, 38-39.

¹² Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 176-77.

¹³ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 407.

concern in ministerial women's lives. It explores how the private world of the household shaped female ministers' public identities as preachers and as members of communities.

The third section of this chapter builds upon the previous discussion by assessing the impact of Quakerism on the non-itinerant wife and mother—the Quaker homemaker. Itinerant evangelism was by no means a universal practice and only a minority exercised the freedom offered by public ministry. Historians like Christine Trevett often comment on the 'many other extraordinary women Friends' who were 'remarkable not for their travels [...] but as quieter, though no less intransigent, souls, showing great tenacity in adversity'.¹⁴ No history of the movement to date, however, has explored the role of those ordinary women who were attracted to Quakerism and managed their daily lives, marriages, and families around its testimonies. Maintaining the household as a site of order and harmony formed a crucial aspect of their experiences and, as we shall see, offered a space for them to contribute to the movement. An exploration of the extant correspondence between travelling husbands and their wives, as well as the testimonies left after their deaths, provides rich evidence of the contribution that ordinary women were able to make to the transatlantic mission. Whilst I do not suggest that such women are representative of all Quaker women, I hope to widen the historiographical focus beyond the better-known 'public' female Friend. Indeed, to study only those women who left behind spiritual autobiographies or undertook ministerial work is, to borrow Thomas Freeman's metaphor, akin to studying the steeple

¹⁴ Christine Trevett, *Women and Quakerism in the 17th Century* (York, 1991), p. 41.

and believing that you have examined the entire church.¹⁵ The movement, I argue, could not have survived the harsh years of persecution without women's contribution within the household. The relationships that these 'ordinary' female Friends developed within their families are of particular interest and importance in understanding the development of early Quakerism. This is a matter which will be pursued further in the following chapter on the Women's Meetings.

It is worth starting with the caveat that 'family' and 'household' are terms that do not have a static meaning throughout history and cannot be reduced to simple economic units of production, reproduction, and consumption with a male head at their centre. Naomi Tadmor has shown that the historical construction of the 'family' incorporated a variety of relationships that extended beyond the ties of blood and marriage. When 'English people spoke or wrote about "families"', she notes, it was very often 'not the nuclear unit that they had in mind'.¹⁶ In the Quaker case, the blood family was often overshadowed by the metaphorical religious family, a broad association of unrelated people. The Meeting, in particular, gave Friends a sense of belonging to a much larger family than their immediate kinship network. Many early converts were even at pains to separate themselves from their natal relations, becoming 'brothers', 'sisters', 'fathers', and 'mothers' in their new spiritualised household. This underscores the necessity of studying the Quaker family from both the perspective of conjugal families and the wider body of believers.

¹⁵ Thomas Freeman, "'The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuose Women": The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2000), p. 8.

¹⁶ Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 19.

In exploring Friends' domestic relationships, this chapter offers a starting-point to a wider discussion about the Quaker 'family'. Motherhood was a constructed role and the duties of mothering and childcare were not confined to biological mothers.¹⁷ Many of the themes explored here have relevance beyond the scope of this chapter, which lays the groundwork for wider discussions later in the thesis. These ideas will become more apparent in Chapters Two and Three, which explore the spiritual, emotional, and economic support structures that evolved within the wider 'household of faith'.

1. The Quaker ideal of domesticity: household and family relationships in early Quaker thought

Early Quakers never developed a systematic theology, which makes it hard to decipher how far the movement's conception of family relations differed from that of their contemporaries. Similarly, there was no single Protestant or even Puritan view of marriage and family life. Domestic ideals outside the movement were also widely debated by contemporary writers, for which a substantial secondary literature is available.¹⁸ The malleable nature of early modern

¹⁷ This is something that Tim Reinke-Williams acknowledges in his recent study of women in early modern London. Tim Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability in Early Modern London* (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 15.

¹⁸ For studies on women and the early modern household see: Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988); Margaret J. M. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (London, 1987); Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*; Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Woman's Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1984); Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003); and Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English society, 1650–1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London, 1998).

For work on the early modern family and household see: Christopher Durston, *The Family in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1989); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997); Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450–1700* (London, 1984); O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships*; Steven E. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (London, 1983); and Sarah M. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008).

domesticity is best expressed by Karen Harvey, who explains that patriarchy was not 'a rigid system of male governance, but a flexible "grid of power" in which several different groups attained status and authority'.¹⁹ The Quaker experience, then, is just one of many examples of the opportunities available to women to negotiate the terms of patriarchy.

Whilst it is clear that no one model can express the diversity of women's experiences, to be a Quaker meant to share certain values concerning the family. The following section aims to delineate some of the main ideas and themes which distinguished Quaker domestic arrangements from those of their contemporaries. It shows how the position of women within the Quaker household provided one of the most radical challenges to the conventional model of domestic relations, particularly through their ability to join the sect independently of their husbands; their approved status as ministers; the acceptance of loving but free relations between husband and wife; and the elevated status of the wife and mother within the domestic hierarchy.

Dutiful wives and mothers: the Quaker pattern of domestic piety

One of the most radical challenges posed by early Quakerism was the freedom it offered women to join the movement without the approval of their fathers or husbands. The early modern household was thoroughly authoritarian and conduct-book writers like William Gouge, whose *Of Domesticall Duties* went through multiple editions throughout the seventeenth century, explained that a

For discussions on masculinity and the place of men in the household see: Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003); and Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012).

¹⁹ Harvey, *The Little Republic*, p. 4.

woman 'must yeeld a chaste, faithfull, matrimoniall subjection to her husband'.²⁰ That Quaker women offered a direct affront to the patriarchal order was demonstrated in dramatic style in 1670, when Anne Wright felt a 'command from God' to run through St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin dressed only in ashes and sackcloth. Her husband, on hearing of her actions and intended journey to deliver a message to the King in England, disapproved, describing how he was 'not willing to part with her upon any such conceits or strong fancy as she was daily conceiving in her melancholy mind'. Refusing to provide her with a horse and money for her journey, he questioned 'how she could make it out to be lawful, by any law of God or man, for a wife to leave her husband and family, against his will and without his consent'.²¹

Religious teachings buttressed the conventional belief in wifely subjection. Ephesians 5:23 taught women to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord, for the husband was the wife's head, as Christ was the head of the Church.²² Disobedient women like Anne Wright therefore posed a threat not only to the stability of the family but also to the wider social and religious order. Indeed, after Anne Wright reprovved the mayor of Cork for persecuting Quakers, she was imprisoned for travelling without the consent of her husband and was advised that she would not be released until he certified before the local Justices that he had approved her journey.²³ Hostile propaganda repeatedly made a connection between female converts and other women beyond male control.

²⁰ William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), p. 28.

²¹ William Wright, 'A Brief and True Relation of Anne, the Wife of William Wright, of Castledermot, in the County of Kildare in Ireland, Who Deceased the 1st Day of December, 1670', in Mary Leadbeater (ed.), *Biographical Notices of Members of the Society of Friends who were Resident in Ireland* (London, 1823), p. 60.

²² Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 29.

²³ Wright, 'A Brief and True Relation of Anne, the Wife of William Wright', pp. 58–59.

Dorothy Waugh, for example, was symbolically forced to wear the scold's bridle after preaching in the Carlisle market place in 1656.²⁴ The non-Quaker reaction to female Friends is explored in detail in Chapter Four, but it is clear that these women were seen as posing a radical challenge to prevailing gender ideologies.²⁵

The husband was normally the dominant partner in the religious life of the household; he was a 'Bishop' over his 'little Church' and 'little commonwealth'.²⁶ It is now generally accepted that the social changes brought about by the Reformation gave women increased opportunities to exercise agency in the religious life of the household.²⁷ This is perhaps most persuasively demonstrated through their notional right to disobey their husbands' commands if they conflicted with the Church's teachings, since service to God was to be placed before service to any worldly authority. But, as Bernard Capp has shown, there was a clear lack of guidance in Puritan texts on 'the practical implications, or the difficulties of a conscientious woman facing a moral dilemma'.²⁸ In other words, how the demands of wifely obedience could be balanced by the duties of conscience.²⁹

²⁴ 'A Relation Concerning Dorothy Waughs Cruell Usage by the Mayor of Carlile' in James Parnell, *The Lambs Defence Against Lyes* (London, 1656), pp. 29–30.

²⁵ See: David Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England', in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 116–36.

²⁶ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 18.

²⁷ A good summary of this debate is provided in Emily Clark and Mary Laven, 'Introduction', in Emily Clark and Mary Laven (eds.), *Women and Religion in the Atlantic Age, 1550–1900* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 1–11. For more on the opportunities of women to exercise agency see Crawford, *Women and Religion*, pp. 38–52; and Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, pp. 314–42.

²⁸ Bernard Capp, 'Gender, Conscience and Casuistry: Women and Conflicting Obligations in Early Modern England', in Harald E. Braun and Edward Vallance (eds.), *Contexts of Conscience in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 117–18.

²⁹ The issue of gender and conscience is also discussed in detail by Patricia Crawford in 'Public Duty, Conscience, and Women in Early Modern England', in John Morrill, Paul Slack and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 57–76; and Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, pp. 314–42.

Women's potential disavowal of patriarchal authority, however, certainly did not extend to independently joining religious sects without their husbands' consent, which Keith Thomas describes as being viewed as 'monstrous and unnatural'.³⁰ Gouge advised that '*A wife must doe nothing which appertaineth to her husband[']s] authoritie simply without, or directly against his consent*'.³¹ Conversion to Quakerism evidently altered women's perception of their position within the household and the obedience they owed as dutiful wives. Shortly after joining the movement in 1680, Alice Hayes explained that the tensions between her and her husband were so great that she was forced to decide '*whether I loved Christ Jesus best or my Husband; for now One of the Two must have the Preheminence in my Heart*'.³² Alice's husband, Daniel, who had forbidden her to join the movement, allegedly went to the extremes of hiding her clothes before she went to Meeting. However, in true Quakerly manner this did not deter Alice, who recalled how she 'would go with such as I had, so that he soon left off that'.³³ Numerous accounts of Quaker suffering include similar scenarios of female Friends who endured the wrath of unsympathetic husbands. Mary Akehurst was reportedly beaten by her husband and bound with chains for a month after her first appearance as a prophet.³⁴

Even in the post-Toleration climate of the eighteenth century, some stigma still seems to have been attached to women independently joining religious groups without the consent of their male relations. Elizabeth

³⁰ Keith Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', *Past and Present*, vol. 13 (1958), p. 52.

³¹ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 290.

³² Alice Hayes, *A Legacy or Widow's Mite; Left by Alice Hayes, to Her Children and Others. With an Account of Some of Her Dying Sayings* (London, 1723), pp. 39–40.

³³ Hayes, *A Legacy, or Widow's Mite*, p. 39.

³⁴ LRSF, YM/Mfs/GBS/2/5 Great Book of Sufferings, London and Middlesex to Yorkshire, Ireland and New England, 1659, cited in Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 196.

Ashbridge described in detail her estrangement from her husband shortly after she migrated to the American colonies in the late 1730s. Following one dispute, Ashbridge explained '[t]hat, as a dutiful wife, I was ready to obey all lawful commands; but, when they imposed upon my conscience, I could not obey him'.³⁵ Her decision to become a Quaker preacher had violent consequences. She recorded one occasion when her husband attacked her with a penknife saying: "If you offer to go to meeting to-morrow, with this knife I'll cripple you, for you shall not be a Quaker". Undeterred, Ashbridge describes how she 'set out as usual' the following morning.³⁶ In 1720, Margaret Lucas, a Staffordshire Friend, similarly described how her uncle had threatened violence, saying how 'if I ever went to the meeting again, he would bereave me of my life'.³⁷ The actions and threats of these male relatives show the persistence of hostile attitudes towards the movement in both England and the American colonies long after the passage of the 1689 Toleration Act. They also encapsulate the destabilising effect that women's independent conversion to religious sects could have on domestic harmony.³⁸

Like many other radical sectarian groups, Quaker theorists recognised that family divisions and even separation might be necessary in order to pursue

³⁵ At this time, Ashbridge was married to a man by the name of Sullivan (further details are unknown). Elizabeth Ashbridge, *Some Account of the Early Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge* (Philadelphia, 1807), p. 43.

³⁶ Ashbridge, *Some Account of the Early Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*, p. 44.

³⁷ Margaret Lucas, *An Account of the Convincement and Call to the Ministry of Margaret Lucas, Late of Leek, in Staffordshire* (London, 1797), p. 37.

³⁸ This was a pattern glimpsed not only within eighteenth-century Quakerism, but also in other religious movements where individual conscience was emphasised above duty to a spouse. The Methodist convert, Catherine Exley, for instance, described how her husband 'was rather severe with me, and sometimes said he feared I was going out of my mind'. Another instance she recounted was his wish that she would pray in silence and not speak so loudly that the neighbours would hear. See Rebecca Probert (ed.), *Catherine Exley's Diary: the Life and Times of an Army Wife in the Peninsular War* (Kenilworth, 2014), pp. 51–52. A detailed discussion of this is provided in Naomi Pullin, 'In Pursuit of Heavenly Guidance: The Religious Context of Catherine Exley's Life and Writings', in Probert (ed.), *Catherine Exley's Diary*, pp. 79–95.

God's work in the world. 'Opinions do tend to break the relation of Subjects to their Magistrates, Wives to their Husbands, Children to their Parents,' wrote George Fox in 1653.³⁹ A vision of spiritual community extended back to the primitive church when the first apostles left family and friends behind to pursue their spiritual fellowship. The divisions caused by those men and women who chose to absent themselves from their families to follow their callings, was an element of Quaker ministry that was continually criticised in the anti-Quaker press. One anonymous writer highlighted in 1653 how Friends' self-imposed itinerancy was simply an excuse for 'fulfilling the lusts of the flesh'. They questioned '*Whether they have not the Word of God as a shadow, when they make it stand by at their pleasure?*'⁴⁰ Yet the hardships associated with separation from families in service to God were a common trope in radical sectarian writings. An interesting parallel is found at the start of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, when Pilgrim first commences his journey. His family stood at the door of their house 'cry[ing] after him to return', but Pilgrim, refusing to be deterred from his mission, 'put his fingers in his Ears, and ran on, crying, Life, Life, Eternal Life.'⁴¹ Whilst Pilgrim later made his journey with his family, his early experience of conversion, like those of many Quaker preachers, led him to believe that separation from his family was one of many necessary trials on his religious journey.

Unlike any other movement of this period, however, Quakers considered spiritual and domestic work to be intrinsically linked. Even those Friends who

³⁹ George Fox, *Saul's Errand to Damascus with His Packet of Letters from the High-Priests, against the Disciples of the Lord* (London, 1653), p. 4.

⁴⁰ Anon., *Certain Quæries and Anti-Quæries, Concerning the Quakers, (So Called) In and About Yorkshire* (London, 1653), p. 5.

⁴¹ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to that Which is to Come Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream* (London, 1678), p. 3.

undertook evangelical work beyond the household continued to place an extraordinary emphasis upon their labours within their families. George Fox counselled Friends in 1657 not to travel and preach as a continuous way of life, and advised that 'if any have been moved to speak' and had 'quenched that which moved them', they should return home to their family and 'not go forth afterwards into words, until they feel the power arise and move them thereto again'.⁴² Such a pattern enabled Friends to pursue ministerial careers without having to relinquish all ties to their families. John Banks, for instance, described in detail his life outside of his ministerial work, noting how he 'laboured with my hands, with honest endeavours and lawful employments, for the maintenance of my family'.⁴³ This stood in contrast to the roles provided for ministers in some other movements, which consistently held up single and unattached lifestyles as ideals of religiosity. The Presbyterian minister Christopher Love, for instance, was allegedly so desirous to avoid becoming 'entangled with the business of the world', that he rented a separate home from his wife and children so that he could work undisturbed.⁴⁴ Many Methodist converts, moreover, viewed their families as hindrances to attaining spiritual perfection and, as Anna M. Lawrence has shown, many freed themselves from bad marriages.⁴⁵ Sarah Ryan told how conversion to Methodism had allowed

⁴² George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (Cambridge, 1952), p. 341, George Fox's Address to Friends in the Ministry, given at John Crook's house, 31 May 1658.

⁴³ John Banks, 'A Journal of the Labours, Travels, and Sufferings of that Faithful Minister of Jesus Christ, John Banks', in *The Friends' Library*, ii, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Cited in Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 311, hereafter cited as Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*.

⁴⁵ Anna M. Lawrence, *One Family under God: Love, Belonging, and Authority in Early Transatlantic Methodism* (Philadelphia, 2011), pp. 140–45.

her to abandon her third husband with a clear conscience.⁴⁶ Whilst Methodists did not prevent preachers from marrying, they believed that a celibate life was superior for religious teachers. Drawing upon St Paul's words, the Methodist leader John Wesley explained that '[t]he unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be held both in body and spirit, but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband'.⁴⁷ For Quaker men and women, by contrast, neither marriage nor child-rearing was considered an obstacle to them carrying on their spiritual work.

Naturally, pursuing a ministerial career was easier for those female Friends who were not responsible for managing a household. A number of scholars have shown the significance of Quaker approval of single women whose freedom from family commitments enabled them to submit themselves entirely to God's will.⁴⁸ The eighteenth-century minister Catherine Payton, for example, waited twenty-three years to marry William Phillips, whom she first met in 1749 during a ministerial visit to Swansea. Her decision to defer the marriage, she explained, was because she 'feared to indulge thoughts of forming a connection, which, from its incumbrances, might tend to frustrate the intention of Divine wisdom respecting me'.⁴⁹ A Quaker woman might legitimately remain single or defer marriage, but unlike Methodism, this was the exception rather than the rule. Rebecca Larson's study of eighteenth-century transatlantic female ministers, for instance, reveals that seventy

⁴⁶ Sarah Ryan's case against marriage is described in detail in Lawrence, *One Family under God*, pp. 145–50. The dissolution of her marriage to 'Mr Ryan', is recounted on pp. 147–48.

⁴⁷ Cited in Lawrence, *One Family under God*, p. 137.

⁴⁸ See especially: Amy M. Froide, 'The Religious Lives of Singlewomen in the Anglo-Atlantic World: Quaker Missionaries, Protestant Nuns, and Covert Catholics', in Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf (eds.), *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World (1600–1800)* (Toronto, 2009), pp. 60–78; and Karin Wulf, *Not all Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (London, 2000).

⁴⁹ Catherine Phillips (née Payton), *Memoirs of the Life of Catherine Phillips: To which are added Some of Her Epistles* (London, 1797), pp. 207–08.

per cent of female preachers were married at the time of their religious service, and 'nearly all' of those undertaking transatlantic work married at some point during their lives.⁵⁰ It would therefore appear that one of the most distinctive and surprising features of Quakerism was the integration of ecstatic preaching with social roles that were stable and traditional.

'[T]ruly united in Spirit': love, friendship, and companionship in Quaker marriages

Although the religious commitment of female Friends could involve a serious challenge to domestic arrangements, it is important to recognise that the family was viewed as an empowering and supportive institution in their daily lives. Whereas other faiths put stress on individual salvation (*sola fide*), early Friends' belief in the all-encompassing power of the Inner Light meant that stimulating a conversion within the family was just as important as making their message accessible to individuals outside their faith. Quaker domestic arrangements even came to be praised by many eighteenth-century writers as superior to those of any other group. The abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson, for instance, who worked extensively with Quakers, wrote that 'domestic happiness' was their chief source of enjoyment and 'only bliss'.⁵¹ The transmission of the Holy Spirit thus became an intimate and increasingly domestic concern for Quaker leaders that did not rely on explicit rituals or public exhortations. As we shall see, Quaker expressions of love and courtship were unusual, since they were not so

⁵⁰ This analysis of marital status has been taken from the list of transatlantic ministers provided by Larson in the appendices to *Daughters of Light*, which provides short biographies of fifty-six female ministers in the transatlantic community during the period 1700–1775. Larson, *Daughters of Light*, pp. 135–37, 305–19, Appendix One.

⁵¹ Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism, Taken from a View of the Education and Discipline, Social Manners, Civil and Political Economy, Religious Principles and Character of the Society of Friends* (3 vols, New York, 1806), i, p. 101, hereafter cited as Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*.

much directed to a physical person, but to the spiritual 'Light Within' that inhabited the loved one.⁵²

Whilst historians like Thomas have emphasised the highly traditional and patriarchal nature of Quakerism once it took on an 'institutional form', it is clear that women were granted an unusual level of freedom within the household.⁵³ One of the clearest and most direct challenges posed to traditional domestic relationships was the capacity of a woman to feel 'drawings' to undertake religious service. Members of the movement, throughout our period, accepted women's absences from the family home as a necessary aspect of their ministerial obligations. Richard Jacob confessed to his wife Elizabeth, that 'Thy company is so desirable to me that I think no not all the wealth of this world if it might be had should not purchase thy absence'. Nonetheless, he supported her ministerial vocation: 'I am sensible that the Lord concerned thee and is with thee, I am willing to brook thy absence and shall wait the Lord's time for thy return'.⁵⁴ This contrasted with the Puritan aphorism that the faithful wife should not stray 'too much *from Home*'.⁵⁵ Perhaps more remarkably, however, Quaker husbands not only had to accept their wives' absences when they felt a calling to travel abroad, but were also expected to care for their children and provide them with financial and material support. Whilst his wife Mary was undertaking ministerial work in the colonies in 1750, the London Friend Daniel

⁵² Jacques Tual, 'Sexual Equality and Conjugal Harmony: The Way to Celestial Bliss. A View of Early Quaker Matrimony', *JFHS*, vol. 55, no. 6 (1988), p. 167.

⁵³ Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', p. 53.

⁵⁴ Friends Library Dublin, *Grubb Collection S*, Folder 10, Limerick, 10 July 1701, Richard Jacob to Elizabeth Jacob, quoted in Phil Kilroy, 'Quaker Women in Ireland, 1660-1740', *Irish Journal of Feminist Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1997), p. 13.

⁵⁵ The Puritan colonist Cotton Mather expected women to provide the necessary housekeeping services for their families, so that if her husband was asked where she was, he could answer 'as once Abraham did, *My wife is in the Tent*'. Cotton Mather, *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion, on the Character and Happiness of a Woman* (London, 1694), p. 112.

Weston admitted that '[i]t was a very near tryall to be so depriv'd of One of the most affectionate and best of wives and a true help Meet'. But as he went on to explain, 'as it was a Duty requir'd by her great Lord and Master, [I] could do no other than resign her to his work and service'.⁵⁶ Such declarations of love and support stand as testament to the elevated place of the Quaker wife within the domestic hierarchy.

Friends' belief in spiritual equality challenged the sexual inequality of marriage introduced by the Fall. 'Love between Quaker husbands and wives', argues Jacques Tual, 'had been cleansed of all guilt thanks to the new covenant of the second birth'.⁵⁷ Female Friends came to be viewed as almost equals in the marriage partnership. The eighteenth-century Quaker minister Deborah Bell was described by her husband as 'the gift of God to me', prized as 'a help-meet [...] and a true and faithful yoke-fellow in all our services in the church: for being ever one in spirit, we became one in faith and practice, in discerning and judgment [...] which nearly united us'.⁵⁸ The experiential nature of the Quaker faith, which did not rely upon the patriarch's ability to interpret the Scriptures and lead family prayers, encouraged marital partnership and equality. The emphasis in the testimonies of Quaker wives was on unity and oneness with their husbands, rather than obedience and loyalty. The Quaker minister Alice Curwen was even described by her husband as being 'tender over me'.⁵⁹ This

⁵⁶ Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as HSP), MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 6, fol. 90, Daniel Weston to Israel Pemberton Jr., London, 22 August 1750.

⁵⁷ Tual, 'Sexual Equality and Conjugal Harmony', p. 166.

⁵⁸ Deborah Bell, *A Short Journal of the Labours and Travels in the Work in the Ministry, of that Faithful Servant of Christ, Deborah Bell* (London, 1776), p. xxvi, 'The Testimony of John Bell, Concerning his Wife Deborah Bell'.

⁵⁹ Anne Martindell *et al.*, *A Relation of the Labour, Travail and Suffering of that Faithful Servant of the Lord, Alice Curwen* (London, 1680), sig. B1r [pagination confused], 'Thomas Curwen his Testimony'.

expression, as Catie Gill has argued, carried startling connotations of hierarchy and implied supremacy.⁶⁰

In wider society too, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers invoked the ideal of women as a help and support to their husbands and both sexes were advised to be careful in choosing a spouse who would be '*an helpe meet for them*'.⁶¹ Husband and wife were expected to 'conferre, read, pray, confesse, and give thanks together' and look to one another for spiritual counsel and admonition.⁶² The wife was nevertheless a subordinate within this relationship, expected to submit to her husband's government. Indeed, affection was often expressed in written testimonies through a wife's willingness to subject herself to her husband.⁶³ Quakers, by contrast, believed that husband and wife should contribute to each other's happiness and comfort as spiritual helpmates. It has been argued that in the interest of sexual equality Friends dispensed with the vow of obedience in their marriage ceremony, which released women from 'the restraints of subservience' and placed them in a more equal position within the household.⁶⁴ This was eloquently demonstrated in the testimony that the English Friend Eleanor Haydock wrote after the death of her husband, Roger, in 1696. In her account, she described their fourteen years of marriage as one of conjugal harmony:

⁶⁰ Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Political Identities, 1650–1700* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 157.

⁶¹ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 185.

⁶² Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 111–2.

⁶³ As Mendelson and Crawford argue, writers like Gouge dwelt on women's acceptance of subjection as the key component of the relationship affirming that 'every dutie which they [wives] performe to their husband, their very opinion, affection, speech, action, and all that concerneth the husband, must savour of *subjection*'. Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 135.

⁶⁴ Cited in Simon Dixon, 'Quaker Communities in London, 1667–c1714', Royal Holloway, University of London, PhD thesis (2005), p. 134.

we laboured in our respective Gifts in the Work of the Ministry, being truly united in Spirit [...] so that we lived in great Love and Peace [...] in which time we were never straitned [*sic*] one towards another, always one Heart, and of one Mind, purely knit together in the Covenant of Life.⁶⁵

This ideal was particularly well-suited to the Quaker marital partnership, where husband and wife were deemed spiritual equals and perceived as labouring together to fulfil the Lord's work at home and abroad.

Love was the spiritual cement of the Quaker family and the household was regarded as a union of individuals in the sight of God. Friends' belief that marriage was a bond of equals based on love was reinforced through their choice of language, which emphasised harmony and companionship. During a business visit to London, the Quaker minister Samuel Sansom told his wife that 'my greatest pleasure in this life, is the hopes of the Enjoyment of thy Company, my Dearest (bosom friend) which I pray God grant to our Mutuall Comfort'.⁶⁶ Scholars frequently comment on the 'unusual sociability' of Quaker spouses and it is unsurprising that Quaker writers often described the marital bond as the highest form of friendship.⁶⁷ William Penn, for example, explained that a wife is 'a Friend, a Companion, a Second Self', owing to the sexless nature of the souls.⁶⁸ The Quaker understanding of friendship will be further explored in

⁶⁵ Roger Haydock *et al.*, *A Collection of the Christian Writings, Labours, Travels and Sufferings of that Faithful and Approved Minister of Jesus Christ, Roger Haydock* (London, 1700), sig. B3r, B4r–B4v, 'Eleanor Haydock's Testimony Concerning Her Husband Roger Haydock'.

⁶⁶ Haverford College Quaker and Special Collection (hereafter cited as HCQSC), MS Coll 1008 Morris-Sansom Collection, c.1715–1925, Box 18, Sansom, Samuel folder, Samuel Sansom to 'My dear and Loving Wife', London, 10 February 1739.

⁶⁷ Richard T. Vann and David Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death: The British and Irish Quakers in the Demographic Transition, 1650–1900* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 243–44.

⁶⁸ William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude: In Reflections and Maxims Relating to the Conduct of Human Life* (London, 1693), p. 32.

Chapter Three. It is clear, however, that in this context love and friendship for early Friends were intimately linked. It also highlights the theoretical equality of husband and wife in the Quaker household, for writers like Michel de Montaigne and Francis Bacon had theorised friendship as a flow of affection between two equals.⁶⁹ Whilst marriage was often considered as a friendship and writers like John Milton argued for a more equitable relationship between husband and wife, it was generally accepted that they could not be true friends, because of the natural inequality of the relationship.⁷⁰

The equality of Quaker marital arrangements is highlighted by the emphasis that Friends placed on loving and free relations between husband and wife. Whilst early modern writers continually emphasised the need for loving matches free from parental pressure and financial inducements, Quakerism placed an unusual amount of emphasis on marital relationships based primarily on a principle of reciprocal love.⁷¹ William Penn, like many of his Quaker contemporaries, advised Friends to 'Never marry but for Love; but see that thou lov'st what is *lovely*' and explained that '[b]etween a Man and his Wife nothing ought to rule but *Love*'.⁷² Although there were inevitably some Quaker matches motivated by considerations that extended beyond the mutual affection of

⁶⁹ Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin, 'Introduction' in Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (eds.), *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300–1800* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 4.

⁷⁰ Jeremy Taylor explained that this domestic friendship 'is not equall, and there is too much authority on one side and too much fear on the other to make equal friendships'. Jeremy Taylor, *The Measures and Offices of Friendship with Rules of Conducting It* (London, 1657), p. 68. Milton's views on marriage are noted by Sheila Wright, with reference to *Paradise Lost*: Sheila Wright, "'Truly Dear Hearts': Family and Spirituality in Quaker Women's Writings, 1680–1750", in Sylvia Brown (ed.), *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2007), p. 101.

⁷¹ Gouge insisted that it was essential that 'there be a mutuall liking of one another' before the marriage moved onto the next stage for as he explained 'Mutuall love and good liking of each other is a glue'. Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, pp. 564, 197. The emphasis which early modern courtship culture placed on 'Mutual Love and Good Liking' is explored by David Cressy in *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 260–63.

⁷² Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude*, pp. 27, 36.

husband and wife, a strongly platonic vision of matrimony nevertheless emerges from early Quaker writings. These were matches that surpassed the bounds of physical and material considerations, where a love of others became a symbolic expression for love of Christ. John Bowne even claimed that 'a true Love was begotten in my heart' towards his wife Hannah 'before I knew her Face', which he attributed to 'the Love of God, that lived in her'.⁷³ Since Friends were expected to wait for divine guidance in determining whether a partner was suitable, the love they felt towards one another provided a strong indication that their match was divinely-ordained.

Whilst love was widely held to be an essential element in marriage throughout our period, it was not considered a necessity before the match was made. Ralph A. Houlbrooke notes that in seventeenth-century courtship culture, it was believed that mutual affection could easily develop within marriage between well-matched partners.⁷⁴ Love alone was not the key to a happy marriage, but depended upon other considerations, including parity of piety, wealth, status, and age. Moreover, Puritan writers like Gouge often worried that too much love might distract a husband and wife from their love of God.⁷⁵ Marriage within Quakerism, however, was seen as grounded in mutual spiritual improvement, where husband and wife sought in one another a loving helpmeet. This was reflected in the marriage proposal that the Quaker writer Robert Barclay wrote to his future wife Christian Mollison in 1669:

⁷³ LRSF, MS Vol 150 Luke Howard Collection, fol. 15, 'The Testimony of John Bowne Concerning his Innocent Wife and Faithful Yoke-Fellow Hannah Bowne', undated, c.1677.

⁷⁴ Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 76.

⁷⁵ This was a view that was later advanced by Methodists, who, according to Mack, believed that family relationships could pose a threat to salvation if they 'loved too much'. Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 97. I am grateful to Thomas Dixon for this reference.

Many things in the natural [world] concurs together to strengthen and increase my affections towards thee, and to endear thee unto me, but that which is before all and beyond all, is, that I can say in the fear and presence of the Lord, that I have received a charge from him to love thee, for I know his love is towards thee.⁷⁶

Clearly, Quakers like Barclay found in God their reasons for loving a spouse. Many of the surviving letters of Quaker courtship shift easily between these overt terms of endearment and spiritual expressions. Since the inner light directed their matches, the godly virtues of potential spouses were accepted as providentially ordained.⁷⁷

Even in the American context of Quakerism, where many Friends belonged to the wealthy merchant class, it is clear that Friends frequently put the independent judgements of members before all other temporal concerns. Dr Richard Hill told his daughter Rachel in 1758 that he believed the happiness of a marriage depended ‘principally on a mutual and well-grounded affection’. As he explained, he would never press his children to marry anyone without such mutual affection.⁷⁸ It was quite common for women to reject marriage proposals if they did not feel sufficient affection for their suitor. This is demonstrated in the 1705 minutes of Chester Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania, where a committee of female Friends was appointed to investigate why the marriage between John Martin and Jane Hunt had not taken place. Hunt’s

⁷⁶ LRSF, Temp MS 745/37 Robson MSS, pp. 11–12, Robert Barclay to Christian Mollison, Urie (copy), 29 October 1669.

⁷⁷ Penn wrote in another treatise that ‘They that love *beyond* the world, cannot be *separated* by it [...] Nor can spirits ever be *divided*, that love and live in the same divine principle’. William Penn, *The Select Works of William Penn* (3rd edn, 5 vols, London, 1782), v, p. 183.

⁷⁸ Richard Hill to Rachel Hill, Madeira, 28 July 1758, in John Jay Smith (ed.), *Letters of Doctor Richard Hill and His Children: Or, The History of A Family, as Told by Themselves* (Philadelphia, 1854), p. 156.

answer was telling: she reported that 'she could not love him well enough to take him to be her husband'.⁷⁹ Matches determined by love gave female Friends a high level of autonomy in entering into marriages and deciding on suitors. Other women also made the decision to turn down suitors they did not love, but it is arguable that the Quaker model of marital arrangements made an equal match grounded in love for God the overriding factor in their decision to enter into marriage. This is a view that has been widely supported in the secondary literature on the unusually large numbers of Quaker women, especially those inhabiting the American colonies, who chose to remain single rather than marry a husband with whom they did not share spiritual affinity.⁸⁰

Allegiance to Quakerism evidently brought about a significant redefinition of roles within the family. Quaker households for the most part appear to have retained the general characteristics and structures of the patriarchal family observable in wider society. Indeed, many of the Quakers' ideas on marriage and marital relationships found parallels within contemporary writings. This was particularly evident in the help-meets ideal propounded by Puritan moralists, the belief that marriage should be based on love, and the view that a woman's role as a companion to her husband was crucial in ensuring a stable household. It is nevertheless clear that the radical 'public' roles available to women within Quakerism extended to their domestic position, enabling them to re-imagine their place within the family. The Quaker emphasis upon spiritual equality, in particular, appears to have enabled female Friends to occupy positions of greater authority within the family than were

⁷⁹ FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting, 1695-1733, with Papers of Condemnation, minutes for 29 October 1705.

⁸⁰ See especially: Wulf, *Not all Wives*.

generally available to their contemporaries. Yet the most dramatic challenge appears to have come from their ability to pursue a ministerial career without renouncing marriage or motherhood. This was an element of their 'calling' that was radically different from that experienced by women in other sects, since they were able to combine marriage and ministry without one set of obligations conflicting with the other.

Since Quakers saw everyday tasks, as much as preaching, as a calling from God, a surprising emphasis was placed upon the activities of ordinary domestic life, for both ministering and non-itinerant Friends. This was much less evident in the writings of other sectarian groups. Moreover, the focus that the post-Restoration movement placed upon the family as the main site of its evangelical efforts provided a more elevated position for the wife and the mother within the Quaker household than was generally available to women within wider society. How these Quaker ideals of domesticity affected women's lives in practice is a theme which will be pursued in the sections that follow. I will begin by exploring the experiences of ministering women, whose status within the movement ostensibly challenged their domestic identities.

2. 'Supply[ing] my place in my absence': ministering wives and mothers

An active and visible body of female preachers, guided not by their domestic responsibilities but by their own spiritual callings, clearly served to destabilise the patriarchal household. Historians of Quakerism have noted the readiness of early converts to follow their calls to ministry and leave their temporal affairs

behind.⁸¹ The unusual role of the itinerant female preacher undoubtedly affected her life in significant ways, impacting upon her position within the family. However, as the following section will show, the boundaries between itinerant preaching and family life were fluid.

The emphasis placed upon the individual woman's relationship to the divine has been seen by historians as providing women with radical opportunities to liberate themselves from domestic concerns. The first part of this section challenges this view by exploring how women's domestic identities added value to their work as ministers. A careful reading of the evidence presented in their spiritual autobiographies and correspondence also shows how the household exerted a strong and positive influence on their public careers. These women continued to rely upon the support and care of their husbands, children, and extended families. The second part presents evidence of the positive impact that itinerant ministers could have upon family life and the patriarchal household. It places particular emphasis on the celebrated figure of the 'Mother in Israel', whose spiritual authority endowed her with high status within her own household and in the wider family of Friends.

'Thy lawful work and thy duty': the influence of family life on female Friends' public careers

Female Quakers understood that their religious calling posed a potential threat to the welfare of their own families. Many chose to present their familial sacrifices as part of the trials they faced for their faith. Called in 1670 to deliver

⁸¹ Barry Reay has suggested that of the first ministers who arrived in America during the period 1656 to 1663, forty-five per cent were women. Larson, in her survey of eighteenth-century female preachers, has estimated that there were thirteen hundred to fifteen hundred active female ministers in the transatlantic Quaker community over the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London, 1985), p. 26; Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 63.

a written testimony to King Charles II, urging him to halt the persecution of Quakers, Elizabeth Stirredge spoke for many of her contemporaries when she explained that she had reluctantly been forced to place her personal calling to ministry before her domestic responsibilities. The divine impulse that guided her journey proved a heavy burden. She recalled how, 'when I looked upon my children, my heart yearned towards them'. However, as she explained, she could 'get no rest, but in giving up to obey the Lord in all things that he required of me'.⁸² Juxtaposing the obligations of the family and their divine 'leadings', women like Stirredge used their domestic relationships to define their public identities as preachers.

Whilst the primary emphasis in the published writings of public female Friends was on their spiritual labours, a continued emphasis upon their identities as wives and mothers was significant on two accounts. In the first place, it adds weight to the argument that Quakerism was unique in balancing women's spiritual and outward identities by encouraging gifted married women to take on positions of spiritual authority. It also highlights the gendered nature of these female ministers' testimonies. In particular, they stand in contrast to the spiritual autobiographies and life accounts published by their male brethren, who rarely made reference to their families or domestic ties. The editors of Thomas Story's life account offered an apology to the reader for the omission of particular details and 'private Persons', explaining that the author 'esteem'd them as Subjects of too light and insignificant a Nature to bear any Part or Mixture with Things appertaining to Religion'. They even went on to

⁸² Elizabeth Stirredge, 'The Life and Christian Testimony of that Faithful Servant of the Lord, Elizabeth Stirredge', in *The Friends' Library*, ii, p. 192.

note that it 'is not a little remarkable, that he has not once mentioned his ever having been in the conjugal State, though 'tis certain that he was married in 1706 to *Anne* Daughter of *Edward Shippen*, with whom he lived in great Harmony and Affection several Years'.⁸³

The published accounts of female Friends, by contrast, consistently drew attention to their identities as wives and mothers. Gill comments on the strong familial context that featured in the life accounts of many post-Restoration ministering women's writings, which was evidenced by framing the minister's narrative around the testimonies of the husband and children.⁸⁴ This was a trope much less common in the accounts of male Friends and adds weight to the idea that the value of Quaker women's spiritual accounts lay in the continued presence of the household and family in their writings. It also served to anticipate and rebut the charge that female ministers were inevitably abandoning their family responsibilities. As the mothers of several young children, these women's absences from the family home were radical. Nevertheless, in drawing attention to their families and openly acknowledging that they were breaking with convention, these women were able to use their stories of familial sacrifice to enhance the spiritual authority of their published testimonies.

Numerous Quaker women justified their decision to travel by explaining that their divine calling would ultimately secure the spiritual welfare of their families. Like the early Apostles, they believed that eternal glory would come to

⁸³ Thomas Story, *A Journal of the Life of Thomas Story: Containing an Account of his Remarkable Convincement of, and Embracing the Principles of Truth, as Held by the People Called Quakers* (London, 1747), pp. ii, iii, 'To the Reader', written by James Wilson and John Wilson, Kendal, 24 July 1747.

⁸⁴ Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community*, p. 153.

the families of those who sacrificed everything to follow Jesus, preach the gospel, and suffer persecution in His name.⁸⁵ The 'Faithful handmaid' Joan Vokins explained that despite her love for her husband and seven young children, disobedience to her spiritual calling would have provoked the Lord 'to have withholden his Mercies from us all, and to bring his Judgements upon us [...] in the Day of Acco[un]t'.⁸⁶ A common theme in itinerant women's private writings was therefore the conviction that the sacrifices they were making within their families was for a far greater cause. During her travels to America in October 1750, the English Friend Mary Weston explained how she hoped that both her husband and daughter 'may still with me be sharers of Divine Bounty' in both 'health of body' and 'the influences of the blessed spirit' in which, as she explained, they were all participants.⁸⁷ Similarly, the Lancashire minister Ruth Follows cited the Scriptural example of 'Strength in Weakness' to highlight the trials she had suffered on leaving her husband and small children 'to his divine protection'.⁸⁸ Her travels took on providential significance when she explained that the Lord had preserved her family in her absence. 'Although it is a pinching trial to leave dear husband and children', she took reassurance from the fact that 'great peace' came to those 'who are obedient to the Lord's requirings'.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Mark 10:28-31: 'Then Peter began to say to him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, 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. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first' (King James Version).

⁸⁶ Joan Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified: As Manifested and Revealed in his Faithful Handmaid Joan Vokins* (London, 1691), p. 23.

⁸⁷ LRSF, MS Vol 312 Mary Weston's Journal, fol. 71, Mary Weston to Daniel Weston, New York, 9 October 1750.

⁸⁸ The idea of 'strength' being 'made perfect in weakness' was described in 2 Corinthians 12:9.

⁸⁹ Ruth Follows, 'Memoirs of Ruth Follows, Late of Castle Donnington, Leicestershire; For Sixty Years A Minister in the Society of Friends with Extracts from Her Letters', ed. by Samuel Stansfield, in *The Friends' Library*, iv, p. 27.

Another feature of ministering Quaker women's published writings that is rarely glimpsed in those of their male contemporaries is evidence of them postponing missionary service on account of particular family circumstances. Alice Curwen, for example, explained in her spiritual autobiography that she felt a calling to go to Boston and New England, 'at which', she explains, 'my Heart was exceedingly broken, and I cryed unto the Lord with many Tears, and said, *O Lord, what shall become of my little Children, and of my poor Husband?*'⁹⁰ Her troubles stemmed from the fact that at the time of her calling, her husband, Thomas, was incarcerated for his testimony against tithes. Alice, the mother of a large family, was consequently the sole provider and care-giver and could not easily justify her absence. Alice's self-interrogation lasted many years, and it was not until her family obligations had lessened and her husband was released from prison that she took up the call to travel abroad at God's command. The eighteenth-century Carlisle minister Jane Pearson even instructed her readers to return home if they felt under a burden to do so. Whilst travelling in Lancashire, she described having a strong drawing towards her home after receiving news of her mother's illness and imminent death. 'I mention this', she wrote, 'that friends may attend to their feelings and drawings as to returning home, for had she departed in my absence, I should have been in danger of letting in the reasoner'.⁹¹ Adopting an itinerant lifestyle, as Cristine M. Levenduski has emphasised, was 'problematic in a culture emphasizing familial

⁹⁰ Martindell *et al.*, *A Relation of the Labour, Travail and Suffering of [...] Alice Curwen*, p. 2.

⁹¹ Jane Pearson, *Sketches of Piety: In the Life and Religious Experiences of Jane Pearson* (York, 1817), p. 37. It is almost certain that 'the reasoner' in this context was the Devil. Jane Pearson's life account is full of references to her own emotional and spiritual trials, where she describes her personal struggle to resist the temptations of Satan and the 'bitter whisperings and insinuations of the crooked, piercing serpent'. Her decision to return to her ailing family is thus presented as one of the ways in which she was able to continue to follow the path laid out for her by God. For more on her struggles with Satan see especially: Pearson, *Sketches of Piety* pp. 19–26.

stability as the basis for communal solidity'.⁹² In showing that their family obligations were carefully balanced and that there were occasions when the family could be placed above spiritual concerns, these women represented a model of domesticity much more in line with contemporary expectations.

Even for those women who undertook prolonged ministerial service, there was no question of them abandoning their long-term domestic responsibilities. A number of itinerant women's personal letters reveal the conflict they could face, as mothers whose natural urge was to be present when the family was in need. In a letter of 1751, the Philadelphian Quaker Mary Pemberton spoke for many of her contemporaries when she assured her husband that she took 'no Pleasure' in being 'absent from thee and our Dear Children Who I sincerely Esteem'.⁹³ The Bristol Friend Edith Lovel, who died in a shipwreck in 1781 on her return from ministerial service in Dublin, explained in her correspondence to her husband her frustrations at not knowing where or when she would be 'called' to travel. She often stated how she imagined her family accompanying her on her journey, and described in detail the conflict of such duties. On feeling a calling to visit Quaker families in Cork, rather than return home, she noted how she 'lay most part of the night watering my pillow with tears', for she 'could not think of giving up to go'. She then went onto explain how she hoped that her husband would 'be enabled to bear this trial for me', for it was one that she could not bear alone.⁹⁴ The personal correspondence of women like Edith Lovel and Mary Pemberton highlight the

⁹² Cristine M. Levenduski, *Peculiar Power: A Quaker Woman Preacher in Eighteenth-Century America* (London, 1996), p. 31.

⁹³ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 7, fol. 123, Mary Pemberton to Israel Pemberton Jr., Shrewsbury, MA., 29 October 1751.

⁹⁴ HCQSC, MS Coll 955 Edward Wanton Smith Papers, 1681–1971, Box 5 L–M, Lovel, Edith folder, 'Extracts of Letters from Edith Lovel to Her Husband', Dublin, 8 November 1781.

trying and often highly emotional circumstances they faced as wives and mothers who wanted to return home to their families.

Many itinerant women's written testimonies also reveal the complexity of their identities as spiritual prophets who owed obedience to God and as wives who were expected to remain loyal to their husbands.⁹⁵ Leaving her husband to care for their children, the New England Friend Hannah Bowne undertook ministerial travel in England and the Low Countries in the 1670s. Yet in the testimony written after her death in 1678, her husband, John, was at pains to emphasise her wifely responsibilities. 'The resolution of her heart and the Bent of her Spirit', he wrote, 'was altogether to be Subject unto me in all things, which for conscience sake she could do.' His language reinforces the idea of wifely obedience. Even during her travels, her husband continued to exert his influence and at one point decided to accompany her, so that he could 'press her [...] to haste away to her Children'.⁹⁶ To some degree, such evidence throws into question the radicalism of Quaker women's activities, suggesting that a woman's call to ministry was checked by her position within the household. Nevertheless, the movement's recognition that women had a 'calling' beyond marriage and motherhood is something that Larson has characterised as the 'greatest modification of the legal subordination of women to men'.⁹⁷ As already noted, one of the most revolutionary features of Quaker women's near-equality

⁹⁵ Only on rare occasions did an outright renunciation of spousal responsibility occur. These include the accounts published in: Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, *This is a Short Relation of Some of the Cruel Sufferings (for the Truths sake) of Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers in the Inquisition in the Isle of Malta* (London, 1662); Rebecca Travers *et al.*, *The Work of God in a Dying Maid Being a Short Account of the Dealings of the Lord with one Susannah Whitrow* (London, 1677); Hayes, *A Legacy, or Widow's Mite*; and Ashbridge, *Some Account of the Early Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*.

⁹⁶ LRSF, MS Vol 150 Luke Howard Collection, fol. 15, 'The Testimony of John Bowne Concerning his Innocent Wife and Faithful Yoke-Fellow Hannah Bowne', undated, c.1677.

⁹⁷ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 155.

within the marital partnership was that when they felt a call to travel, their husbands were expected to support them. Even John Bowne, despite his evident unhappiness, did not feel entitled to obstruct his wife's powerful call.

Much of the extant correspondence between Quaker spouses attests to the supportive and loving domestic arrangements of many female ministers. The English Friend Isaac Hall, for instance, relayed commonplace information about the welfare of their children to his wife, Alice, whilst she was travelling in Ireland:

thy Son John is grown a great lad and he is very hearty and he [goes] to the hay field and works till he Sweat he is fresh couler'd [...] Sarah is hearty and fresh Couler'd and she can walk in John[s] hand unto her Grand Mothers. She has not got all her teeth yet [...] My mother is very well and she helps us all she can.⁹⁸

The existence of such loving correspondence, full of details about the children's progress and how they were coping during the mother's absence, suggests the implicit approval of Quaker husbands for their wives' spiritual work. It also suggests the need for more research into the role of the Quaker grandmother, another type of non-itinerant who clearly had an important supportive role in the Quaker household. Since the husbands of itinerant wives were more likely to need assistance to provide for their families, it is likely that grandmothers were a common substitute for maternal care.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Isaac Hall to Alice Hall, Broughton, Cumberland, 26 July 1747, in John Hall Shield (ed.), *Genealogical Notes on the Families of Hall, Featherston, Wigham, Ostle, Watson etc.* (Allendale, Northumberland, 1915), pp. 35a–37.

⁹⁹ In October 1777, Mary Lloyd wrote a letter of thanks to her 'Honor'd Mother' Priscilla Farmer, describing how she was under 'the *greatest obligation* to her for the care she takes of my dear little son and Household affairs in my absence, also for her affectionate attention to my excellent

Not only did women's absence prove an emotional trial for the family members they left behind, for poorer Friends it could also have a disruptive effect upon the household economy. As we shall see in Chapter Four this was an issue exploited in the anti-Quaker press. The image of the female Quaker 'tub-preacher', for instance, as a laundress who had turned her washtub upside-down, reinforced contemporary fears that such unnatural women were neglecting their families. To some extent, of course, that criticism had force. An itinerant preacher, whether female or male, was inevitably placing a burden on the rest of the family. Some correspondence hinted at the problems of a family trying to cope in the mother's absence. Thus in 1747 Isaac Hall informed his ministering wife:

We have had about two weeks very fine we[a]ther and I have got all my hay [...] and some little among the corn without hireing any but Mary Hudert two days and half. I think to get it all this week for I have got it so fare without raine. Our big [barley] and wheat will be pretty so[o]ne ripe, and I hope thou will be at home when the oats is ripe.¹⁰⁰

Alice Hall clearly played a significant role in the domestic economy of the family and Isaac's remarks suggest that her presence was sorely missed. Ruth Follows was another female minister, from 'low circumstances', whose absence brought hardship on the family. 'I was thy fathers partner', Ruth told her children, 'at sharing last harvest'. Yet for sixty years she repeatedly visited Meetings across the British Isles, while her supportive husband cared for their children. At times

Husband'. FHL, Temp MSS 403/4/8/1 Arthur B. Braithwaite MSS, fol. 3, Mary Lloyd to Priscilla Farmer, Weymouth, 15 October 1777.

¹⁰⁰ Isaac Hall to Alice Hall, Broughton, Cumberland, 26 July 1747, in Shield (ed.), *Genealogical Notes*, pp. 36–37.

Ruth noted how the family was 'prity much stript of [...] temporal goods', but her husband continued to provide financial support during her travels and frequently made the travel arrangements at the beginning of her journeys.¹⁰¹ Thus despite the evident disruption to the family economy, it is clear that Quaker husbands like Isaac Hall and George Follows understood and accepted the importance of their wives' missionary work.

These women were evidently able to command a position of respect and authority within their marriages. We find a clear contrast in the reactions of non-Quaker spouses to their wives' ministerial work. Despite having won the grudging consent of her husband to travel to England, the Quaker minister Anne Wright was forced to carry a little notebook of advice that he had written for her '*to read and consider thrice over at least, or once every week*'. In it William Wright reminded her of her duties and encouraged her that once she had completed her mission she must hasten home: 'remember thy family, who will long to know what is become of thee; and know that thou hast some work there, which thou oughtest to look after; which all people [...] know to be thy lawful work, and thy duty.'¹⁰² William's distinction between her religious and 'lawful' responsibilities suggests something of the way in which women's spiritual callings continued to be perceived by non-Quakers. Here, Anne's relationship with the divine was viewed as something that lacked natural authority.

In spite of their religious differences, however, such a scenario also shows us how the domestic setting as a physical and emotive space had a

¹⁰¹ LRSF, Temp MS 127 Follows Family Papers, folder 4, fol. 14, Ruth Follows to Joseph Follows, 5 February 1775 and Temp MS 127 Follows Family Papers, folder 3, fol. 28, Ruth Follows to Samuel Follows, 27 August 1779, quoted in Whyman, *The Pen and the People*, p. 145.

¹⁰² Letter sent by William Wright to Anne Wright, Castledermot, 21 August 1670, in Leadbeater (ed.), *Biographical Notices*, pp. 63–64.

formative role in shaping the relationships between itinerant women and their families. It is striking that a non-believing husband, William Wright, would consent to or at least tolerate his wife absenting herself from the family home and her domestic responsibilities. There is little to suggest that he shared Anne's belief that her missionary calling was from God; rather, he acknowledged the strength of her conviction, and appreciated her efforts to prove herself an ideal wife in every other respect. When she first felt a call to ministry, he noted, 'she laboured daily to please me in every thing, hoping thereby to gain my consent and willingness to her new-intended journey.' Anne's missionary work may even have strengthened their marital bond; on her much-anticipated return she was described as 'merry and pleasant [...] and very loving.'¹⁰³ That such a supportive relationship could develop between spouses of different confessions suggests the crucial importance of women's relationships within the private space of the household. Their domestic and their preaching roles were interlinked, and each influenced the other.

'[G]ood Examples in life and conversation': Quaker Mothers in Israel

We have seen how itinerant women's experiences continued to be determined by their domestic identities. However, this was a reciprocal process: their positions as public prophets also had an important role in shaping the lives of their families. This is particularly pronounced in the context of post-Restoration Quakerism, when its evangelical impetus became largely focused upon the family. Mary Waite, in her 1679 *A Warning to All Friends Who Professeth the Everlasting Truth of God*, explained that it was only through having an orderly

¹⁰³ Wright, 'A Brief and True Relation of Anne, the Wife of William Wright', p. 57.

household that authority would be conferred upon parents as ministers. '[I]f the Lord Require any Service or Testimony of any of you', she advised that:

all may be cleare in your selves and justified by Gods witness, that you have stood in his Counsel and Authority in your families and been good Examples in life and conversation, by keeping your own houses in the good Order, and Ruleing their for God, then may you openly with boldness appear for the Lord.¹⁰⁴

This passage highlights the fluidity between Quaker women's daily and spiritual identities, showing how their positions within and management of the household were important in conferring status upon them as ministers.

Quaker women, as Debra L. Parish has noted, were presented not simply as passive pious models but as propagators of religious advice and instruction both 'within and beyond their family spheres.'¹⁰⁵ This is perhaps best reflected in the figure of the 'Mother in Israel', who, according to Mack, maintained the family 'as a locus of worship, moral education and spiritual shelter', whilst also undertaking public preaching outside of the family home.¹⁰⁶ The spiritual calling of the Quaker minister Joan Vokins, for example, clearly enhanced her authority within the family, as exemplified in the letters she sent to her husband and seven children during ministerial service in the American colonies. '[R]emember to have an Eye over our dear Children, that they lose not the sense of Truth', she urged her husband in 1680, 'for it is my fear, now I am from them,

¹⁰⁴ Mary Waite, *A Warning to All Friends Who Professeth the Everlasting Truth of God* (London, 1679), p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ Debra L. Parish, 'The Power of Female Pietism: Women as Spiritual Authorities and Religious Role Models in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1992), p. 38.

¹⁰⁶ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 218.

that if thou do not supply my place in my absence, that the Spirit of this World will prevail, and hinder the Work of the Lord in their Hearts, and in thine too.'¹⁰⁷ Vokins's choice of phrase offers an interesting insight into the Quaker ideal of domesticity, adding weight to the idea that the promotion of domestic piety was something in which women had the primary role. The implicit authority of Vokins's position within the religious life of her household is further demonstrated in a letter she sent the following year, reminding her husband and children to 'Forget not your Family-Meeting on First Days at Evening'.¹⁰⁸ Vokins's worries stemmed from the fact that lack of maternal supervision might encourage her family to be led astray, and it is significant that a role-reversal seems to have taken place with her husband being given guidance on how to deputize in her absence.

The Quaker emphasis on women's roles as religious teachers and instructors thus enabled them to occupy a position of authority within the family unavailable to their contemporaries. Helen Plant comments that whilst some tender and religiously experienced men Friends were occasionally represented as 'nursing fathers', there was no male equivalent to the semi-official title of 'Mother in Israel'.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Lawrence found in her study of eighteenth-century Methodism that it was celibate women who were more likely to become 'Mothers in Israel'.¹¹⁰ These were women who devoted their whole life to the Methodist cause as preachers, exhorters, and travellers. It was

¹⁰⁷ Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified*, p. 52, Joan Vokins to her Husband, Richard Vokins, Rhode Island, 14 June 1680.

¹⁰⁸ Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified*, p. 63, Joan Vokins to her Husband and Children, Nevis, 11 February 1681.

¹⁰⁹ Helen Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities, 1770–1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', University of York, PhD thesis (2000), p. 70.

¹¹⁰ Lawrence, *One Family under God*, pp. 151–56.

a lifestyle, Lawrence suggests, that 'their married sisters would have found very difficult, if not impossible'.¹¹¹ The Quaker Mother in Israel, by contrast, while dedicating herself to obeying God's will, was not expected to renounce marriage or motherhood in the process.

Nevertheless, itinerant women's spiritual commitments inevitably had the potential to clash with their domestic duties, and it is striking that many of their spiritual autobiographies sought to redirect the focus of their work onto their families and households. Though Joan Vokins spent the majority of her adult life travelling in the service of Truth, she was subsequently memorialised in a domestic setting, surrounded by her husband and children. Her children's testimonial described the great care she had taken for her family and children, that 'we might be *nurtur'd, and brought up in the Fear of the Lord, [...] above all things in this World*'.¹¹² Like the autobiographies of several other female ministers, Vokins's spiritual autobiography removes the focus from her prophetic travelling work and emphasises her position as an instructor and educator of her children.¹¹³

The private counsel ministering women offered their children had the potential to take on far greater significance through the act of publication. Alice Curwen, for instance, justified writing and publishing her spiritual testimony by explaining that it was '*For the Encouragement of them that hereafter may put their Trust in the Lord*'.¹¹⁴ As Patricia Crawford has suggested, maternity

¹¹¹ Lawrence, *One Family under God*, p. 151.

¹¹² Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified*, sig. A7r, 'Concerning our Dear and Tender Mother, Joan Vokins'.

¹¹³ This is something that Gill found in her study of Quaker deathbed scenes, which provided an ideal (and socially acceptable) setting for women to gain authority as religious teachers. Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community*, pp. 147–82.

¹¹⁴ Martindell *et al.*, *A Relation of the Labour, Travail and Suffering of [...] Alice Curwen*, p. 2.

provided women with a powerful and distinctive voice, providing a subject on which they could publish 'without implicitly attacking conventional values.'¹¹⁵ The explicit authority of female ministers like Vokins and Curwen, who addressed family discipline and childrearing practices in their writings, held particular value for the post-Restoration movement. Their public status gave authority to their views on family order.

Sheila Wright has noted that many of the post-Restoration Quaker journals were consciously written to include domestic details and advice on how to deal with competing commitments to family, home and God.¹¹⁶ The leading American Friend Anthony Morris, for example, found reassurance during his travels through the colonies in 1715 that he and his wife were 'not the First that have been seperated on such ocations', and noted how reading George Fox's journal had 'prov'd of some service to me'. He went on to describe the 'Abundance off [*sic*] Hardship' Fox had endured in his service to the Truth, 'And how easy he seemed to part with his wife in that Service'.¹¹⁷ While male Friends tended to write their journals with a general audience in mind, many female ministers consciously addressed their journals to their children. 'Having had it upon my mind for a considerable time', the Lancashire Quaker Abiah Darby explained, she had felt a desire to 'leave to you my Dear Children, some Account of the gracious Dealings of the Lord towards me'.¹¹⁸ By using their

¹¹⁵ Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings 1600-1700', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (London, 1985), pp. 221-22.

¹¹⁶ Wright, "Truly Dear Hearts", p. 100.

¹¹⁷ HCQSC, MS Coll 1008 Morris-Sansom Collection, c.1715-1925, Box 6 M-Morris, E. P., Morris, Anthony folder, 1715, 1759 and 1859, Anthony Morris to Elizabeth Morris, Chester, PA. (from David Lloyd's), 13 October 1715.

¹¹⁸ Rachel Labouchere (ed.), *Abiah Darby 1716-1793 of Coalbrookdale, Wife of Abraham Darby II* (York, 1988), p. 1.

journals as a mechanism for instruction, these women were able to guide their children in the Quaker faith and way of life.

One highly distinctive feature of Quaker women's ministry was that it was often passed on or down to other family members. In her study of York Monthly Meeting in the later-eighteenth century, Wright notes the large numbers of active ministers whose mothers also undertook divine service.¹¹⁹ Evidence of women giving 'spiritual apprenticeships' to other family members is more commonly found in the eighteenth-century colonial context, where Quaker populations were higher and family association appeared to carry greater communal significance.¹²⁰ Whilst biographical details of some of these women's mothers are unknown, it is clear that family connections had an important role in conferring status on women as ministers. Susanna Morris, for instance, had three sisters who were approved Public Friends at Abingdon Meeting in Pennsylvania.¹²¹ The preacher Sarah Worrell from Chester County in Pennsylvania also had four siblings who were ministers.¹²² The relationship between family and public authority within the movement is a theme explored further in Chapter Two.

The evidence presented here demonstrates that family ties and obligations continued to inform and shape the emotional, material, and spiritual lives of even the most independent of female ministers. By consistently returning the focus of their published writings and correspondence to their

¹¹⁹ Sheila Wright, 'Quakerism and its Implications for Quaker Women: The Women Itinerant Ministers of York Meeting, 1780–1840', in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *Women in the Church* (Studies in Church History, 27, Oxford, 1990), p. 408.

¹²⁰ I have used Larson's list of transatlantic female Quaker preachers for the sample. See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, pp. 305–19, Appendix One. Of the female ministers listed who had at least one parent, grandparent or sibling active in the ministry, eleven (58 per cent) were raised in the Colonies, six (32 per cent) were from England and two (11 per cent) were from Ireland.

¹²¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 313.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 318–19.

domestic identities, these women were able to legitimate their careers as itinerant preachers through their family responsibilities. Notwithstanding the common feminist assertion that the domestic setting was marginal in these women's writings, we can see a striking synthesis between ecstatic and domestic modes of expression in many of their private and published texts. Their experiences both shaped and were shaped by their positions as wives and mothers. This supports Mack's contention that the most creative feature of early Quaker life was the synthesis of 'the fluid elements of an ecstatic movement with social identities that were stable and also surprisingly traditional'.¹²³ The belief that women's domestic obligations and influence in the household could provide them with the status and knowledge to fulfil religious engagements was one of the most innovative aspects of post-Restoration Quakerism. Far from marginalising women, the private space of the household could both confer status on them as public ministers and provide a supportive accompaniment to their preaching careers. Yet this also raises the issue of whether there were any ways in which public authority could be granted to women who didn't undertake itinerant service. This is the central issue in the final section of this chapter.

3. 'None fitter to do the husband's work than a wife': the public work of the Quaker housewife

In 1911 Rufus Jones confidently declared that 'itinerant ministers were without question the makers and builders of the Society of Friends.'¹²⁴ However, as the following section will argue, this view requires serious modification when

¹²³ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 239.

¹²⁴ Rufus Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (2 vols, London, 1921), i, p. 195.

attention is directed towards those women supporting the Society (over several generations) through their roles within the household. Preserved within the volumes of Quaker sufferings and testimonies are hundreds of records attesting to the perseverance and stoicism of Quaker women in the face of hardship and persecution. Freeman has argued that the supportive role of the Marian martyrs' female relations had a decisive influence on the development of English Protestantism. Yet, he notes, the role of these 'female sustainers' remains an 'important and hitherto neglected chapter on gender and religion in English life'.¹²⁵ Existing histories of the Quaker movement also fail to give sufficient credit to those who stayed at home, sustaining the movement while ensuring the continuity of ordinary domestic life.

The first part of this section attempts to remedy this historiographical omission, by showing how the movement would not have survived its earliest years without the efforts of non-itinerant female Friends. It also argues that second- and third-generation Quakerism would not have continued without women's contribution, as its survival came to depend upon the nurturing of the faith within the family. The second part of this section explores how this seemingly more conservative phase in the movement's history led to the realisation and enhancement of the non-itinerant mother's role within the spiritualised household.

The impact of suffering and itinerancy on the Quaker household

Quaker women's lives were dramatically altered by their husbands' religious beliefs. Many became indirect sufferers during the harshest years of

¹²⁵ Freeman, "The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women", p. 9.

persecution, between the passage of the Conventicle Act in 1662 and the Toleration Act in 1689. The 1691 minutes for Mountmellick Monthly Meeting in Dublin provide a striking example in the testimony written by William Edmundson following the death of his wife Margaret. William noted how Margaret had 'never reflected or opposed me as touching religion, nor in my testimony against tithes and priests forced maintenance, but joyned me in all such things'. He described, moreover, how Margaret had herself faced persecution and social ostracism as a result of her husband's commitment to Quakerism. One shocking example occurred when 'the cruell and bloody raperies besett our house and poured in shott on both sides in at the windows [...] setting the house on fire [...] and they tooke me and my two sons from her [...] and left her stripped into her shift'. He recalled moreover how, on petitioning for her family's release, the sixty-year-old Margaret was stripped 'stark naked, except shooes and she went neer two miles in the cold winter'. She was later reunited with her husband and sons, but shortly afterwards died as a result of this exposure and brutal treatment.¹²⁶ His narrative underlines women's steadfastness in their commitment to Quaker principles, and the support they provided the movement through their courage and resolution while separated from their husbands and facing harassment and violence.

The published testimonies on the challenges and hardships faced by the wives of persecuted Quakers came out of the tradition of Quaker suffering literature. Their trials were presented as 'crosses' that the faithful had to bear in Christ's name. One account told how Charles Lloyd's wife, Elizabeth, had come

¹²⁶ William Edmundson, 'Margaret Edmundson (c.1630-1691): Her Husband's Testimony', ed. Isobel Grubb, in *JFHS*, vol. 33 (1937), pp. 32-34.

to the prison where he was being held 'in her fine clothes, chuseing, at that time, rather to live there with her husband in filth and inconvenience, than to dwell in her own house of Dolobran with out him'.¹²⁷ Such displays of wifely solidarity, intended as 'testaments for truth', were crucial to the survival of the movement. Any woman who weakened and conformed in the face of hardship and persecution would undermine her husband's demonstration of faith, and so undermine the movement as a whole.¹²⁸ Jenett Bond, for example, proudly declared to Chipping Women's Monthly Meeting in 1675 that 'shee never paid Tythe nor never intends to doe, nor any thing to the Repaire of the Steeplehouse', because 'my Husband suffering for not paying Tythe, I have unity with, And never shall weaken his Testimony, but in my measure shall bee his helpe and strength in the Lord'.¹²⁹

The mutual support between Quaker spouses finds parallels in Freeman's work on the female relations of the Marian martyrs. These women, he notes, were 'sustainers' of the men in prison, providing 'physical, financial, moral, and emotional support' that enabled them to draw 'strength from each other'.¹³⁰ Similarly, many Friends would not have survived the waves of persecution without the efforts of their wives and female relations. Some wives suffered persecution themselves. In July 1666 Elizabeth Hughes of

¹²⁷ LRSF, Temp MSS 210 Lloyd MSS, section 1, fol. 20, pp. 9–10, Account of Charles Lloyd written by his daughter Elizabeth Pemberton, 1697.

¹²⁸ This was encapsulated in the written advice that the eighteenth-century Friend Samuel Bownas gave to male ministers. He explained that if they were facing imprisonment they should provide emotional encouragement and support to their wives, to avoid 'any *indirect* compliance with thy adversary [...] which will be a Hurt to thy ministry, and an evil example to thy Brethren'. Samuel Bownas, *A Description of the Qualifications Necessary to a Gospel Minister, Containing Advice to Ministers and Elders* (London, 1767), p. 98.

¹²⁹ Lancashire Archives (hereafter cited as LA), FRL/1/2/1/1 Lancaster Women's Quarterly Meeting Minutes 1675–1777, 'The Testimonies of the Women, Brought in, At a Generall Womens Meeting, at Widdow Haydockes', 23 September 1675.

¹³⁰ Freeman, "The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women", p. 9.

Montgomeryshire was imprisoned after attempting to bring her husband a clean shirt and some other provisions. Called upon to swear the Oath of Allegiance, she refused and was then imprisoned for over a year.¹³¹ In the same year, James Harrison asked his wife, Anne, to bring leather, patterns, and thread to Chester Castle, where he was being held a prisoner.¹³² The raw materials James requested would have enabled him to continue his shoemaking trade, crucial for his survival, for prisoners were forced to earn money to barter for food and drink.¹³³ Given the conditions of Stuart prisons, Thomas's ability to work for sustenance and basic necessities would have been essential to preserve his life and health.

The frequent absence of Quaker husbands and fathers placed on the female members of the household an important responsibility, required to labour for as well as purchase the provisions needed to support the household.¹³⁴ At the age of sixteen, Deborah Wynn was forced to take primary responsibility for the family business and home after her parents were imprisoned at York Castle in 1661. As their only child, 'the Management of their Trade and Business fell under her Care, and during their Imprisonment she travelled to *York*, twenty two Miles, on Foot, once in two Weeks to visit them,

¹³¹ Besse, *Quaker Sufferings*, i, p. 751.

¹³² 'I would have a [sole] hide and some offal leather, in the widebay you may put it, with as many [patterns] as can be spared for I have bought three pieces, for upper leathers if thou have it thou may bring me 30—or 40 shillings, [...] see I would have some thread.' HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 1, fol. 13b, James Harrison to Anne Harrison, Chester Castle, 21 July 1666.

¹³³ The Quaker Edward Coxere, for instance, explained that when he was imprisoned at Yarmouth in 1664, he was forced to pursue a range of enterprises, including spinning worsted and shoemaking, in order to barter for bread. Edward Coxere, *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere: A Relation of the Several Adventures by Sea with the Dangers, Difficulties and Hardships I Met for Several Years*, ed., E. H. W. Meyerstein (Oxford, 1945), pp. 103–06.

¹³⁴ Reinke-Williams has argued that one of the main traits for which housewives were praised in early modern London was their ability to provision their households with the victuals and commodities which ensured domestic comfort. Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability*, p. 54.

and to carry them what money she had got for their Support'.¹³⁵ The steadfastness of female Friends in such circumstances is a striking feature of Quaker memorials. John Gratton remarked how his imprisonment was 'made easie', for his wife Anne 'was enabled (through Mercy!) to keep Markets, and to carry on our Business for a Livelihood, she also came sometimes to see me in Prison, though it was Sixteen Miles, which was hard for her in the Winter Season.'¹³⁶

It is clear that the efforts and endurance of these women were essential to the survival of Quaker households. Naturally, managing the family home, budget or estate was not unique to Quaker women and were responsibilities that generally devolved to the female head of the household when her spouse was absent.¹³⁷ After the Restoration John Bunyan spent more than a decade in Bedford County Gaol, leaving his wife to care for his outward affairs, after he had refused to renounce his nonconformist beliefs. As with early Friends, the hardships that Bunyan's family suffered were presented as one of the trials he faced in bearing witness to the truth.¹³⁸

Whilst the phenomenon of women supporting their absent husbands was clearly not exclusive to Quakerism, the sheer scale of Quaker suffering multiplied and deepened women's involvement in the management of their households and businesses. Quakerism drew its members from all levels of society and, given the huge number of Friends forcibly removed from their

¹³⁵ John Bell, *Piety Promoted, in a Collection of Dying Sayings of Divers of the People Called Quakers* (London, 1740), pp. 5–6, 'Deborah Wynn'.

¹³⁶ John Gratton, *A Journal of the Life of that Ancient Servant of Christ, John Gratton: Giving an Account of His Exercises when Young, and how He Came to the Knowledge of the Truth* (London, 1720), pp. 118–19.

¹³⁷ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 310.

¹³⁸ Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006), p. 165.

households, adherence to Quakerism pushed a large number and wide demographic of women into this situation. Margaret Fawcett, for instance, explained in a testimony to Cumberland Monthly Meeting in 1680 that her husband had suffered as a prisoner for nine years and it 'was only for a Hen'.¹³⁹ Similar harsh treatment over seemingly inconsequential matters is evidenced by the sheer scale of Quaker suffering in the movement's early years. Barry Reay has calculated the total number of Quaker imprisonments at eleven thousand between 1660 and 1680.¹⁴⁰ The imprisonment of male heads of households for reasons such as refusal to pay tithes (as with Margaret Fawcett's husband) or attendance at conventicles was a great trial for many Quaker families. It could easily reduce wives and children 'to Poverty', as John Gratton feared would be the fate of his own family following a long imprisonment for refusing to pay tithes.¹⁴¹

The surviving correspondence between ministering husbands and their wives underscores the importance of these women as stable (and reliable) points of contact with the wider Quaker community. This was powerfully encapsulated in a letter from William Ellis to his wife in 1694, when he declared that 'truth is one, in wife and husband; and I know none fitter to do the husband's work than a wife'.¹⁴² James Harrison, for instance, entrusted his wife with his shoemaking business whilst he travelled across England and the colonies. A letter James sent from London in 1667 reveals Anne's key role in managing his affairs, with instructions about the collection and delivery of

¹³⁹ LRSF, MS Vol 150 Luke Howard Collection, fol. 16, 'A Cobby of the Letter to George Bowley About Margarett Fawcetts Husband's Suffering', Cumberland, 29 November 1680.

¹⁴⁰ Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 106.

¹⁴¹ Gratton, *A Journal of the Life of that Ancient Servant of Christ, John Gratton*, p. 40.

¹⁴² William Ellis to Alice Ellis, 'Daiford, in Ireland', 26 February 1695, in James Backhouse (ed.), *The Life and Correspondence of William and Alice Ellis, of Airton* (London, 1849), p. 12.

goods, debts owed, and messages to be delivered to his business associates. '[I]f John Hoult be at towne,' James wrote, 'tell him that his brother James have taken up ten shillings more, th[a]n the 15s paid by my order.'¹⁴³ We should not underestimate the crucial role of these non-itinerant wives in alleviating the burdens that their ministering husbands faced during separation from their business associates and local affairs. William Ellis frequently asked his wife, Alice, to communicate messages to particular members of the Settle community. In one letter of April 1698 he asked Alice to speak to Elizabeth Moore 'and tell her that I am much concerned for her son John, that he may get a wife as will really love and serve Truth'.¹⁴⁴ Such messages show that the non-itinerant wife was far from a passive figure in the marital relationship. Alice responded to her husband's request to 'have a full account how Friends manage their affairs' by providing him with regular updates on local affairs and the spiritual state of the Meetings.¹⁴⁵ The non-itinerant wife thus became the main point of contact between her husband and the wider Quaker community. It was crucial that these women left at home knew how to contact their itinerant husbands.¹⁴⁶ That in turn suggests a significant and largely unacknowledged level of agency, for such women needed to know how to make effective use of social networks and sometimes also of transport arrangements.

¹⁴³ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 1, fol. 66, James Harrison to Anne Harrison, London, 9 June 1677.

¹⁴⁴ William Ellis to Alice Ellis, Chuckatuck, VA., 19 April 1698, in Backhouse (ed.), *The Life and Correspondence of William and Alice Ellis*, p. 64.

¹⁴⁵ William Ellis to Alice Ellis, 'Daiford in Ireland', 26 February 1695, in *Ibid.*, p. 12. In another letter, Alice informed William that 'We have had two Quarterly Meetings of Public Friends, at Settle, since thou left us, which were very precious meetings, [...] I was at the Quarterly Meeting at York, and I can truly say, it was the most comfortable meeting that ever I was at there'. Alice Ellis to William Ellis, Airton, Yorkshire, 24 July 1698, in *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁴⁶ How Quaker women knew how to contact their men whilst they were travelling on ships is commented on by Whyman in *The Pen and the People*, p. 60.

The efficient supervision of temporal matters was of paramount importance to ministering male Friends, who could then leave behind their worldly concerns and devote themselves to their spiritual callings. This is encapsulated in a message that Anne Audland sent her husband in the 1650s. 'Take no care for us', she wrote, 'but in the worke of the Lord stand faithfull, for [...] I have pure unity with [thee].'¹⁴⁷ These words of loving encouragement must have been hugely significant for John Audland, who was able to leave behind his concerns for the family's welfare and devote himself entirely to the Quaker mission. The Philadelphian Quaker Ann Story frequently sent her husband Thomas information about his business associates and some of the decisions that she had made on his behalf, including the shipping of goods and the disbursement of money whilst he was travelling across the American colonies. In one letter, dated 1708, Ann wrote that 'I could acquaint thee with Severall things relating to our [own] affairs but am not willing to trouble thee with them.'¹⁴⁸ Ann Story appears to have had a remarkably independent role in managing her husband's affairs. It was a common practice for non-Quaker wives to report to their absent husbands on what they had done in the household economy. However, as Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have shown, they were not expected to solicit advice or make too many independent decisions without the consent of their spouses.¹⁴⁹ Because of the length and uncertainty of spiritual service, however, it would seem that many non-itinerant Quaker

¹⁴⁷ LRSF, MS BOX C4/1 Markey Manuscripts, fols 16–17, Anne Audland to John Audland, undated, c.1652–1664.

¹⁴⁸ LRSF, Temp MSS 388/2 Correspondence sent from Ann Story to Thomas Story 1709–, fol. 1, Philadelphia, 22 February 1709. I am grateful to Susan Whyman for this manuscript reference.

¹⁴⁹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 310.

women were able or obliged to take on a more independent role in managing their husbands' affairs.

'A conscionable performance of publick duties': the work of women within the post-Restoration Quaker family

Whilst the context of persecution clearly provided female Friends with opportunities to take on primary responsibility for the household, it is arguable that their domestic roles had still greater significance, for post-Restoration Quakerism's mission was gradually redirected towards maintaining the faith within the family. In 1677 the Dutch Friend Geertruyd Deriks Niesen reminded her female readers of their responsibilities as parents to raise up the next generation of ministers. She stressed that children were 'committed to us as a particular Charge and Ministry', and that the mother's parental duties should therefore be considered part of her spiritual service.¹⁵⁰ Raising children who would remain faithful to Friends' beliefs and practices was essential for the survival of the Society and is a theme developed in Chapter Two.

Quaker mothers, as we have seen, were given a primary role in the religious socialisation of their households. In 1686, Theophila Townsend entreated her female readers to watch over their children 'and be good patterns and Holy examples to them, and use all diligence to admonish, and counsel [them]'.¹⁵¹ This took on added significance in the religious climate following the 1689 Toleration Act, when Friends became more closely integrated into the life of wider society. Unlike some Calvinist Nonconformists, Friends were unequivocal in their belief that they should 'witness' the faith as part of their

¹⁵⁰ Geertruyd Deriks Niesen, *An Epistle to be Communicated to Friends, and to be Read in the Fear of the Lord in Their Men and Womens Meetings* (London, 1677), p. 4.

¹⁵¹ Theophila Townsend, *An Epistle of Love to Friends in the Womens Meetings in London, &c. To be Read among them in the Fear of God* (1686), p. 3.

everyday lives. This meant that they also had to find ways to integrate their spiritual and temporal concerns. As Levy has noted, concerns were frequently expressed by the leadership that Friends' active participation in local business affairs and social customs was making it hard to ensure 'the successful transference of "holy conversation" to the next generation'.¹⁵² It was therefore doubly important for mothers to keep careful watch over their children and families to guarantee they did not lose sight of the Lord. Mabel Barker, for instance, was memorialised for 'promoting good [domestic] Order' and ensuring that 'the Church might be kept clean from the Defilements of the World', and was praised for devoting her labours to the home rather than travelling abroad on ministerial service.¹⁵³

In emphasising a 'guarded' education for their children, Quakers identified women as the primary spiritual instructors of the household. George Fox's *A Primmer [sic] and Catechism for Children* advised that 'A Child left to himself bringeth his Mother to shame'.¹⁵⁴ His choice of expression suggests that this sort of Quaker educational material was written for the mother and that she was seen as primarily responsible for catechising and educating her children. This was reinforced by printed advice circulated by the London Yearly Meeting in 1731, which explained how 'mothers of children [...] as they have frequently the best opportunities' should take particular care to instruct their

¹⁵² Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 16.

¹⁵³ 'A Testimony from Thirsk Monthly-Meeting in Yorkshire, concerning Mabel Barker', in Society of Friends, *A Collection of Testimonies Concerning Several Ministers of the Gospel Amongst the People Called Quakers, Deceased* (London, 1760), pp. 253–56.

¹⁵⁴ George Fox, *A Primmer [sic] and Catechism for Children: Or a Plain and Easie Way for Children to Learn to Spell and Read Perfectly in a Little Time* (London, 1670), p. 92

children 'in the knowledge of religion and the holy scriptures'.¹⁵⁵ The Quaker mother's chief duty was the spiritual supervision of her children, a task facilitated by her presence within the household.

The Protestant Reformation had undoubtedly enhanced the position of women within the religious life of the household. It was within this space, Crawford argues, that mothers played an important role 'in socialising their children as Christians'.¹⁵⁶ Anglican reformers like Richard Allestree stressed the responsibility of the mother in the religious education of her children. 'All mankind is the Pupil and Disciple of Female Institution', he wrote, 'the time when the mind is most ductile, and prepar'd to receive impression, being wholly in the Care and Conduct of the Mother'.¹⁵⁷ However, it was only when the husband was 'absent, or negligent and careless' that she would also be expected to lead family prayers and supervise the wider religious education of the household and, even then, she was usually expected to get 'some other to performe them'.¹⁵⁸

Believing in the equality of women as teachers and instructors, Quakerism provided a highly unusual recognised space for its female members to take a primary rather than subordinate role in the religious instruction of their children. This expanded role is reflected in the circumstances in which John and Barbara Bevan of Traverigg, Glamorganshire, moved to settle in Pennsylvania. As John explained, they had emigrated after Barbara convinced him that 'it might be a good place to train up children amongst a sober people

¹⁵⁵ 'Advice to Parents and Guardians', in London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends Held in London, From its First Institution* (London, 1783), p. 180.

¹⁵⁶ Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts* (8th edn, Oxford, 1705), sig. b2r.

¹⁵⁸ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 260.

and to prevent the corruption of them here'. Whilst he was reluctant to leave his native land, he added, 'I was sensible her [Barbara's] aim was an upright one, on account of our children'.¹⁵⁹ Such a statement highlights the respect a pious Quaker wife could command when it came to matters relating to her children.¹⁶⁰ Unlike Puritan authors who emphasised the natural sinfulness of children, Quaker writers continued to emphasise their inherent perfectibility.¹⁶¹ This placed the mother in an important position, with primary responsibility for maintaining a godly atmosphere within the family. The memorial of the Pennsylvanian Friend Hannah Smith (daughter of James and Sarah Logan) emphasised that 'having had her self the benefit of an excellent Mothers Example, she tried to follow her, as well in her general conduct, as a more private endearment of Family Order and Harmony'.¹⁶² The passage underlined the centrality of the Quaker mother's role, both as a religious exemplar and through her ability to maintain a well-ordered household.

The epistles and memorials circulated between Quaker Meetings constantly asserted the importance of daily work as spiritual service. The figure of the hardworking-housewife became a celebrated subject in the memorials of eighteenth-century Quaker women. The testimony written by Lurgan Monthly

¹⁵⁹ This example is cited in Barry Levy, 'The Birth of the "Modern Family" in Early America: Quaker and Anglican Families in the Delaware Valley, Pennsylvania, 1681-1750', in Michael Zuckerman (ed.), *Friends and Neighbours: Group Life in America's First Plural Society* (Philadelphia, 1982), p. 36.

¹⁶⁰ J. William Frost notes how the Pennsylvania governor James Logan would have liked to have sent his daughters to be educated in England, but his wife, Sarah, had refused. J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends* (New York, 1973), p. 144.

¹⁶¹ See Nikki Coffey Tousley, 'Sin, Convincement, Purity, and Perfection', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, pp. 172-85.

¹⁶² HCQSC, MS Coll 1001 Haddon-Estaugh-Hopkins Papers, 1676-1841, fol. 156, Smith, Isaac folder, 'A Memorial Concerning My Beloved Wife Hannah Smith', by John Smith.

Meeting following the death of the Irish Quaker Mary Greer, for example, explained that she:

laboured much in her own Family in Gospel Love, that her Children and Servants might be preserved out of Pride and Idleness, and live in the Fear of the Lord; so that we fully believe she was faithful in discharging her Duty, according to the Gift bestowed on her.¹⁶³

As this passage demonstrates, motherhood had been elevated to a sacred level, where Greer's spiritual calling was fulfilled by meeting the needs of her children and family, not by public ministry. Quakerism, in this respect, appears to have been influenced by wider cultural developments. Indeed, Friends' idealisation of domestic work as a divinely appointed duty echoes the advice given by Puritan moralists, who often suggested that the duties of housewifery were as pleasing to God as preaching the gospel. William Gouge, for instance, explained that the public calling of a woman included 'a conscionable performance of household duties,' which he explained 'may be accounted a publike worke'.¹⁶⁴ Despite such affinities, however, it is significant that through the process of memorialisation, Quakers went considerably further, by elevating mothers whose ministerial gifts did not extend to travelling missionary work to an honoured position within the movement.

A similar pattern can be observed in the memorialisation of men Friends in post-Restoration texts, where commitment to their families was often highlighted as an exemplary trait in their characters. Of John Fothergill it was written that he was 'a Man of Skill and Industry in managing his temporal

¹⁶³ 'A Testimony from the Province-Meeting at Lurgan in Ireland, Concerning Mary Greer', in Society of Friends, *Collection of Testimonies*, p. 169.

¹⁶⁴ Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, p. 18.

Affairs for the Benefit of his Family, over which he had a true Paternal Care; so that it may well be said, he was a kind Husband, and tender Father'.¹⁶⁵ The hallmarks of a Quaker patriarch were thus his industry and strong attachment to family life. Thomas Clarkson observed that the Quaker denial of 'the pleasures of the world' had led Friends to cherish those pleasures found in domestic life:

They are long in each others society at a time, and they are more at home than almost any other people. For neither the same pleasures, nor the same occupations, separate these as others.¹⁶⁶

As already noted, in contrast to some other Nonconformist groups in the period, the family was viewed as a supportive institution for Quaker ministers, rather than distracting them from their spiritual calling. Quaker husbands away from home often expressed in their correspondence the heavy burden their absence had placed upon them. 'Parting from the[e] and our dear Children', Anthony Morris explained in a letter to his wife in 1715, 'was Like to Be to[o] hard for me'.¹⁶⁷ Likewise, Thomas Story explained to his future wife Ann, that 'there's nothing in this life that I have ever desired more than the enjoyment of thy dear company'.¹⁶⁸ In emphasising the domestic as well as spiritual responsibilities of both male and female Friends, it is clear that Quakerism valued those who showed deep attachment to their families and home life.

¹⁶⁵ 'A Testimony from Knaresborough Monthly-Meeting, Concerning John Fothergill', in Society of Friends, *Collection of Testimonies*, pp. 183–86.

¹⁶⁶ Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*, iii, p. 258.

¹⁶⁷ HCQSC, MS Coll 1008 Morris-Sansom Collection, c.1715–1925, Box 6 M–Morris, E. P., Morris, Anthony, 1715, 1759, and 1859 folder, Anthony Morris to Elizabeth Morris, Chester PA. (from David Lloyd's), 13 October 1715.

¹⁶⁸ LRSF, Temp MSS 388/1 Correspondence sent from Thomas Story to Ann Shippen 1702–, fol. 7, from Samuel Cheevers's at Herring Creek, 1 May 1705.

The role of Quaker wives and mothers may have had particular significance in the context of early frontier life, when travel would have been difficult and much of the vitality of the movement lay in the efforts of Friends within their families. Margaret Hope Bacon, for example, has argued that women played the primary role in the development of the Nantucket Quaker community because of its isolation and the frequent absence of husbands and fathers on whaling expeditions.¹⁶⁹ In Pennsylvania, too, many of the early female settlers were married to Quaker merchants who spent long periods away in England, the West Indies and other colonies. 'I am as a widdow before my time', wrote the Pennsylvanian Friend Phebe Pemberton in 1695, whose husband was frequently away on business. She told him reproachfully that 'I desire thee do not so intangle thy self for no gane, for I Had rather have thy Company th[a]n a grate deale of outward Riches, thou art more now in bondage to business th[a]n Ever'.¹⁷⁰ The experience of being alone in an unfamiliar land clearly added to her sense of isolation. Nevertheless, it also evidently increased her authority as the guardian of the family's spiritual life, as she admonished him not to entangle himself further in the worldly concerns that were distracting him from his spiritual calling. Quaker communities, as Levy notes, needed 'strong, meek, talented wives', able to guide backsliding husbands towards the Truth.¹⁷¹ Such accounts underline the important position of women as spiritual role models within the Quaker family.

¹⁶⁹ Margaret Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (San Francisco, 1986), pp. 45–46.

¹⁷⁰ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 2, fol. 107, Phebe Pemberton to Phineas Pemberton, Falls, Bucks County, PA., 24 April 1695.

¹⁷¹ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, pp. 220–21.

Scholars have frequently emphasised the impact of the internal reform movement on American Quakerism, which led to the disownment of thousands of Friends in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁷² Whilst the years immediately preceding the American Revolution are beyond the scope of this survey, it is clear that further research is needed on the gendered impact of the increased focus on group solidarity within the Quaker community. The Philadelphian Friend Ann Whitall, for example, frequently commented in her diary on the frustrations of being married to a man of much weaker religious commitment. In one entry in July 1760 she explained that one of her greatest troubles was her husband's failure to bring their children to Meetings, noting how she went 'with a heavy heart if my children don't go to meeting nor their father'.¹⁷³ In another entry, she noted how she was 'grieved this day because of this playing of ball and this fishing and our children with them'.¹⁷⁴ Despite her frustrations, however, Whitall was clearly the custodian of the family's religious life. As a pious instructor and religious role-model, she acquired an eminent position in her family and as a religious leader within the Quaker community, despite the worldliness of her husband. Such women took it upon themselves to revive the Quaker faith within their families, even as their husbands and children sometimes became ever more closely integrated with the non-Quaker world.

¹⁷² Jack D. Marietta in his survey of the Quakers in the Delaware Valley argues that Pennsylvania Friends disowned about half of their membership between 1750 and 1790 in order to preserve their religious discipline and household ideal. Jack D. Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783* (Philadelphia, 1984), cited in Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 16.

¹⁷³ Ann Whitall, 'The Journal of Ann Whitall (1760-62)', in Hannah Whitall Smith (ed.), *John M. Whitall: The Story of His Life* (Philadelphia, 1879), p.17, diary entry for 27 July 1760.

¹⁷⁴ Whitall, 'The Journal of Ann Whitall', p. 15, diary entry for 3 May 1760.

The language and symbolism of Quaker memorials demonstrates the extent to which the movement valued the labours of pious men and women within their homes and families. Whilst these testimonies can never accurately represent the fullness of these women's experiences, it is significant that no comparable body of literature exists for any other group of women during this period. The women's lives were presented as following a specific model of domesticity that was neither marginalised in Quaker history nor viewed as inferior to ministerial work. Their work within the home was understood as integral to the Society's development. As the autonomous guardians of the household, these spiritual housewives shaped the public character of the movement and ensured that its beliefs retained their force. Historians have often commented that the more conservative and 'quietist' phase of Quakerism in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries restricted the opportunities available to women. The evidence presented here, however, shows that as the movement came to rely more on transmission than conversion, Quaker women were the key agents in socialising their children and instilling the Quaker faith.

4. Conclusion

The Quaker movement, as Levy has recognised, was the first to view egalitarian domestic life as a part of its religion.¹⁷⁵ It is clear from the evidence presented here, that there was an unusual congruence between the spheres of religion and everyday life for early Friends. This chapter has explored the identities of female Friends as wives and mothers, and the extent to which both ministering

¹⁷⁵ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*.

and non-ministering women's domestic lives were shaped by their commitment to the movement.

Whilst women's roles within the household found many parallels within wider society, especially in the Puritan tradition, Quaker culture encouraged a re-envisioning of domestic relationships in a number of important ways. This can be seen through the emphasis Friends placed on the equality of women within the marriage partnership, whether as instructors of their children, religious teachers, or missionaries. One element of Friends' lives that was especially distinctive was their belief that spiritual labour authorised ministers to cede domestic responsibilities to their spouses. This meant that a recognised place was provided for women beyond their function within the family. However, unlike a Catholic nun or a Baptist or Methodist Mother in Israel, a Quaker woman who dedicated herself to divine service did not have to renounce marriage or motherhood. Celibacy was not a prerequisite for an active ministerial career, and familial duties were viewed as equally important to their ministerial vocations.

These women's careers clearly helped them to attain a position of authority within the marital relationship. Unlike their non-Quaker contemporaries, who were responsible for the religious instruction of the family only in their husbands' absence, a Quaker Mother in Israel would often take primary responsibility for the spiritual life of the household. The evidence of status accruing to ministers through their careful management of their domestic relationships underlines the reciprocal relationship between women's public and private work. Their extant spiritual autobiographies and correspondence highlight the ways in which women's household work defined

their ministerial experiences and also, conversely, how their status as ministers enhanced, rather than undermined, their position within the family.

Even those women who did not undertake 'gospel service' could achieve a recognised position as spiritual leaders. As section three demonstrated, there is a strong case for exploring the role of non-ministering female Friends whose lives were disturbed by persecution and interrupted by their husbands' religious commitments. For Quaker housewives, accepting their husbands' missionary service was an important aspect of a marital relationship in which both parties perceived domestic responsibilities as part of their joint spiritual mission. The remarkable accounts of these women give us a sense of the key role that they played, vital for the survival of the early Quaker movement. Not only did they give their husbands practical and material support, they also provided a crucial point through which their spouses could maintain contact with both the household and local community. Domesticity was at the heart of the Quaker faith and, as we have seen, women were able to play multiple roles throughout their lifetimes.¹⁷⁶ To ignore these women who did not die or leave a written account of their experiences is to overlook the majority of female Friends whose lives were deeply affected by their adherence to the faith and whose physical, financial, moral, and emotional support unequivocally contributed towards the survival of movement.

In a maturing Society, with a leadership that emphasised the centrality of families to Quaker morality, women enjoyed a significant position, as mothers of a future generation of believers. In the post-Restoration years, particularly

¹⁷⁶ This is a theme that Laurel Ulrich Thatcher explores in depth in her study of Colonial Women in *Good Wives*.

within the American colonies, emphasis was increasingly placed upon the correct rearing of Quaker children to ensure its survival. As motherhood became a sacred, specialised calling, some non-itinerant women were able to achieve high status within the transatlantic community. The huge number of diaries, dying words, and memorials of these women, whose lives were distinguished primarily by service to their families, attests to the determination of early Friends to memorialise exemplary wives and mothers who had sustained the movement through labour within the household and not in wider public service.

The Quaker 'home-maker' as much as the traveller had a crucial role in ensuring the continuity of domestic piety and the survival of the movement for future generations. This continuity cannot be gleaned solely from the journals and spiritual autobiographies of Quaker women, on which so many accounts of their position have relied. It must also be sought in the correspondence and communication networks which developed within and between families across the Atlantic world of Quakerism. The next chapter expands further on the status of the non-itinerant woman within the wider Quaker community, assessing the roles available to her within the separate Women's Meetings. As we shall see, this was another aspect of female Friends' lives that was determined by their domestic identities. Their stable position within the local Quaker community and their authority as religious instructors, nurturers, and teachers within the household enabled many such 'ordinary' women to acquire a recognised public status within the 'household of faith'.

Chapter Two

'A Government of Women': Authority and Community within the Quaker Women's Meetings

'[H]is blessed presence is with us in our Womens Meetings; and wee doe find a goeing on and prospering in that worke which the lord hath called many to.'

LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671-1753, fol. 30, 30 April 1676.

The polemicist and ex-Quaker William Mather reacted with horror at the discovery of 'a Government of Women, Distinct from Men, Erected amongst some of the People call'd Quakers'.¹ Mather was referring to the establishment of separate Women's Meetings, a federation of which had materialised across the English counties from 1671, and came to dominate debates both within and outside the Society about the correct place for women within the developing sect. Describing them as '*Unscriptural Government*', he unscrupulously reproached the stubbornness of 'such *Women* as has a secret Command of their Husbands Purses'.²

Written in 1694, Mather's argument acknowledged the outpouring of opposition to the rise of the Meeting system, catalysed by the formal recognition of separate Women's Meetings for business. Central to this debate was the Wilkinson-Story schism of the 1670s, which not only questioned the role of Women's Meetings outside of large cities like London and Bristol, but also highlighted the emerging problem that Friends were forced to confront: how could the inner promptings of the Spirit be balanced with the corporate

¹ William Mather, *A Novelty: Or, a Government of Women, Distinct from Men, Erected Amongst Some of the People Call'd Quakers* (London, 1694).

² Mather, *A Novelty: Or, a Government of Women*, p. 1.

identity of the sect?³ Certainly, the development of a more routinized approach to discipline and organisation, as embodied in the Meeting system, marks the transition from sect to church observed by sociologists like Max Weber and Ernest Troeltsch.⁴ But its new gendered and authoritarian structures seemed to separatists like Mather, Story, and Wilkinson to be regressing into the hierarchical trappings of the religion they had rejected.

In permitting women some authority in matters of governance, Quakers largely disregarded conventional gender roles. It could be argued that through authorising a formal and collective space for women to meet together and advise their male brethren, the Quaker Meetings for business were unique within Protestantism. These Meetings offered those female members who didn't preach outlets for participation and opportunities for service. They also provided a crucial and largely overlooked alternative model of female sociability, intimately linked to the alliances which will be explored in Chapter Three.

It is the tasks, individuals, and changing roles of women within this system that will be the focus of this chapter. It will be divided into three main sections, beginning with a brief discussion of the history of the Women's

³ On the Wilkinson-Story schism and the rise of the Separatists see: William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (2nd edn, rev. H. J. Cadbury, Cambridge, 1961); *idem*, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (2nd edn, rev. H. J. Cadbury, Cambridge, 1961). On John Wilkinson, John Story and the establishment of the Women's Meetings see also Bonnelyn Young Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism* (London, 1994), pp. 147–58 and Su Fang Ng, 'Marriage Discipline: The Place of Women in Early Quaker Controversies', *Seventeenth Century*, vol.18, no. 1 (2003), pp. 116–17.

⁴ Max Weber uses the concepts 'church' and 'sect' in a number of his works, including *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* and *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Ernest Troeltsch outlined his sect-church theory in *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, vol. 1 (New York, 1931). For a detailed study of the church-sect theory of Weber and Troeltsch see William H. Swatos Jr., 'Weber or Troeltsch?: Methodology, Syndrome, and the Development of Church-Sect Theory', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1976), pp. 129–44.

Meetings and different historiographical approaches to the subject. Scholars have long debated the impact that the rise of separate Meetings had on female Friends' public identities. Little is known, however, about the day-to-day activities and tasks of the Women's Meetings and their influence on the development of the Quaker faith at a local level. Sections two and three will redress this historiographical omission through a detailed assessment of the minutes of two Women's Monthly Meetings in the North-Western Counties of England—Marsden, in Lancashire, and Kendal, in Westmorland—and two in the colonies—Chester, in Pennsylvania, and Burlington in West Jersey.⁵ Each of the Meetings under discussion was selected because of the survival of a complete set of Men's and Women's Monthly Meeting minutes for the period 1700–1750, as well as for their relative neglect in the scholarship. (See Appendix One for a discussion of the sources and methodology.) Section two will discuss the scope and authority of women's duties and responsibilities through detailed examination of their minutes for two sample periods: 1700–1705 and 1745–1750. Section three will then explore the roles played by specific individuals who served as officers, overseers, and members of committees.

Acknowledging the integral role of these female-dominated gatherings, this chapter breaks new ground in Quaker women's history by showing how the existence of a Women's Monthly Meeting within a particular community shaped the lives of both its members and its female overseers. In so doing, it highlights another layer of non-ministering female Friends' experiences and the ways in which they were able to contribute to the evolving Society. Despite the female

⁵ I am grateful to Richard Allen for his useful suggestions concerning the Quaker Meetings in the colonies.

elders' sometimes differing concerns, it will argue that the unifying experience of meeting together gave Women's Meetings across the Atlantic a shared world outlook and generated remarkably similar programmes of church-oversight.

Much of this cohesion sprang from the development of a pyramidal organisational structure of Preparative, Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings, that was successfully transplanted to the American colonies by ministering Friends and settlers throughout the 1680s. Individual local Meetings (Preparative Meetings) belonged to larger Monthly Meetings, which oversaw most of the issues relating to membership and discipline. Whilst the responsibilities of the Monthly Meetings were highly varied and depended on local circumstances, they tended to involve issues relating to marriage, discipline, poor relief, estate-management, membership requests, recording births and deaths, and granting certificates for individuals wishing to relocate. The Monthly Meetings within each county sent delegates to the regional Quarterly Meetings, to which more complicated problems were referred, especially those relating to discipline. The Quarterly Meetings also approved ministers' requests to travel abroad, sent out enquiries and offered general guidance to Monthly Meetings about the behaviour of their members. At the top of the structure was the Yearly Meeting, which was the chief source of authority in matters of faith and practice among Friends. Its widely-circulated annual epistles also set the tone for much of the Society's culture.

At every level, these gatherings comprised separate Men's and Women's Meetings, with the roles assigned to male elders paralleled in the structure of the Women's Meetings. Among the officers were overseers, who in same-sex pairs supervised entire districts and cared for the property of the Meeting.

Overseers shared their functions with the Meetings' elders—men and women responsible for the spiritual well-being of the community through careful supervision of its members. Each Meeting also appointed individuals to the important roles of clerk and treasurer. The treasurer was responsible for the collection, care, and distribution of the Meeting's stock, whilst the clerk would record the decisions made during the Meeting, draft epistles to fellow-Meetings, and prepare lists of business agenda. The only exception was the London Yearly Meeting, which did not officially establish a separate Meeting for its female members until 1784. This is an issue which will be considered later in the chapter when comparing the experiences of British and American female Friends. Quaker Meetings reserved the title 'Elder' for those appointed to attend the select Meetings for Ministers and Elders, which also had monthly, quarterly, and yearly components. However, the term will be used here to refer to any Meeting official who provided spiritual and moral guidance to the rest of the congregation.

Unlike any other religious denomination of the period, early Friends expected their female-led Meetings to keep a permanent record of their proceedings. This means that where historians of other sectarian movements have been forced to rely upon institutional records kept by and about men, the information contained within the Quaker Women's minutes provides us with a unique insight into women's roles within the institutional life of a religious community, as recorded by women.⁶ Whilst the content of these minutes was

⁶ The absence of female-authored church records within the Baptist church is something which Karen A. Smith acknowledged when she called for historians to be more inclusive of women's voices in order to tell the full story of early Baptist life. Karen A. Smith, 'Beyond Public and Private Spheres: Another Look at Women in Baptist History and Historiography', *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2 (1998), pp. 79–85.

never uniform, and there are gaps and omissions, they nevertheless enable us to glimpse the shared concerns and experiences of the movement's female leaders. A comparative case study approach reveals how these Meetings bound female Friends into closely-knit communities, whilst also showing us how these individual communities operated within the wider international denominational framework.

'Meeting', as Thomas D. Hamm has recognised, signifies for Quakers the 'gathering of a body of believers for worship together'.⁷ Each of the assemblies mentioned here would have been preceded by a mixed Meeting for Worship. The male and female members of the congregation would then withdraw to separate parts of the Meeting House to oversee their business. Since most Quaker business was conducted within the setting of the Monthly Meeting, this will form the main focus of the survey. Its strong disciplinary focus and proximity to the local Quaker community meant that its leaders were closely involved in the lives of their members and ideally placed to supervise their behaviour, an influence which neither the more distant Quarterly nor Yearly Meetings could match. Unless otherwise stated, 'Meeting' in the context of this chapter will therefore refer to that of the 'Monthly Meeting for business'.

1. 'Distinct [...] yet in perfect unity': the evolution of Quaker Women's Meetings

Since Friends had no professionally trained full-time ministers, the responsibility for all tasks fell upon lay members. This offered great potential for extensive female participation in church oversight and governance. Whilst a few other dissenting movements permitted some women a degree of authority

⁷ Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York, 2003), p. 10.

within church governance, Quakerism introduced a concept of gender equality into both the ministry and the conduct of church business that took a new approach to appropriate gender roles. The theoretical underpinnings of the Women's Meetings for business, as well as their treatment in the historiography of the movement, will be the focus of this section.

Informal Women's Meetings had existed in London from the late 1650s as a means of relieving Friends in the face of overwhelming suffering and hardship. One of these independent groups of women became known as the 'Box Meeting' (named after the 'Box' into which Friends anonymously placed their donations). They inquired into the needs of widows, orphans, and the sick and were especially concerned for those families left destitute by persecution.⁸ Inspired by the efforts of these women, it was whilst undertaking ministerial work in the American colonies in 1671 that the Quaker leader George Fox proposed the creation of a nation-wide system of separate Meetings for female Friends that recognised their special duties and roles as overseers of female members. As he noted, 'there is many things that is proper for women to look into both in their families, and concerning of women which is not so proper for the men, which modesty in women cannot so well speak of before men as they can do among their sex [...] And many women are of more capacity than others are, and so they must instruct and inform the rest.'⁹

⁸ For more information about the first Women's Meetings and the London Women's Box Meeting see: Irene L. Edwards, 'The Women Friends of London: the Two-Weeks and Box Meetings', *JFHS*, vol. 47, no. 1 (1955), pp. 3-21; and Michele Denise Ryan, "In my hand for lending": Quaker Women's Meetings in London, 1659-1700', University of California, Santa Cruz, PhD thesis (2003). I am grateful to Simon Dixon for this reference.

⁹ George Fox, 'Friends Fellowship Must be in the Spirit; and all Friends Must Know One Another in the Spirit and Power of God', undated, 'Book of Epistles of George Fox, 1666-1682', cited in Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 286.

There are numerous reasons for Fox's decision to establish these segregated Meetings. This can partially be attributed to a broader desire for order in the post-Restoration climate, where Quaker leaders aspired to a more 'respectable' movement, which distinguished the work of female elders from that of their brethren.¹⁰ Yet it is no coincidence that at the time that Fox proposed this nation-wide system of female governance, women's efforts in relieving poor and suffering Friends were at their most visible, owing to the impact of persecution. The first Meeting to be established outside of London was at Swarthmoor, the home of Fox's wife and early leader, Margaret Fell, who had been instrumental in establishing a system of relief for Quaker prisoners and families in financial distress through the Kendal Fund.¹¹ Bonnelyn Young Kunze has even suggested that Fell's role in the Quaker administrative structure was of 'equal importance' to that of her itinerant husband.¹² Her unusual influence over early Quaker culture is widely known. However, her impact on the transatlantic Meeting system is a subject that continues to demand attention.

In establishing separate business Meetings, Fox expected Women's Meetings to coordinate with the Men's in supervising the welfare and behaviour of their female members. Crucially, they were expected to become active in their own right, departing from the exegesis that God created woman to be a helpmeet to man (Genesis 2:18, 20). They were to have their own dominion,

¹⁰ This is a view that Mack suggests was the chief factor in their establishment: Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 283–93.

¹¹ For more about the Kendal Fund see: Bonnelyn Young Kunze, "Poore and in Necessity": Margaret Fell and Quaker Female Philanthropy in Northwest England in the Late Seventeenth Century', *Albion*, vol. 21, no. 4 (1989), pp. 559–80.

¹² Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism*, p. 167.

'distinct (as we may say in some respects,) yet in perfect unity with our brethren.'¹³

As noted in the Introduction, the rise of the Quaker Meetings for discipline and the institution of positions of eldership have traditionally been viewed as negative developments for the movement. Many feminist and gender historians, for instance, have viewed the suppression of the independent actions of the first radical converts and the segregation of men and women within their Meetings as detrimental to female advancement within the Society.¹⁴ This interpretation echoes wider scholarly trends in Gender History, especially those considering the impact of the Reformation on women's religious lives. This was especially true of Reformation histories published in the late 1980s, where it was argued that far from empowering women, the cultural changes in Reformation Europe constrained their opportunities for independent action. Reference has been made, for example, to both the closure of the convents in Protestant Europe and the enforced enclosure (*clausura*) of the convents in Catholic Europe.¹⁵ Whilst there has been some modification to this view in recent years, the changes brought about by the Reformation have been viewed

¹³ 'An Epistle from the Women Friends in London to the Women Friends in the Country, also elsewhere, about the service of a Women's Meeting, 4 January 1674', in A. R. Barclay (ed.), *Letters, &c., of Early Friends; Illustrative of the History of the Society, from Nearly its Origin, to about the Period of George Fox's Decease; with Documents Respecting its Early Discipline, also Epistles of Counsel and Exhortation, &c.* (London, 1841), pp. 343–44.

¹⁴ Patricia Crawford declared that the rise of 'a hierarchy of male leaders', combined with the repression of the more prophetic elements of ministry, made women's role less prominent and female Friends less visible. Christine Trevett, like many historians of seventeenth-century Quaker women, also lamented the fact that the Meeting system channelled female activity into more stereotypically feminine areas. This led her to conclude that the most remarkable feature of the Women's Meetings was 'the lack of power associated with them'. Crawford, *Women and Religion*, pp. 162, 193–97; Christine Trevett, *Women and Quakerism in the 17th Century* (York, 1991), p. 81.

¹⁵ See especially: Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford, 1989); and Merry Wiesner, 'Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany', in Sherrin Marshall (ed.), *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds* (Bloomington, IN., 1989), pp. 8–28.

as limiting women's positions within early modern society by confining them to an isolated sphere controlled by men and offering them no space for group action.¹⁶

The denigrators of the Women's Meetings often fail to acknowledge that no comparable religious movement provided women with the opportunity for such a formal role within its organisational framework. Great power and authority lay with those women given committee assignments and tasked with specific acts of spiritual and moral supervision.¹⁷ In contrast to the Catholic cloister, Quakerism gave women much more autonomy in overseeing the affairs of the Society outside of the walls of the Meeting House. Even those Protestant sects noted for the role they granted to women, as initiators and organisers, never went as far as the Quakers to provide a formal role for their female members within the structure of the church. Whilst the Baptists permitted women some authority in religious oversight, for example, through granting women in some congregations the right to vote and in caring for the poor and sick, these offices were highly circumscribed and limited to a select minority,

¹⁶ Recent studies reveal how both Protestant and Catholic women were able to continue to exert agency within these restricted spaces through their service to the Church. Claire Walker has shown in her study of English convent life in France and the Low Countries that the nuns were not simply passive objects of unwelcome reform and were given plenty of opportunities to negotiate their terms. Emily Clark has also argued that many of these religious women, including the reformer Teresa of Avila, viewed *clausura* as liberation from secular distractions, rather than a mechanism for patriarchal control. Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 49; Emily Clark, 'When Is a Cloister Not a Cloister? Comparing Women and Religion in the Colonies of France and Spain', in Emily Clark and Mary Laven (eds.), *Women and Religion in the Atlantic Age, 1550-1900* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 69-72.

¹⁷ Scholars like Mary Maples Dunn have pointed out that the Quaker business Meetings for women gave them what they needed most: a place of their own. Mary Maples Dunn, 'Latest Light on Women of Light', in Elisabeth Potts Brown and Susan Mosher Stuard (eds.), *Witness for Change: Quaker Women over Three Centuries* (London, 1989), p. 82. I am grateful to Jordan Landes for this reference.

who traditionally had to be sixty years of age and widowed or single.¹⁸ Thus, whilst Baptists offered women authority in the movement, they continued to uphold conventional views of women and church governance; their secular roles as wives and mothers restricted their exercise of power in the movement.

Whilst recent studies have underscored the important link between female piety and church oversight, the roles available to women were generally through informal, rather than official channels. As Janet Moore Lindman has shown in the context of eighteenth-century Virginia and Pennsylvania, despite the fact that Baptist women outnumbered men, they were barred from official conferences where male leaders debated issues and decided policy.¹⁹ A similar pattern is found in Wesleyan Methodism. By virtue of the fact that they could not become ministers or itinerant preachers, women were excluded from the roles of 'Helpers' or 'Assistants', who devoted their full time and energy to the supervision of the society and the continued spread of the faith. Even the Methodist class Meetings—a form of 'family gathering' at the lowest level of church governance—were led by a male community leader.²⁰ Thus it was only through their role as visitors of the sick that Methodist women were given any authority in spiritual matters. Quakerism was therefore unique in providing leadership roles for women from a range of backgrounds at all levels of the Society's hierarchy.

¹⁸ As Crawford noted, the role of the Baptist deaconess was based on 1 Timothy 5:9 and 11, where only widowed women could occupy the office. She was not be 'under threescore years old' and was not permitted to remarry. Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p. 201.

¹⁹ Janet Moore Lindman, *Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2008), p. 117.

²⁰ For more about the roles available to women within the organisational structure of Wesleyan Methodism, see Paul Wesley Chilcote, *John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism* (London, 1991), pp. 67–91; and Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 127–70.

As argued in Chapter One, in contrast to Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic models of church organisation, Friends accepted that women could combine the exercise of religious and domestic responsibilities. Quaker authors even defended the Meeting system as providing a highly appropriate outlet for women's separate sphere of knowledge, which derived from their positions within the household.²¹ The biblical appellation 'Mother in Israel', for example, was often reserved for those women who attained a position of stature within their local Meetings. 'Elder women in the *Truth*', George Fox wrote in 1672, 'were not only called *Elders*, but *Mothers* [...] and a *Mother in Israel*, is one that gives Suck, and Nourishes, and Feeds, and Washes and Rules, and is a Teacher in the *Church* [...] an Instructor [*sic*], an Exhorter'.²² The Mother in Israel thus denoted women who displayed a particular gift for kindling the spiritual welfare of others within their Meetings. The testimony left by Wigton Quarterly Meeting after the death of the 'nursing *Mother in Israel*', Bridget Story, encapsulates the important role of the female elder. Story was not only 'a Pattern of Humility, Self-denial, Plainness and Circumspection, in her own Family', but also 'zealous for promoting and maintaining good Order in the Church; and in particular, concerned for the inward Growth and Preservation of the rising Generation'.²³ One of the most frequently celebrated traits of a Mother

²¹ William Loddington, an early supporter of separate Women's Meetings, wrote in one tract that: 'Women Friends meeting by themselves, may without the least suspicion of usurping Authority over the Men, confer and reason together, how to serve Truth in their places, in such things as are most proper and suitable for them.' William Loddington, *The Good Order of Truth Justified; Wherein Our Womens Meetings and Order of Marriage (by Some Especially Opposed) are Proved Agreeable to Scripture and Sound Reason* (London, 1685), p. 5.

²² George Fox, *A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles, Letters and Testimonies* (2 vols, London, 1698), ii, p. 324, Postscript of 'To all the Womens Meetings, that are Believers in the Truth', 1672.

²³ 'A Testimony from the Quarterly-Meeting of Wigton, Concerning Bridget Story', in Society of Friends, *A Collection of Testimonies Concerning Several Ministers of the Gospel Amongst the People Called Quakers, Deceased* (London, 1760), pp. 78-79.

in Israel's character was her diligence in attending Meetings and overseeing the spiritual growth of the younger members of her community.²⁴ Whilst not all Mothers in Israel were biological mothers, it is significant that the movement gave an accepted cultural space to those traits associated with motherhood—caring, nurturing, and teaching. Eighteenth-century Baptists and Methodists also promoted women of a certain spiritual stature within the community to the role of Mother in Israel. However, as Anna M. Lawrence has noted, they did not envision them as 'domestic figures'. In contrast to the Quakers, these were women noted for the 'passion of their piety and the ardency of their faith' and not for their ongoing roles within the household.²⁵ Even the Anglican reformer Mary Astell never entertained the possibility of married women joining her proposed female seminary, which was a kind of secular convent, where women could enjoy both the leisure and seclusion necessary for their religious and intellectual development.²⁶

One of the most persuasive insights in the history of early Quakerism has therefore come from the recognition that the Quaker Women's Meetings provided an important space for the public world of the ministry and the private space of the household to converge. Barry Levy has argued that by virtue of their place within the family, eighteenth-century female Friends were

²⁴ Deborah Wardell was memorialised in 1732 as 'an approved Mother in our spiritual Israel, for her Care, Conduct and Advice' and for being 'of good Service' in 'Meetings of Business'. 'Lancelot Wardell's Testimony Concerning his Dear Deceased Wife, Deborah Wardell, who Died the 7th of the Tenth Month 1732', in Society of Friends, *Collection of Testimonies*, p. 65.

²⁵ Anna M. Lawrence, *One Family under God: Love, Belonging, and Authority in Early Transatlantic Methodism* (Philadelphia, 2011), p. 85.

²⁶ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (4th edn, 2 parts, London, 1697). On Astell's vision see especially: Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, 2010); Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2009); and Ruth Perry, 'Mary Astell and Enlightenment', in Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (eds.), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 357–70.

already placed in positions of communal authority.²⁷ This recognition of the congruity between women's public and private identities has provided a significant revision to the view that the separate Meetings suppressed women's opportunities for active participation. In this sense, the home was the sphere within which women were to exercise equal ministry, and by extension, this was the area they were held particularly responsible for in their Meetings. After all, the first Meetings had been held within members' homes.²⁸ The survival of the faith, as historians have come to recognise, depended upon women's active involvement in nurturing Quaker values within their families and local Meetings. As Mary Maples Dunn has argued, they 'combined a woman's space with a woman's sphere', by permitting a transfer of ideas from the domestic setting to the Meeting House.²⁹

The work of women within their Meetings is now generally accepted as being integral to the development of early Quakerism. This is particularly true of the historiography which deals with the eighteenth-century colonial setting of the movement, where less dramatic shifts in women's status are evident. Rebecca Larson, for instance, acknowledges that the establishment of separate Women's Meetings for business, as a counterpart to the Men's, offered an 'unprecedented inclusion of females in church government'.³⁰ Margaret Hope Bacon has even described the American Women's Meetings for business as

²⁷ Levy argues that this evolution of women's functions within the Meeting system was particular to Quakerism, because the early Quaker settlers were the first to combine domesticity with religious belief. Indeed, according to Levy, Fox's main reason for establishing the Meeting system was to 'ensure household discipline'. Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, pp. 25, 78–79.

²⁸ The women of Chester Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania continued to hold their Meetings in members' homes until the beginning of 1704.

²⁹ Dunn, 'Latest Light on Women of Light', p. 82.

³⁰ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 31.

'training grounds' for female leadership in the Women's Rights Movement.³¹ Bacon's feminist stance may lead us to question how far the ideal of spiritual equality could be converted into political activism. It is nonetheless notable that the Meeting system equipped Quaker women with skills in record-keeping, in presiding at Meetings, and in keeping financial accounts. Although similar roles would have been pursued by women in their everyday lives, it is significant that these opportunities were available to female Friends within the religious sphere. It also provided a unique space in which women could act independently in their own affairs and drive forward church policy.

Some historians have provided helpful insights into the role of female Friends within specific Meetings, among them Jean R. Soderlund, Sheila Wright, Gareth Shaw, Michele Denise Ryan, and Susan Forbes.³² Reference will be made to these studies where appropriate, but noticeably absent from these discussions is any detailed investigation of the opportunities available to women to gain status within their communities and the women's relationships with their male counterparts. Moreover, no study to date has explored the differences, and indeed, the continuities that existed between the Women's Meetings in England and those in the American colonies. This omission is

³¹ Margaret Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (San Francisco, 1986), p. 45.

³² Jean R. Soderlund explores four Women's Monthly Meetings in New Jersey and Pennsylvania: Shrewsbury, Chesterfield, Philadelphia, and Chester in, 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings, 1680-1760', *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 4 (1987), pp. 722-49; Susan Forbes has researched the Friends of New Garden Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania, in 'Quaker Tribalism', in Michael Zuckerman (ed.), *Friends and Neighbours: Group Life in America's First Plural Society* (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 145-73; Michele Denise Ryan discusses the Quaker Women's Meetings in London in, "In my hand for lending"; Gareth Shaw has focused on the Meetings of seventeenth-century Ostwick, in Yorkshire in, 'The Inferior Parts of the Body: the Development and Role of Women's Meetings in the Early Quaker Movement', *Quaker Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2005), pp. 191-203; and Sheila Wright has researched the nineteenth-century Quaker community in York in, 'Quakerism and its Implications for Quaker Women: The Women Itinerant Ministers of York Meeting, 1780-1840', in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *Women in the Church* (Studies in Church History, 27, Oxford, 1990), pp. 403-14.

significant, especially since much of the cohesion of the Society depended upon the successful transplantation of the Meeting structure into these new social, economic, and cultural contexts. Lawrence, for instance, found that eighteenth-century American Methodism was not simply a duplicate of the English system on American soil: 'it matured within a culture of exchange'.³³ It is therefore important to ask whether a similar divergence existed in the colonial Quaker context. It is also important to determine the effect that Quaker emigration had on the vitality of the British Quaker Meetings, whose populations are acknowledged to have shrunk dramatically over this period. It was reported, for example, that in some rural areas, the 'unsavoury precedings and runneings into Pensilvania' was 'a Cause of great weakening If not total decayeing of some meetings'. For these Friends, as Richard Allen argues, 'there was a general feeling that they were the "remnant" of once-vibrant Quaker communities'.³⁴

The following discussion provides an original contribution to the history of Quaker women by directing the focus towards the day-to-day functions of their Meetings on both sides of the Atlantic. It will also draw attention to the women involved in this 'government of women', and how they interacted with their partner Men's Meetings. Whilst the authority women held in their Meetings was far from total, I believe that how their work translated into their daily experiences holds the key to better understanding the place of these ordinary women within their Quaker communities. The remainder of this chapter will explore this opportunity for collective female action across the Atlantic world of Quakerism.

³³ Lawrence, *One Family under God*, p. 18.

³⁴ Quoted in Richard C. Allen, 'Restoration Quakerism, 1660–1691', in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies* (Oxford, 2013), p. 40.

2. '[W]orkers together with them in the same faith': the tasks of the Women's Meetings

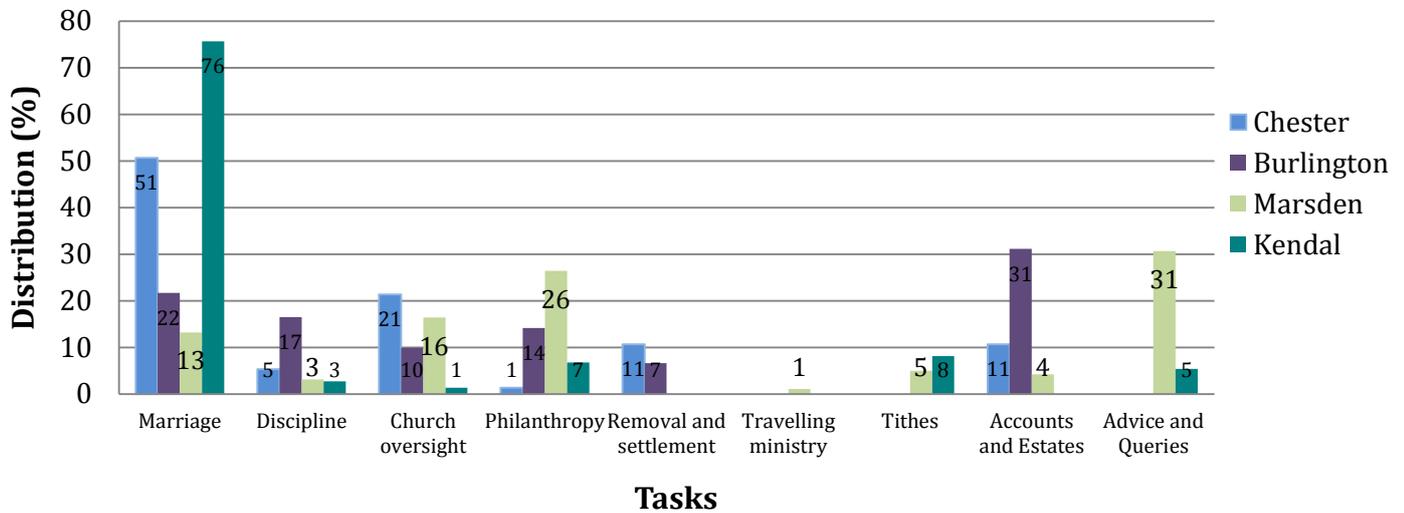
From their inception, Women's Meetings were viewed as fundamental to Quaker discipline. '[S]uch will be vesells fitt for the masters use; to perform the servis of his house', one epistle of 1676 declared.³⁵ Women's responsibilities within the Meetings were never officially codified, leaving great potential for local and regional variation. Investigating how differently gender roles were constructed within this setting, this section explores the representations of female authority and women's relationships within their Monthly Meetings in both England and America. This will be achieved through close analysis of the tasks and activities which occupied much of the time and energy of the female elders in Kendal, Marsden, Chester, and Burlington.

Whilst there is some evidence of local variation and changing priorities, a surprisingly consistent outlook on church order and communal oversight existed in both the English and colonial Meetings. The discussion will be based around the findings set out in Figures 1 and 2, which provide a visual representation of the distribution of all the tasks brought before the four Meetings for the sample years 1700–1705 and 1745–1750. A number of tasks occupied the agendas of the female elders. This section, however, will focus upon four important concerns: marriage, discipline, philanthropy, and settlement.

³⁵ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671–1753, fol. 30, Barbados Women's Meeting to the London Women's Box Meeting, 30 April 1676.

Figure 1 Distribution of tasks of the Chester, Burlington, Marsden, and Kendal Women's Meetings, 1700–1705

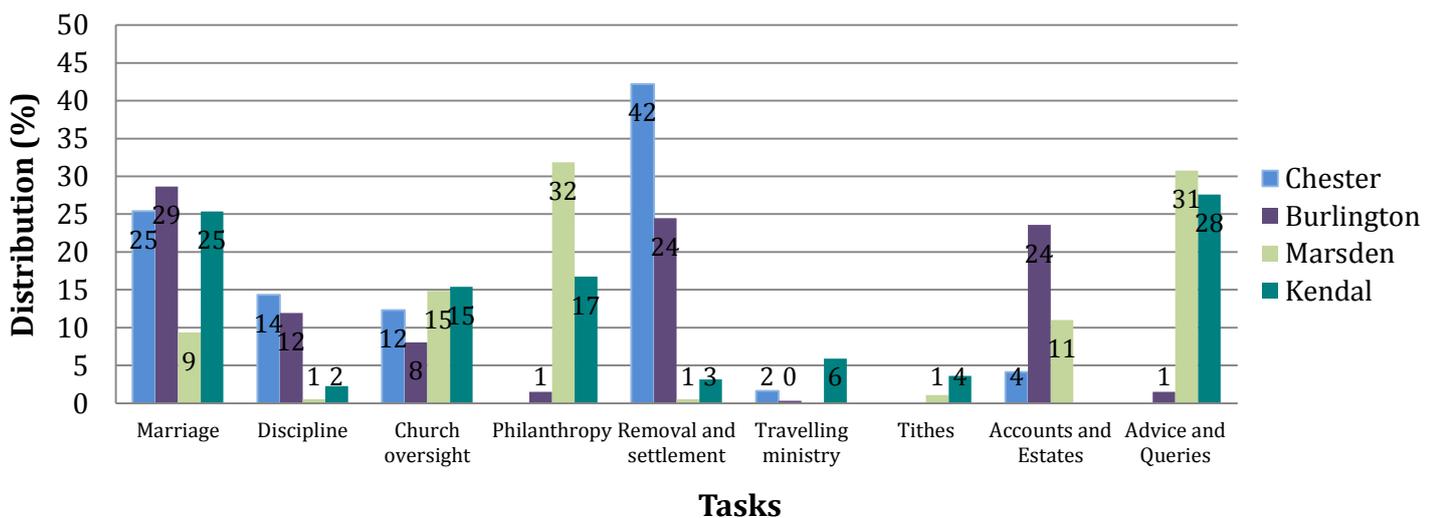
*See Appendix Two for a numerical breakdown of the tasks of each Meeting and a detailed list of the activities that formed these categories



Data extracted from the following sources: Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College (hereafter cited as FHL), MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695–1733, with Papers of Condemnation; FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747; LA, FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678–1738; and Kendal Archive Centre (hereafter cited as KAC), WDFCF/1/22 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1671–1719.

Figure 2 Distribution of tasks of the Chester, Burlington, Marsden, and Kendal Women's Meetings, 1745–1750

* See Appendix Two for a numerical breakdown of the tasks of each Meeting and a detailed list of the activities that formed these categories



Data extracted from the following sources: FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1733–1779; FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747 and 1747–1799; LA, FRM/1/25 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1738–1760; and KAC, WDFCF/1/23 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1719–1756.

Marriage, order, and discipline

Unlike Anglicans and Puritans, Quakers believed that holy marriage was possible only for those willing to subordinate themselves to the will of the group and have their characters and intentions examined by the whole community. As Figures 1 and 2 reveal, all four Women's Meetings consistently involved themselves in matters relating to marriage, suggesting that it was a transatlantic concern. Between 1700 and 1705, it took up seventy-six and fifty-one per cent of Kendal and Chester women's time respectively. Although Figure 2 suggests that it had declined by 1750, the issues of approving couples for marriage remained a key feature of the tasks undertaken in all four Monthly Meetings.

Friends enforced a rigorous process of consent for marriage that placed female elders in an important position over both men and women.³⁶ Prospective marriage partners had first to obtain permission from their parents before presenting their intentions to their local Preparative Meeting. They would then progress to the Monthly Meetings, where they would be expected to declare their intentions on two consecutive occasions. Both partners were expected to come first before the Women's Meeting, which would then grant them approval to proceed to the Men's Meeting. Each time a couple submitted a request to marry before the Women's Meeting, two female elders were

³⁶ The correct procedure for marriage was outlined in an epistle of the 1670s, directing all Friends to: 'bring their Marriages twice to the womens meetings, and twice to the mens: the first time they are to come to the womens Meetings that the women of the meeting, do examin both the man and the woman, that they be cleare and free from all other persons, and that they have their parents, and friends and Relations, Consent; [...] if any thing be found that they are not clear [...] then they do not proceed, till they have given satisfaction both to the parties and friends, concerning that matter.' 'A Seventeenth-Century Quaker Women's Declaration', transcribed by Milton D. Speizman and Jane C. Kronick, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1975), p. 242.

appointed to investigate the 'clearness' of the woman for marriage.³⁷ After the match had been approved, two more female elders were appointed to attend the nuptials and report back to the Meeting on whether it had been conducted in an orderly manner. Levy has argued that Friends exhibited such rigorous control over the marriage process because of their desire to regulate the formation of new households and thus the primary environments in which children were raised. His findings from the Welsh Tract Meetings in the Delaware Valley support this conclusion, since almost half of the business that came before the Meetings directly concerned marriage.³⁸

Given that all prospective husbands and wives had to submit themselves to the Women's Meetings before they were allowed to proceed to the Men's, it can be argued that the process constituted a subtle and implicit challenge to patriarchy. In September 1704, for example, the Women's Meeting of Kendal delayed Jeremiah Whittnell's marriage to Margaret Harton because the certificate that the young man presented was deemed 'insufficient' to clear the Truth.³⁹ Chester women, moreover, deferred the marriage negotiations between John Hoskins and Ruth Adkison in September 1698 because of 'some Reports concerning John'.⁴⁰ The authority exhibited in this process, especially in the women's ability to decide the arrangements of marriage for men, was an issue against which Separatists reacted particularly strongly. William

³⁷ Clearness meant a number of different things for Friends, but in the context of marriage, it was usually in relation to whether the couple wishing to marry were free from all other engagements, had the approval and consent of their parents, and that both parties had sought divine guidance. In the case of a remarriage, the overseers had to ensure that neither of the parties had been widowed for less than a year.

³⁸ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 132.

³⁹ KAC, WDFCF/1/22 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1671-1719, minutes for 1 September 1704.

⁴⁰ FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695-1733, minutes for 27 September 1698.

Mucklow's 1673 tract, *The Spirit of the Hat*, complained that if the Women's Meeting were allowed a veto, they could deprive a man of 'a Person whom he most dearly loves'.⁴¹ Moreover, some like William Mather criticised the potential for disruption in such a lengthy process. He thought it 'a very hard Tryal' for men to submit to female authority in matters of marriage, especially since unnecessary delays might drive exasperated couples to disobey the rules of the Society and go to a Priest 'to rid themselves of the trouble of waiting [...] any longer'.⁴²

The circumstances surrounding the Quaker process of marriage discipline provided a vital space for women to act independently of their male brethren. Friends even asserted that this was a task particularly suited to women, because they had greater knowledge of the circumstances in marriage and should rightly shoulder the responsibility of overseeing its orderly accomplishment. '[W]e are much in our families amongst our children, maids and servants', one epistle from Lancashire Women's Meeting declared, 'and may see more into their inclinations.'⁴³ Both Protestant and Catholic women played an accepted role in early modern marriage and courtship culture. Although parental consent was not a legal requirement in Tudor and Stuart marital arrangements, numerous instances can be found of mothers intervening in

⁴¹ William Mucklow, *The Spirit of the Hat, or, The Government of the Quakers Among Themselves, as it Hath Been Exercised of Late Years by George Fox* (London, 1673), p. 32.

⁴² Mather, *A Novelty: Or, a Government of Women*, pp. 11–12. The frustrations caused by such delays were encapsulated in a letter that the London Friend John Sansom sent to his recently-married son, Samuel, in which he expressed his concern that 'thou should meet with so much disappointment in passing the meetings', especially since he had thought 'the Certificate I had signed had been sufficient [...] for I am fully satisfied in thy Choice'. HCQSC, MS Coll 1008 Morris-Sansom Collection, c.1715–1925, Box 17 S, Sansom, John folder, John Sansom to 'Dear Child', 16 August 1737.

⁴³ Highly likely to have been authored by Sarah Fell this epistle was written sometime between 1675 and 1680, transcribed by Speizman and Kronick in 'A Seventeenth-Century Quaker Women's Declaration', p. 242.

marriage negotiations and acting as facilitators, or even obstacles, to young men's addresses.⁴⁴ In providing a formal and legitimate space for women to oversee the formation of new marriages, however, Quakers went much further in giving mothers and other women a formal role in the courtship process. The consent of both parents, moreover, was a compulsory feature of Quaker marriage discipline procedure.⁴⁵

Whilst marriage regulation dominated the agendas of all four of the Women's Meetings, the very high proportion of marriage-related issues dealt with by Kendal women in the period 1700–1705 is worthy of note. In fact, of the four Meetings under study, the Women's Meeting at Kendal dealt with the highest number of marriages, despite numerically undertaking the lowest number of tasks in total. Perhaps the best explanation for this lies in the fact that up until 1704 Kendal men had little responsibility in overseeing local marriages. Women's involvement in this matter was so extensive that ninety-eight per cent of the administration surrounding couples desiring to marry were exclusively dealt with by the Women's Meeting. This stands in contrast to Chester Women's Meeting, which, despite taking on a similar number of assignments during this period, dealt with only forty per cent of the total marriage arrangements within the community. (See Appendix Three for a numerical breakdown of the men's and women's responsibilities for these Meetings.) This autonomous role for Kendal women seemed to be much more in

⁴⁴ Numerous examples can be found in David Cressy's chapter on 'Courtship and the Making of Marriage' in his *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 233–66. One such instance occurred in Durham in 1571, when Thomas Soley made his initial addresses to Agnes Smith through her mother and her mother's kinsmen, before talking to Agnes about his intentions, pp. 258–59. Others included the rebuttal that the Sussex merchant Samuel Jeake received in 1676 after Mary Weeks's mother opposed the match and warned her daughter about heeding any further addresses from him, pp. 245–47.

⁴⁵ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 132.

keeping with the powers permitted to women in the English cities, where Meetings like the independent London Box Meeting allowed women a degree of autonomy in Meeting together without their decisions being accountable to the men. This display of female independence may also be indicative of the reach and influence of Margaret Fell and her daughters in the region, for as Fell's biographer asserted, she was uncompromising in her belief that Women's Meetings should hold 'the prerogative in marriage contractual procedure'.⁴⁶

Since the distribution of tasks within Marsden Meeting during the same period was much more in keeping with the pattern of oversight that evolved in the Meetings of the American colonies, however, it is likely that the arrangement of marriage discipline within Kendal was a distinctly local development. Marriage issues occupied only thirteen per cent of Marsden women's time between 1700 and 1705. In all probability this was owing to the fact that up until 1704 Kendal women were limited in the range of roles that they could perform, because they were forced to meet and conduct business in a private building, separate from the Meeting House.⁴⁷ This may well have meant that the low number of tasks they undertook in other aspects of church administration skewed the number of tasks relating to marriage in their favour. Whilst this division of labour could indicate that the female Friends of Kendal were not viewed as equals in their Meetings, it is significant that they were

⁴⁶ Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism*, p. 157.

⁴⁷ As the minutes of the Men's Meetings in Kendal rather surprisingly reveal, it was not until February 1703 that a proposal was even raised for a space to be provided for the women of Kendal Monthly and Quarterly Meetings to assemble: 'Whereas it was thought necessary [that] [...] a more convenient place might be provided for *our* women Friends of this County to keepe their Quarterly Meeting and allsoe the Womens Meeting at Kendal.' The minute for the following month declared their intention to extend the south side of the existing Meeting House and to calculate the charges incurred. However, it was not until December of that year that a general collection of £13 19s. 6d. was made to cover the costs of this undertaking. KAC, WDFCF/1/13 Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1699-1723, minutes for 5 February 1703, 5 March 1703, 26 March 1703, and 31 December 1703.

entrusted to oversee almost exclusively this particular aspect of church governance. This suggests the high regard the Men's Meeting placed on their judgment, and also indicates the centrality of the Women's Meeting within a close-knit rural community.

The pattern of marriage regulation that developed in the other English and colonial Meetings, however, suggests that it was more common for the Men's and Women's Meetings to work in tandem, rather than in isolation from one another. This is exemplified in an anonymous epistle sent to the London Women's Box Meeting, where the female correspondents declared that '[we] are workers together *with* them in the same faith, and only distinct as to our places, and in those particular things *which* most *properly* appertaines unto us as women'.⁴⁸ This cooperation was particularly important when it came to the detection of specific transgressions in relation to marriage. Elizabeth Branson, for instance, brought a paper of acknowledgment to Burlington Women's Meeting in November 1703, to condemn her 'disorderly marriage'.⁴⁹ After inquiring into the affair, the women judged that they were 'not fully satisfied concerning it' and petitioned the Men's Meeting for advice, where it was judged that Branson should attend the following Monthly Meeting and sign a new

⁴⁸ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671-1753, fol. 17, unsigned epistle to the London Women's Box Meeting, undated, c.1671-1675.

⁴⁹ The denunciation of a member for misconduct was a highly charged process, not dissimilar from Nonconformist models of discipline practised in England. Following the pattern set out in Matthew 18:17 that moved from private admonition to presentment before witnesses and finally public condemnation, Quaker Meetings sought to reclaim errant members and bring them to a sense of the gravity of their misconduct. If the labours of the female elders were successful, the errant woman would submit a paper of acknowledgment to her local Women's Meeting for approval. If a paper was judged not to be genuine in its sincerity or satisfactory in its condemnation, then it would be returned to the individual for revision. If individuals refused to submit to the discipline of the Meeting, they were disowned by the Meeting, a process which generated an official written condemnation.

paper of acknowledgment.⁵⁰ Likewise, when the overseers at Kendal 'could not give so satisfactory account' of Elizabeth Morland's clearness for marriage in 1725, which occasioned 'severall questions and some uncomman discorce [*sic*]', it was determined that the Men's Meeting should be left to decide whether the couple should be allowed to proceed any further.⁵¹ Whilst this reliance on the advice and counsel of the men indicates that the decisions of female elders were never completely autonomous, it is significant that in all instances it was the female members of the congregation who made the initial discovery of the transgression. Moreover, after the Men's Meeting had given them their judgment on the matter, they entrusted the Women's Meeting to implement their advice.

This is indicative of a symbiotic relationship existing between the male and female elders of the Meetings, rather than one determined by female obedience to patriarchal dictates. On no occasion within these sample periods was the decision of any of these Women's Meetings in relation to marriage overturned by their respective Men's Meeting, suggesting that the judgement of the female elders was respected. The intervention of women in the marital arrangements of their own sex even permitted them a formal place within the space of the Men's Meetings, as female overseers were expected to accompany the young women attending the Men's Meeting to declare their intentions. Thus after Richard Holden and Ann Hellewell had been approved by Marsden Women's Meeting for marriage, two overseers were appointed to attend the

⁵⁰ FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681-1747, minutes for 4 October 1703 and 4 November 1703.

⁵¹ KAC, WDFCF/1/23 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1719-1756, minutes for 4 June 1725.

wedding and to accompany the young woman to 'lay the concern before the mens Meeting'.⁵²

Colonial women, in particular, were able to demonstrate considerable independent authority in supervising the behaviour of their female members in matters relating to marriage. When Chester Monthly Meeting heard of Jane Worrilow's so-called 'miscarridge' with Abraham Leake in February 1696, a committee of women was appointed to labour with the young woman and bring her to a sense of her 'wild doings'. She eventually brought a paper of condemnation to the Women's Meeting, where she acknowledged that 'he did lye upon the bed Cloaths by me part of one night, I being in bed, which thing hath brought great troubell and sorrow upon me'.⁵³ As the circumstances surrounding this incident suggest, it was a matter which the female elders took very seriously, particularly because news of the incident had spread beyond the Quaker community. The entire process from initial condemnation to the final publication of Worrilow's paper was retained within the Women's Meeting and at no point were the men Friends consulted, despite the wide publicity that the incident had gained. Similarly, when the elders at Burlington Monthly Meeting heard of Elizabeth Day's illicit marriage to 'a man that Friends did not approve of', they immediately appointed a committee to inquire into the matter and to speak with all the individuals involved. These included four female members, who were all forced to produce papers of acknowledgment for witnessing the marriage, as well as Day's mother, who had allegedly countenanced her

⁵² LA, FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678-1738, minutes for 15 May 1701.

⁵³ FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695-1733, minutes for 24 February 1696, 30 March 1696, 25 May 1696 and paper of acknowledgment issued by Jane Worrilow dated 9 May 1696.

daughter's behaviour. Those who refused to submit papers of acknowledgment were immediately suspended, including Elizabeth Day herself.⁵⁴ None of the women involved in the affair was forced to present her admission of guilt to the Men's Meeting, neither were the men Friends consulted in the matter, which remained entirely under the women's supervision.

The discrepancy between the proportion of cases of delinquency dealt with by Chester and Burlington women, in comparison to those of Marsden and Kendal, suggests that formal discipline was much more of a preoccupation for the women Friends of the colonies. As Figure 2 indicates, less than one per cent of Marsden and only two per cent of Kendal women's energies were spent disciplining members in the period 1745–1750, compared to fourteen per cent for Chester and twelve per cent for Burlington. That colonial women may have been more autonomous in dealing with errant individuals within their congregations is highlighted by the fact that ten tasks of a disciplinary nature against female Friends reached the agendas of Kendal Men's Meeting in the period 1745–1750. Only five of these were ever brought to the attention of the Women's Meeting. A complaint, for instance, was lodged in June 1747 against Sarah Sewart, a young woman of the Meeting, who had 'committed lewdness' with John Birket. Her suspension from the Meeting was pronounced in September 1747, after the couple married clandestinely—a circumstance which the men Friends judged to be incompatible with the movement's testimonies and made them not 'in a suitable condition at present to continue in unity'.⁵⁵ At no point during the condemnation process, however, were the women Friends

⁵⁴ FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747, minutes for 9 February 1703, 1 March 1704, 5 April 1704, 7 June 1703, and 6 September 1703.

⁵⁵ KAC, WDFCF/1/15 Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1747–1777, minutes for 26 June 1747, 7 August 1747, and 4 September 1747.

involved. Instead, a short statement is recorded in the Women's Meeting book after the first incident in June 1747, which simply said that 'some have born disorderly Company to thear shame and repro[a]ch'⁵⁶

Perhaps this divergence in female authority over matters of discipline should not come as a surprise when we consider the significantly different social contexts faced by female Friends in the British Isles and the colonies. The conditions of frontier life are likely to have encouraged a church order which permitted women a greater degree of independence in their Meetings. It can be argued, for instance, that when attempting to establish a viable supervisory and disciplinary structure, all hands would have been needed. This may explain why Chester and Burlington women were able to take on more responsibility than originally intended. Chapter One showed how an emphasis on order and stability over ministerial service gave colonial women greater opportunities to attain positions of authority within their local communities. One indicator is the fact that the Women's Meeting of Burlington emerged almost immediately after the Men's Meeting was founded (a mere two years after settlement).⁵⁷ Bacon found a similar pattern in the minutes of Nantucket Monthly Meeting in New England. Here, women were actively involved in education, poor relief, and discipline because the male members of the community were often absent for long periods on whaling expeditions.⁵⁸ Other examples include Soderlund's findings for the Monthly Meetings of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where the

⁵⁶ KAC, WDFCF/1/23 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1719-1756, minutes for 26 June 1747.

⁵⁷ On the history of Burlington Meetings see: Amelia Gummere, *Friends in Burlington* (Philadelphia, 1884).

⁵⁸ Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, pp. 45-46.

women took full jurisdiction over cases of discipline without submitting disownments to the men for review.⁵⁹

Evidence of colonial women's autonomy over matters of discipline also reflects one strand of thought in the historiography that considers English Friends to have been more conservative in their attitudes towards women. This is perhaps best reflected in the issue of the Women's Yearly Meetings, where a separate Meeting for the female Friends of Pennsylvania and Burlington had been established shortly after settlement in the 1680s. London women, on the other hand, did not get a Yearly Meeting until 1784. Even then, the final institution of the Meeting was the result of a long and hard-fought campaign, initiated by both British and American reformers from 1746. Such a discrepancy in the organisational structure of the Society has led scholars like Bacon to argue that, in the British context, women were not perceived as equals in church government.⁶⁰ Certainly, the women Friends of rural Meetings like Marsden and Kendal may have had fewer opportunities for independent action than their sisters in America. This is encapsulated in an epistle that Kendal Women sent to the London Box Meeting in 1675, where they tellingly explained that their separate Meetings were 'lightly looked upon and of lit[tle] esteeme among Some who should have Strengthened us'.⁶¹ Phyllis Mack has suggested that women residing in counties like Lancashire and Westmorland were

⁵⁹ Soderlund, 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings', p. 744.

⁶⁰ Margaret Hope Bacon, 'The Establishment of London Women's Yearly Meeting: A Transatlantic Concern', *JFHS*, vol. 52, no. 2 (1995), pp. 153–54. This point is further developed by Bacon, with regard to the physical space of the Meeting House in *Mothers of Feminism*, pp. 46–47. Here Bacon argues that American Friends employed a system of moveable shutters to divide the men and women Friends after their Meetings for worship, a fact which she suggests emphasised the equality of the female members. English Friends, by contrast, expected their female members to retreat to a separate part of the Meeting House or a different building.

⁶¹ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671–1753, fol. 23, Kendal Women's Meeting to London Women's Meeting, 5 March 1676.

particularly badly affected by undercurrents of opposition to them gaining a position of authority within the organisation. This was owing to the fact that many of the Separatists, who were firmly opposed to the establishment of the Women's Meetings, were from these northern regions.⁶²

Whilst there is certainly a strong case for viewing English Quaker women as having less autonomy within their Meetings, it is important to note that even the Men's Meetings dealt with a significantly lower number of cases of discipline. Marsden Men's Meeting, for instance dealt with only five cases of discipline and Kendal recorded only twenty-four between 1745 and 1750. This contrasts with Burlington and Chester Men's Meetings, which dealt with ninety-four and one hundred and sixteen cases of discipline respectively in the same period. The low number of cases of discipline addressed by the English Monthly Meetings overall is indicative of the smaller populations of Friends residing in these rural Meetings. Population alone, however, would still not account for such a high discrepancy, which is more likely to be attributable to the fact that English Meetings had developed alternative methods of ensuring conformity and dealing with errant members without resorting to formal denunciation.

These alternative procedures are particularly evident when we look at the number of tasks relating to 'Advice and Queries' for Marsden and Kendal Women's Meetings in the period 1745-1750, as revealed in Figure 2. This aspect of church oversight took up a significant proportion of the female elders' time (thirty-one and twenty-eight per cent respectively). The use of written Queries and Advices as a means of asserting discipline had been used by English

⁶² This included the Meetings' strongest opponents, Wilkinson and Story. Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 336-37.

Friends from the 1680s. However, in the colonies, the practice of giving written answers to specific Queries was not in general usage until 1755.⁶³ This involved a set of about twelve questions that overseers of each preparative Meeting were expected to read and answer on a quarterly basis. Questions typically posed by the English Women's Meetings included issues such as:

Do all who profess with us keep in plain[n]ess of Language, Apparel, Dress and Furniture?

Are the Youth among us careful, and well advised to avoid going to see any vain Shows, or even to Fairs without sufficient buesiness [*sic*] [...] ?

Are all young and unmarried Women careful that they keep no disorderly company nor in any w[ays] concern themselves upon the account of Marriage without the consent of their Parents, Guardians, or some faithful and judicious Friends of the Meeting they belong to [...] ?

Are Families visited by faithful Members for the more effectual building up of the Church?⁶⁴

This list of queries is somewhat reminiscent of the Church of England 'Articles of Visitation' that were distributed to churchwardens before an episcopal or Archdeacon's visit.⁶⁵ The Quaker stress on women keeping orderly company before marriage, for example, echoes the Anglican emphasis on the necessity of chastity before marriage.⁶⁶ The Quaker queries nevertheless had a different focus and tenor to those of their Anglican contemporaries, particularly since one of the dominant concerns for Anglican officials in this period was parishioners' attendance at illegal conventicles. Moreover, it is significant that

⁶³ J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends* (New York, 1973), p. 4.

⁶⁴ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671–1753, fol. 57, Queries issued by Lancaster Women's Meeting 'To be observed by Women Friends in the County of Lancashire', 15 October 1748.

⁶⁵ For a detailed list of the Articles of Visitation see: Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church* (2 vols, Church of England Record Society, series 5, Woodbridge, 1994–1998).

⁶⁶ One of the injunctions circulated by the Prebendary John Barnston to local officials in Wiltshire in 1624 required them to ensure that no individuals residing in the parish had 'committed incontinencie before marreadge'. Fincham (ed.), *Visitation Articles*, ii, p. xvi.

in contrast to the Anglican model, the female members of the Quaker community were actively involved in obtaining these written testimonies, the answers to which would have been regularly submitted for the independent scrutiny of the Women's Quarterly Meeting.

Through the act of regularly reading and adapting Queries and Advices, it can be suggested that English Friends found alternative means of enforcing conformity amongst their members. Occasional references are made in the minutes to the effect of this form of discipline. In April 1697, for instance, Marsden women asked their delegates whether all Friends were 'careful to keep their words and not run into Debt beyond what they are able to pay in one time?' Here, the overseers of Sawley Meeting noted that Mary Tatham's thread trade had run into debt. The Meeting appointed two delegates to visit her and advise her to end her trade, to prevent getting into further debt.⁶⁷ The process of using queries as a means of admonishing members was an important instrument in ensuring conformity, without having to resort to the outright condemnation that was prevalent in Chester and Burlington. This is supported by the fact that many of the replies to the Queries included statements such as 'the Queries was Examined and not any thing was offered by way of Complaint'.⁶⁸ David Cressy suggests that the churchwardens' frequent employment of '*omnia bene*' (all well) should be translated to mean 'go away' or 'mind your own business', and thus may reflect a similar tendency on the part of

⁶⁷ LA, FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678-1738, minutes for 15 April 1697.

⁶⁸ LA, FRM/1/25 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1738-1760, minutes for 15 July 1747.

these English Meetings to deal with instances of transgression informally.⁶⁹ In some respects, this can be attributed to the stronger influence of neighbourhood ties for those Friends who continued to live in the rural counties of England, where they may have been more likely to admonish and support one another, rather than make a formal complaint to the Monthly Meeting.

Despite the difference between the number of disciplinary matters brought before the Women's Meetings in England, Pennsylvania, and West Jersey, it is remarkable that female members were permitted any authority at all in the disciplinary process. Lindman has noted the dominance and exclusivity with which white male elders administered Baptist church discipline in colonial Pennsylvania and Virginia.⁷⁰ This power in overseeing the correction process, she argues, mirrored the traditional power of men in the family: 'to protect, reprimand, and punish dependents.'⁷¹ Quaker women's involvement in the disciplinary process, by contrast, was deemed fundamental in providing an example to the younger generation. As the custodians of female virtue, they were expected to oversee the behaviour of their congregations, admonish them where necessary, and bring them to a sense of their errors. Thus, although we might expect the men to have final judgement over the matter of admitting and denying members, women's involvement in the admonition and counselling of female Friends clearly provided an important accompaniment to the disciplinary structures of the movement.

The surveillance of all members through a system of discipline, adjudicated by the female overseers and elders of the Meetings, became an

⁶⁹ David Cressy, 'Conflict, Consensus, and the Willingness to Wink: The Erosion of Community in Charles I's England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 2 (1998), p. 135.

⁷⁰ Lindman, *Bodies of Belief*, p. 93.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

intensive means of regulating church order. The all-female committees appointed by the Women's Meetings certainly devoted a great deal of their attention to detecting breaches of Quaker marriage discipline procedure. The minutes of both the colonial and North-Western Meetings suggest that no incident or individual escaped the female overseers' notice. Elizabeth Cadwalader was denounced by Chester Women's Meeting in 1720 for 'being over taken with strong drink and for dancing with a mans Jacket on'. To make matters worse, Cadwalader was also seen that day 'to act unseemly with a man and in a manner most undecently and not fit to be mentioned'.⁷² This incident is suggestive of the intensive means by which the Women's Meetings gathered intelligence and reports on their members' behaviour. Moreover, it indicates the very real public presence and communal identity of female overseers outside of both the household and Meeting House.

Philanthropy and settlement

Philanthropy and the issue of settlement (granting approval for a member to move to another Meeting) were tasks that increasingly came to dominate the concerns of the Quaker Women's Meetings. In the case of Marsden, instances of charitable concern had even surpassed the combined totals of marriage and discipline by 1750, as demonstrated in Figure 2. Early Quakers took a largely egalitarian view on the issue of caring for the poor, for it was argued that outward property was only a temporary gift, to be shared charitably between

⁷² FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695-1733, minutes for 31 October 1720.

the 'Saints in light'.⁷³ Early initiatives to relieve Quaker prisoners and families in financial distress highlighted the Quaker sense of charitable concern for the poorer members of their community. As previously noted, the Women's Box Meeting of London had been designed to provide financial support for the many London Friends suffering from imprisonment and poverty. This meant that from the start, the organisation and distribution of poor relief was to become a central concern of the Women's Meetings. George Fox argued that women should take a primary role in poor relief, because of their positions within the household and community. 'Women many times know the Condition of poor Families, and Widows, and such as are in distress, more than Men,' he wrote, 'because they are most conversant in their *Families*, and about such things.'⁷⁴

Women's responsibilities within their Meetings were thus viewed as an extension of their private and gendered knowledge, which included visiting and relieving the sick, poor, and destitute, as well as offering care and support to widows and orphans residing in their Meetings. This form of 'practical charity', was cited as an acceptable public role for pious women. Indeed, Patricia Crawford argues that philanthropic acts, such as nursing the sick in hospitals, enabled abbesses and prioresses to exercise considerable independent authority within the Catholic Church.⁷⁵ Many dissenting movements permitted women a formal place in philanthropy-based activities. The office of deaconess, which was open to women in some separatist congregations like the Baptists,

⁷³ 'An Epistle from the Women Friends in London to the Women Friends in the Country, also Elsewhere, About the Service of a Women's Meeting, 4 January 1674', in Barclay (ed.), *Letters, &c., of Early Friends*, pp. 343-44.

⁷⁴ 'An Encouragement to all the Faithful Women's Meetings in the World, who Assemble Together in the Fear of God, for the Service of Truth', 16 November 1676, in George Fox, *A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles*, ii, p. 387.

⁷⁵ Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p. 22.

involved providing relief to the sick and poor. Other groups, like the Methodists, had a designated 'sick visitor' role, which was occupied by a number of women. It was a position that Paul Wesley Chilcote suggests offered female converts 'countless opportunities for discussion of the life of faith, plain and open relations with other people'. On occasion, this could also have an evangelical tenor.⁷⁶

Many researchers have suggested that this aspect of women's oversight was a stereotypically feminine activity deemed appropriate for female members to channel their energies.⁷⁷ Gail Malmgreen, for instance, writing about eighteenth-century Methodism, noted that the rise of such 'auxiliary tasks' had the effect of driving women 'farther from the centre of affairs' within the Church.⁷⁸ However, as Ryan has reminded us, there is no indication that seventeenth-century women played a more active role in poor relief than men, particularly when it came to distributing financial assistance.⁷⁹ What made Quakerism unique was the fact that the intense persecution experienced in the early years of the movement extended women's roles beyond offering merely moral and spiritual support. Instead, the relief of suffering, imprisoned, orphaned, and poor members was provided through the innovation of a regular collection of a 'stock', which the Women's Meeting could dispense as necessity dictated. This rather surprising independence of women collecting, keeping checks on, and distributing funds as they saw fit, which was implemented on a

⁷⁶ Chilcote, *John Wesley and the Women Preachers*, p. 72.

⁷⁷ Trevett described the work of the Women's Meetings in poor relief and oversight of their own sex as 'safer (and more "feminine") waters'. Christine Trevett, *Quaker Women Prophets in England and Wales 1650-1700* (Lampeter, 2000), p. 169.

⁷⁸ Gail Malmgreen, 'Domestic Discords: Women and the Family in East Cheshire Methodism, 1750-1830', in Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, and Raphael Samuel (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (London, 1987), p. 66.

⁷⁹ Ryan, "In my hand for lending", p. 18.

nationwide scale, was justified as fulfilment of their service and care for the poor was universally accepted as a responsibility for women Friends to involve themselves.

Economic hardship in both Marsden and Kendal meant that the issue of poor relief significantly affected the distribution of tasks within the Women's Meetings. As Kunze notes, 'poverty was a way of life for a considerable portion of the population' in Lancashire.⁸⁰ Since many relied upon subsistence farming, the impact of localised famine, as well as financial hardship, is likely to have severely affected members of these areas, particularly since English Friends continued to be fined for their refusal to pay tithes and thus forfeited all claims to parish poor relief. As Figure 2 indicates, Marsden women devoted thirty-two per cent of their attention to the relief and care of poor members of their community in the period 1745–1750, equating to fifty-eight individual proceedings. Jennett Scott of Sawley, one of Marsden's constituent Preparative Meetings, received relief on an almost monthly basis. Contributions towards her care totalled the significant sum of £7 3s. 6d. between January 1745 and December 1750. Similarly, Martha Parkinson received £2 17s. 11d., some of which was paid to cover her rent, whilst other contributions were to cover the cost of the purchase of fabric to make shifts.⁸¹ The high number of individuals in need of relief meant that a similarly high proportion of Marsden women's tasks was associated with raising and collecting funds to furnish the Meeting's stock. The Women's Meeting provided a crucial and largely overlooked alternative institution through which to provide for the indigent members of the

⁸⁰ Kunze, "Poore and in Necessity", p. 564.

⁸¹ LA, FRM/1/25 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1738–1760, see minutes between 17 January 1745 and 20 December 1750.

community and is a theme that will be returned to in the final chapter on female Friends' interactions with their non-Quaker neighbours.

Although the wealthier Meetings of the colonies seemingly devoted less time to specific acts of charity, some of the tasks of the Meetings inevitably involved elements of philanthropy. Chester women, for instance, instructed two elders of the Meeting to visit Mary Edwards in March 1714 and 'Carry her cloath enough to make her mother two shifts'.⁸² Burlington Women, moreover, in the period 1700–1705 exhibited great care towards the needy members of their community, with over fourteen per cent of their time spent on tasks of a philanthropic nature. These included numerous outgoings for the relief of unnamed Friends. In November 1700 £1 was donated to 'a poor widdow' and 6s. 8d. was given to 'a poor Friend'.⁸³ Aside from specific cases of relief, Burlington women also spent as much as thirty-one per cent of their time in the period 1700–1705 dealing with what can be termed 'Accounts and Estates'. The majority of the activities listed under this category made explicit reference to either the collection of funds to go towards the Meeting stock or recorded the money that had been disbursed towards the cleaning of the Meeting Houses at Burlington and Springfield. Whilst no indication is given about who was paid for the work, it is likely that this task would have been a means of employing poorer members of the community, thus supplying them with a regular source of income.⁸⁴

⁸² FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695–1733, minutes for 29 March 1714.

⁸³ FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747, minutes for 4 November 1700.

⁸⁴ This was almost certainly the case in Kendal, as indicated by entries in the Minutes for Kendal Women's Preparative Meeting. It was noted, for example, how in October 1722 the Meeting had appointed Ruth Knipe to clean the Meeting House in the place of Sarah Cowper. Ruth Knipe had

With the issue of philanthropy and relief for the poor came the problem of entitlement. Naturally, those who were declared 'out of unity' with the Meeting would forfeit any claim for support and assistance, although Meetings occasionally made exceptions to this rule.⁸⁵ Under Quaker rules of settlement, members were expected to apply for a certificate of removal before joining another Meeting. This had the effect of ensuring the moral character of the individuals under consideration, including their clearness to marry, as well as providing reassurance on their financial affairs and creditworthiness. It also prevented charlatans from imposing upon the goodwill of Friends. Those who, on arrival, failed to present a certificate to their new Meeting were refused membership until they could prove that they were in good standing with their former Meeting. Esther Gilbert, for instance, who desired to settle in Burlington, was advised in July 1700 by the Women's Meeting that unless she produced a certificate, 'Friends could not receive her as a member of this Meeting.'⁸⁶

Thus while philanthropy came to dominate the activities of poorer Meetings like Marsden, it was the issue of settlement which seems to have created a significant administrative burden for more prosperous regions like Chester and Burlington. The administration surrounding members applying for and presenting certificates of removal eclipsed the issue of marriage within the

come to the attention of Kendal women in the past and was a recipient of relief in the years running up to this appointment. A decision, for instance, had been made in May 1720 that her 'necessities be enquired into' and that she be 'supplied as its thought needfull.' On another occasion later that year, the minutes recorded how Ann Garnett was to 'give Ruth Knipe which she thinks she has occasion for, for her own use and let this Meeting know [what] she Lyes down at this time.' KAC, WDFCF/1/46 Kendal Women's Preparative Meeting, 1719-1774, minutes for 4 May 1720, 1 February 1721 and 31 October 1722.

⁸⁵ When Marsden Women's Preparative Meeting was made aware of the dire need of Susan Turner, who was described as 'not being fully in society with us', it felt 'obliged to help her in her necessity' out of a sense of 'conscience'. LA, FRM/4/6 Marsden Women's Preparative Meeting, 1698-1794, minutes for 13 February 1701.

⁸⁶ FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681-1747, minutes for 1 July 1700.

colonies, with settlement constituting forty-two per cent of Chester and twenty-four per cent of Burlington women's duties between 1745 and 1750. Since both Pennsylvania and West Jersey had been founded by immigrant populations, it is highly likely that a culture had developed in these regions where geographical mobility and resettlement were much more commonplace. The populations in the North-Western counties of England, on the other hand, were more static and, aside from a large exodus of inhabitants to the colonies in the 1680s, a much smaller percentage transferred beyond the bounds of their Meetings in the wake of the 1689 Toleration Act. The Women's Meetings of Marsden, for instance, received and accepted only one petition for removal between 1745 and 1750. This stands in clear contrast to Chester women, who dealt with some thirty-nine separate petitions to provide certificates of removal and were presented with twenty-five certificates from individuals and families settling within the compass of the Meeting. This suggests that the women residing in the colonies were part of much more mobile communities.

Overseeing the resettlement of members offered great potential for female agency. It was, admittedly, subject to some limitations, for when a couple or family requested a certificate of removal, this had first to be approved by the Men's Meeting. Even so, as Betty Haggund has argued, the ability of female Friends to confirm decisions and draft certificates resulted in an important sense of 'ownership' and 'corporate' understanding of group experience.⁸⁷ A number of examples can even be found of the Women's Meetings dealing independently with matters of removal when this involved a petition from a

⁸⁷ Betty Haggund, 'Changes in Roles and Relationships: Multiauthored Epistles from the Aberdeen Quaker Women's Meeting' in Carolyn D. Williams, Angela Escott and Louise Duckling (eds.), *Woman to Woman: Female Negotiations during the Long Eighteenth Century* (Newark, DE., 2010), pp. 140–42.

woman desiring to remove on her own to another Meeting. Thus when the recently married Mary Delaplan requested a certificate of removal from the female elders of Burlington in order to settle within the compass of her husband's Meeting, a committee of women was appointed to visit the young woman and enquire into the matter. Once satisfied, they were ordered to prepare and bring the certificate in time for the next Meeting, so that it could be signed by the women Friends present.⁸⁸ Female elders were thus able to wield considerable influence and authority over the lives of their congregation through monitoring, controlling, and authorising their removal and settlement.

* * *

It is clear that Quaker women's public religious work was not affected by the decline in Quaker ministerial activity that has so often led researchers to lament the opportunities available to women in the eighteenth-century movement. Detailed analysis of the tasks that female Friends performed within their Meetings provides an important insight into how the concerns and priorities of the Women's Meetings evolved as they responded to different circumstances and local conditions. Whereas the Men's Meetings of England tended to retain much of the executive power over discipline and other aspects of church administration, the conditions of the frontier environment enabled colonial women to take over a greater range of responsibilities and act more autonomously than their English sisters, especially when it came to disciplining errant members. Moreover, the highly mobile populations of the colonies meant that Chester and Burlington Meetings tended to focus their energies on

⁸⁸ FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681-1747, minutes for 12 August 1745 and 2 September 1745.

supervising the movement of members between Meetings (especially in the five years before 1750), whilst English women focused a greater proportion of their time and energy on the relief of the poorer members of their communities.

It is notable, however, that despite these differences, a remarkably consistent model of authority appears to have evolved on both sides of the Atlantic. This reveals the ongoing process of exchange and interaction that dominated the experience of English and American female Friends. Moreover, it stands as testament to the durability of the Quaker Meeting system, which enabled a similar set of responsibilities and obligations to emerge within these female-dominated spaces without a bureaucratic system or hierarchy being introduced. The regulation of marriage proved to be the most dominant and consistent task for which the female elders took responsibility across our period. In many respects this should not come as a surprise, since it was a role that was particularly appropriate to women's gendered sphere of knowledge. What is interesting, however, is how early Quakers established a system which enabled non-itinerant women to hold positions of power within the wider community, by virtue of their positions within the household. Not only were women able to authorise marriage contract procedure for the female members of their Meetings and discipline those who strayed from Quaker marriage custom, they also had an unparalleled level of influence over male Friends wishing to marry.

The work that female Friends completed in their Meetings found parallels in women's wider social roles, whether in negotiating matches for their children, running their husbands' businesses, or relieving poorer members of their communities. Nevertheless, such activity was usually informal and

undertaken in the place of an absent male. The fact that the Women's Meetings discussed here were granted official powers of jurisdiction over their communities and acted in tandem with their partner Men's Meetings highlights one important way in which Friends challenged traditional gender conventions. It is significant that these activities were performed and assigned within a collective female space, enabling elders to develop connections with their fellow-members as well as achieve status within their communities. The discussion will now turn to investigate who occupied positions of authority within the Women's Meetings, and how the distribution of power affected the lives of both the Meetings' elders and female congregants.

3. '[F]avoured with excellent talents': the women of the Monthly Meetings

Quakerism was unique in providing an autonomous space for its female members to involve themselves in the Society's business. As we have seen, in matters of marriage and some cases of discipline and removal, these female elders had significant power in determining the fates of their members. Having seen the types of tasks and responsibilities in which the Women's Meetings were regularly involved, the following section will consider who the most active members of these Meetings were and how this reflected broader social trends.

Unlike other separatist churches of the time, no official membership records were kept by Quaker Meetings before the 1830s. It is therefore almost impossible to know how many individuals were active in the Women's Meetings, especially since the elders would gather after a general Meeting for Worship. Only by creating lists and noting who were assigned to act as overseers or members of committees can we get a sense of which women were

most active in the Meetings. Although such data is far from comprehensive, particularly since a Friend's name would have been recorded only if she was assigned a particular task, it does help to create a profile of the types of women appointed to such positions. This approach was adopted by Soderlund to good effect in her study of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania and New Jersey Friends, enabling her to investigate the socio-economic status of the Meetings' leaders.⁸⁹ The discussion here will take this approach further to assess the different roles these elders assumed and what factors helped establish their standing within the Meeting.

The following section will be divided into two main parts, focusing first upon the different roles open to women within their Monthly Meetings. It will then turn to the types of women who filled positions of authority, exploring the extent to which wealth and family connections played a major role in determining community status. Max Weber, in his *Sociology of Religion*, argued that the rise of institutional and organisational discipline led to the creation of an elitist movement dominated by and limited to only the most wealthy and influential members of the religious community.⁹⁰ From the evidence presented here, however, it will be argued that whilst for practical reasons wealth was clearly an important factor, family connections above all appear to have determined women's roles within their Meetings.

⁸⁹ Soderlund, 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings', pp. 727–28.

⁹⁰ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, transl. Ephraim Fischhoff (London, 1965).

The roles available to women in their Monthly Meetings

In October 1732 Grace Lloyd, wife of the Pennsylvanian politician, David Lloyd, was appointed to serve as clerk for Chester Women's Meeting.⁹¹ Grace combined the traits of a well-respected elder, in good standing within the community, with the image of a capable and successful Quaker business woman. She was memorialised by her friend and former servant, Jane Hoskins, as one 'favoured with excellent talents', a woman of 'good understanding, sound judgment and quick apprehension', as well as possessing 'a good gift in discipline'—traits that naturally would have placed her in a good position for taking on a leading administrative role in the Meeting.⁹² As a literate and established member, Grace's influence over the Pennsylvanian Quaker community must have been extensive. As well as serving as clerk to Chester Women's Monthly Meeting between 1732 and 1744, she was also appointed to transcribe the proceedings of Philadelphia Women's Yearly Meetings between 1729 and 1744. She also acted as an occasional scribe for Concord Women's Quarterly Meeting between 1715 and 1749.⁹³

Evidence of the sway that a clerk could have over the Quaker church is revealed in Grace Lloyd's personal correspondence.⁹⁴ Her letters to members of the Pemberton family from December 1746 reveal a dynamic woman with an appetite for both news and business ventures. A repeated theme in her

⁹¹ FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695–1733, minutes for 30 October 1732.

⁹² Jane Hoskins, *The Life and Spiritual Sufferings of that Faithful Servant of Christ Jane Hoskens* (Philadelphia, 1771), p. 30.

⁹³ HCQSC, B1.1 Philadelphia Women's Yearly Meeting Minutes, 1692–1814, minutes for 13 November 1729 and 18 September 1744; FHL MR-Ph 136 Concord Quarterly Meeting Women's Minutes, 1695–1803, minutes for 2 May 1715, 7 November 1715 and 14 August 1749.

⁹⁴ Whether through coincidence or the time-consuming nature of the role, almost no documents relating to Grace's personal life have survived during the period she acted as clerk at Chester.

correspondence is a desire to hear about Friends in the ministry and where they intended to travel on their missions. In one 1751 letter to Rachel Pemberton, for example, she noted that she would 'be glad to hear how our friends far[e]d at Shre[w]sbury and which way Mary Weston is gon[e]', whilst in 1753 she declared that 'I long to hear [o]f any news of our dear Friends arrival at Carolina.'⁹⁵ Aside from receiving regular updates from her network of female correspondents, Grace's writings also reveal that she was actively engaged in commercial dealings with Quaker merchants like John and James Pemberton.⁹⁶ The authority and power of her writings, even in her declining years, are indicative of a woman with a great understanding of the networks that bound together the social and economic lives of Friends and their communities.

Unfortunately, less information is available about the lives of the other clerks involved in Chester Meeting, or indeed, those of other Meetings. In many respects, these unusual women defy generalisation. Nonetheless, some common traits and characteristics would have been necessary to fulfil such a role. They needed to be women of some stature in the Quaker community with a high level of literacy, something that was not possible for all members. Literacy was essential because they had to take rough notes of the Meeting's transactions, set

⁹⁵ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 7, fol. 142, Grace Lloyd to Rachel Pemberton, Chester, 1751; HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 9, fol. 94, Grace Lloyd to Rachel Pemberton, Chester, 17 November 1754.

⁹⁶ In one letter she sent to James Pemberton in September 1750, she explained that she had sent 80 pieces of eight (Spanish dollars) to send on to his brother John: 'and desire him to buy a good fine piece of tandam Holand and the Remainder after himselfe satesfyed in what he thincks will best answer'. HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 6, fol. 108, Grace Lloyd to James Pemberton, 20 September 1750. In another letter to James Pemberton in December 1753, she began by explaining that 'I have hear with sent the Remainder of the Cargoe which I cant sell to advantage [...] [I] shall send thee more mony as sone [sic] as I can gett it, have sent back 4 pieces of linen, 22 dozen Hankerchiefs, 1 ½ dozen Cotton Gloves and 3 pieces Sack Webb. I tryed 1 piece of the Yorkshire Brown, thought if it would wash and whiten I could Recomend it.' HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 9, fol. 110, Grace Lloyd to James Pemberton, 19 December 1753.

the agenda, compose and sign documents, and keep track of the financial transactions of the Meetings, as well as copy the minutes into the official Meeting book. The clerk also needed to show leadership qualities, for she had the vital responsibility of judging the 'sense of the Meeting' and representing it accordingly in the minutes. Since members were not allowed to vote on issues—instead favouring a consensus or unity to be sought through patiently waiting on the Spirit—the clerk had the challenging job of discerning the 'will' of the Spirit in a particular situation. A good clerk, as Hamm has explained, would have had 'the ability to find commonality among differences and to combine differing views into a solution'.⁹⁷ The role of clerk gave a female elder the potential for significant but discreet influence, as she might sometimes have to pronounce what she felt to be the will of God, even when competing arguments had been presented in the Meeting.

Clerks were usually also well-established members of their communities who had served on committees for a number of years prior to their appointment. Grace Lloyd, for instance, had been nominated as an overseer for Chester at least eighteen years prior to being made clerk.⁹⁸ The Burlington clerk, Abigail Raper, may have been active in the Meeting for as long as forty-seven years before she stepped down from the position in 1748.⁹⁹ All of these women appear to have been married or widowed, although individual merit seems to have been the governing factor in judging whether a woman was

⁹⁷ Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, p. 11.

⁹⁸ Grace Lloyd's first committee assignment after settling in Chester in January 1714 was to act as a representative to the Quarterly Meeting in June 1714: FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695–1733, minutes for 28 July 1714.

⁹⁹ Whilst it is unclear whether two individuals of the same name occupied the position of overseer, an Abigail Raper was appointed to inquire into clearness for marriage in June 1701. She stepped down from the role in April 1748. FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747 and 1747–1799, see minutes for 2 June 1701 and 2 May 1748.

suitable for the role. No evidence exists of a woman being appointed simply because her husband was clerk of the Men's Meeting, and only one instance has been identified of a husband and wife serving as clerks to their respective Meetings at the same time.¹⁰⁰ By contrast, there are numerous examples of single and never-married women acting as clerks for both English and American Meetings, which is indicative of the emphasis that Friends continued to place upon individual merit rather than outward circumstances.¹⁰¹

Another important and often overlapping office was that of the treasurer, who kept the accounts and retained the Meeting's stock. In some Meetings these roles were combined. Thus when Mary Smith was appointed to act as clerk for Burlington Monthly Meeting in May 1748, the sum of £3 18s. 6d., which formed the total Meeting stock, was also placed into her hands.¹⁰² As with the role of clerk, this was a position that required good business acumen, sound numerical skills, and a working knowledge of basic accounting. In her thesis on the Quaker Women's Box Meeting in London, Ryan demonstrated the advanced accounting skills that the female clerks and treasurers of the Meeting displayed in their minutes. Among other things, this included a modified style of double-entry book-keeping, a rare skill, Ryan argues, which provides evidence of their

¹⁰⁰ Both Abigail and Joshua Raper of Burlington Meeting appear to have been acting as clerk for the Men's and Women's Monthly Meetings at the same time. FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747 and FHL, MR-Ph 60 Burlington Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1737–1756, see equivalent minutes for 1 June 1747.

¹⁰¹ Margaret Fell's daughter Sarah, for instance, served as clerk to Swarthmoor Meeting for a number of years before her marriage to William Meade in 1681, and the unmarried Philadelphian Friend Sarah Morris also served as clerk to Philadelphia Women's Meeting throughout the 1740s. For more information about Sarah Fell see: Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism*; and Norman Penney (ed.), *The Household Account Book of Sarah Fell of Swarthmoor Hall* (Cambridge, 1920); on Sarah Morris see: Soderlund, 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings', p. 728.

¹⁰² FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1747–1799, see minutes for 2 May 1748 and 6 June 1748.

proficiency in business.¹⁰³ This essential skill, which involved listing debits and credits separately, was a regular staple of Quaker Meeting minutes. Evidence even from the poorer Women's Meetings in the English countryside demonstrates regular use of calculations to confirm that the accounts were in balance.¹⁰⁴

It was the overseer, however, who was at the heart of the Quaker Meeting structure. The female elders appointed to this role worked hard to maintain order and discipline. Their public accountability for the Meeting made them highly visible members of their communities. In addition to running her own household and engaging in ministerial work, the Kendal overseer Grace Chamber inspected thirty-six separate couples for marriage and visited numerous women in order to clear them for removal to other Meetings between 1705 and 1750. In this same period, she was also appointed to act as a representative for Preston Preparative Meeting and Kendal Quarterly Meeting one hundred and eight and fifty-one times respectively. She visited all the Quaker households in the Preston area on a regular basis, and was occasionally nominated to support Crook and Powbank Preparative Meetings in their visitation of local families.¹⁰⁵ Each visitation cycle took between four and six months to complete and included family devotion, as well as opportunities to offer discreet advice to household members, both male and female.

¹⁰³ Ryan, "In my hand for lending", pp. 137-38.

¹⁰⁴ The minutes of Marsden Women's Meeting for 15 May 1718, for instance, recorded that £1 5s. 8½d. had been collected from the preparative Meetings, 5s had been disbursed to Jennet Dickinson and £1 8½d. remained in the Meeting stock. The following month, Jennet Dickinson received another payment of 5s. 4d., which left a total of 15s. 4½d. LA, FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678-1738, see minutes for 15 May 1718 and 19 June 1718.

¹⁰⁵ KAC, WDFCF/1/22 Kendal Women's Meeting Minutes, 1671-1719, see for example minutes from 5 September 1712 and 4 September 1713.

Considerable skill in the ministry and the ability to draw upon personal experience were evidently required to fulfil the role of overseer. Grace Chamber's memorial was of a very similar tenor to Grace Lloyd's in Pennsylvania, and she was remembered as both intelligent and 'endowed with an excellent understanding'.¹⁰⁶ The centrality of the Meeting was firmly engrained in her entire outlook, as illustrated by the advice she sent to the travelling minister Thomas Story in 1715, after having supplied him with some powder as a remedy for his coughing and shortness of breath: 'A knifepoint-full (or 2) of it after a Meeting [...] and at bedtime has done several good.'¹⁰⁷ For an elder like Grace Chamber, the place of the Meeting in her daily life was so central that she even framed her medical advice around it.

Overseers, as we have seen, occupied a central role in the disciplinary mechanisms of the church, with primary responsibility for investigating and reporting wrongdoing. The terms of their oversight were extensive and incorporated such matters as investigating a young couple's clearness for marriage and its orderly completion, and the visitation of members who had come under the notice of the Meeting for irregular behaviour. The position, as Levy summarises, 'required a head for genealogy, a nose for gossip and spiritually discerning eyes.'¹⁰⁸ The evidence presented in the previous section suggests that these family visitors were vigilant in monitoring the behaviour of their members and establishing accurate information about any instance of wrongdoing. Chester Friends, for instance, were determined to secure a full

¹⁰⁶ Kendal Monthly Meeting, 'Testimony of Kendal Monthly Meeting concerning Grace Chamber, deceased, 1763', ed. Norman Penney, in *JFHS*, 7 (1910), pp. 182–83.

¹⁰⁷ LSRF, MS Vol 340, The Life of Thomas Story with Original Letters, between fols 476 and 477, Grace Lloyd to Thomas Story, from Sedgwick, Cumbria, 2 June 1715.

¹⁰⁸ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 209.

account from Alice Yarnall after her child was delivered too soon after marriage. Reluctant to believe that she had come 'before her time as is supposed', a committee of women was appointed to speak to five women involved in the delivery and visitation of Yarnall after the birth and give 'the truth of what they think concerning the child'. The testimonies corroborated Yarnall's story that the child had been premature and the Meeting declared its satisfaction.¹⁰⁹ This incident reveals the extent to which the behaviour of female members was monitored outside of the Meeting House, as well as the extensive reach of the female elders over the behaviour of their members throughout their married lives.

Specialised forms of religious visiting, as embodied in the visiting committees, offered one of the most extensive and influential roles for the overseers of the Women's Meetings. One example of the pervasiveness of their powers of surveillance was the issue of 'superfluity', which included both the dress of members and how they chose to furnish their houses. This was of particular concern to English Friends, who repeatedly warned their members against following the 'Customes and wayes of the world'.¹¹⁰ Marsden women recorded in their minutes in 1695 an epistle from Lancaster Quarterly Meeting, which included an extensive list of fashions their female members were forbidden from buying, wearing or selling. Among other things, this included hoods with long tabs that turned back further from the cheek than from the brow; necklaces; 'figured or strip[ed] stuff'; mantuas (cloaks) lined with different coloured materials with 'small tails pinned according to the fashions of

¹⁰⁹ FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695-1733, minutes for 26 December 1715, 30 January 1716, and 27 February 1716.

¹¹⁰ LA, FRL/1/2/1/1 Lancaster Women's Quarterly Meeting Minutes 1675-1777, minutes for 3 July 1695.

the world'; painted calico in dresses and aprons; and hatts with broad ribbons 'tyed with a bunch behind'.¹¹¹ The wealthier American Meetings, by contrast, appear to have been much less vigilant in advising their members to observe testimonies relating to plainness. As Frederick B. Tolles has noted, plainness was a relative matter for Philadelphian Friends and very much depended on the wealth and circumstances of the individual.¹¹² This discrepancy is an issue to which we shall return in the final chapter on Quaker relationships with the non-Quaker world. It is worth observing here that at no point in their minutes did colonial Friends seek to enforce conformity to standards of plainness. The close integration of American Quakers with the customs and practices of wider society may explain why so many members were disciplined in the period 1745–1750 for errant behaviour. Forbes argues that this was the case in New Garden Monthly Meeting, in Pennsylvania, suggesting that a high level of concern over discipline on the part of the Meetings was related to the rapidly expanding non-Quaker population in the region.¹¹³

The vigorous policing of members' private lives, held up for corporate scrutiny, undoubtedly placed overseers in an uncomfortable position which could create bad feeling between them and other members. In much the same way that the English government was forced to rely upon the voluntary authority of parish constables to enforce legislation in the localities, the Quaker Quarterly and Yearly Meetings left their main jurisdictional authority in the

¹¹¹ LA, FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678–1738, minutes for 18 July 1695, copy of epistle from Lancaster Quarterly Meeting, dated 5 July 1695.

¹¹² Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York, 1960), pp. 87–88.

¹¹³ Forbes, 'Quaker Tribalism', pp. 167–68.

hands of these unpaid male and female overseers.¹¹⁴ Great potential must have existed for these intrusive activities to alienate neighbours, friends, and even family members and they raised the issue of where and to whom loyalty was primarily due. That individuals were sometimes reluctant to undertake this activity is suggested by evidence from the minutes, where Meetings often had difficulty finding persons willing to carry out the onerous process of conducting formal family visits. A 1704 minute from Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting, for instance, requested that volunteers come forward to undertake house-to-house visitations, noting that 'if none doe soe offer that the said Friends consider of one and return his name'.¹¹⁵ Marsden Women's Preparative Meeting was forced to appoint or inquire about individuals willing to act as overseers on an almost monthly basis between 1700 and 1705.¹¹⁶ The nomination of individuals for committee assignments in a highly voluntary faith, dependent upon the spiritual consensus and unity of its members, is perhaps indicative of the elders' reluctance to undertake some of the more time-consuming aspects of this work.

Since Quaker religious culture made the need for a professionally trained clergy redundant, an important but largely overlooked moral responsibility also fell upon the members of the general congregation. These individuals, who attended the Meetings but performed none of the business tasks, constituted an estimated sixty per cent of the total number of individuals who gathered on a

¹¹⁴ The tensions between voluntary bureaucracy and legal enforcement are explored by Alexandra Walsham in *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 39-105, see especially pp. 89-92.

¹¹⁵ KAC, WDFCF/1/13 Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1699-1723, minutes for 4 August 1704.

¹¹⁶ LA, FRM/4/6 Marsden Women's Preparative Meeting Minutes, 1698-1794, see minutes between 14 March 1700 and 14 February 1706.

monthly basis.¹¹⁷ As much of the spiritual oversight of the congregation fell entirely and, in theory equally, upon all members, the Meeting also relied heavily upon the surveillance, information, and admonition that were undertaken by these individuals on an informal basis outside the Meetings. When Anna Pole and Molly Parrock, for example, visited the household of the young Hannah Callender in January 1759, she noted that 'some cautions [were] given to us Girls to take care of what Company we kept'.¹¹⁸ Some women went even further in their informal moral oversight of other members. 'I thought it my business', Ann Whitall wrote in her diary in 1760, 'to tell KA [Kate Andras] of Sleeping in Meetings so much as she does', leading her to question whether anything would 'rouse us up to more diligence to serve our Maker'.¹¹⁹ In a culture with a strong impetus to keep members within the fold, it is likely that informal acts performed by members of the congregation made a significant contribution to the business of the Women's Meetings.

Quaker elitism or Quaker 'tribalism'?: determining community status

As J. William Frost stated in 1973, 'to understand the Meeting, one needs to know the family.'¹²⁰ In a spiritual community that viewed itself as an extended family, the development of stable and orderly household relationships was paramount to the metaphorical spiritual family. Time and again, epistle writers exhorted male and female elders to extend their loving and nurturing influence

¹¹⁷ This estimate was made by Forbes in her study of New Garden Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania, where she argues that about sixty per cent of the town Quakers attended the Meetings but performed none of the business tasks delegated by the gathering. Forbes, 'Quaker Tribalism', p. 147.

¹¹⁸ Hannah Callender, *The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of the American Revolution*, ed. Susan E. Klepp and Karin Wulf (London, 2010), p. 86, diary entry for 13 January 1759.

¹¹⁹ Ann Whitall, 'The Journal of Ann Whitall (1760–62)', in Hannah Whitall Smith (ed.), *John M. Whitall: The Story of His Life* (Philadelphia, 1879), p. 17, diary entry for 27 July 1760.

¹²⁰ Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*, p. 2.

as heads of families over the members of their separate Meetings. Catharine Whitton, for example, exhorted Friends across the Atlantic in 1681 to 'be Faithful to the Lord, and careful over his household and family'.¹²¹ Thus when the elders of Kendal denounced superfluous fashions and a tendency for sleeping in Meetings in 1713, they ordered Friends to be watchful, 'soe that we may grow up as a true family to our own comferrt [*sic*] and welbeing.'¹²²

Given that the Meeting was to act as a surrogate family for its members, it is not surprising that family ties proliferated among the highest echelons of the Meetings. Whilst detailed family reconstitution is beyond the scope of this thesis, Tables 1 and 2 provide an indication of how family could bestow status on the female Friends in Chester, Burlington, Marsden, and Kendal Women's Meetings. This has been achieved by extracting the names of the individuals who were granted committee assignments in the Women's Meeting and matching them to the surnames of the male Friends assigned a specific task of oversight.

¹²¹ Catharine Whitton, *An Epistle to Friends Everywhere: To be Distinctly Read in their Meetings, When Assembled Together in the Fear of the Lord* (London, 1681), p. 6.

¹²² KAC, WDFCF/1/22 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1671-1719, minutes for 25 September 1713.

Table 1 Family connections between Chester, Burlington, Marsden, and Kendal Men's and Women's Meetings, 1700–1705

| | Chester | Burlington | Marsden | Kendal |
|--|----------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Individual in Men's Meeting sharing the same surname | 25 | 42 | 20 | 22 |
| No individual in Men's Meeting sharing the same surname | 10 | 10 | 16 | 3 |
| Total | 35 | 52 | 36 | 25 |
| Total (%) of identifiable connection | 71 | 81 | 56 | 88 |

Data extracted from the following sources: FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1733–1779, MR-Ph 92 Chester Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1721–1745 and MR-Ph 103 Chester Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1745–1778; FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747 and MR-Ph 60 Burlington Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678–1737; LA FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678–1738 and FRM/1/1 Marsden Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678–1723; and KAC, WDFCF/1/22 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1671–1719 and WDFCF/1/13 Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1699–1723.

Table 2 Family connections between Chester, Burlington, Marsden, and Kendal Men's and Women's Meetings, 1745–1750

| | Chester | Burlington | Marsden | Kendal |
|--|----------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Individual in Men's Meeting sharing the same surname | 37 | 43 | 29 | 49 |
| No individual in Men's Meeting sharing the same surname | 18 | 32 | 22 | 25 |
| Total | 55 | 75 | 51 | 74 |
| Total (%) of identifiable connection | 67 | 57 | 57 | 66 |

Data extracted from the following sources: FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695–1733 and MR-Ph 92 Chester Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1721; FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1747–1799 and MR-Ph 60 Burlington Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1737–1756; LA FRM/1/25 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1738–1760, FRM/1/2 Marsden Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1723–1746 and FRM/1/3 Marsden Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1746–1781; and KAC, WDFCF/1/23 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1719–1756, WDFCF/1/14 Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1727–1747 and WDFCF/1/15 Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1747–1777.

Given that this survey is based on surnames determining family connections over two small sample periods, these figures are likely to be under-representative of wider kin connections within the Meetings and may also create false associations between members simply sharing the same surname with no actual family relationship. The survey nonetheless provides some indication of the family connections that might exist between members. The figures suggest a strong positive correlation between family membership and active participation in the Meetings. Moreover, analysis of Chester marriage records has revealed that where a female elder has been identified in both the extant Meeting and marriage records, her listed spouse often matches the name of the male elder with the same surname active in the Men's Meeting.¹²³ This suggests that marriage in most cases linked the male and female Meeting elders together.

Of the thirty-five women active in Chester Monthly Meeting between 1700 and 1705, twenty-five (seventy-one per cent) had an identifiable spouse or probable family member sharing the same surname involved in the Men's Meeting in the same period. A comparable figure exists for the period 1745–1750, where the number of Chester women with spouses or family members involved in the Men's Meeting constituted sixty-seven per cent of the women actively serving in the Meeting. A total of eighty-one per cent of Burlington women also had a spouse or relative involved in the Men's Meetings in the period 1700–1705. Forbes observed a similar connection in her study of the Quaker community at New Garden, where those who were most active in the

¹²³ This was achieved through an assessment of the following records: FHL, MR-Ph 99 Chester Monthly Meeting Marriages, 1692–1782; and FHL, MR-Ph 99 Memorandum of Births and Buryall[s] of the Monthly-meetin[g] of Chester, 1677–1884.

Monthly Meeting were easily identifiable from their family ties.¹²⁴ The emphasis on endogamous marriage, as observed by Pennsylvanian and West Jersey Friends, and the rigorousness with which it was enforced, explains at least in part why such strong connections existed between the members of the separate Meetings.

The view that eighteenth-century Quakerism was a 'tribalistic' faith, characterised by small, self-contained, and relatively homogenous communities, has come to dominate many interpretations of the Friends residing in the American colonies. Carla Pestana, for instance, noted the important 'communal context' which characterised early Quaker conversions in Salem, observing that an important social as well as spiritual dimension accounts for the movement's expansion in the region.¹²⁵ This is not an argument that has been developed by historians of the eighteenth-century English movement. However, of the four Meetings under examination, Kendal Women's Meeting shows the greatest proportion of women active in the local organisation with a spouse or other family member actively participating in the Men's Meeting in the period 1700–1705 (eighty-eight per cent). This would suggest that from an early stage, the rural Quaker communities of England had developed a model of authority intimately linked to family connections. In part, this is probably owing to the close-knit and largely static nature of the Kendal community, which was highly dependent on kinship and patronage networks. The initial wave of conversions in the 1650s and 1660s caused many Friends to sever their familial ties. Later,

¹²⁴ Forbes, 'Quaker Tribalism', p. 165.

¹²⁵ Carla Gardina Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 68–69. I am grateful to Elizabeth Bouldin for this reference. Forbes also referred to the tribalistic nature of the Quaker faith in her study of New Garden Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania: Forbes, 'Quaker Tribalism', pp. 145–73.

when a strict rule of endogamy was enforced in the eighteenth century in the face of declining numbers, English Quakerism seems to have emphasised a model of religious order characterised by strong family connections. This view is supported by Levy, whose assessment of Chester Friends in England led him to conclude that 'northwestern Quakers were fascinated by the potentialities of familial relations', which led to the withering of old kinship ties and the creation of 'powerful, self-contained' Quaker households.¹²⁶

Not all women, however, needed to have a spouse in good standing in the Men's Meeting in order to achieve high status in their congregation. Lydia Lancaster, for instance, gained influence as both a minister and overseer within Lancaster Monthly Meeting, despite the fact that her husband, Brian, had been disowned from the Society in 1721 for failings which included drinking in excess and running into debt.¹²⁷ Lancaster, by contrast, remained a staunch supporter of her local Women's Meeting and active in its business until her death in 1761. She was memorialised as able to speak from experience 'being instructed in sorrow she was favoured with a sympathizing Heart, and knew how to partake in the Affliction of others'. Perhaps even more significantly, she was revered for her ability to 'distinguish higher obligation of spiritual unity from the ties of natural connection or general acquaintance'.¹²⁸ It is highly likely that Lydia Lancaster's experiences of marital hardship made her an ideal choice to advise other women in her Meetings about the dangers of entering into a bad marriage. It also demonstrates how any woman could excel within the Quaker

¹²⁶ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, pp. 50–51.

¹²⁷ The disownment of Brian Lancaster is noted in the biography of Lydia Lancaster in Gil Skidmore (ed.), *Strength in Weakness: Writings of Eighteenth-Century Quaker Women* (Oxford, 2003), p. 33.

¹²⁸ LRSF, Portfolio MSS, vol. 17, fol. 65, 'A Testimony from Lancaster Monthly Meeting Concerning Lydia Lancaster'.

organisation by virtue of her own personal qualities of leadership. This stands in contrast to the wider societal model that measured women by their marital status and saw the married woman as merely an 'adjunct of her husband', rather than an independent individual in her own right.¹²⁹

Quakerism was clearly distinctive in advancing members based on their own merit, rather than their social status or economic circumstances. Evidence, however, does suggest a tendency for leaders in both the English and colonial Women's Meetings to come from more settled and prosperous backgrounds. The importance of financial security for those women occupying the highest ranks of the Meeting has been highlighted by a number of scholars. Soderlund, for example, in her survey of Pennsylvanian Meetings, noted the high number of wealthy leaders who came to dominate Quaker church governance. By the 1750s, she argues, the majority of the leaders came from households 'with above- and well-above-average wealth'.¹³⁰ Clearly, committee work and extensive family visitation were luxuries which were only really available to the wealthiest members of the community. A high level of literacy would also have been required in order to occupy the majority of the highest-ranking positions within the Meeting. Whilst Quaker literacy rates were generally much higher than the rest of eighteenth-century society, the level of education required for some of these roles would have limited the higher positions to an elite few with both the time and leisure to acquire and practise their skills.¹³¹ Ryan, for

¹²⁹ Mary Beth Norton, 'The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America', *American Historical Review*, vol. 89, no. 3 (1984), p. 600.

¹³⁰ Soderlund, 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings', p. 733.

¹³¹ N. H. Keeble suggests that dissenters may have accounted for thirteen to fifteen per cent of the literate population, despite the fact that nonconformist made up no more than six per cent of the total population. N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1987), p. 138.

instance, suggested that the numerical skills and authority exhibited by the women of the London Box Meeting may have reflected their connections to the capital's wealthiest merchants.¹³² Moreover, these leading figures would also have needed a significant amount of leisure time to complete their tasks. Mercy Bell, a leading London Friend and wife of Nathaniel Bell, a schoolmaster and bookseller, often complained to her correspondents of the heavy work-load associated with 'writing on the meetings account'. In one letter to her friend Priscilla Farmer, she explained that she had just completed a Letter to the Quarterly Meeting, which she had written 'three times already' and 'by order of the meeting [had] copy'd it into the Minute Book', a task she explained '[I] am quite weary of'.¹³³

There were of course also more mundane reasons why women from wealthier backgrounds came to dominate the Quaker elite. In those Meetings where a considerable amount of money was distributed to the poor on a regular basis, someone with financial means would have been desirable, as they would have been able to afford to cover any deficits. Tolles demonstrated that the wealthy members of the Philadelphia Quaker community were 'disproportionately burdened' with the care of poor and sick immigrants.¹³⁴ Moreover, given that large donations would be given to the clerks and treasurers, they would have needed to be in a position of financial security so that the Meeting's investment in their person was never at risk.

¹³² Ryan, "In my hand for lending", p. 21.

¹³³ LRSF, Temp MSS 403/1/2/3 Arthur B. Braithwaite MSS, fol. 8, Mercy Bell to Priscilla Farmer, London, 20 February 1757.

¹³⁴ Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (New York, 1948), p. 66.

The high personal, emotional, and financial investment that the Meetings required of their clerks and treasurers is indicated by the 1699 minutes of Barking Women's Meeting, which record that Phyllis Bush, 'who hath kept friends Booke and Stocke for some years', had stolen from the Meeting stock. Bush, having '[been] putt to some straights', made use 'of this money to her owne use; *which both the Men and women Friends, doe judge to bee a wronge thinge to use the poores money*'.¹³⁵ A more honest Friend was immediately appointed to replace her. The incident shows how an individual's status within the community was intimately bound to her credit and reputation. But it also indicates that wealth was not the sole determinant of leadership, since a lower-status woman had been advanced to the role of treasurer.

It was generally in the more populous and wealthy Meetings of the American colonies that a more plutocratic form of government was most evident. Whilst reconstitution of the circumstances of the women involved in the English Meetings is a much harder task, owing to the disparate nature of the surviving genealogical records, evidence from Marsden and Kendal Meeting minutes suggests that women from a wider range of economic backgrounds occupied positions of leadership in the Meetings. Numerous instances can be found of former overseers being forced to turn to the Meeting for relief in later life. Ellen Veepon, for instance, who had regularly served as an overseer for Marsden Monthly Meeting from 1696 and received at least eleven committee assignments between 1700 and 1705, became a regular recipient of relief from April 1730, when Friends recorded that they had disbursed '4s. to Ellen Veepon

¹³⁵ LRSF, 11 b 13 Ham and Waltham (Barking) Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1675-1721, minutes for 7 March 1700 and 4 April 1700.

widow'.¹³⁶ It is significant that no comparable situation of acting elders becoming recipients of the relief they had once administered (and in all likelihood contributed towards) is evident in the American Meetings. This contrast attests to the impact of local conditions in shaping the leadership base of a Meeting.

4. Conclusion: 'An invisible community'

In 1675, women Friends meeting together at London addressed an epistle to their 'Dear Friends and Sisters' in Barbados. Despite the vast distances between them, a sense of unity and spiritual oneness permeated their writing. '[O]ur hearts [are] open to you as yo[urs] [are] to us', they wrote, 'as drinking together in the one spirit of life and endless love, whereby all the faithfull partake of an invisible community.'¹³⁷ Perhaps one of the most powerful choices of metaphor, the 'invisible community' in which these women imagined themselves encapsulated the sense of female fellowship fostered through the act of Meeting together.

In its premise that the best way to understand the experiences and outlook of women in their Meetings is to examine in detail the minutes they compiled, this chapter has explored the tasks, relationships, roles, and status attached to the Women's Monthly Meetings of northern England, Pennsylvania,

¹³⁶ LA, FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678-1738, minutes for 23 April 1730. Ellen Veepon was tasked with visiting every female Friend in the compass of Marsden Meeting to inspect their dresses on 21 May 1696 and was appointed to inspect Ann Hellewell for clearness to marry on 21 March 1701. The same was also the case with Susan Horrabin, who had regularly served as an elder for Marsden Preparative Meeting, but petitioned the meeting for relief in early 1719. Her first of many payments was for 2s. 6d. in January 1719. LA, FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678-1738, minutes for 15 January 1719. For Horrabin's committee assignments see, for example, LA, FRM/4/6 Marsden Women's Preparative Meeting Minutes, minutes for 11 April 1700.

¹³⁷ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671-1753, fol. 25, London Women's Meeting to Women Friends in Barbados, 18 November 1672.

and West Jersey. Rather than simply focusing on the more corporate form of the Society and how it affected women's social progression, the analysis has shown the multifarious ways in which occupying a position of prominence within the Meeting affected women's lives and experiences. As custodians of the spiritual and moral well-being of the community, the roles available for women within the Meeting system provided a range of opportunities for 'ordinary' members of the congregation to act in positions of authority and leadership. A position of great weight and responsibility evidently lay on those individuals regarded as elders within the Quaker community. The time-consuming and burdensome nature of this work, combined with the fact that they would have needed to be present at almost every Monthly Meeting, highlights the important weight that was given to non-itinerant female Friends, whose activities shaped the social and cultural outlook of the Society.

As we have seen, the relationship that evolved between local Men's and Women's Meetings clearly affected the activities which women could legitimately undertake. However, at all levels, the space of the Meeting provided an important sphere in which women were able to develop connections with one another. It also gave them opportunities to adopt positions of authority and status within their communities in new and interesting ways. Indeed, the tasks of the separate Women's Meetings which developed within Kendal, Marsden, Chester, and Burlington reveal a dynamic and nuanced model of female oversight, dependent upon the circumstances faced by different groups of Friends, whilst sharing a common philosophy of discipline and order. Despite their geographical diversity, a surprisingly unified programme of order and regulation developed across the Atlantic.

The metaphor of the family was a powerful one in Quaker church culture. Not only did it enable a pious community of spiritual elders to develop, linked as much by their family connections as by their spiritual union, but in order to conduct church business efficiently and effectively, it also had the more practical effect of underlining the need for supportive household relationships outside of the Meeting. On both a material and metaphorical basis the Quaker Meeting system reflected household order, where control over the formation of new households and the need to provide exemplary guidance for Quaker children meant that regulation of marriage was to become one of the most time-consuming and important aspects of Quaker women's functions.

A strong impetus to regulate the behaviour and settlement patterns of female Friends, as well as care for the poor and needy members of the congregation, expanded women's functions from the space of the Meeting House into the wider community. Indeed, the intense and, at times, intrusive controls which the female overseers exhibited over the personal lives of their members are indicative of significant powers of regulation and a well-integrated presence within the wider Quaker community. It is significant that through offering a separate and formal space in which to meet together and discuss church business, Quakers succeeded in providing a place for women within the church hierarchy which integrated domestic responsibility with public authority. This elevation of the wife and mother was something which other dissenting movements, like the Baptists and Methodists, failed to fully realise.

Whilst a strong case can be made for the meritocratic nature of the Quaker Meeting system, which elevated members with the best spiritual and

moral endowments to high-ranking roles, a strong correlation existed between communal status and family membership. In a Society increasingly intent on regulation and discipline among members, it is not surprising that domestic relationships were perhaps the most significant predictor of women's involvement in the Meeting. On a practical level, the need for both the spare time and disposable income to undertake many of the tasks of the Meeting meant that positions of authority tended to be reserved for the wealthiest and most literate members. Nevertheless, a strong link between active leadership and household standing was prevalent throughout the eighteenth century in Chester, Burlington, Marsden, and Kendal Meetings. Thus whilst Friends did not have to be among the elite to achieve positions of authority, it was clearly important that these women came from established and orderly Quaker households. This fits with the evidence found in Chapter One, where a strong correlation was demonstrated between stable and supportive domestic environments and active ministerial service. To Friends, the family was paramount and the Quaker community was an extension of the family.

For women who never experienced a spiritual calling, these Women's Meetings provided opportunities to serve the movement in roles that rested upon their fixed residence within their localities. The Meeting also came to govern many of their day-to-day tasks and responsibilities. In assembling together on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis, these women succeeded in creating a female spiritual community—one connected to but not dependent upon their positions within households. The physical space of the Meeting House also provided an important arena for women to meet together and form connections and friendships with other members of the Society. Some

of these occurred on a personal level, with fellow-worshippers, others were imagined or 'invisible', united only by their correspondence and shared religious experience. In providing members with an alternative form of female sociability, the Meetings gave women a sense of cohesion, friendship, and fellowship. Moving beyond the Meeting, the next chapter will focus on how these social connections and alliances were fashioned and experienced by women across both neighbourhood and nations. In fulfilling their roles within Meeting, church, and family, these women participated in a shared spiritual sphere that defied class and gendered distinctions and united them across the Atlantic world of Quakerism.

Chapter Three

‘[U]nited by this holy cement’: The Constructions, Practices, and Experiences of Female Friendship within the Quaker Community

The Sythe [*sic*] of Time, Death, parteth Friend from Friend,
But to true Friendship cannot put an end;

[...]

Bless’d be the Day, wherein my Love abounded,
At first to her, and Friendship firm was Founded,
In our United Hearts; my Faithful Friend!
Friendship ’twixt thee and me shall never end.

Mary Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement* (London, 1702), sig. B4v.

In 1702 *Fruits of Retirement*, a compilation of meditations, poems, letters, and writings by the Quaker poet Mary Mollineux, was published by a group of her close friends and co-religionists. Whilst Mollineux refused to publish her writings during her lifetime, ‘not seeking Praise amongst Men’, her works were nevertheless designed for a public audience, ‘to communicate the Exercise of peculiar Gifts amongst her near Friends and Acquaintance[s].’¹ Manuscripts circulated by hand were her preferred form of publication. Her decision to limit the circulation of her most intimate writings to only those ‘whom she knew in the Fellowship and Bond of Truth’ highlights the importance of religious belief in shaping the pattern of female friendships in early Quakerism.² In her various poems on the subject of ‘Friendship’, Mollineux highlighted the spiritual debt that she owed to her friends, whose conversation had enlarged her understanding and enriched her relationship to the divine. In return, she wrote to and for her Friends—members of her religious community. This form of

¹ Mary Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement: Or Miscellaneous Poems, Moral and Divine. Being some Contemplations, Letters &c. Written on a Variety of Subjects and Occasions* (London, 1702), sig. A7v.

² Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement*, sig. A7v.

'literate sociability' reflects the multifaceted experience of friendship within the early movement. Despite their rather abstract quality, one theme dominating Mollineux's verses was how the practice of friendship could be linked to a pious lifestyle. It is this complex interplay between the language of friendship and how this translated into women's everyday experiences that will form the focus of this chapter.

Friendship and network formation within early Quakerism have received little sustained historiographical attention. In part, this is owing to the limited extent to which Quaker authors engaged with the concept of friendship, either as a philosophical idea or a moral practice.³ Indeed, the focus that was placed on the subject in Mary Mollineux's compendium was unusual by Quaker standards.⁴ The highly individualistic nature of the Quaker faith may have persuaded authors to avoid the matter altogether, as the temporal concern of maintaining relationships could be viewed as a hindrance to personal piety. Many of Mollineux's verses were composed in solitude, the 'fruits of retirement'. Yet this intense personal contemplation, as Phyllis Mack has shown, was balanced by the interactive practice of the Quaker faith.⁵ Notwithstanding the inward-looking theology of Quakerism, notions of friendship and cooperation were intrinsic to the way in which Quaker communities were formed and maintained. Focusing on the various types of friendships and networks of 'Friends' that developed across the Atlantic, this chapter will show how women,

³ Thomas Heilke came across something similar in his study of the Swiss Anabaptists, where he noted that friendship is something not 'directly articulated' within Anabaptist writings on church community. Thomas Heilke, 'From Civic Friendship to Communities of Believers: Anabaptist Challenges to Lutheran and Calvinist Discourses', in Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López, and Lorna Hutson (eds.), *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700* (Farnham, 1988), p. 230.

⁴ *Fruits of retirement* contained ten items, both in verse and prose, with the subject of friendship in their title.

⁵ Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 150–51.

through their adherence to the faith, reshaped their understandings and practices of friendship to fit their own experiences.

The multifaceted nature of Quaker friendships was facilitated through a dynamic transatlantic network of itinerant ministry, Meetings, epistolary, and commercial exchanges. We saw in the previous chapter how participation in separate Meetings offered an alternative sphere of sociability, which was dependent upon like-minded women meeting together on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis to offer spiritual, emotional, and practical guidance to one another. This chapter will observe women's personal relationships in their broadest geographical scope. It will explore the range and meanings of 'friendships' within the transatlantic Quaker movement, emphasising the distinctive combination of being both a personal 'friend' and a member of the religious community: a 'Friend of Truth'.

From the earliest days of the movement the word 'Friend' was in general use by Quakers to describe those who shared the same spiritual outlook. A common misconception is that the term 'Society of Friends' was already in corporate use at this point in the movement's history.⁶ In fact, early Quakers preferred to describe themselves collectively as the 'Children of Light', 'Friends of Truth' or 'Friends in Truth' to distinguish one another from the rest of society.⁷ Writing to her former landlady in 1752, the Quaker preacher Mary

⁶ William C. Braithwaite was able to uncover one dubious reference to 'Society of Friends', dating from 1665, but this he argues was used in a 'descriptive' rather than a 'customary' sense. The full use of the term 'Society of Friends' does not appear to have developed connotations with Quakerism until the late eighteenth century: William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (2nd edn, rev. H. J. Cadbury, Cambridge, 1961), pp. 307–08. It was in common usage by 1800 when Joseph Bevan Gurney published *A Refutation of Some of the More Modern Misrepresentations of the Society of Friends, Commonly Called Quakers*.

⁷ The name 'Quaker', like many other derisory labels, was often used by Friends without qualification. However, it was not a term that was officially accepted by Friends themselves, except when indicating that it was applied to them in contempt by others. Anne Audland, for

Weston explained that 'Truth makes the Friends of it, more dear to each other, th[a]n the nearest relation'.⁸ In using the word 'Truth' to describe their relationships, Friends were signalling their conviction that their beliefs and practices directly reflected the teachings of God. As Weston's statement suggests, Friends' spiritual compatibility and relationship to 'Truth' came before their personal connections. This tension between spiritual, temporal, and personal friendships will be explored in detail in the following discussion.

The chapter has been structured in three distinct sections to emphasise the polyvalence of Quaker women's connections. Using contemporary writings on the subject as its main source base, the first section will explore how female alliances were theorised by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers, with reference also to general historiographical treatments of friendship. The remainder of the chapter will then compare the Quaker experience of friendship to these general models. Drawing upon a range of printed and manuscript materials, section two will explore the language and theological construction of friendship as theorised by early Quaker writers. Section three will then move the discussion to the practicalities of Quaker women's friendships and what made them unusual by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century standards. Whilst adherence to Quaker testimonies in some respects restricted the types of friendship available to women, the highly mobile and literate nature of the movement also served to expand these alliances, highlighting how a shared religious bond could solidify friendships between women across vast distances.

example, signed *A True Declaration of the Suffering of the Innocent, Who is Hated and Persecuted Without a Cause: 'By Anne Audland, whom the world scornfully calls Quaker'* (London, 1665), title page.

⁸ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 8, fol. 56, Mary Weston to Mary Pemberton from Wapping, London, 14 September 1752.

As this aspect is largely missing from the secondary literature, this will form the most substantial of the three sections.

In arguing that the practice of friendship among early Quaker women was shaped by their adherence to the faith, this survey will show how Quaker friendships both conformed to and contravened non-Quaker patterns of social bonding. It will emphasise the relationship between Quaker understandings of friendship and those circulating in the wider society and question how far there was a specifically gendered dimension to women's alliances. What made Quaker understandings of friendship distinctive, I will argue, was the sense of providence underpinning their unions. This helped to make it possible for women's friendships to be conducted and maintained over vast distances and forged between individuals who shared nothing but a commitment to the 'Truth'.

Friendship encompassed a broad spectrum of relationships. For the purposes of this discussion, however, the focus will be upon non-kin relationships. Whilst acknowledgment will be made to the relationships that might also develop between Quakers and non-Quakers, I will explore here only those connections formed within the movement. Most Quaker theorists believed that *amicitia perfecta* (true or perfect friendship) was only attainable between fellow-believers, an ideal that will be discussed in the second section on the theology of Quaker friendship. The connections that women developed with the non-Quaker community will be interrogated in greater depth in Chapter Four.

1. The quest for *Amicitia Perfecta*: interpreting friendship in the historiography

Friendship attracted a great deal of attention from non-Quaker writers and thinkers throughout the early modern period. It was 'perplexing', Naomi Tadmor suggests, because it entailed a range of ideas that were almost impossible 'to explain and prescribe in any consistent manner'.⁹ From the days of the Ancients right up until the present age, individuals have been unable to agree on *who* should be regarded as a friend, and *what* virtues should be attached to friendship. Modern social scientists describe friendship as a voluntary relationship, often among individuals of relatively equal social status, and principally among non-kin.¹⁰ Yet, as scholars like Tadmor and Barbara Caine have recognised, friendship had a plurality of meanings throughout the early modern period. Members of one's household, family, business associates, political affiliates, as well as personal companions, were variously described under the hypernym of 'friend'.¹¹ This could also refer to members of one's religious community, where connections between individuals were defined by shared religious practices.

The bonds forged within the family could also be included within this taxonomy of friendship. The humanist scholars Desiderius Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives, for instance, concluded that husbands and wives were even closer

⁹ Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 237–38.

¹⁰ Jacqueline P. Wiseman, 'Friendship: Bonds and Bind in a Voluntary Relationship', *Journal of Social and Personal Relations*, vol. 3 (1986), pp. 191–211; See also Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, pp. 211–15.

¹¹ Barbara Caine, 'Introduction', in Barbara Caine (ed.), *Friendship: A History* (London, 2009), p. x; see also Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, esp. pp. 167–215.

than friends because they shared one body as well as one soul.¹² As explored in Chapter One, the language of companionship helped Quaker couples to construct their understanding of marriage. Although friendship and family connections were closely linked in contemporary imagination, however, they were also differentiated, for the prescription of a hierarchical rather than horizontal relationship tended to define domestic experience. The indissolubility of marriage as theorised by Erasmus for example, was based on the recognition that the authoritative husband had dominance over the weaker wife.¹³ As Jeremy Taylor noted, 'this friendship and social relation is not equal, and there is too much authority on one side, and too much fear on the other to make equal friendships.'¹⁴ Likewise, Francis Bacon noted in his essay 'Of Friendship' that unlike a father or husband, a 'true Friend' was a non-family intimate who could 'speak as the case requires' and thus offer frank and edifying counsel.¹⁵

As well as navigating these conflicting definitions of who should be regarded as a friend, early moderns also had to accommodate a range of attitudes and values about what constituted *amicitia perfecta*, the highest form of friendship. Leading Greek and Roman philosophers, particularly Aristotle and Cicero, continued to dominate seventeenth and eighteenth-century theories of friendship. Prominent in their writings was the theme that perfect unity between two individuals could only be achieved between social and intellectual

¹² Constance M. Furey, 'Bound by Likeness: Vives and Erasmus on Marriage and Friendship', in Lochman, López, and Hutson (eds.), *Discourses and Representations of Friendship*, p. 35.

¹³ Furey, 'Bound by Likeness', pp. 35–36.

¹⁴ Jeremy Taylor, *The Measures and Offices of Friendship: With Rules of Conducting it* (London, 1657), p. 68.

¹⁵ 'A man cannot speak to his Son, but as a Father; to his Wife but as a Husband; to his Enemy, but upon terms. Whereas a *Friend* may speak as the case requires and not as it sorteth with the Person'. Francis Bacon, 'Of Friendship', *The Essays, or Councils, Civil and Moral, of Sir Francis Bacon* (London, 1696), pp. 75–76.

equals.¹⁶ Underlying this idealised notion of friendship was the belief that it was only available to a particular type of person—an educated elite man. Indeed, the assumption that women were naturally inferior and thus unable to become virtuous citizens continued to permeate early modern thought. Michel de Montaigne in his essay 'Of Friendship', which went through multiple editions throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, explained that women were incapable of perfect friendship because 'the ordinary talent of women, is not such as is sufficient to keep up that correspondence and communication, which are necessary for cultivating this sacred tye'.¹⁷ The core values of friendship were therefore theorised within a masculine world of civic performance which was unavailable to women.¹⁸ Jon Mee has noted that eighteenth-century women were still excluded from this world of sociability, because it was believed that their conversation was not deemed to meet 'the proper standards of talk underpinned by a classical education'.¹⁹

Nevertheless, as alternative models developed outside of this idealised, classically-inspired notion of friendship, attention was increasingly focused on the possibility of friendship between women. The seventeenth-century poet, Katherine Phillips, even argued for its superiority over other types since, unlike

¹⁶ It was Aristotle's notions of *philia* (love shared between exemplary friends) in his *Nicomachean Ethics* and Cicero's interpretation of *amicitia* (likeness in virtue) in his *Laelius de Amicitia* that early modern writers continued to utilise in their writings on friendship. Helen Berry's research into the *Athenian Mercury* found that platonic ideas of friendship were also influential during this period. Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural World of the Athenian Mercury* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 212–34.

¹⁷ Michel de Montaigne, 'Of Friendship', *The Essays of Michael Seigneur de Montaigne, translated into English* (8th edn, 3 vols, London, 1776), i, p. 212.

¹⁸ Laura Gowing, 'The Politics of Women's Friendship in Early Modern England', in Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (eds.), *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300–1800* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 131–32.

¹⁹ Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention and Community, 1762 to 1830* (Oxford, 2011), p. 10.

marriage, it was grounded upon equality.²⁰ Using letters, diaries, and poetry to reconstruct the affectionate bonds between women, scholars have successfully demonstrated the many ways in which friendship patterns enabled women to develop spaces in which to negotiate patriarchal constraints.²¹ Crucially, those female writers like Phillips who defended the capacity of women for friendship appealed to traditional ideals of friendship as a meeting of equals.

This recognition of the vibrant participation of women in a culture of friendship has been supported by recent research into the emergent fields of sensibility and sociability. The appearance of new social spaces, such as the coffee house, salon, and theatre, as well as new reading and writing practices, altered how women were understood as both gendered and social beings at the turn of the eighteenth century.²² In a society where overt expressions of love, sensibility, and emotion were common in both public and private writing, the perceived emotional nature of women increasingly came to be admired. The belief that women were more emotional and thus more capable than men of sympathy and empathy corresponded with the rise of new ideas about what it meant to be a friend.²³ The rise of new prescriptive texts, such as Hannah

²⁰ Penelope Anderson, "Friendship Multiplied": Royalist and Republican Friendship in Katherine Philips's *Coterie*', in Lochman, López, and Hutson (eds.), *Discourses and Representations of Friendship*, pp. 135–37.

²¹ See in particular: Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003); Gowing, 'The Politics of Women's Friendship', pp. 131–49; Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 231–51; Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (eds.), *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2008); and Lisa Vollendorf, 'The Value of Female Friendship in Seventeenth-Century Spain', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2005), pp. 425–45.

²² See for example: G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1992); and Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC., 2009). For more on changing epistolary practices see in particular: James Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450–1700* (Basingstoke, 2001); and Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800* (Oxford, 2009), esp. pp. 112–57.

²³ Susan E. Klepp and Karin Wulf suggest that this new emphasis on sensibility gave women greater influence at social gatherings and thus in the public sphere, 'Introduction: Hannah

Woolley's *Gentlewoman's Companion*, offered guidance to female readers on how to select and sustain their friendships.²⁴ The anonymous author of *The Ladies Dictionary*, for instance, devoted lengthy sections to the subject of friendship, arguing that 'Friendship well chosen and placed, is the greatest felicity of life'.²⁵ While women had been excluded from the world of civic friendship, this burgeoning behavioural literature on female alliance-formation indicates that they were now considered to be active participants in the culture of social exchange.

Such practices were naturally restricted to elite women affluent enough to support such leisurely activities. Nevertheless, lower-ranking women could also access friendship culture. Bernard Capp's study of early modern gossips has shown us how a largely oral culture of neighbourly support and female networks could give women an active role within the early modern community.²⁶ Moreover, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have demonstrated how everyday interactions and lifecycle events from the birthing chamber to epistolary exchanges provided alternative spaces for women to develop relationships of intimacy outside of the family.²⁷ These scholarly developments have led to a realisation that women from all social classes could

Callender Sansom and Her World' in *The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of the American Revolution*, ed. Susan E. Klepp and Karin Wulf (London, 2010), pp. 2–3.

²⁴ Hannah Woolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion: Or a Guide to the Female Sex* (London, 1673).

²⁵ N. H., *The Ladies Dictionary; Being a General Entertainment for the Fair-Sex* (London, 1694), p. 223.

²⁶ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*.

²⁷ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 231–54.

be active participants in what Lynne Magnusson has termed 'the richly complex rhetoric of social exchange in early modern England'.²⁸

Moreover, the influence of Christian notions of friendship provided an expansive theoretical space for close personal bonds to develop between women. Although they were viewed as inferior in terms of their mental, legal, educational, and physical capacities, in 'matters of the soul' they were often accepted as equals.²⁹ Amanda E. Herbert in her work on women's alliance-formation highlights how the idea of Christian charity (*caritas*) gave women the space to participate in a religious culture of friendship, since 'followers of Christ were prompted to love one another despite their differences and inequalities'.³⁰ Intimate friendships, as Mendelson and Crawford have argued, could be reinforced by shared faith. They argue that religious devotion should be placed within a broader framework of 'collective feminine experience'.³¹

Despite this acknowledgment, however, the subject of Quaker women's friendships is largely absent from the historiography. Few discussions have questioned what it meant to be women 'Friends' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The most significant contribution has come from Herbert's recent work *Female Alliances*, which takes the special bond that developed between travelling Quaker companions as an example of female alliance-building in seventeenth-century Britain.³² However, Herbert's assessment is also limited by its focus on only a very specific relationship

²⁸ Lynne Magnusson, *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 1, cited in Katherine R. Larson, *Early Modern Women in Conversation* (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 34.

²⁹ Amanda E. Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (London, 2014), p. 24.

³⁰ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, p. 26.

³¹ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 217, 225–31.

³² Herbert, *Female Alliances*, pp. 142–67.

(travelling missionaries) as a demonstration of how religious belief could enhance the experience of female friendship. Very little indication is given about how far these Quaker alliances differed from other societal models and there is a tendency to underplay the distinctive gendered dimension of these women's friendships.

This interest in the shared sense of community between Quaker women has been developed by scholars working in the fields of Literary Criticism and Gender History. Catie Gill's recent assessment of Quaker women's multiple-authored texts demonstrates how individual women writers attained a sense of fellowship within the wider Quaker community through co-authoring Quaker publications.³³ Other important contributions have come from studies of later periods of Quakerism, including Sandra Stanley Holton's work on nineteenth-century Quaker women's network formations and Sheila Wright's assessment of Quaker women's friendships in the period 1750–1900.³⁴ Wright's analysis is particularly useful in highlighting how common religious values aided Quaker women's alliances. As she suggests, shared religious and social expectations enabled women to form particularly close friendships.³⁵

Whilst these surveys mark a decisive revision in our understanding of friendship formation within Quakerism, no study to date asks how the experience of friendship for Quaker women was altered by their adherence to the movement. In 1982 Nancy Tomes stated, with reference to colonial

³³ Quaker women, she states, 'wrote for and to their religious community. They wrote of concord, and 'fellowship': Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Political Identities, 1650–1700* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 184.

³⁴ Sandra Stanley Holton, 'Kinship and Friendship: Quaker Women's Networks and the Women's Movement', *Women's Historical Review*, vol. 14, Nos. 3 and 4 (2005), pp. 365–84; and Sheila Wright, 'Every Good Woman Needs a Companion of Her Own Sex': Quaker Women and Spiritual Friendship, 1750–1850', in Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750–1900* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 89–104.

³⁵ Wright, 'Every Good Woman Needs a Companion of Her Own Sex', p. 90.

Quakerism, that 'the networks formed by women's social activities have never been given the acknowledgment they deserve'.³⁶ Even now, we still lack a detailed study that investigates how the terminology of friendship was used by Quaker women to add meaning to their everyday lives and relationships. This chapter seeks to rectify this historiographical omission by focusing upon how the experience of being 'Friends' shaped their social interactions. It begins by exploring the language of friendship in early Quakerism and how this was expressed by both Quaker writers and female adherents.

2. The theology and language of Quaker friendship

The very existence of the Quaker movement was underpinned by Christian understandings of friendship: a spiritual community of believers, united by a shared religion of experience. The word 'Friend' appears repeatedly throughout Quaker writings, but its meanings vary widely. This supports Tadmor's claim that for early modern men and women, 'friend' was a flexible term.³⁷ As this section on the theology of Quaker friendships will show, some tension appears to have existed in how the term was theorised. At times, it was employed by individuals who regarded themselves as part of the Quaker community of 'Friends' and on other occasions it was reserved as a term of endearment for close personal friends, acquaintances and, on occasion, family members. Arguing that the inherent sense of community propounded by Quaker believers enabled a more expansive notion of friendship to develop that was based purely on spiritual attributes, the following section will show how seventeenth- and

³⁶ Nancy Tomes, 'The Quaker Connection: Visiting Patterns among Women in the Philadelphia Society of Friends, 1750-1800', in Michael Zuckerman (ed.), *Friends and Neighbours: Group Life in America's First Plural Society* (Philadelphia, 1982), p. 192.

³⁷ Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, p. 167.

eighteenth-century Quaker writers fashioned an unconventional understanding of friendship.

'Love Your Enemies': Universal Friendship

One striking feature of early Quakerism was the diverse range of individuals addressed as 'Friends', which encompassed not only the movement's converts, but also its opponents. In a letter to William Lancaster, who had purportedly written 'a Paper of great Objection against us, the People called Quakers', George Whitehead, along with six other members of the Society, addressed him as their 'Friend'. They even subscribed the letter, which was later printed in Whitehead's *An Antidote Against the Venome of the Snake in the Grass*, as 'thy Friends and Well-wishers'.³⁸ Jacques Derrida in his philosophical examination of friendship reminded scholars to look at friendship's binary constructions and to remember that the term implies absence and its opposite, hostility, as much as its literal implications of perfection.³⁹ Quaker authors were notorious for their highly confrontational and explicit written attacks against their opponents. Yet, the decision of some Quaker authors to address their opponents as their 'Friends' implies an all-encompassing notion of friendship that could be positive and seemingly unrestricted. Alice Curwen, for example, described the Mayor of Plymouth, Richard Tomes, a notorious persecutor of local Quakers, as

³⁸ Printed in George Whitehead, *An Antidote Against the Venome of The Snake in the Grass* (London, 1697), pp. viii–xi, John Gratton, Samuel Watson, Thomas Lower, James Parke, John Bowater, George Whitehead and John Vaughton to 'Friend William Lancaster', London, 3 June 1695.

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship* (London, 1997), pp. 32–33. This idea is explored in Daniel T. Lochman and Maritere López, 'Introduction: The Emergence of Discourses: Early Modern Friendship', in Lochman, López, and Hutson (eds.), *Discourses and Representations of Friendship*, p. 13.

a 'Friend', requesting that he 'be not stir[r]ed up against a peaceable People that meets together singly to worship'.⁴⁰

In many respects, this universalised notion of friendship was an extension of the wider Christian tradition of *caritas*, which encompassed universal, brotherly, and communal love. The Bible taught individuals to 'Love your enemies' and 'do good to them that hate you' (Matthew 5:44). Theologians like Thomas Aquinas had argued that love should not be limited to a man's friends, but extended to his neighbour and fellow-man.⁴¹ This Sermon on the Mount trope continued to permeate early modern thought, as writers like Jeremy Taylor recognised the importance of Christian charity in the performance of friendship. He noted how 'there is enough in every man that is willing, to make him become our friend' and went on to explain that 'he who was to treat his enemies with forgiveness and prayers, and love and beneficence was indeed to have no enemies, and to have all friends'.⁴² The religious idealisation of *caritas* viewed the love of an enemy as admirable, because it was a reflection of God's love.

However, there was a clear tension in its practical application. '[W]hen men either are unnatural or irreligious', Taylor wrote, 'they *will not* be friends.' He also noted that strangers '*cannot be friends* actually and practically'.⁴³ In this respect, the Quaker impulse to regard critics and individuals who had mistreated them as their allies seems much more expansive than contemporary applications. Moreover, a preoccupation that dominated many writings on the

⁴⁰ Anne Martindell *et al.*, *A Relation of the Labour, Travail and Suffering of that Faithful Servant of the Lord, Alice Curwen* (1680), p. 27.

⁴¹ Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, p. 238.

⁴² Taylor, *The Measures and Offices of Friendship*, p. 12-3.

⁴³ Taylor, *The Measures and Offices of Friendship*, p. 10.

subject was how to discern a true friend from an enemy in disguise.⁴⁴ Henry Sacheverell's sermon on *The Perils of False Brethren*, for example, conveyed the deep-seated anxieties surrounding the deceptive influence of Satan when it came to the issues of religion and politics. Indeed, as Sacheverell explained, the Church was not only under attack from 'professed enemies', but also from those who 'pretended to defend it'.⁴⁵ The universalised notion of 'Friend' used by early Quakers, by contrast, did not need to distinguish a friend from an enemy, because all had the power to enter into divine communion. Early Quaker calls for repentance, for instance, served as affirmation of the regenerative power of the Inner Light, where God's grace was freely available to all and everyone was viewed as a potential friend. Grace Barwick, for example, whose 1659 printed call for repentance, *To All Present Rulers, Whether Parliament, or Whomsoever of England*, referred to her persecutors and unknown readers as 'Friends', whilst Esther Biddle addressed the inhabitants of London, as 'my dear beloved friends, who are friends of God' and exhorted them to 'dwell together in the life immortal'.⁴⁶ The desire to dispense with all social differences even led Anne Clayton in *A Letter to the King*, to address the returning sovereign as her 'dear Friend' and 'dear Heart'.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Carolyn James and Bill Kent, 'Renaissance Friendships: Traditional Truths, New and Dissenting Voices', in Caine (ed.), *Friendship: A History*, p. 117.

⁴⁵ Cited in Mark Knights, *The Devil in Disguise: Deception, Delusion and Fanaticism in the Early English Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2011), p. 147

⁴⁶ The persecutors to whom Barwick was referring were General John Lambert 'and the rest of the Officers' and included her own husband. Grace Barwick, *To All Present Rulers, Whether Parliament, or Whomsoever of England* (London, 1659), pp. 1–2 and Esther Biddle, *A Warning from the Lord God of Life and Power, Unto thee O City of London* (1660), p. 18.

⁴⁷ Anne Clayton, *A Letter to the King* (London, c.1660), p. 1.

The 'family of faith': friendship within the Quaker community

The tension inherent in this universalised notion of friendship meant that early Quakers also faced the challenge of putting it into practice. Of particular concern, was whether the highest form of friendship was available to individuals who did not share the same relationship to 'Truth'. After the initial zeal of the first few decades, Friends increasingly came to view themselves as 'saints' working towards a common end. This extensive view of friendship, encompassing those both within and without the movement, naturally began to waver from the 1670s, as Quaker ministers began to focus their preaching efforts on Quaker audiences. Indeed, the more 'quietist' movement of the eighteenth century has been characterised by its inward-looking focus and concomitant stress on forging alliances between believers. This emphasis on more selective friendship is encapsulated in an interesting exposition penned by Sophia Hume in 1750. '[T]he sacred and expressive name of friendship', she wrote, 'belongs only to those whose souls are united by this holy cement [...] yet where this holy attraction and sacred Bond is wanting the friendship is defective, cold, incompleat and insip[i]d.'⁴⁸ Moments of tension and conflict, at local or national level, also severely tested the Quaker commitment to seeing enemies as potential Friends. At times, such pressures encouraged Friends to think of persecutors as un-Christian and therefore beyond the universalism of Christian charity. Its contradictions were most apparent during the Keithian schism of the 1690s when the Society was forced to question whether those 'who have given the highest Demonstrations of Their being our greatest

⁴⁸ HCQSC, MS Coll 1000 Gulielma M. Howland Collection, Box 6 Ho-L, Hume, Sophia folder, Sophia Hume to unknown, undated, c.1750.

Enemies' could be 'owned and received as Friends, as Brethren, as Preachers, as Ministers of Christ amongst us'.⁴⁹ As we shall see in the next section, Friends' quest for moral purity with fellow-believers altered not only the internal character of the movement but also its relationship to the wider-world, as it became 'an inward-looking partly closed community'.⁵⁰

One of the effects of the more quietist and introspective outlook of the eighteenth-century movement was the still greater emphasis placed on individual piety, with members urged to refrain from all activities which distracted the mind from its focus on God. Mercy Bell, for example, warned her friend, Priscilla Farmer of the dangers of too much social interaction. 'I know its the common way to persuade People into Company', she wrote, 'indeed the company of a particular Friend may be of service, but in a general way Company is oppressive'.⁵¹ Elizabeth Dennis was even praised in her posthumous testimony for not being distracted from either her domestic or spiritual labours, despite the fact that 'her Company was much desired'.⁵² Similarly, the autobiography of the American Quaker minister Elizabeth Hudson highlighted the potential consequences of placing the needs of a friend before the needs of God:

⁴⁹ Thomas Ellwood, *A Reply to an Answer: Lately Published to a Book Long Since Written by W. P. Entitled, A Brief Examination and State of Liberty Spiritual, &c.* (London, 1691), pp. 11–12.

⁵⁰ Helen Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities, 1770-1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', University of York, PhD thesis (2000), p. 8.

⁵¹ LRSF, Temp MSS 403/1/2/3 Arthur B. Braithwaite MSS, fol. 4, Mercy Bell to Priscilla Farmer, undated, c.1756.

⁵² It was also noted how she would not leave her home, 'unless necessity, either to visit the Churches, or upon the account of her Business, called her to it.' LRSF, Testimonies Concerning Ministers Deceased, vol. 1 1728–1758, fols 285–6, 'A Testimony Concerning our Deceased Friend Elizabeth Dennis. Given at our Monthly Meeting Held at Colchester', 3 March 1749.

Here I missed my way by gratifying my own will, [...] [and] pursued the track laid out by my companion and left that truth [which] would have opened more clear had I kept a single eye to it.

Hudson went on to warn her readers to 'keep a single eye to the Divine leader, not suffering our affections to any companion whatsoever to bias our enlightened judgements and draw us from pursuing that track truth directs us to follow'.⁵³ Too much focus on temporal needs and personal relationships would distract Friends from a greater spiritual calling.

This fitted into wider religious models that viewed all forms of temporal association as a distraction from the pursuit of godliness. Saint Teresa of Avila felt that one of her greatest faults was her attachment to her friends, until God told her, 'I will have thee converse now, not with men, but with angels'. Thereafter, her saintly lifestyle was praised because she chose to place God before all other personal relationships.⁵⁴ Moreover, the Quaker ideal also corresponded to the Calvinist model of friendship, where an individual's obedience to divine commands was placed above all other temporal connections. As a consequence, friendship was never viewed by Calvinists as anything more than a temporal pleasure or relationship of necessity. Sarah Savage, a strict Presbyterian, found that her faith prevented her from forming friendships with other women.⁵⁵ Indeed she shunned most occasions for social

⁵³ Elizabeth Hudson, 'An Abstract of the Travels and Some Other Remarks of Eliza Hudson, from 22nd of 1st month 1742', in Margaret Hope Bacon (ed.), *Wilt Thou Go On My Errand? Journals of Three 18th Century Quaker Women Ministers: Susanna Morris, 1682-1775; Elizabeth Hudson, 1722-1783; Ann Moore, 1710-1783* (Wallingford, PA., 1994), p. 185.

⁵⁴ Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Life of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus*, in *The Complete Works of St Teresa of Jesus*, ed. E. Allison Peers (3 vols, London, 1946), i, p. 155.

⁵⁵ A detailed micro-historical analysis of Sarah Savage's diaries is provided in Herbert, *Female Alliances*, pp. 168-93.

interaction, which she viewed as 'wasteful and decadent'.⁵⁶ As Herbert notes, in devoting herself to a highly individualistic regime of personal devotion, she struggled to balance 'her duty to be friendly and loving to her female relations with the demands of her Nonconformist conscience'.⁵⁷

As with their Predestinarian counterparts, earthly friendship for early Quakers was considered imperfect compared to their heavenly alliance. However, Quakerism was unusual in the emphasis it placed on the temporal benefits of friendship, when viewed within the context of collective salvation. Since Christ was present in all, friendship was with Christ, as much as with the person he inhabited. The stereotypical activity of quaking performed by early Friends, for example, was understood as a 'dissolution of the individual personality', of 'melting' into a collective, group identity.⁵⁸ The strong, inherent preference of the early Quakers to see the possibilities of a wider, more inclusive community was reconfigured into other forms of universal association. As we shall see in Chapter Four, this was increasingly expressed through activities like philanthropy and political activism. William Penn, for instance, in his *One Project for the Good of England*, argued that collective interest between different religious groups could be a basis for toleration. He suggested that love of God should be the basis of a civil union between Anglicans and dissenters that would transcend self-interest and religious differences. It was not in 'the *Interest of England*', he wrote, 'to let a great Part of her Sober and Useful Inhabitants be destroy'd about things that concern

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁵⁸ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 150.

another World'.⁵⁹ As Geoff Baldwin has argued, Penn put forward a radical view of Christian endeavour that imagined the public as a 'very close-knit community', defined by common interest rather than 'a colder, more distant, contractarian relationship'.⁶⁰ From this perspective, the radical Universalist challenge posed by Friends opened up an important space in which it was possible to accommodate an expansive interpretation of friendship that incorporated both the transcendence of heavenly communion and the spiritual benefits of close bonds between fellow-believers on earth.

Thus, in contrast to both the Catholic and dissenting models of friendship, Quakers managed to maintain a social cohesiveness and sense of community with other members, whilst also pursuing their own singular spiritual calling. Predestinarian doctrines emphasised the exclusivity of those able to achieve salvation and thus made it harder for those who adhered to a godly lifestyle to enter into any relationship that might distract them from their higher calling. Indeed, as Thomas Heilke has found, there was 'no substantive role for friendship' in Calvin's conception of religious community.⁶¹ The model of community proposed by Quakers, by contrast, made it entirely possible for idealised spiritual alliances between believers to coexist with more universalised notions of friendship. This was epitomised in the famous 1778 debate between Dr Johnson and the 'ingenious Quaker lady', Mrs Knowles, who discoursed on the validity of friendship as a Christian virtue. During the discussion, which was published in James Boswell's biography of Samuel

⁵⁹ William Penn, *One Project for the Good of England: That is, our Civil Union is our Civil Safety, Humbly Dedicated to the Great Council, The Parliament of England* (London, c.1679), p. 5.

⁶⁰ Geoff Baldwin, 'The 'public' as a Rhetorical Community in Early Modern England', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (eds.), *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 211-12.

⁶¹ Heilke, 'From Civic Friendship to Communities of Believers', p. 227.

Johnson, Mrs Knowles countered Johnson's argument that all friendship involved preferring the interest of one friend over another, by explaining that God had ordered that good be done to all men, 'but especially to them who are of the household of Faith'. She then proceeded to close the debate by citing Christ's special love for John: 'our Saviour had twelve Apostles, yet there was *one* whom he *loved*. John was called "the disciple whom JESUS loved."⁶² Through presenting their union as something embodied in the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, Quaker theorists like Knowles reasoned that in order to be regarded as a true Friend an individual must share in their vision of a holy covenant or community. Nevertheless, as Knowles's argument makes clear, it is possible for special friendship to operate in conjunction with, rather than opposition to, more universalised notions of Christian charity. Everyone should be loved as friends, but intimacy was expected to be kept between a few friends who were co-religionists.

A recurring theme of Quaker women's writings was the companionship that their shared religious communion brought to their relationships. Writing to Priscilla Farmer, Mercy Bell saluted her friend with the acknowledgment that 'thou art and hast of late been much the Companion of my thoughts even when [I] *should* sleep [I] am conversing with thee'.⁶³ Her conversation, as she later explained, was 'Scripture Language', which had been 'presented to my mind'.⁶⁴ The Philadelphian Friend Sarah Morris provided an important exposition of

⁶² Mrs Knowles's famous defeat of Samuel Johnson was witnessed by James Boswell and later published in his biography of Johnson: James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. Comprehending an Account of His Studies, and Numerous Works, in Chronological Order* (2 vols, London, 1791), ii, p. 226. Boswell records the debate as occurring on 15 April 1778 during dinner at the house of John and Charles Dilly.

⁶³ This rather disjointed sentence has been quoted accurately from the original.

⁶⁴ LRSF, Temp MSS 403/1/2/3 Arthur B. Braithwaite MSS, fol. 4, Mercy Bell to Priscilla Farmer, undated, c.1756.

Quaker friendship in her musings on the subject. 'Where I profess Friendship, and entertain it', she wrote:

I would have it strengthen in the Root, and increase in the Genuine pleasant and beneficial fruits [...] It examples, and inculcates piety; and the belief of another World [...] This is Friendship imutable, a Companionship in the knowledge, love and faith of Jesus.⁶⁵

In both cases, female Friends not only expressed the sense of companionship they experienced with their distant readers as a complementary partnership, but also as a relationship born out of a shared spiritual journey together.⁶⁶ It was powerfully expressed in a letter Sarah Taylor sent to her 'Dear Friend and Companion' Ruth Follows in 1770. Of particular importance was how she chose to sign the epistle: 'be asur'd I am in wonted near Union and affection thy real and simpathizing Friend and Sister Pilgrim.'⁶⁷ The symbolic decision to describe their friendship as a 'pilgrimage' encapsulated the spiritual journey Friends believed they shared with their Quaker acquaintances. Although not physical travelling companions, it was believed that their mutual spiritual affinity would enable them to navigate the trials of their faith in this life and thus further their understanding of their lives in the next.

Tangible bonds formed between fellow-members were strengthened by the allusion to a single spiritual family. A popular trope that appeared in Quaker writings across the period was the concept of Friends being united together

⁶⁵ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 3, fol. 159, Sarah Morris writing on the nature of Friendship, undated c. 1745.

⁶⁶ Rebecca Larson has highlighted the importance of these bonds of friendship for Sarah Morris, who never married. In her will, she bequeathed sums to eight women ministers from different regions listed as 'esteemed friends'. Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 131.

⁶⁷ LRSE, Temp MSS 127 Follows MSS, folder 1 Letters of Ruth Follows to and from Friends, fol. 13, Sarah Taylor to Ruth Follows, Manchester, 28 September 1770. I am grateful to Susan Whyman for this manuscript reference.

within a 'family and Household of faith'.⁶⁸ The metaphorical 'household' implied spiritual unity and friendship, as manifested through a single body of believers. Quakers called each other 'brother', 'sister', 'father', 'mother' and they offered one another spiritual, emotional, and economic support as imaginary family members. Crucially, this was occurring at the same time as individual members were temporarily or permanently breaking bonds with their biological families through joining the movement. New understandings of friendship were thus developed between Quakers as a means of assuaging the loss of their former personal and social alliances. Anne Audland, for instance, used deeply passionate and emotive language to describe the relationship that had evolved between herself and the Quaker leader Margaret Fell. When Anne was imprisoned at Banbury gaol in Oxfordshire in 1655, she reported her sufferings to the Quaker elder who she variously described as 'my dear and pretious sister in whom my life is bound up' and 'my naturall mother'.⁶⁹ Anne's metaphorical usage of familial language and sibling bonds is indicative of the ways in which rhetoric enabled women to emphasise solidarity in the face of adversity. Her choice of address to Margaret Fell as 'naturall mother' suggests the re-imagining of family, and more specifically the parent-child bond, within the writings of early Friends.

It was naturally more common for Friends to imagine themselves as part of a religious family in the earliest years of the movement, when many of their own relations were not Quakers. Nonetheless, this reconfiguration of the

⁶⁸ LRSF, MS Vol 335 Gibson MSS, vol. 2, fol. 3, Samuel Neale to Ann and Sally Kendal, Amsterdam, 10 September 1752.

⁶⁹ LRSF, MS Vol 321 Caton MSS, vol. 3, p. 331, Anne Audland to Margaret Fell, Banbury Gaol, 5 February 1655; and LRSF, MS Vol 321 Caton MSS, vol. 3, p. 435, Anne Audland to Margaret Fell, Banbury Gaol, 23 November 1655.

language of amity was still appropriated by second- and third-generation Friends. The Quaker Women's Meeting of Aberdeen, for example, addressed their 1700 epistle to the Women's Box Meeting in London to their 'Dear Friends: Mothers and Sisters whome we do esteeme and Honour in the Lord and in the Everlasting Covenant of light'.⁷⁰ The image underlines the sense of familial closeness between Quaker Meetings, despite the distance which separated them.⁷¹ In presenting themselves as children, they sought strength and advice as they underwent the various trials of their faith. Thus despite the impact of changing circumstances and a sense that friendship with fellow-members did not have to act as a substitute for the loss of personal relationships, Friends nevertheless continued to imagine themselves as part of a spiritualised family. A revealing letter sent from Lydia Lancaster to Samuel Fothergill in 1756 highlights the prominence which ideals of a Quaker household continued to exert, as she signs the letter: 'thy true and faithfull *friend*, sister and companion in the suferings of Jesus [...] acording to my measure.'⁷²

The metaphorical allusion to a spiritual family, however, was not exclusive to Quakerism.⁷³ The Methodists embraced very similar expressions, also choosing to refer to one another as 'brother', 'sister', 'father', and 'mother',

⁷⁰ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671–1753, fol. 53, epistle from Aberdeen Women's Meeting to the Women's Meeting in London, 6 April 1700.

⁷¹ As Betty Hagglund has shown, the later-established Women's Meeting in Aberdeen initiated a correspondence with their more experienced elders in London, with a sense of being spiritually immature. Betty Hagglund, 'Changes in Roles and Relationships: Multiauthored Epistles from the Aberdeen Quaker Women's Meeting', in Carolyn D. Williams, Angela Escott and Louise Duckling (eds.), *Woman to Woman: Female Negotiations during the Long Eighteenth Century* (Newark, DE., 2010), pp. 143–44.

⁷² LRSF, MS Vol 329 Crossfield MS, fol. 59, Lydia Lancaster to Samuel Fothergill, Lancaster, 10 February 1756.

⁷³ Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and many other sectarian Protestant groups referred to each other as 'Brother' and 'Sister'.

which they regarded as 'the best of bonds'.⁷⁴ However, in clear contrast to the model of domestic arrangements propounded by Quakers, these Methodist spiritual families were expected to replace all other temporal connections, resulting in what Anna M. Lawrence describes as a de-emphasis on the traditional family. Moreover, in contrast to early Quakers, the model of friendship idealised within Methodism continued to express these relationships in terms of traditional hierarchical bonds between family members. These terms invoked status, since fathers and mothers dominated local organisations. As a consequence, they 'replicated the titles, emotions, and supports of the nuclear family structure'.⁷⁵ The notion of spiritual friendship advocated by early Friends, by contrast, was non-hierarchical. Thus when Quakers used the terms 'brother' and 'sister' or 'father' and 'mother', their language and actions implied the erasure of hierarchical distinctions; they acknowledged each other as 'real equals'.⁷⁶ Even where Friends like Anne Audland or the Aberdeen Women's Meeting described themselves as children, they remained independent of the wider movement and, unlike Methodist converts, never had to submit to the authority or rule of discipline of their spiritual parents.

One important outcome of this belief in disembodied alliances within their spiritualised household was that it was entirely separated from gendered distinctions, giving male and female believers extraordinary space in which to forge their friendships. The collective practice of Quaker spirituality made it possible for intimate bonds to develop between male and female believers. Lydia Lancaster, for instance, described the 'freedom to communicate to thee as

⁷⁴ Anna M. Lawrence, *One Family under God: Love, Belonging, and Authority in Early Transatlantic Methodism* (Philadelphia, 2011), p. 72.

⁷⁵ Lawrence, *One Family under God*, pp. 72–73.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

a bosom friend', when describing her spiritual experiences to Samuel Fothergill in 1756.⁷⁷ Other male writers also described sharing a close intimate relationship with female members of the community. In 1702, J. Alexander explained to Mary Holme Junior, a young unmarried woman, that 'in order that we might sing praises unto our God [...] we might take hand in hand in a spiritual sense and help one [an]other on our way and so be a help and strength to each other'.⁷⁸ His revealing expressions highlight the powerful form in which these spiritual friendships could be imagined. Indeed, the non-somatic nature of this union between a single man and woman was visualised through the imaginary act of taking one another by the hand and leading each other along the path to righteousness.

Read in its historical context, the idealised Quaker notion of friendship between men and women provided an unusual accompaniment to the wider literary and religious debate about the relationship between gender and friendship. It was a subject of continual contention within early modern society. Helen Berry's research into the world of John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* has revealed that readers' questions throughout the 1690s were preoccupied with the issue of platonic love and whether non-sexual friendship was possible between men and women. In its reply, the periodical acknowledged that 'Platonick Love [...] undoubtedly is possible', but that love and desire were usually interconnected.⁷⁹ This view that friendship between the sexes should be restricted appears to have been supported by the attitudes of early modern

⁷⁷ LRSF, MS Vol 329 Crossfield MS, fol. 59, Lydia Lancaster to Samuel Fothergill, Lancaster, 10 February 1756.

⁷⁸ LRSF, MS Vol 334 Gibson MSS, vol. 1, fol. 4, J. Alexander to Mary Holme Junior, Bendrigg, Kendal 22 February 1703.

⁷⁹ Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture*, p. 224.

conduct writers. Jeremy Taylor debated whether women could make such good friends as men: 'A man is the best friend in trouble [...] a woman can as well increase our comforts, but cannot so well lessen our sorrows.'⁸⁰ Moreover, the author of *The Ladies Dictionary* responded to the question of whether Friendship contracted by single persons could continue with '*the same Zeal and Innocence if either Marry*' by noting that 'It may, tho Ten to One if it does; since in those Circumstances there will be great hazard that either the Innocence will spoil the Zeal, or the Zeal the Innocence'.⁸¹ Through styling their alliances as a purely spiritual experience, outside of the body, Quakers provided an acceptable alternative space for intimate bonds to develop between men and women, without raising concerns over their moral integrity. As Wright argues, in inhabiting a shared 'spiritual sphere', Quakers established a world that was not clearly defined by 'gendered separate spheres'.⁸² Thomas Lancaster, for example, argued in his testimony of the Yorkshire minister Tabitha Hornor, that an 'intimate acquaintance' had been made possible between them, because 'she was Male and Female being all one in Christ'.⁸³

The ideal of Christian fellowship advocated by early Friends emphasised the indiscriminate nature of friendship shared between like-minded souls. As this section has shown, close examination of seemingly uncomplicated declarations of friendship, as used by early Quaker writers, reveals a multifaceted and complex picture of early modern alliance-formation. Clearly, the changing outlook of the movement, combined with the inherent ambiguities

⁸⁰ Taylor, *The Measures and Offices of Friendship*, p. 103.

⁸¹ N. H., *The Ladies Dictionary*, p. 196.

⁸² Wright, "Every Good Woman Needs a Companion of her Own Sex", p. 90.

⁸³ LRSF, MSS Box G2/2 Hornor Family Papers, fols 63, 65, 'Extracts from Thomas Lancaster's Testimony Concerning Tabitha Hornor', Sedbergh, Cumbria, 24 May 1747.

in the practice of Christian charity, provided some tensions in how Friends performed and understood their alliances. Nevertheless, Quaker writers appear to have successfully found a theoretical balance between the pursuit of personal piety and a more universalised notion of friendship within the community of 'saints'. As Mack notes, Friends 'aimed for nothing less than the experience of a divine presence, or indwelling, in their own bodies', whilst also aspiring for 'friendship and spiritual empathy with the entire community of Quakers'.⁸⁴

Indeed, when examined within broader social contexts, Quakerism appears to have offered a model of friendship that was generally more spacious than those practised within other dissenting movements and wider society. The Quaker belief that enemies could be brought within their circle of amity, and thus regarded as 'Friends', is one example of this. However, it was how the relationship between men and women was expressed that provided the most important deviation from contemporary norms. Indeed, the model on which Friends formulated the idea that all relationships between fellow-members should be performed between equals, regardless of sex or race, paralleled those theories that justified women's place as spiritual authorities within the Society. The spiritualised aspect of their alliances was derived solely from God and transcended all other temporal concerns, making it easier for Quakers of the opposite sex to enter into friendships with one another. Bearing these ideas in mind, the following section turns to the more practical application of Quaker models of friendship. It will explore how religious conviction could shape a distinctive construction of female friendship at a time when the connections

⁸⁴ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 143.

formed between women had growing social and cultural significance in wider society.

3. Companions in life and death: the experiences of female Friendship

The strongest bonds of friendship were evidently formed between those who shared the same spiritual relationship to 'Truth'. However, as previously noted, there has been little exploration of how Quakerism altered the practice of friendship within women's daily lives. Religious affiliation, as Sue Morgan has argued, offered women opportunities to develop 'sororial networks through lives bound by shared religious practices in close-knit communities'.⁸⁵ The lives of Quaker women were structured around many of the same gendered practices of sociability performed by women across early modern society, including epistolary exchange, visiting patterns, and hospitality. However, they also faced isolation and persecution for their religious beliefs, finding themselves cut off from their former acquaintances, their own families, and wider cultural customs.⁸⁶

The following section explores the impact of religious belief on Quaker women's alliances. The ideal of Christian fellowship to which female Friends subscribed became a site of emotional intimacy. We have seen how the language of companionship with which early Friends chose to express their relationships to one another told the story of both their physical and spiritual journeys in this life and the next. But we must also explore how this concept of

⁸⁵ Sue Morgan, 'Women, Religion and Feminism: Past, Present and Future Perspectives', in Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism*, pp. 10–11.

⁸⁶ Joan Vokins, for instance, remarked that 'I turned my back on the World, and all the friendship and glory of it, that I might obtain the favour of Jesus'. Joan Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified: As Manifested and Revealed in his Faithful Handmaid Joan Vokins* (London, 1691), p. 22.

universal friendship enabled Quaker women to reimagine their alliances in their daily lives. This section will explore three distinctive facets of the alliance-building activities and friendships of Quaker women: sociable interactions within their everyday exchanges; the connections formed between itinerant women as companions; and the formation of friendship across the Atlantic community of Friends.

Quaker women's friendships were expressed in a variety of ways, and the types of experience explored in this section reflect the complexity of these relationships. Accessing this type of female-dominated sociability is inevitably limited by the availability of sources. As Mendelson and Crawford argue, little has remained of the 'mental or material culture' of ordinary women, whose friendships were based in oral traditions rather than literary culture.⁸⁷ The majority of exchanges between female Friends would also have been conducted on a verbal and informal basis, which leaves few traces in the historical record. This means that in the majority of cases we can access these relationships only when the participants lived at a distance and were thus forced to offer support and counsel through the act of writing.

Stress will be placed upon the unusual significance of long-distance friendship in the construction of Quaker women's networks. It is worth noting, however, when assessing the experience of friendship in both British and American Quakerism, that there is some disparity in the types of sources available. Many colonial women, for instance, kept detailed diaries and journals of their lives and social exchanges, which provide important insights into the

⁸⁷ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 203.

'emotional universe' of their personal networks.⁸⁸ For British Friends, by contrast, we are forced to construct women's exchanges through more 'official' records, such as Meeting minutes and printed memorials. The Quaker Birth Registers, recorded by the English Meetings, listed the names of the women (and men) who witnessed Quaker births, provide one additional source that has received relatively little attention from historians, but offers a wealth of evidence concerning the networks of support and mutual assistance performed in women's everyday lives (see Appendix Four).⁸⁹ Alongside these sources, this section also makes extensive use of Female Friends' spiritual autobiographies, printed memoirs, and correspondence.

'[T]he sovereign balm of Life': the practice and maintenance of friendship in Quaker women's daily lives

As a 'peculiar people', the customs by which Quakers differentiated their private, public, and spiritual lives from the rest of society shaped how their friendships were expressed and performed. Quaker women's adherence to a strict culture of austerity and plainness served to mark them as 'separate' from other women within their neighbourhoods and local communities. Their status as outsiders was aptly expressed by Thomas Clarkson in his appraisal of Quaker customs and habits:

It cannot be expected that persons, educated like the Quakers, should assimilate much in their manners to other people [...] Excluded also from much intercourse with the world, and separated at a vast distance from it by the singularity of many of their customs, they would naturally

⁸⁸ Tomes, 'The Quaker Connection', p. 175.

⁸⁹ I am grateful to Simon Dixon for making me aware of this collection.

appear to others to be close and reserved. Neither is it to be expected that those, whose spirits are never animated by music, or enlivened by the exhibitions of the theatre, or the diversions which others follow, would have other than grave countenances.

Clarkson's assessment of what he termed the Quaker 'gait' highlights the vast cultural gulf that separated Friends from wider society.⁹⁰ By the eighteenth century, the leisure activities that usually afforded women opportunities to develop friendships were perceived by Friends as distractions from their higher spiritual calling. These included dancing, attending the theatre, reading romances, following the latest fashions, and socialising in places like coffee houses and salons. One 1691 epistle issued by the London Yearly Meeting warned Friends against the dangers of 'unprofitable and idle discourses' and advised their members to 'watch against, and keep out, the spirit and corrupt friendship of the world'.⁹¹ Since they were isolated from their neighbours, Quaker women were forced to look elsewhere for sympathetic and supportive friendships: to their fellow-believers.

Religious worship in pre- and post-Reformation life has long been recognised for the opportunities for interaction and social solidarity it provided.⁹² In the Quaker case, however, this had added significance since the Meeting House and the provision of separate Women's Meetings became an important site of female sociability. Not only did it provide a safe environment for like-minded women to physically meet together, but it also provided them

⁹⁰ Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*, i, pp. 328–29.

⁹¹ London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends Held in London* (London, 1783), p. 25.

⁹² Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (Harmondsworth, 1991), pp. 179–82.

with the opportunity to share in spiritual communion. This was revealed in an undated letter sent by Mercy Bell to Priscilla Farmer, who had been absent from their local Meeting. '[P]eople may acceptably serve and worship the Almighty in private and its our Duty as well as in publick', she wrote, but it was essential for them to 'enjoy his presence unitedly with others of his People.'⁹³ The institution of separate Women's Meetings stressed the importance of female society and friendship in encouraging an emphasis on group fellowship over the individual. It was fittingly expressed by the Philadelphian Quaker poet Hannah Moor, whose poem 'Thought in a place of Worship' encapsulated the spiritual oneness shared within the Meeting House: 'Most sweet it is to feel the unity / Of such cementing love gathering in one, / Flowing from heart to heart and like a cloud / Of mingled incense rising to the Throne'.⁹⁴ The Meeting House therefore came to have a central place in their socialisation activities, since attendance afforded members regular opportunities to meet with one another, share local news, hear epistles, letters, and spiritual writings read, and collectively join together in their spiritual union with God.

The significance of the Meeting as a hub of female sociability is revealed through the writings of American Quaker women. As a devout Friend, the mid-eighteenth century Philadelphian diarist Hannah Callender attended Meetings for Worship on a bi-weekly basis, as well as participating in the Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings for Business as an elder. Whilst silence was expected throughout the Meeting and Friends were not supposed to discuss frivolous matters either just before or after worship, Callender almost always

⁹³ LRSE, Temp MS 403/1/2/3 Arthur B. Braithwaite MSS, fol. 2, Mercy Bell to Priscilla Farmer, undated, London, c.1756.

⁹⁴ HCQSC, MS Coll 950 Satterthwaite Family Papers, 1696–1924, Commonplace book, 'Thought in a place of Worship by Hannah More', n.d, c.1745–1833.

used her attendance at Meetings as an opportunity to undertake social visits and often dined with visiting ministers and local acquaintances afterwards.⁹⁵

One 1758 entry in her diary encapsulated the social interaction surrounding the Meetings:

Morn: drest and gone to Eliza Barkers, found Polly Pusey there. Phebe bayly and more, after a while went to Raper's found betsey Brook there, the time passed very agreeably till meetin time. went to meeting, Ann Schofeild and Sarah Marcy spoke. Polly Sandwith and I dined at John Smith's. afternoon, a women's meeting.⁹⁶

The importance of women's social activities in maintaining group cohesion has been acknowledged as an understated aspect of Quaker history.⁹⁷ Yet, as the experiences of diarists like Hannah Callender suggest, women played a critical role in the social interactions of their local communities. Moreover, despite its prevalence in the writings of women like Callender, the place of the Meeting in this picture has not received adequate historiographical attention. Quaker women's diaries reveal a complex world of social interaction centred around their Meetings, where female Friends visited one another at home, read together, and paid close attention to one another's health, behaviour, and reputation. After a particularly intimate day with her friend Caty Howel in September 1758, Callender expressed how 'Friendship's the sovereign balm of Life'.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ On the conduct expected of Friends before and after Meetings see: J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends* (New York, 1973), p. 36.

⁹⁶ Callender, *The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom*, p. 70, diary entry for 28 September 1758.

⁹⁷ Tomes, 'The Quaker Connection', p. 192.

⁹⁸ Callender, *The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom*, p. 67, diary entry for 8 September 1758.

It is important to note, however, that in contrast to the visiting customs practised in wider society, female Friends appear to have 'observed the principle of exclusivity'.⁹⁹ The next chapter will show how this ideal was at times transgressed as a result of Quaker women's work within their communities, but they preferred not to socialise or develop close personal connections with women who did not share their faith. It was neatly encapsulated in the testimonies and practices surrounding the circulation of Mary Mollineux's edited collection of poems, cited at the beginning of this chapter. As the testimonies in the preface of the volume made clear, intimate friendship with women outside of the Society was unimaginable for the Quaker poet. This was underlined by her reluctance to make her manuscript writings available to women outside of her close religious circle. It was also signified in her own personal connections, for it was noted how Mollineux refused to enter into an intimate relationship with her childhood friend and cousin, Frances Owen, because of their 'different Principles, in matters of Religion'. As well as being kin, the two young women shared very similar interests, personal circumstances, and an apparent compatibility in terms of their 'natural Inclinations and Tempers'. However, as her testimony emphasises, Mollineux could only accept Owen as her 'particular Bosom-Friend' after she had joined the Quaker movement.¹⁰⁰

Meetings were intended to be solemn occasions, where the benefits of religious instruction were stressed over the pleasures of sociability. Friends were exhorted in 1770, for instance, to avoid all 'unprofitable association and

⁹⁹ Tomes, 'The Quaker Connection', p. 186.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement*, sig. A2r-A2v, 'A Testimony Concerning My Dear Friend and Cousin Mary Mollineux, Deceased. By Frances Owen', Rigate, 20 May 1701.

converse', for it was believed that too 'long and frequent conversation on temporal matters' could do a great deal of damage to 'the religious mind'.¹⁰¹ The practice of sociability among pious Friends like Mary Mollineux and Hannah Callender was therefore dominated by what can be termed 'godly conversation', where the main topics of discussion centred on religious discourse and issues raised in Meetings for Worship. Even within these informal social spaces, Friends were exhorted to wait in silence for 'renewal of strength'.¹⁰² Ellin Evans reminded her friend Rachel Pemberton to 'retire and spend some time in waiteing upon god' when friends were visiting, so that a 'renewing of strength [...] will sit well upon thy mind when the company withdraws'.¹⁰³ Even informal gatherings afforded opportunities for solemn reflection. Frances Owen noted how she and her friend, Mary Mollineux, would often enter into serious discussions whilst walking or riding together. These occasions, being 'season'd with Truth' and being 'in a Temper conversable, and concerned for the Good of others', had the effect of making their conversations 'improving and desirable'.¹⁰⁴ The practice of rational and edifying conversation amongst Quaker women was expected to bring believers closer to God, a matter which finds parallels in the wider dissenting tradition. Jon Mee's investigation of eighteenth-century 'conversability' has highlighted how even by 1760, notions of conversation were still guided by ideas of an ultimate religious truth. Like female Friends, dissenting writers believed that the purpose of conversation

¹⁰¹ London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices*, p. 29.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁰³ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 10, fol. 63, Ellin Evans to Rachel Pemberton, not dated, c.1754.

¹⁰⁴ Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement*, sig. A4v, 'A Testimony Concerning My Dear Friend and Cousin Mary Mollineux [...] by Frances Owen'.

was to seek the higher reason of Christianity, although its practice was never exclusive to their nonconformist communities.¹⁰⁵

Some disparity, however, seems to have existed between the sociability practised by American Friends and those of their British sisters. Whilst English Quaker women were involved in more 'official' types of social visiting, like attending births and visiting sick members of their communities, they appear not to have been so heavily invested in informal visits solely for the purpose of sociability. This is neatly encapsulated in the reflections of Ann Warder, an English-born Quaker, who observed the unusual sociability of her Philadelphian co-religionists in her journal.¹⁰⁶ Often decrying the distraction which the time-consuming nature of social visits caused to what she deemed more important household work, she explained how 'it is a custom to visit here more than with us'. She went on to complain that 'I have now a great heap of work that decreases very slowly through gossiping about, which is unavoidable without giving my kind friends offense, for the great number before I have got once around renders it necessary to begin again'.¹⁰⁷ Warder's observations highlight the significance and frequency of social calls practised by American Friends, but also suggests the irregularity of such a custom for a native Englishwoman who viewed them as a distraction. It is possible that the nature of colonial life and the relative wealth of many of the Quaker inhabitants made ideal conditions for

¹⁰⁵ The dissenter Isaac Watts, for instance, argued that the ends of reading and conversation remained 'the Conformation of our Hearts and Lives to the Duties of true Religion and Morality'. 'Free Conversation', he argues, is designed for 'mutual Improvement in the Search of Truth'. Cited in Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, pp. 72–73.

¹⁰⁶ Ann Warder's 15-volume journal was written for the benefit of her sister Elizabeth, who remained in England. During their long separation, Warder described her time as a foreigner visiting America in her writings. Extracts from the diary were published by Sarah Cadbury in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 17, no. 4 (1893), pp. 444–61 and concluded in vol. 18, no. 1 (1894), pp. 51–63.

¹⁰⁷ Ann Warder, 'Extracts from the Diary of Ann Warder (Concluded)', ed. Sarah Cadbury, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1894), p. 51.

social visiting and regular interaction.¹⁰⁸ In rural areas of the British Isles, where Friends were always a small minority within their local communities there may not have been the same pressure or indeed opportunity to undertake time-consuming social visits to local co-religionists.

It is nonetheless clear that at the same time that the evolving Society was restricting the types of activity that its female members could perform within their daily lives, female Friends on both sides of the Atlantic were finding ways to foster meaningful social interaction. The circulation of Mary Mollineux's collection of poems between a select circle of Friends reflected Quaker ideals of sociability in practice. As Tryall Ryder explained in the preface to the volume, it was during the 'Perusal of some Copies of some Verses, which she gave me,' that 'I felt such Unity of Spirit with them'.¹⁰⁹ The important function which this type of literate sociability had in reinforcing a sense of community amongst Friends is a largely unacknowledged aspect of the movement's history. The circulation of poetry between women has been recognised as playing an important part in a shared culture of sociable interaction in early modern culture, bringing women together and enabling them to reflect on issues that engaged them both intellectually and emotionally.¹¹⁰ Perhaps one of the reasons for the absence of this type of sociability within Quakerism was the potential threat it posed to women's spirituality. Indeed, the reading and writing of poetry had been

¹⁰⁸ Although Friends were not a majority among the Colonial populations, in places like Pennsylvania they remained a culturally dominant force until the end of the eighteenth-century. The large number of Quaker inhabitants that resided within cities like Philadelphia may have made visits of this nature more of a necessity than the more isolated Quaker communities within England.

¹⁰⁹ Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement*, sig. A7v, 'A Testimony Concerning My Dear Friend M. Mollineux by Tryall Ryder'.

¹¹⁰ Catherine La Courreye Blecki, 'Reading Moore's Book: Manuscript vs. Print Culture, and the Development of Early American Literature' in *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America*, ed. Catherine La Courreye Blecki and Karin A. Wulf (Pennsylvania, 1997), pp. 80–81.

classified by Quaker leaders as a pastime that reflected pride rather than humility and was to be avoided.¹¹¹ Unlike her contemporaries, however, whose verses reflected 'the extravagant Wits of the Age', Mollineux's poems were separated 'from the Earthly, Worthless Dross'. She was praised for making 'use of her Gift, rather to Convince and Prevail upon the Mind, to affect and raise the Soul upon Wings of Divine Contemplation'.¹¹²

The rise of this type of erudite friendship amongst Quaker women corresponded with the rise of other important sites of literary and intellectual interaction in early Enlightenment culture. The French salon model, which found prominence in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic, provided one such parallel. As Karin Wulf has noted, the influence of the salon was crucial in the practice of female sociability, providing opportunities for debate, discussion, and the circulation of manuscript literature at select gatherings.¹¹³ Elizabeth Eger's work on the late eighteenth century bluestocking circles has also shown how the salon came to create a sense of community for women. Their conversations were central to their sense of belonging, Eger argues, by 'providing mutual support, identity and friendship'.¹¹⁴ Like the discussions that arose out of the salon, Mollineux's poems served as sources of intellectual

¹¹¹ In *No Cross, No Crown* William Penn warned Friends to avoid 'the vain Apparel and usual Recreations of the Age', which included: 'Romances, Plays, Lampoons, Poets, Montebanks, Fidlers, and such like Buffanly conversation [...] which never was the Christian way of Living, but the pastimes, of the Heathens that knew not God.' William Penn, *No Cross, No Crown, or Several Sober Reasons Against Hat-Honour, Titular-Respects, You to a Single Person, with the Apparel and Recreations of the Times Being Inconsistent with Scripture, Reason, and Practice* (London, 1669), pp. 23 [mispaginated as p. 17], 20.

¹¹² Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement*, sig. A6r, 'A Testimony Concerning My dear Friend and Cousin Mary Mollineux [...] by Frances Owen'.

¹¹³ Karin Wulf, 'Milcah Martha Moore's Book: Documenting Culture and Connection in the Revolutionary Era', in *Milcah Martha Moore's Book*, pp. 23–24.

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Eger, 'The noblest commerce of mankind': Conversation and Community in the Bluestocking Circle', in Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (eds.), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 292.

discussion for her acquaintances. Frances Owen, for instance, noted that they 'would often discourse of the present Objects [the poems], much tending to Edification'.¹¹⁵ In the Quaker context, however, the expansion of a literate culture of sociability was also facilitated by the growth of Women's Meetings. Not only did these create a circulating library of Quaker materials, but their select gatherings were also punctuated by a constant exchange of epistles, spiritual autobiographies, and written testimonies, which were regularly discussed and reflected upon. Indeed, the intellectual benefits of the Meeting can be likened to the model of 'Amicable Society' propounded by Mary Astell, whose vision of a college of retirement was centred on her desire to create a separate intellectual space for women, who would live together in companionate scholarly friendship. Like her Quaker contemporaries, Astell emphasised the necessity of learning for the pursuit of godliness and the benefits of performing this amongst 'useful [...] company'.¹¹⁶ The rise of a culture of literate sociability amongst Quaker women, which was supported by their Meetings, thus reflected broader social developments, whilst also providing a safe public space for them to adhere to their own particularised religious beliefs.

'I greatly want thy Company and assistance': gossip networks and life-cycle exchanges

The culture of support surrounding the births of Quaker children provides another salient example of how Quaker women could participate in a culture of sociability practised by their non-Quaker contemporaries, whilst performing it

¹¹⁵ Mollineux, *Fruits of Retirement*, sig. A4v.

¹¹⁶ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (4th edn, 2 parts, London, 1697), i, pp. 45–48.

within their own separate sphere. The supportive function of gossips in the early modern community has been widely documented and Quaker women also benefited greatly from the love and comfort of those women who attended them during childbirth.¹¹⁷ The extensive nature of such networks of support within English Quakerism is revealed from the Birth Notes kept by the Monthly Meetings in London from 1676, which documented the names of the women who had witnessed the births of Quaker children.¹¹⁸ Daniel Wells's mother, for example, was attended by thirteen female witnesses in May 1688, whilst nine female gossips were present at the birth of Maria Gandy in 1721.¹¹⁹ As Ann Giardina Hess concluded from her survey of the Buckinghamshire Quaker Birth Notes, 'nowhere was neighbourly bonding and community religious integration more evident than amongst [Quaker] women'.¹²⁰

Besides providing an important culture of neighbourliness, Capp has noted, this type of sociability 'typified the wider patterns of female interaction' in women's everyday lives.¹²¹ Indeed, the role of these supportive networks within the delivery room points to an important divergence in the Quaker context, for the majority of witnesses who subscribed their names on these

¹¹⁷ See: Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 49–55; and David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 84–87.

¹¹⁸ The London Quaker Birth Notes, which were recorded from 1676, named the midwife who officiated at the birth, along with the witnesses who were in attendance. The National Archives (hereafter cited as TNA), RG6/1626 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1676–1707; RG6/1627 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1707–1718 and RG6/1628 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1718–1725.

¹¹⁹ TNA, RG6/1626 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1676–1707, p. 36 and TNA, RG6/1628 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1718–1725, p. 702.

¹²⁰ Ann Giardina Hess, 'Midwifery Practice Among the Quakers in Southern Rural England in the Late Seventeenth Century', in Hilary Marland (ed.), *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe* (London, 1993), p. 52.

¹²¹ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 51; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 84–87.

Birth Notes were identifiably Friends.¹²² Even within the rural community of Upperside in Buckinghamshire, Hess identified one hundred and sixty of the two hundred and thirty-five witnesses (sixty-eight per cent) who attended the local Quaker births as Quakers.¹²³ Such a figure is surprising since Quaker families were much more widely dispersed than they were in London. Thus, despite the fact that it would have been difficult to gather a group of Quaker women to attend a delivery at short notice, at least two-thirds of witnesses were from the mother's religious community. This contrasts with the gossip networks studied by Capp, where female support during childbirth was determined mainly by physical proximity and a 'culture of good neighbourliness', rather than religious affiliation.¹²⁴

The intimacy and exclusivity of these events for Quaker women is highlighted by the London Birth Notes, where the conditions were favourable for gathering a select group of women at short notice. Margaret Cross was attended by six gossips at the birth of her daughter, Margaret, in March 1720 and in the fifteen years that followed both she and the same group of gossips were listed as present at numerous Quaker births during this period. A more detailed account of these networks is provided in Appendix Five, but it is worth noting here that on all occasions where Margaret Cross attended a Quaker birth, they were exclusive to those gossips who had witnessed her own lying-in.¹²⁵ This was also a highly mobile network, demonstrated by the fact that Margaret

¹²² The presence of non-Quaker women at Quaker births will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. It is worth noting, however, that where a non-Quaker woman was in attendance at a Quaker birth, it would have been the skilled midwife and her assistant.

¹²³ Hess also notes the strong probability that some were Quaker maidservants from distant counties such as Yorkshire and Lancashire. Hess, 'Midwifery Practice Among the Quakers', p. 53.

¹²⁴ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, pp. 50–51.

¹²⁵ TNA, RG6/1628 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1718–1725, p. 622; and RG6/1629 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1725–1769.

Cross and her husband, Josiah, moved to three different parishes during this period—from St Saviour's to St Olave's, and from there to St Martin Orgars—but continued to be supported by the same group of gossips. What we can therefore conclude from this small survey is that religious ties, rather than neighbourly support, were significant in forming these alliances. Gossiping, as Capp argues, 'was about bonding and belonging'.¹²⁶ Indeed, if we follow his suggestion of everyday supportive networks being manifested in the delivery room, we can see how Quaker women stood outside or on the margins of this culture of neighbourly support. The choice of godparents or 'gossips', for example, was used to strengthen friendship and reinforce kinship and patronage, but was a custom which Quakers regarded as superfluous and not in keeping with their testimonies.¹²⁷ This served to reinforce the bonds between believers whilst also distancing them from the interlocking networks of family and patronage that ensured the survival of individual families.

It is highly probable that many of the women present at Quaker births were forced to travel longer distances than their non-Quaker neighbours in order to help their co-religionists. This is something which Hess found for Buckinghamshire Quaker midwives, whose preference for delivering Quaker mothers meant that they were much more mobile than other midwives.¹²⁸ When Mary Bowne believed herself 'to be quickened', she expressed her desire to see her distant friend, Phebe Pemberton, during this difficult time, explaining that 'I greatly want thy Company and assistance [...] I see my Los[s] more [...]

¹²⁶ Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 57.

¹²⁷ Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450–1700* (London, 1984), p. 131.

¹²⁸ Hess, 'Midwifery Practice Among the Quakers', p. 69.

and more and thy motherly advise would be a great Comfart to mee here'.¹²⁹ The supportive relationship expressed in this exchange had added significance, for Mary Bowne had recently relocated to a different part of the colonies on account of marriage.¹³⁰ After the birth of her third child two years later, Bowne expressed similar hopes of seeing her distant friend when she faced problems with breast-feeding, believing that both Phebe and her husband would be a great comfort to her in her time of trouble.¹³¹ The shared experiences of settlement and religious affiliation were clearly crucial in this context, for Bowne chose to turn to her distant co-religionist, rather than her non-Quaker neighbours, for emotional support and advice at this difficult time. This highlights not only the difficulties associated with settlement, but also the strength of bonds shared between female Friends during important lifecycle events.

In their everyday lives, Quaker women shared many of the same kinds of cultural exchange as non-Quaker contemporaries, whether through worship, gossiping, or literary discussion. Nevertheless, within these alliance-building practices, we can also see how religious belief altered how they were expressed and experienced. What made Quaker women's friendships unusual was the exclusivity of their social interactions, as well as the austere nature their exchanges. Despite some geographical variation, these occasions of informal interaction became spaces in which female Friends monitored one another's

¹²⁹ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 2, fol. 98b, Mary Bowne to Phebe Pemberton, August 1693.

¹³⁰ Bowne was writing from Flushing in New York and Pemberton was currently living in Bucks County in Pennsylvania.

¹³¹ 'I am so bad a [nurse] that I think the child does not get [one fourth] part of its mentenance from the brest and what it gets is with much dife[c]ulty and hard ship.' HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 2, fol. 113, Mary Bowne to Phineas and Phebe Pemberton, Flushing, New York, 9 August 1695.

behaviour, indicating the degree to which the ideal of an internally open and visible community life transcended concepts of public and private space. Above all, however, it is clear that faith permeated Quaker women's social worlds at every level, physically separating them from the wider 'world', whilst cementing the bonds between spiritual equals. Local ties had far less significance than religious affiliation.

'This act of pure friendship': female companionship in Quaker missions

Looking beyond such lifecycle events, one of the most powerful examples of how Quaker doctrines encouraged an alternative model of friendship was the intimate friendships Quaker women often formed during their itinerant travels. The presence of supportive companions during missionary service is a prominent feature of itinerant women's writings. Since Quakers modelled their journeys on the labours of the early Apostles, these same-sex partnerships encapsulate how spiritual friendship could be incorporated into women's alliances. A number of themes emerge from the study of Quaker companionships, including the concept of a union of spirits, the biblical friendship of Jonathan and David, and the influence of providence. Quaker friendships incorporated some traditional elements, as theorised and practised in wider society. The unparalleled circumstances in which these women found themselves, however, created a distinctively nuanced experience of friendship.

The word 'companion' appears repeatedly throughout female ministers' spiritual autobiographies, suggesting that their same-sex partnerships were a formative influence in the construction of their writings. The English minister Catherine Payton, for instance, used the word 'companion' one hundred and

seven times in her three hundred-page memoir.¹³² The same term, by contrast, was only used eighty-one times by the English minister Thomas Story in his seven hundred and fifty-page life account.¹³³ Both were English Public Friends who undertook missionary work to the American colonies in the eighteenth century.¹³⁴ Whilst this does not mean that the experience of companionship was any less important or meaningful for male Friends, it does indicate how the physical and emotional burdens of travel could shape women's writings. As we observed in Chapter One, Quaker men, like Story, appear to have been much less inclined to make reference to their personal relationships in their life accounts, preferring to emphasise their own spiritual progress and journeys. The unconventional nature of Quaker women's work may have meant that it was harder for them to relinquish their personal ties. This may account for the important role of their 'spiritual yokemates' in their writings, for they became substitutes for their absent families at a time when they were expected to relinquish all connections to complete the Lord's work.¹³⁵

A close study of how these friendships were expressed in Quaker women's autobiographies reveals the gendered nature of their relationships. Of particular prominence was the idea that the messages articulated by a companion reflected the writer's spiritual calling. Catherine Payton noted the

¹³² This figure has been calculated from a keyword search of the word 'companion' in her spiritual autobiography. Only discrete uses of the word in reference to her same-sex partners have been recorded. Catherine Phillips (née Payton), *Memoirs of the Life of Catherine Phillips: To which are added Some of Her Epistles* (London, 1797).

¹³³ This figure has also been calculated from discrete uses of the word 'companion' in Thomas Story's life account: Thomas Story, *A Journal of the Life of Thomas Story: Containing an Account of his Remarkable Convincement of, and Embracing the Principles of Truth, as Held by the People Called Quakers* (London, 1747).

¹³⁴ Catherine was an active Quaker minister from 1748 up until her death in 1794 and visited America with the Irish Minister Mary Peisley from 1753 to 1756. Story travelled and lived in the American Colonies for fifteen years and was an active Public Friend between 1696 and 1742.

¹³⁵ The idea of Quaker yoke-mates is discussed in detail in Herbert, *Female Alliances*, pp. 163–66.

spiritual unity that she attained with her American companion, Sarah Barney: 'that sincere love to Truth which dwelt in her, united her to my spirit.'¹³⁶ In articulating messages that complemented the words spoken by their companions, ministers could be reassured about the divine origin of their own message. The American minister, Jane Hoskins, explained that 'where companions in this solemn service are firmly united in the true bond of christian fellowship, it must tend to confirm that authority of their message, testifying their joint consent to the doctrine they teach'.¹³⁷ It is crucial to note that very few references are made by male Friends to the idea of spiritual service being shared between companions.¹³⁸ Quaker women, however, reserved the highest praise for their companions when they vocalised one another's most intimate thoughts. A common trope in Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers's 1661 account of captivity in Malta, for example, was how they 'were guided by one Spirit'. When their captors tried to turn them against one another, it was noted that both friends spoke 'one and the same thing in effect, so that they had not a jot nor tittle against us'.¹³⁹ In preaching the same message, the spiritual foundation of their friendship was at its strongest. At a time when independent female travel was treated with suspicion, the spiritual unity emphasised by itinerant women reinforced the divine inspiration of their mission, since their message carried more weight when it was expressed as a shared spiritual instinct that could only have come from God.

¹³⁶ Phillips, *Memoirs of the Life of Catherine Phillips*, p. 127.

¹³⁷ Jane Hoskins, *The Life and Spiritual Sufferings of that Faithful Servant of Christ Jane Hoskens* (Philadelphia, 1771), p. 30.

¹³⁸ Not one mention is made in Thomas Story's life account of the messages he shared with his travelling companions. Instead, the emphasis was on the message preached by each minister and how they were received.

¹³⁹ Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, *This is a Short Relation of Some of the Cruel Sufferings (for the Truths sake) of Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers in the Inquisition in the Isle of Malta* (London, 1662), p. 17.

One of the dominant themes of Quaker women's writings was how the intense spiritual connections formed between female companions supported them through extraordinary trials and life-threatening situations. Evans and Cheevers's account of their three-and-a-half year imprisonment in Malta provides a striking example of how their love and care for one another provided a positive accompaniment to their narrative of suffering. Their travails included separation from their natural families and native land, as well as confinement in a tiny airless cell without access to light, water, or regular supplies of food. '[T]heir mutuality', as their biographers have written, 'confirmed and generated the emotional and spiritual strength which, along with their belief, allowed them to endure physical suffering and spiritual attack.'¹⁴⁰ One instance that was particularly telling occurred after their captors first attempted to separate them. In an act of defiance, Evans took Cheevers by the arm and declared that: *'The Lord hath joined us together, and wo be to them that should part us [...] I rather chuse to dye there with my friend, than to part from her.'*¹⁴¹ This was reminiscent of the words spoken at the marriage service, when the minister declared that 'those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder'.¹⁴² Such, a choice of expression, has been argued by Herbert to have figured them as 'devoted, long-term companions who shared an identity of religious purpose'.¹⁴³ Like the marriage service, it also had a sense of finality, suggesting that they could only be parted in death.

¹⁴⁰ E. Graham, H. Hinds, E. Hobby, and H. Wilcox (eds.), *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by 17th Century Englishwomen* (London, 1989), p. 117.

¹⁴¹ Evans and Cheevers, *A Short Relation [...] of Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁴² Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 289.

¹⁴³ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, p. 143.

Even outside the context of persecution, the profound spiritual connections between women who had joined together 'in gospel labour' was a central feature of their writings. This shared special bond was powerfully expressed by the American minister Susanna Morris who, with her companion Sarah Lay, travelled to the British Isles in 1745 and suffered a dangerous crossing and shipwreck. '[W]e were so in fellowship with one another', Morris recorded in her journal, 'that she [Sarah] held fast hold on me and said if she then must die she would go off with me.' Lay's physical presence and attentiveness to the needs of her companion testify to the extraordinary singularity of their bond. Their union was heightened by their anticipation of heavenly communion. As Morris explained, 'the living Lord was a comforter to me and my dear companion [...] who wrought wonders for my deliverance'.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Joan Vokins, who suffered from poor health for the entirety of her ministerial career, described her companions as 'Heavenly Relations'. This was a choice of expression that like Sarah Lay's pledge of devotion to her companion emphasised the transcendence of their alliance. They knew that even if she departed this life, they would be reunited in the next.¹⁴⁵

The experience of companionship served to create powerful and enduring alliances that lasted far beyond the duration of the mission. 'My heart seemed rent within me on parting with thee', wrote Mary Weston to her former companion, Mary Pemberton, in 1752.¹⁴⁶ Her choice of expression indicated the lasting character of their friendship despite the temporary nature of their

¹⁴⁴ Susanna Morris, 'An Account of Part of the Travels of Susanna Morris', in Bacon (ed.), *Wilt Thou Go On My Errand?*, p. 72.

¹⁴⁵ Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified*, p. 50.

¹⁴⁶ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 8, fol. 56, Mary Weston to Mary Pemberton, Wapping, London, 14 September 1752.

ministerial work together.¹⁴⁷ As Herbert has noted, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quaker companions addressed one another with expressions that emphasised the 'common spirituality' as well as the 'lifelong bond' that was shared between them.¹⁴⁸ The long-term nature of companionate friendship was effectively conveyed in a letter sent by the Pennsylvanian Friend, Grace Lloyd, to her former companion, Abigail Bowles, shortly after recovering from a life-threatening illness. In her letter, Lloyd noted how Bowles was 'daily in My Mind', and even declared that she would rather pass what time she had left with her former companion than with friends or family: 'Noe friend. Nor Relation in the world I Should [be] So glad to see. Espesaly in my Sickness I wo[u]ld have given aboundance to have one hours time with thee.'¹⁴⁹

Parting from a companion, after the impulse to preach had been satisfied, often proved a great source of suffering for itinerant ministers.¹⁵⁰ When Mary Peisley parted temporarily from Catherine Payton during their service in the American colonies, she underwent a great spiritual crisis. In one particularly evocative statement she wrote that 'what now adds to my trial is that I have got no second self to whome I might disclose my Joys [and] my griefs'.¹⁵¹ Peisley's choice of the striking expression 'second self' recalls the long-established ideals of friendship between men, where the virtuous friend

¹⁴⁷ The two women had in fact only travelled together for a few weeks for the small section of Mary Weston's voyage between Philadelphia and New York.

¹⁴⁸ Amanda E. Herbert, 'Companions in Preaching and Suffering: Itinerant Female Quakers in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World', *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2011), pp. 109–10.

¹⁴⁹ LRSF, MS Vol 296 Watson MS, fol. 3, Grace Lloyd to Abigail Bowles (later Watson), Chester, Pennsylvania, 26 September 1727.

¹⁵⁰ Mary Weston explained when she joined in ministerial service with Mary Peisley in 1749, that 'the longer I was with her the harder it was to part'. LRSF, Portfolio MS, vol. 4, fol. 49, Mary Weston to Peter Peisley, Wapping, London, 10 November 1749.

¹⁵¹ HCQSC, MS Coll 859 Shackleton Family Papers, 1707–1785, Peisley, Mary folder, Mary Peisley to Elizabeth Shackleton, Christiana, Pennsylvania, 16 November 1754.

was idealised as 'another himself'.¹⁵² The second self, as Keith Thomas explains, became a 'mirror', by which an individual could better understand himself through contemplating his friend.¹⁵³ In contrast to the traditional formulation of the second self, however, the view of companionship propounded by ministers like Mary Peisley was entirely spiritual and served to enhance the minister's knowledge of the divine, rather than personal self-knowledge. Indeed, Peisley's anxiety about being separated from her 'second self' stemmed from her own uncertainty as to whether the calling she had experienced was genuine. In one letter, her sense of crisis and loss was exemplified through her presentation of herself as 'a poor backslideing child [...] who donte see her self in the light thou do[es]'.¹⁵⁴

The language used by these women is reminiscent of what Constance M. Furey has termed 'more abstract notions of perfect friendship', conveyed through the classical description of friends as 'one soul in two bodies'.¹⁵⁵ The most powerful example of the intimate and personal love shared between Christian friends was the story of David and Jonathan, whose souls, according to the first book of Samuel, were 'knit together'.¹⁵⁶ Many Quaker ministers compared their relationships with their companions to that of David

¹⁵² Aristotle viewed *amicitia perfecta* as an intimate and affective relationship, where the virtuous friend became "another himself". See Dirk Baltzly and Nick Eliopoulos, 'The Classical Ideals of Friendship', in Caine (ed.), *Friendship: A History*, p. 23. This idea continued to permeate early modern notions of friendship. Francis Bacon remarked in his essay on friendship '*That a Friend is another himself*; for that a *Friend* is far more than *himself*'. Francis Bacon, 'Of Friendship', p. 75.

¹⁵³ Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2009), p. 194.

¹⁵⁴ HCQSC, MS Coll 859 Shackleton Family Papers, 1707–1785, Peisley, Mary folder, Mary Peisley to Elizabeth Shackleton, Christiana, Pennsylvania, 16 November 1754.

¹⁵⁵ Furey, 'Bound by Likeness', p. 31.

¹⁵⁶ '[T]he soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul', 1 Samuel 18:1 (King James Version).

and Jonathan.¹⁵⁷ The American minister Elizabeth Hudson, for example, stated that her friend Elizabeth Norris had been made 'an useful instrument in the hand of the Lord [...] for our hearts became truly united to each other [and] I believe not inferior to that degree of friendship which subsisted betwixt Jonathan and David'.¹⁵⁸ In one letter, Mary Weston also noted the 'cementing vertue' of friendship, 'which as David saith passeth the Love, that I need not name'.¹⁵⁹ The story of Jonathan and David provided a powerful model for women to illustrate their close personal and emotional alliances, for it was friendship at its most perfect: based on a foundation of unshakeable commitment to each other and to their shared religious ideals. However, it was perhaps a surprising allusion given their gender and leads us to question why they preferred to model their relationship on two men, rather than find an appropriate scriptural example of a close bond between two women.¹⁶⁰ It is perhaps best accounted for by Mack, who suggests that in their roles as prophets, Quaker women transcended their gendered identities and felt free to assume the personalities of men.¹⁶¹

Quaker women's emphasis on friendship as a meeting of the 'souls' was part of a long-standing tradition that dated back to Aristotle. It was an integral concept in influential early modern treatises on friendship, such as Anglican cleric Jeremy Taylor's *The Measure and Offices of Friendship*. Friendship, for him

¹⁵⁷ John Audland and John Camm were described as being 'firmly knit together, as *David* and *Jonathan*, by the bond of unspeakable love'. Thomas Camm and Charles Marshall (eds.), *The Memory of the Righteous Revived. Being a Brief Collection of the Books and Written Epistles of John Camm and John Audland* (London, 1689), sig. C3r.

¹⁵⁸ Hudson, 'An Abstract of the Travels and Some Other Remarks of Eliza Hudson', p. 131.

¹⁵⁹ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 8, fol. 56, Mary Weston to Mary Pemberton, Wapping, London, 14 September 1752.

¹⁶⁰ The story of Ruth and Naomi, for example, provided another important example of friends being united through their love of God, despite their differences in language, age, culture and understanding.

¹⁶¹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 10.

too, was to be celebrated as a 'union of souls'.¹⁶² The biblical story of Jonathan and David also continued to permeate such religious ideals of friendship. The eighteenth-century Methodist movement, for instance, also appropriated this alliance to express the emotional bonds formed between believers. However, as Lawrence has shown, for the Methodists this story took on greater emotional significance because it provided an example of how religious bonds between godly people could overthrow natural family bonds.¹⁶³ Specific examples of the friendship formed by Methodist women show how their new-found spiritual alliances could be used as a justification for severing familial relationships. Sarah Ryan, for instance, confessed in her autobiography that her desire to pursue a celibate lifestyle with her female co-religionists had allowed her to abandon her husband.¹⁶⁴ Quaker women, by contrast, never used their spiritual alliances as a justification for relinquishing other personal relationships. Their lives and domestic arrangements were highly traditional and their companionate alliances provided a supportive accompaniment to a godly lifestyle during their temporary removal from the family home.

The distinctive aspects of itinerant Quaker women's self-fashioning of their friendships can thus be attributed to the providential element of their undertakings: it was their relationship to 'Truth', rather than to each other, which served to unify their message. As Sarah Crabtree has noted, Public Friends did not come from a particular socio-economic class, but were a 'diverse group of people unified by a religious calling'.¹⁶⁵ This stood in contrast

¹⁶² Taylor, *The Measures and Offices of Friendship*, pp. 82–83.

¹⁶³ Lawrence, *One Family under God*, pp. 123–24.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145–6.

¹⁶⁵ Sarah Crabtree, "'A Beautiful and Practical lesson of Jurisprudence": The Transatlantic Quaker Ministry in an Age of Revolution', *Radical History Review*, vol. 99 (2007), p. 54.

to established theories, in which it was generally believed that friendship was only possible between individuals who were of similar social standing. Berry argues that the Platonic ideals that permeated early modern thought explained friendship as a relationship between equals.¹⁶⁶ Thomas also explains that one of the necessary conditions for perfect friendship in early modern thought was equal social status, so that the bonds that defined the relationship were horizontal and not vertical.¹⁶⁷ For itinerant Quakers, however, the purest form of spiritual friendship could be achieved between women of vastly different social backgrounds. Mary Peisley, the daughter of an Irish farmer, joined with Mary Weston, the wife of a wealthy London merchant, in ministerial service across England in 1749. Weston described her time with her Irish companion as 'this act of pure friendship'. In a letter to Peisley's father she even wrote that 'I know none to equal her of the rising generation' and later went on to declare that 'I own I love her beyond expression, and would do any thing in my power to serve her by night or day, should think it a blessing to have her continually with me'.¹⁶⁸ Not only was Peisley of a much lower social rank than Weston, but she was also seven years her junior and unmarried. Weston's willingness to place herself in service to a lower-status woman highlights the authority conferred on Friends who displayed a particularly powerful spiritual gift. In contrast to wider social expectations, primacy was given to the religious rather than the practical dimensions of their union.

¹⁶⁶ See Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture*, pp. 212–34; and Baltzly and Eliopoulos, 'The Classical Ideals of Friendship', pp. 17–19.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas, *The Ends of Life*, p. 196.

¹⁶⁸ LRSF, Portfolio MS, vol.4, fol. 49, Mary Weston to Peter Peisley, Wapping, London, 10 November 1749.

The uncontrollable power of providence was seen as the overriding force in determining companionate friendship. Mary Weston, for example, explained in a letter to her cousin, Abigail Watson, in 1749 that after having no view of a companion for her proposed ministerial work to the American colonies, she was resolved to submit to the will of God in the hope that 'my good master will provide me one when the time comes'.¹⁶⁹ The lack of individual choice in selecting a suitable companion stood in contrast to eighteenth-century conduct literature, which advised female readers to move cautiously and choose their friends carefully. Indeed, literate women, as Herbert notes, were expected to ponder carefully in private the individual merits of potential female companions before they trusted them with friendship.¹⁷⁰ *The Ladies Dictionary* advised its readers to enter into their friendships with 'the greatest Wariness imaginable, since you are to be responsible to the World for the Miscarriages of those in some measure that you contract an Intimacy with'.¹⁷¹ Quaker women, too, were expected to enter into their alliances with caution. However, their motivations for doing so were very different from the advice that was given to their non-Quaker contemporaries. In 1752, the young Catherine Payton noted her reservations about forming a relationship too hastily with the Lancashire minister Rachel Wilson, whom she accompanied to London. She remarked that this rather sudden union 'brought a great exercise upon my mind', since she knew that her relations 'were desirous that I might steadily move in the counsel of God; and perhaps might fear my running too fast, which I also dreaded'.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ LRSF, MS Vol 296 Watson MS, fol. 13, Mary Weston to Abigail Watson (Bowles) from Wapping, London, 25 November 1749.

¹⁷⁰ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, p. 46.

¹⁷¹ N. H., *The Ladies Dictionary*, p. 224.

¹⁷² Phillips, *Memoirs of the Life of Catherine Phillips*, p. 27.

Whereas her contemporaries emphasised the potential damage that could be done to a woman's reputation should she enter into a friendship too hastily, Payton's concerns stemmed from a fear of offending God by not patiently waiting for his guidance.

Similarly, the lack of reciprocity and material support in Quaker women's friendship-formation countered contemporary norms, since a companion's compatibility was judged entirely by divine guidance. In 1681 Joan Vokins travelled to the colonies without a companion, 'yet the Lord so ordered it, that I had still some honest Woman, or Maiden Friend, both by Sea and Land.'¹⁷³ As this passage suggests, the spiritual underpinning of her ministry was evidenced through God's provision of suitable female companions throughout her journey. Divinely-inspired friendship is further evidenced by the circumstances that brought Catherine Payton together with her companion, Mary Peisley, in the early 1750s. As Payton explained in her spiritual autobiography, her calling to travel to America manifested itself with an 'apprehension that I must go with my dear friend Mary Peisley'. It was to her great surprise that she shortly after received a letter from Peisley, enquiring whether she knew of a female Friend with an inclination to travel to the American colonies. 'I am almost at a loss', wrote Payton in her reply, 'to find terms to express the laborious thought which has possessed my soul; for it seems to me, that providence designs I should accompany thee.'¹⁷⁴ The singular impulse these women experienced to travel to a distant part of the world stood as powerful testament to the providential nature of their friendship. It

¹⁷³ Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified*, p. 46.

¹⁷⁴ Phillips, *Memoirs of the Life of Catherine Phillips*, pp. 47–50.

functioned as a reminder of the divinely-inspired nature of their service, which transcended all other considerations.

This trust in providence to guide Quaker alliances was all-pervasive and also affected how companionship was formed between male Friends.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, companionate friendship had specific value for itinerant Quaker women. Travel to unknown and distant lands during this period was dangerous for a multitude of reasons and women who travelled without an official companion were more vulnerable, especially as their unusually public roles opened them up to physical and verbal attack. Herbert cites the example of the young Quaker woman Elizabeth Ashbridge, who in 1732 became trapped into indentured servitude when attempting to secure a crossing from Ireland to the American colonies.¹⁷⁶ A more colourful example of the dangers inherent in travel without an official companion appears in the spiritual autobiography of the American minister Elizabeth Hudson, who had travelled to the British Isles on religious service. In 1749, shortly after separating from her companion, she lost her way in Edinburgh, entered a local house, and asked for the master to send word to a local Quaker of her arrival, not knowing where she was 'or in what sort of hands'. Her concerns were fully justified for, as she described later in a carefully worded account, the door swung open to reveal 'divers of these little rooms with men and women in them in such positions as to give me an

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Story, for instance, devoted an entire section in his journal to detailing how he joined with his companion, Roger Gill. 'I found my Mind very free towards him', he stated, 'and discovered something of my Concern to him for *America* [...] and asked him if he knew of any ministering Friend concerned for those Parts, for I wanted a Companion: To which [...] he replied "It is now long since I was first concerned that way."' Story, *The Life of Thomas Story*, pp. 149–50.

¹⁷⁶ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, pp. 159–60.

insight into what sort of house we were in, and also of the necessity of our departure'.¹⁷⁷

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quakers believed that their companions were critical to their ministry and spiritual growth. The close bonds they formed provided a powerful model of female sociability that reconfigured traditional notions of friendship by providing a degree of respectability to women's itinerant service at a time when the radical act of leaving the family home continued to be viewed by society with suspicion. Unlike other types of religious female friendship, the Quaker model was particularly flexible in enabling women to pursue these intense spiritual alliances in conjunction with their traditional domestic relationships. It provided a positive accompaniment to a female minister's own personal and emotional trials, particularly when it could be understood as a providentially ordained union. As Deborah Bell explained, 'we having travelled together this long journey in much love and true unity, always being willing, according to the strength given, to help to bear one another's burdens.'¹⁷⁸

'Near to each other in a spiritual Relation': forging long-distance alliances

Keith Thomas has argued that friendship was 'largely determined by proximity'.¹⁷⁹ However, we have seen how shared religious observation between fellow-Quakers had the potential to alter the geographical and physical scope of their alliances. Adherence to the movement enabled female Friends to move beyond worldly concerns and fixed spatial boundaries, a fact that is

¹⁷⁷ Hudson, 'An Abstract of the Travels and Some Other Remarks of Eliza Hudson', p. 182.

¹⁷⁸ Deborah Bell, *A Short Journal of the Labours and Travels in the Work and Ministry, of that Faithful Servant of Christ, Deborah Bell* (London, 1776), p. 31.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas, *The Ends of Life*, p. 211.

powerfully demonstrated through the long-distance networks of support that evolved within the early movement. The highly itinerant nature of early Quakerism, combined with strong epistolary and mercantile networks, provided frequent opportunities for women Friends, outside of the context of Public ministry, to enter into alliances with other members of their Society.

The distance which often separated Quaker women opened up an important space for them to develop close alliances with little physical contact. This was particularly evident in the epistles sent between the various Women's Meetings across the Atlantic, which illuminate a remarkable network of support, despite the fact that many letter-writers had never met.¹⁸⁰ The Women's Meeting in Maryland in 1678 described the 'Spiritual Comfort, and great Satisfaction in the truth' that they received after their sisters in London started a correspondence with them and sent them some books. 'Wee are but weake, and few in nomber', they wrote, 'and oure outward beinges far distant one from another.' But they declared their 'true love and heavenly fellowship' and begged their distant friends to pray for their continued spiritual growth.¹⁸¹ Mendelson and Crawford have highlighted how the power of female piety and prayer should be viewed within a broader cultural framework of collective female endeavour.¹⁸² Indeed, in their mutual quest for salvation, the simple act of assisting one another with spiritual advice, admonition, and prayer gave

¹⁸⁰ The transatlantic nature of their alliances are particularly effectively demonstrated in a little-known extant collection of epistles sent to the Quaker Women's Box Meeting in London between 1675 and 1753, comprising about sixty-four letters from Meetings across the British Isles, the American Colonies and even the West Indies. LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671-1753.

¹⁸¹ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671-1753, fol. 37, epistle from the Women's Meeting in Maryland to the Women's Meeting in London, 22 September 1678.

¹⁸² Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp. 225-31.

female Friends the opportunity to enter into supportive relationships with one another.

With the same spiritual outlook and theological presuppositions, a degree of intimacy could be immediately assumed between unknown and distant members of the community. Mary Pemberton, writing from Philadelphia in 1754, explained to Susanna Fothergill, whom she had never met, that she felt 'a degree of that Love that makes the *Friends* of truth near to each other in a spiritual Relation tho Personally unacquainted.' At the time of Mary's writing, Susanna's husband, Samuel, was undertaking ministerial service in the American colonies. '[T]hough tis a Considerable tryal to be deprived of the [company] of an agreeable Companion and Indulgent Husband', Mary wrote, 'tis a Circumstance which has heretofore frequently fallen to my Lot In which at times I have happily experienced the exercise of Patience and Resignation.'¹⁸³ The shared experience of writer and recipient served as a foundation on which women's friendships could develop. 'The Continuance of such a valuable Friendship', as Mary Pemberton explained in a later letter to Susanna, certainly helped to lessen the burden that both women were experiencing as a result of their husbands' absences.¹⁸⁴ Inhabiting a shared culture of religious belief, these women were able to imagine an intimate alliance without physical contact. This represented a radical departure from contemporary norms, for, as we have seen, the highest form of friendship was thought possible only between intimates who occupied a similar, political, cultural, and social world.

¹⁸³ LRSF, MS Vol 329 Crossfield MS, fol. 34, Mary Pemberton to Susanna Fothergill, Philadelphia, 16 October 1754.

¹⁸⁴ LRSF, MS Vol 329 Crossfield MS, fol. 63, Mary Pemberton to Susanna Fothergill, Philadelphia, 18 October 1757.

The extensive body of transatlantic ministers presented perhaps the most important opportunity for close, intimate connections between distant individuals. The act of hosting travelling ministers was also performed in the name of 'Friendship' and provided further opportunities for long-distance female alliances to develop, despite the often fleeting nature of their initial encounters. Mary Weston, for example, was not acquainted with any Friends in America before her arrival in Philadelphia, but was hosted by co-religionists across the colonies throughout her two-year journey. The letters of thanks sent by Weston's husband, Daniel, during her stay in America, speak of the 'repeated acts of the greatest Friendship to her, which has made her passage in that Land much Easier th[a]n it would otherwise have been'.¹⁸⁵ In 1738, the Yorkshire Friend Tabitha Hornor wrote a letter to the minister Abigail Watson, in the hope that she would be 'Ingaged in mind to pay us another visit here'. Noting how 'that near fellowship and simpathy between us cannot admit decay', she described how her thoughts for this ministering Friend were 'often revived upon my mind with that brightness which is the soul ravishing'.¹⁸⁶

Hospitality, or 'guest-friendship', had long been regarded as an important act of cultural significance in early modern England.¹⁸⁷ The Christian notion of universal benevolence, from which Quakers drew much of their rhetoric, was central to the construction of a culture of support and mutual assistance. However, as Felicity Heal found in her seminal work on hospitality, notions of Christian charity that underpinned early modern ideals of hospitality

¹⁸⁵ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 7, fol. 25, Daniel Weston to Israel Pemberton, London, 30 March 1751.

¹⁸⁶ British Library, Add MS 71116 Jacob Family: Correspondence of the Irish Quaker Family of Jacob; 1701–1802, fol. 11, Tabitha Hornor to Abigail Watson, Leeds, 7 August 1738.

¹⁸⁷ See in particular: Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990); and Baltzly and Eliopoulos, 'The Classical Ideals of Friendship', pp. 1–64.

came to be replaced by a more discriminatory system where family, kin, and neighbours were placed at the forefront of charitable concern, and friends and strangers, as well as enemies, were placed on the outer circles of this amicability.¹⁸⁸ The networks of hospitality that evolved within early Quakerism, by contrast, were almost always constructed between complete strangers. Indeed, a greater degree of support and intimacy appears to have been offered to a Quaker woman's co-religionists (even if they were strangers) than to their non-Quaker neighbours or kin.

Whilst male Friends also opened up their homes to travelling ministers, and many hosts were married couples, the greatest burden arguably fell upon women Friends.¹⁸⁹ Their work within the household meant that they were ideally placed to provide a supportive environment for visiting ministers, whether in supplying food or accommodation, or making arrangements during their stay. On hearing of the arrival of the English ministers Catherine Payton and Mary Peisley in South Carolina, Rachel Pemberton ordered that their chests, bedding, and possessions be conveyed from London and Charlestown to her home in Philadelphia. '[A]n appology for sending them under my care is altogether needless', she explained in one letter dated 9 January 1754, 'being glad of the Opportunity of doing this or any other service in my power for you.' She also expressed her hopes that when the two women arrived in Philadelphia,

¹⁸⁸ This process was encapsulated in the growing seventeenth-century tendency to give money to the needier members of communities, rather than provide more intimate forms of assistance, like food, drink and lodging. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, pp. 19 and 16–17.

¹⁸⁹ A letter of recommendation sent from Catherine Payton to Ruth Follows advised the minister about travel in Ireland. In this letter of introduction, Catherine directed Ruth to lodge with an 'antient' Friend in Dublin, adding that if 'thou should have an account of his being Dead, go to William Tayler who lives with him, and by his will is appointed to succeed him in the service of entertaining ministering Friends and to live in the same House he does'. LRSF, Temp MSS 127 Follows MSS, folder 1 Letters of Ruth Follows to and from Friends, fol. 3, Catherine Payton to Ruth Follows, Dudley, 29 July 1761.

they would choose to stay at her home, where 'you may be assured of an hearty wellcome'.¹⁹⁰ The fact that Rachel initiates this generous act of hospitality with two complete strangers suggests the central role that women played in this culture of support. Rachel's husband, Israel, was an important member of the Philadelphian Merchant community, with access to the necessary contacts to make such arrangements possible. However, it was the woman of the household who had heard of the two ministers' travels, initiated contact with them, and arranged for the conveyance of their luggage across the Atlantic.

The centrality of women within networks of hospitality has often been recognised as an important part of early modern religious culture. In a context of persecution, the private space of the household was important, since it was the only place where religious dissent could be safely practised. Households that harboured Catholic priests during the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, for instance, were highly dependent upon wives of recusant Catholics receiving priests into their homes.¹⁹¹ Methodist women also came to play a prominent role within household dissent, since unpaid ministers were continually forced to rely upon the charity of the female members of their circuits for food, lodging, and supplies as they travelled from place to place. Mary Bosanquet Fletcher's home in Madeley was renowned for hosting a constant stream of Methodists. She even compared her home in Yorkshire to 'a

¹⁹⁰ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 9, fol. 129, Rachel Pemberton to Mary Peisley and Catherine Payton, Philadelphia, 9 January 1754.

¹⁹¹ Paralleling the models of hospitality provided by female Friends, Diane Willen explains, the wife usually made the arrangements for a priest's arrival and his secret stay. Diane Willen, 'Women and Religion in Early Modern England', in Sherrin Marshall (ed.), *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds* (Bloomington, IN., 1989), p. 156.

pilgrims inn'.¹⁹² Whilst Quaker women's patterns of hospitality were not unfamiliar in the context of religious dissent, it was unusual for women to participate in both the role of visiting minister and host. Both Catholicism and Methodism subscribed to a model of religious orthodoxy that promoted a celibate class of single men in ministerial roles, to the exclusion of women. Even the relatively liberal ethos of the Wesleyan Methodists did not extend as far as granting women the authority to undertake transatlantic service.

Quakerism thus provided unparalleled opportunities for women Friends from across the Atlantic to meet through the act of hospitality and initiate enduring friendships. Mary Weston, for instance, an English minister who had travelled to the American colonies in 1750 without a female companion, forged a lifelong relationship with her Philadelphian landlady, Mary Pemberton. A letter in 1752, sent shortly after her return home, revealed her longing to be reunited with her 'sympathising Friend'. 'I have just immagin'd my self personally present with thee', Weston wrote, 'as often am in spirit, tho perhaps may never behold the faces one of another more.'¹⁹³ Friendship in this respect provided a powerful accompaniment to ministerial work, since it enabled women Friends to continue to offer spiritual support and counsel to one another long after the initial period of service was over.

The shared sense of spiritual equality between Quaker believers also meant that the host could be placed in a position of authority within the relationship, despite her non-itinerant status. As Weston explained, 'my Dear Landlady[s] [...] Judgments in spiritual things [I] prefer to most' and begged

¹⁹² Lawrence, *One Family under God*, p. 80.

¹⁹³ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 8, fol. 56, Mary Weston to Mary Pemberton, Wapping, London, 14 September 1752.

'the help of thy spirit, in Joynt travel for Enlargement of heart'.¹⁹⁴ John Griffith explained in his testimony of Susanna Morris, how he had 'once made my Home at her House induced thereto by an expectation of receiving Help by her good Company, and Example in my religious Progress in which I was not disappointed'.¹⁹⁵ It is interesting that hosts like Mary Pemberton and Susanna Morris could achieve a position of spiritual authority, despite a status theoretically inferior to that of their ministering visitors. It certainly stood in contrast to the guest-host relationships that emerged within the context of Catholicism or Methodism, where an itinerant, educated, paid minister was immediately placed in a dominant position within the relationship. Indeed, if we take the contemporary view that intimate friendship was only available between equals, it would never have been possible for a close relationship to develop between a lay woman and a Catholic or Methodist minister because of the inequality of their relationship. The provision of hospitality thus provides an important insight into how ideas of friendship among early Quakers became inseparable from their ideas of community: these networks were dominated both by women performing their benevolent duties as Friends, and by women sharing intimacies as friends.

The powerful transatlantic networks of support that emerged within early Quakerism offer conclusive proof of the importance of female sociability within a religious culture that denigrated many of the traditional customs of friendship. As Holton argues, in guarding one another against the dangers of the

¹⁹⁴ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 8, fol. 56, Mary Weston to Mary Pemberton, Wapping, London, 14 September 1752.

¹⁹⁵ HCQSC, MS Coll 968 Allinson Family Papers, 1710–1939, Box 6, 'A Brief Account of Part of Susanna Morris's Second Journey Through Sundry Parts of Great Britain to which is Prefixed a Few Remarks Concerning Her, by John Griffith', undated, c.1775.

material world, Quaker women were forced to focus upon the 'shared pursuit' of spirituality within their daily lives.¹⁹⁶ This served to influence not only how friendships were maintained between Quaker friends, but also the distance over which even the most intimate of alliances could operate. While their religion severely circumscribed the social activities of Quaker women, their personal alliances were enhanced by long-distance networks of fellow-believers. We have seen how women Friends relied upon a much wider circle of distant co-religionists to mitigate the isolation they experienced from their family members, former acquaintances, and neighbours. This is particularly apparent in the experience of travelling ministry, where the compatibility between having a singular spiritual calling and a sympathetic partner with whom to share the physical, emotional, and spiritual burdens of itinerant ministry was a compelling feature of their alliances.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the complex world within which close alliances between Quakers, and specifically between female Friends, were performed, expressed, and imagined. Their language of friendship was distinctive because they achieved a fusion of spiritual and secular feeling. Close personal bonds were acceptable if they could be placed within the context of collective salvation. Quaker concepts of friendship owed a great deal to the Christian tradition, where followers of Christ were prompted to love one another despite their differences and inequalities. Nevertheless, when we compare how Quakers translated their sense of Christian community into their everyday

¹⁹⁶ Holton, 'Kinship and Friendship', pp. 367–68.

relationships, we find a uniquely expansive notion of friendship that was open even to their enemies, and also available between men and women. The Quaker focus on souls rather than bodies was more pronounced among Quakers than any of their Protestant contemporaries, making it easier for Quakers to form close and intimate friendships with co-religionists of the opposite sex.

Belonging to the movement enabled many isolated, persecuted, and suffering Friends to form new and meaningful relationships with other members of their religious community. In the first few decades of the movement, this played an important role in compensating for the loss of their former personal connections following conversion. As the movement developed, however, its social cohesiveness came to rest on the complex web of friendship and kinship networks among its members, which enabled Friends to imagine themselves as part of a unified spiritual family. Although the term 'Society of Friends' was a later development, it captures the spirit of the early movement, for membership immediately gave Friends access to a network of obligation and reciprocity which, like ties of blood, was characterised by an unconditional love for their co-religionists.

While always honouring social obligations to their spiritual kin, however, Friends generally secluded themselves from wider practices of sociability. The 'quietism' that has come to characterise many depictions of the eighteenth-century movement also reflects the Quakers' determination to distinguish themselves from those outside their circle. Yet, rather than subordinating the ideal of friendship altogether, as their Calvinist contemporaries did, early Quakers recognised its value for their union with God in the life to come. The simple acts of offering one another spiritual advice,

admonition, prayer, and written encouragement gave Quaker women the opportunity to form powerful sororial networks of support in their mutual quest for salvation.

Traditional practices of sociability were reconfigured into an alternative framework of 'polite Quakerliness', which balanced social interaction with co-religionists with the expanding social and cultural opportunities increasingly available to their contemporaries. However, even the most informal social gatherings, whether in the tea-room or the birthing chamber, became exclusive sites of religious devotion, where women could meet solemnly together to give praise to God. The spiritual dimension of all their relationships, sometimes transnational in scope, enabled Quaker women to imagine as much as experience their friendships. One of the most distinctive elements of Quaker women's social alliances is the distances over which they were often conducted. Frequently isolated within their local communities, they used letters to seek solace and comfort from distant co-religionists.

Whilst historians have demonstrated how friendship connections were usually reinforced through ties to kin and neighbours, the Quaker case shows how believers could gain immediate access to a transatlantic network of Friends with whom they often formed strong and enduring bonds. It was this 'imaginary' aspect of Quaker women's alliance-formation that provided the most significant deviation from contemporary understandings of friendship. Rather than physical proximity, careful consideration, mutual benefit, or even social equality, it was the emphasis they placed on divine providence and the shared pursuit of spirituality that guided Quaker women in initiating close and enduring friendships.

Through the emphasis they placed on the experience of companionship, whether as itinerant travellers or simply as part of an imagined community of believers, we can glimpse the value that female Friends attributed to both its physical and spiritual aspects. The providential emphasis they often used to justify their alliances encouraged an alternative model of friendship to evolve, which gave little regard to contemporary warnings about the dangers of entering into any relationship that did not promise practical or material benefits. Female public ministry was still widely viewed with suspicion, so it is unsurprising that itinerant women appear to have placed greater value than male itinerants on their travelling companions. Women travelling together gave one another an invaluable sense of solidarity and support when they were undergoing great hardships and sufferings for their faith.

The important role of female alliances in reinforcing a sense of community amongst Friends has been a largely unacknowledged aspect of the movement's history. As this chapter has shown, religious belief played a significant part in shaping the social bonds that developed between these women, and were as much a part of their everyday experiences as their domestic arrangements. The networks forged by Quaker women illustrate the intermediacy of their religious community in the structuring of everyday encounters and personal relationships. Nevertheless, Quaker women did not live in a social vacuum. Their lives were defined by the world beyond their religious communities as well as through their friendships with their co-religionists. How these attitudes towards friendship affected Quaker women's interactions with the non-Quaker world is therefore the focus of the final chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Four

'Dangerous seducers' and 'celebrated' Preachers: Quaker Women's Interactions with the Non-Quaker World

Hail happy virgin of celestial race,
Adorn'd with wisdom, and replete with grace. [...]
Too long indeed our sex has been deny'd.
And ridicul'd by men's malignant pride; [...]
Redeem the coming age, and set us free
From that false brand of Incapacity.

A Young Lady, 'On the Noted and Celebrated Quaker Mrs Drummond',
Gentleman's Magazine: or, Monthly Intelligencer, September 1735, p. 555.

In July 1735 the *General Evening Post* reported that a Scottish Quaker preacher, May Drummond, had lately had the 'Honour to preach' before Queen Caroline. Renowned for her oratory, the 'celebrated Mrs Drummond[s]' audience with the Queen only added to her reputation, as the English press avidly detailed her progress around the nation.¹ The Bristol excise official John Cannon noted in his diary the popular appeal of her meetings, describing how huge crowds had come 'far and near for novelty's sake to hear her'.² Cannon's observations were supported by a report in the *General Evening Post* in October 1735, which described the throngs of people that gathered to hear her preach at the Friars Meeting, near Broadmead in Bristol. It was so well attended with 'great Numbers of different Perswasions' that reinforcements allegedly had to be added to the gallery 'to prevent any Accident by its falling'.³

¹ *General Evening Post* (London), 3 July 1735, p. 3; *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* (London), 22 April 1736, p. 1.

Drummond's tours across England were reported in the *General Evening Post* (3–5 July 1735, 20–23 September 1735, 4–7 October 1735); *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* (7 August 1735, 22 April 1736, 8 June 1736); *Daily Gazetteer* (14 February 1736); *Daily Journal* (13 April 1736); and *London Evening Post* (4 August 1737, 11–13 August 1743).

² John Cannon, *The Chronicles of John Cannon Excise Office and Writing Master, 1734–1743*, ed. John Money (2 vols, Oxford, 2010), ii, p. 313, original fol. 320 entry for 18 October 1737.

³ 'Country-News. Bristol, October 4', *General Evening Post* (London), 4 October 1735–7 October 1735, p. 1.

May Drummond's popular appeal is a far cry from the scorn and intolerance with which the first female Quakers in Bristol were treated. In 1681 four Quaker women were abused at the hands of local magistrates and crowds for attending the same Friars Meeting in Bristol. A contemporary account described how an 'ancient Woman', Susanna York, was badly injured after being thrown down, and how Mary Page, who was heavily pregnant, suffered 'great danger to her Life' after being violently pulled from the Meeting House. To add to their humiliation, local boys were incited to throw dirt and heckle them, calling them 'ugly Whores, Bitches, Jades and Carrions'.⁴ It is striking that just over fifty years later we are confronted with the dramatically contrasting reception of May Drummond preaching at the very same Meeting. Her 'celebrated' status implied a high public standing, whilst her ability to attract mixed audiences indicates curiosity and tolerance at the popular level. The high esteem with which her ministry was regarded resembles that enjoyed by eighteenth-century evangelicals like George Whitefield or John Wesley, who were renowned for their emotionally-charged exhortations and widespread appeal.⁵

It is, however, notable that at the very moment when May Drummond was enjoying mass public attention, the wider Quaker movement was becoming more isolated from the rest of society. Eighteenth-century Quakerism has often been defined by its 'quietist' and introspective nature; its members sought to

⁴ Besse, *Quaker Sufferings*, i, p. 56; LRSF, YM/MfS/GBS/3/1 Great Book of Sufferings, Berkshire to Lincolnshire, Bristol, 1681, p. 32.

⁵ Large crowds followed George Whitefield on his travels across the American colonies, which coincided with the 'Great Awakening'. It was reported during his visit to New England in 1740 that five people were trampled to death in a Boston Congregational church in the crush to hear him. Boyd Stanley Schlenker, 'George Whitefield (1714-1770)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004.

withdraw from the world rather than compromise their religious identity and beliefs.⁶ We saw in the previous chapter the effect which dissociation from the wider world had on the formation of Quaker women's alliances. Yet we also saw how Quaker theology provided an all-encompassing notion of friendship, for the ubiquitous nature of the 'Inner Light' meant that spiritual friendship was attainable to all. This aspect of Quaker theology helps us understand preachers like May Drummond, who regularly addressed and interacted with non-Quaker audiences. She was described as particularly popular 'amongst those of other societies, who were much drawn to the meetings she attended, her character and the circumstances of her conviction often exciting curiosity'.⁷ Her experiences show us that the women of eighteenth-century Quakerism cannot be reduced to mere 'ideal types'. Historians must account for the complex and often contradictory facets of their lives, shaped both by their confessional affiliation and their interactions with wider society.

Earlier chapters have emphasised the unusual quality of the relationships that female Friends developed with other members of their religious community. This chapter, by contrast, moves the focus beyond confessional boundaries, centring on the relationships Quaker women developed and maintained with the non-Quaker world, both as preachers and as members of local communities. Assessing the evolving and, at times, contested images, representations, and interactions within the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Atlantic world, I seek to explore both popular and intellectual responses to Quaker women. I will argue that reactions to

⁶ A good discussion of the debates surrounding Quaker 'quietism' is provided in Robynne Rogers Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism, 1692–c.1805', in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 47–62.

⁷ William F. Miller, 'Episodes in the Life of May Drummond', *JFHS*, vol. 4 (1907), pp. 55–56.

Quakerism were the product of female Friends' social and cultural assimilation throughout the period and thus emblematic of their participation in, rather than separation from, wider society.

The often brutal suffering that early female Friends experienced at the hands of hostile mobs and local officials has dominated our understanding of their relationships with wider society.⁸ The Quaker preacher Barbara Blaugdone, for instance, recorded how a butcher 'swore he would cleave my Head in twain', when she preached at a market-place in Cork.⁹ But the focus on these dramatic or sensationalist suffering accounts, often coloured by what Alexandra Walsham has described as 'martyrological hyperbole and distortion', has been at the expense of other aspects of Quaker women's experiences within their communities.¹⁰ Scholars have also tended to overlook the motivations behind popular violence, and how these changed as the movement and its testimonies became more widely known.

Inspired by the turn towards 'New Social History', a number of influential studies have explored how religious minorities successfully integrated into their local communities.¹¹ However, as Simon Dixon has recently

⁸ Barry Reay has argued that hostility to Quaker women was all-encompassing and cut horizontally across political, social, and religious divides. Phyllis Mack, in her assessment of the early Quaker women prophets, has highlighted the theatrical nature of their sufferings, which she argues carried with them different social and sexual connotations from the sufferings experienced by men. One example she cites is that of the New England Friend Hored Gardner, who was whipped in 1658 whilst holding an infant to her naked chest. Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London, 1985), pp. 62–78; Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 132. The story of Hored Gardner's persecution was included in James Bowden's *The History of the Society of Friends in America* (2 vols, London, 1850–4), i, pp. 141–42.

⁹ Barbara Blaugdone, *An Account of the Travels, Sufferings and Persecutions of Barbara Blaugdone* (1691), p. 27.

¹⁰ Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester, 2006), p. 84.

¹¹ Evidence of religious dissidents living peaceably within their communities, was at the centre of Margaret Spufford's collaborative edition on the rural dissenters. Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725* (Cambridge, 1995). Some of the essays highlighted the integration of these minorities into their local communities, especially Derek Plumb's and

noted, Quaker strategies of separation and integration do not reflect more general patterns of sectarian development.¹² As a consequence, much debate has focused on the extent to which Friends were assimilated into wider society in this period. The highly cohesive nature of the eighteenth-century movement and the desire of Friends to mark themselves as separate from the rest of the world, both in terms of who they socialised with and how they behaved, led historians like Christopher Hill and Michael Mullett to conclude that they both shunned and were shunned by society at large.¹³ The introduction of the 1689 Toleration Act, which officially recognised Quakers as dissenters and permitted them to gather in registered Meetings for Worship, has often been offered as an explanation for Quakers' withdrawal from society.

An influential body of work has recently revised this perspective, showing how Quakers were not hermetically isolated in the years after the Act and were far more integrated into their local communities than previously believed.¹⁴ Whilst these studies have faced some criticism for underplaying

Christopher Marsh's chapters on the Lollards and Family of Love. Derek Plumb, 'A Gathered Church? Lollards and Their Society', pp. 132–63; and Christopher Marsh, 'The Gravestone of Thomas Lawrence revisited (or the Family of Love and the Local Community in Balsham, 1560–1630)', pp. 208–34.

¹² Simon Dixon, 'Quaker Communities in London, 1667–c.1714', Royal Holloway, University of London, PhD thesis (2005), pp. 104–08.

¹³ Both Hill and Mullett argued that the highly cohesive nature of eighteenth-century Quakerism was born out of a deliberate policy of isolationism and the consequent desire of Friends to live within the bounds of their own closed community. Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964), p. 492. This is explored by Bill Stevenson in 'The Social Integration of Post-Restoration Dissenters, 1660–1725', in Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters*, pp. 360–61. Michael Mullett, 'From Sect to Denomination? Social Developments in Eighteenth-Century English Quakerism', *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1984), pp. 168–91.

¹⁴ On Quaker integration see: Adrian Davies's important study of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Essex in, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655–1725* (Oxford, 2000); Simon Dixon's assessment of London between 1667 and 1725 in, 'Quaker Communities in London' and 'Quakers and the London Parish 1670–1720', *London Journal*, vol. 32, no. 3 (2007), pp. 229–49; David Scott's study of York, *Quakerism in York, 1650–1720* (York, 1991); Bill Stevenson's study of Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Huntingdonshire between 1660 and 1725 in, 'The Social Integration of Post-Restoration Dissenters', pp. 360–87; and Alexandra Walsham's study of early modern tolerance and intolerance, in *Charitable Hatred*, esp. Chapters Five and Six.

continued prejudices, a range of evidence has been presented of charity, harmony, and peaceful coexistence between Friends and their non-Quaker neighbours throughout our period.¹⁵

The picture is further complicated when we turn our attention across the Atlantic, particularly to the setting of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. Remarkable religious diversity and tolerance had characterised the colony from its earliest years. Yet distinct Quaker practices, such as their peace testimony and attempts to develop peaceable relations with indigenous populations, had the potential to antagonise their non-Quaker neighbours. Quaker refusal to bear arms, for instance, ultimately led to their forced withdrawal from colonial government in the mid-eighteenth century and, during the Revolutionary Wars, led to frequent accusations of illicit pacts with the British.¹⁶ A range of social and political circumstances clearly affected how Quakers were received, particularly during times of crisis and communal dislocation.

The integration of the movement and its female members into wider society is an important but overlooked aspect of Quaker history. Indeed, the issue of Quaker women's assimilation into seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society has remained largely ignored. Rebecca Larson has provided the most important contribution in her assessment of non-Quaker reactions to female preachers, which she argues were overwhelmingly positive by the latter half of the eighteenth century. Citing the favourable reception that Rachel Wilson received during her travels to the colonies in 1769, she suggests that female

¹⁵ Evidence of the continuation of local hostilities is presented in: Mark Knights, *The Devil in Disguise: Deception, Delusion, and Fanaticism in the Early English Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2011); and John Miller, "A Suffering People": English Quakers and Their Neighbours c.1650-c.1700', *Past and Present*, 188 (2005), pp. 71–103.

¹⁶ The various crises that affected colonial Quakerism are explored in depth in Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (London, 1988), pp. 119–36.

ministers were able to achieve public prominence as Quaker leaders, and were able to attain eminence beyond the Quaker community.¹⁷ Like many observers, she attributes this changing reception, in both England and New England, to the establishment of formal Toleration, which she suggests reshaped the image of Friends in society, politics, and business affairs.¹⁸ The assimilation of the movement into wider society and its newfound 'respectability', she argues, resulted in 'a new visibility of their spiritually "gifted" females'.¹⁹ But her focus is largely on the female preachers of the eighteenth-century colonies and overlooks the significant relationships that Quaker women could have with their non-Quaker neighbours. Moreover, whilst some emphasis is placed on changes occurring both within and without the Society, Larson tends to overemphasise the passage of the Toleration Act in shaping the reception of these highly visible women. How attitudes towards female Friends evolved in different social environments demands further attention.

This chapter aims to build on the existing research into Quaker integration by probing the types of relationships that Quaker women might develop with the wider non-Quaker world. By highlighting the nuances of these relationships, it will show how attitudes towards Quaker women could be transformed in different social contexts. Heeding Walsham's advice to avoid the binary oppositions of tolerance and intolerance, 'toleration' and 'persecution', I will present a multiplicity of images that could be attached to Quaker women and suggest how they changed as the movement evolved.²⁰ Owing to its neglect

¹⁷ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, pp. 232–39.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 247–58.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

²⁰ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, pp. 4–5. Walsham explores the relationship between tolerance and intolerance in depth in Chapter Six, showing how the separate dichotomies of 'sect' and

in the current historiography, sympathetic responses to Quaker women is a theme that will receive particular attention.

The discussion will be organised into two sections. The first will explore the issue of Quaker women's 'integration' at local level. I argue that a desire for communal stability almost always trumped religious difference, by showing both how Quaker women in England and the colonies could provide support for their local communities, and how non-Quakers might help their Quaker neighbours in times of hardship. Section two will then explore representations of female Friends in non-Quaker culture. To understand the ideas about Quaker women that gained currency in wider society, I draw on both printed and visual sources. I will argue that rather than the passage of the 1689 Toleration Act marking the key turning-point in representations of Quaker women, it was the rise of the Women's Meetings in the 1670s, together with a new Enlightened understanding of female Friends as 'respectable' citizens, that altered contemporary perceptions. The thematic organisation is deliberately flexible to avoid a teleological narrative describing a simple transition from persecution to toleration with 1689 as the defining moment in this relationship.

Naturally, a study that deals with a broad range of women's representations and experiences brings with it a number of methodological challenges. It is always a much easier task to identify instances of conflict, division, and public scandal in the archives than to find evidence of communal harmony. Drawing a clear distinction between 'tolerance' and 'intolerance' is, to quote Walsham, 'both intractably difficult and a matter of perspective'.²¹ Several

'denomination' and 'assimilation' and 'separation' are part of a continuous spectrum and not mutually exclusive of one another.

²¹ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 264.

methodological challenges also arise from any survey that utilises printed and visual sources to understand attitudes towards a specific movement or idea. In particular, they raise concerns about the reception of such beliefs and whether they were limited to the attitudes of a small number of literate authors, or represented broader social ideas. Moreover, given low levels of female literacy at this time, it is highly likely that polemical accounts would have been written *by and for* a largely male audience. Nevertheless, print culture, as Martin Conboy has argued, depended upon its claim to represent 'the people in the broadest possible sense'.²² Many of the authors that will be discussed prided themselves on the veracity of their reports and the trustworthiness of their sources. As the sections on anti-Quaker polemic will show, despite their evident partiality and exaggeration, these types of printed materials are a useful means of understanding changing popular and intellectual ideas about Quaker women.

The transformation, or reformulation of female Friends, was part of a dynamic process of exchange deeply affected by developments occurring in both England and the colonies. I hope to show how understandings of religious dissent were being transformed across Atlantic culture, by charting the impact of confessional difference within different social and economic contexts. I begin by exploring the experiences of both English and American Quaker women within their local communities.

²² Martin Conboy, *The Press and Popular Culture* (London, 2002), p. 9. For an excellent study of the interactions between intellectual and popular culture and spoken and written words, see Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000).

1. Negotiating the non-Quaker world: female Friends' social integration

Historians have long acknowledged the centrality of female networks of support to the functioning of the early modern neighbourhood.²³ Patricia Crawford has suggested that 'the loss of neighbourliness was a handicap' for Nonconformist women, who she explains experienced 'social ostracism' following the withdrawal of female support in their daily household tasks.²⁴ The majority of women attracted to Quakerism did not undertake ministerial travel or radically alter their domestic, social or economic responsibilities. Yet, little is known about these women at the very 'grass-roots' of the Society. How, for example, were they able to survive and function within their communities after they converted to Quakerism? Questions also arise about the evolving movement and how far strict isolation was indeed the characteristic of Quaker women's position within their neighbourhoods.

This section will offer many examples of mutual and supportive relationships that developed between female Friends and individuals outside their religious community. As noted in the Introduction, even the most radical of Quaker prophets were exhorted to lead ordinary lives as part of their service to God, in the belief that members must thrive within, rather than isolate themselves from their local communities.²⁵ I shall explore five facets of social

²³ See for example: Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (London, 1995); Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990); and Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*.

²⁴ Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p. 191.

²⁵ George Fox argued in 1658 that spiritual or 'particular growth' could only occur by leading godly lives and making use of opportunities to convert their neighbours, for 'Truth hath an honour in the hearts of people that are not Friends'. George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 340–41, George Fox's Address to Friends in the Ministry, given at John Crook's house, 31 May 1658.

integration between Quaker women and their non-Quaker contemporaries: their experience of suffering; business relationships; philanthropic activities; public preaching; and their increasing tendency to assimilate the habits appropriate to their position in society. Drawing upon a wide range of evidence and identifying a complex pattern of relationships, this section will demonstrate the multiple ways in which Quaker women could be, and indeed often were, accepted into the social and cultural world of the time.

'[A]shamed to see such a thinge donne': Quaker women and their neighbours

That members of the public could be sympathetic to Quaker women's maltreatment is a persistent but often unremarked presence within the suffering literature. Numerous accounts of suffering recorded the actions of neighbours who came to the aid of Friends during times of hardship. Anne Upcott was cruelly treated by her family for working on the Sabbath, and her brother, the local constable, instigated her arrest and set her in the stocks. However, the sympathy of local neighbours was aroused when her father and other brothers came to jeer and mock her whilst she sat stocked in the market place. Such callous behaviour, it was reported, made 'some of the neighbors weepe to see there unnaturalnesse'. One stranger was reported as saying that 'hee was ashamed to see such a thinge donne by her father and brothers haveinge never knowne the like before'.²⁶ The episode is telling of the divisive potential that conversion to Quakerism could have for family relationships, but it also suggests some public sympathy towards female sufferers, and a sense

²⁶ Norman Penney (ed.), *Record of the Sufferings of Quakers in Cornwall 1655-1686* (London, 1928), pp. 17-19.

that family (and perhaps communal) ties should override or at least soften religious differences.

In some instances, the persecution experienced by Quaker women was enough to prompt intervention by members of the public. When the seventeen-year old Elizabeth Braithwaite was sent to prison in May 1684, it was reported how 'severall of her Neighbours [...] were sorely grieved that she should go to Prison, blaming the Officers for Presenting her, telling them, it was a shame for them, she being [...] an innocent Maid, and had done no evil nor harm to any'.²⁷ Female neighbours, moreover, intervened when local justices raided the house of John and Deborah Wynn in the 1670s. Having already distrained almost all of their goods, the persecutors had attempted to take the bed from under Deborah even as she lay in childbirth, 'but the neighbouring Women abhorring the Inhumanity of such an Attempt interrupted their Design, and would not suffer it'.²⁸ The birthing room has often been characterised as an important space in which women could exercise communal support and care for one another.²⁹ The intervention of Wynn's female neighbours demonstrated that such intimacy did not wholly dissipate, despite the different religious beliefs of the participants. This supports Barry Reay's suggestion that it was outsiders rather than close neighbours that suffered the brunt of persecution.³⁰

Even persecutors showed occasional sympathy towards their Quaker neighbours, as Elizabeth Stirredge noted in her autobiography. She explains

²⁷ Anon., *A Brief Relation of the Life and Death of Elizabeth Braytwhaite, A Maid of the Age of about Seventeen Years, who Died in Prison for the Testimony of a Good Conscience, in the Town of Kendal in Westmorland, the 26th of the 7th month 1684* (London, 1684), p. 2.

²⁸ 'Deborah Wynn', in John Bell, *Piety Promoted, in a Collection of Dying Sayings of Divers of the People called Quakers* (London, 1740), pp. 6–7.

²⁹ See for example: David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 84–87.

³⁰ 'It was the idea of the Quaker', he notes, rather than the individual 'that was hated and feared'. Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, p. 66.

how local officers had come to the family shop to demand money for her violation of the Conventicle Act. However, seeing her and her family at their 'lawful calling', the constable had 'leaned his head down upon his hand, [...] and said "It is against my conscience to take their goods from them"'.³¹ It is interesting that these responses were occurring at the same time that women were being vilified in the anti-Quaker press as disrupters of parish life, as we shall see later. These families were clearly able to maintain amicable neighbourly relations that helped protect them during periods of persecution. This tells us that some degree of local toleration existed before the introduction of the 1689 Act. Moreover, as the case of Stirredge suggests, it is possible that a desire for communal harmony may have acted as a disincentive for local officials to take action against their Quaker neighbours.

The unusual customs and manners of early Friends undoubtedly served to distance them from the rest of society. Indeed, the nineteenth-century abolitionist Thomas Clarkson described the Quakers as a 'peculiar' people, who 'differ more than even many foreigners do, from their own countrymen'.³² As his involvement in the abolitionist cause suggests, however, non-Quakers could still be sympathetic to some of their testimonies. The Quaker refusal to pay tithes was one policy that appeared to gain widespread admiration from their earliest years. The female Friends who composed the petition *These Several Papers*, which was signed by over seven thousand women and presented to Parliament in 1659, claimed that its circulation was driven by widespread anti-

³¹ Elizabeth Stirredge, 'The Life and Christian Testimony of that Faithful Servant of the Lord, Elizabeth Stirredge', in *The Friends' Library*, ii, pp. 192–93.

³² Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*, i, p. ii.

tithe feeling.³³ The document, which was divided into twenty-nine sites of regional protest across the country, is testament to an extraordinary feat of organisation. It appears likely that the petition was also signed by women who were not affiliated to the movement, but shared the Quakers' hostility to the tithe system and resented the financial burdens associated with it. A sense of the scale of this inter-denominationalism is provided by Stephen Kent, who suggests that only about fifty per cent of the signatories for Lincolnshire appear in Quaker records. Even more remarkably, only thirty-five per cent of the women who signed the Chester petition can be identified as Quakers.³⁴ It is arguable that the large number of non-Quaker signatories is indicative of a higher level of social interaction between female parishioners of different denominations than we might expect. It also supports the research that has been undertaken on female petitioners during the Civil War period, who were often motivated by both secular and religious concerns.³⁵ *These Several Papers* is a powerful example of how household issues could draw women into the political process, and on a large scale. It also supports Ann Marie McEntee's

³³ Mary Forster *et al.*, *These Several Papers was Sent to the Parliament the Twentieth Day of the Fifth Moneth, 1659. Being Above Seven Thousand of the Names of the Hand-Maids and Daughters of the Lord* (London, 1659).

³⁴ Stephen A. Kent, 'Seven Thousand "Hand-Maids and Daughters of the Lord": Lincolnshire and Cheshire Quaker Women's Anti-Tithe Protests in Late Interregnum and Restoration England', in Sylvia Brown (ed.), *Women, Gender, and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2007), p. 87–8.

³⁵ See especially: Patricia Higgins, 'The Reactions of Women, with Special Reference to Women Petitioners', in Brian Manning (ed.), *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 179–224; and Ann Marie McEntee, "'The [un] civill-sisterhood of oranges and lemons": Female Petitioners and Demonstrators, 1642–53', *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1991), pp. 92–111. This form of collective action also links back to a much longer tradition of women's involvement in food and enclosure riots and crowd activities. See E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, vol. 50, no. 1 (1971), pp. 115–20.

suggestion that such petitions are evidence of the increasing political sophistication of ordinary women during this period.³⁶

Quaker opposition to tithes is one particularly striking example of how the movement's testimonies could cross denominational boundaries. Another is the integrity and trustworthiness that contemporaries came to associate with Quakers' 'plain dealing', often cited to explain their success in business.³⁷ Such a distinction arguably made both female and male members stand out from their contemporaries as scrupulously honest people. One case recorded in the Old Bailey hints at the value that was placed on a Quaker woman's word as early as 1677. The woman in question was a servant who had purportedly stolen goods valued at £50 from her master and mistress. As the testimony reveals, she had been accepted into the household because she had pretended to be a Quaker. '[O]n which account', the prosecution noted, 'her Master and Mistriss the more freely trusted her'.³⁸ Accounts such as this are indicative of the respectability and integrity that non-Quakers associated with Friends from an early stage. They also suggest that non-Quakers might be happy to employ Quaker servants in their households. The growing moral reputation of the movement was clearly shaping the representation of its female members in a variety of contexts.

'[U]seful and loyal members of society': Quaker women's professional relationships

Religious isolationism could not always be put before the practicalities of daily life and the rising economic profile of Quakers was one of the most important underlying reasons why they were becoming more accepted in society.

³⁶ McEntee, "'The [un] civill-sisterhood of oranges and lemons'", pp. 92–93.

³⁷ Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York, 1960), p. 63.

³⁸ Old Bailey Sessions Papers (Online), 12 December 1677, trial for theft: grand larceny (t16771212–9).

Numerous examples attest to women's continued involvement in the economic life of their communities, despite their religious affiliation. Elizabeth Andrews, for instance, recorded in her spiritual autobiography how she had opened a shop in 1672 with her brother in Broseley, Shropshire, where 'no Friends had lived before we came'. The town was an important trading centre, and Andrews frequently discoursed with her customers on matters of religion. In one passage, she notes that 'many were Convinced of the Truth, and some stand faithful to this day'.³⁹ A similar scenario is observed in the journal of the Lancaster Quaker and businessman William Stout, whose status meant that he was very well connected to the economic life of the North-Western counties. His sister, Elin, was responsible for much of the day-to-day management of her brother's retail business, as well as attending market days and fairs. The public nature of her role provided significant opportunities for contact with individuals outside of the Society.⁴⁰ In fact, the commercial interactions of both women serve as evidence of integration at its most effective. Through their everyday work, they were able to present their religious testimonies and ways of life to a broad cross-section of society.

It seems that Quaker women could not easily withdraw from their economic obligations. Instead, they needed to be flexible in order to thrive within their communities. Jane Metford's public identity as a Quaker schoolmistress working in Somerset in the 1730s serves as a particularly useful example of such pragmatism. The diarist John Cannon described how Metford

³⁹ LRSF, Portfolio MS, vol. 36, fol. 161, 'An Account of the Birth, and Education, with the Services and Sufferings for Truth's sake, of that faithful Friend Eliz[abeth] Andrews', undated, later 1690s.

⁴⁰ William Stout, *The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster, 1665-1752*, ed. J. D. Marshall (Manchester, 1967), see for example entries for 1688: pp. 90-91, 96, and 1691-1692: pp. 102, 105.

was employed to teach elementary reading at a Church of England charity school, which served as a preparatory school or 'nursery'. The 'best readers' were then selected and transferred to Cannon's school.⁴¹ Metford liaised with the churchwardens, supervising the school's arrangements. She also taught her pupils a curriculum that complemented their progression to Cannon's Anglican school. This serves as a striking example of Friends actively furthering their involvement with the world, rather than isolating themselves from it. The Quaker refusal to swear oaths has been often cited as one of the greatest hindrances for Friends to participate in civic life.⁴² However, that women like Jane Metford could, and indeed did, operate within the wider community provides a strong indication that the reality could never match either the Quaker isolationist ideal or government restrictions.

One of the most important roles that enabled a Quaker woman to integrate into her community was as a midwife. The practice of midwifery was a source of much anxiety for the Quaker leadership, for it was feared that women who attended non-Quaker births would be exposed to and even corrupted by profane practices, such as participating in the 'gossips feast', the 'sprinkling of children', or receiving offerings or gifts.⁴³ It also provides a good example of an official space in which Quaker women were legally prohibited from mixing with non-Quakers. Quaker midwives were prevented from obtaining an ecclesiastical

⁴¹ Cannon, *The Chronicles of John Cannon*, ii, p. 202, original fol. 199, entry for 1733.

⁴² Richard T. Vann argues that the Quakers' testimony against oaths 'cost more Friends their lives than any other'. Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655-1755* (Cambridge, MA., 1969), pp. 189-90.

⁴³ Anon., 'At a Meeting of the Midwives in Barbadoes, 11.xii.1677', *JFHS*, vol. 37 (1940), p. 22.

licence to practise their profession because they would not swear the oath of office and refused to baptise a child if its life seemed at risk.⁴⁴

However, Quaker affiliation did not have a wholly negative effect on their livelihoods. Edmund Verney, for example, repeatedly employed the skilful Quaker midwife Frances Kent to attend to his sickly wife during childbirth. She was paid fees of £5, £10, and £20, but, as he notes, she refused traditional gifts from the godparents.⁴⁵ The Bristol excise officer John Cannon also employed a Quaker midwife and her assistant to attend his wife Susannah during labour in 1717 and 1719.⁴⁶ This is indicative of a degree of compromise on the part of both midwife and parents, who were seemingly able to set aside religious differences within the walls of the birthing chamber. As Doreen Evenden has argued, it is more likely that 'the universal and elemental drama' shared by women during childbirth could temporarily create stronger ties than those imposed by religion.⁴⁷

This view is supported by Dixon's research into the involvement of Friends in the late seventeenth-century London livery companies. He concludes that Friends were establishing themselves as 'useful and loyal members of society' and were becoming more integrated into the mainstream of everyday

⁴⁴ The training and licencing of midwives in the American colonies is less-widely documented, but those who practised without a licence would also have been subject to fines or excommunication. However, owing to the dispersed nature of colonial settlements and the practical barriers resulting from this distance, it is likely that the licencing system would have been weaker. Jane B. Donegan, *Women and Men Midwives: Medicine, Morality and Misogyny in Early America* (London, 1978), p. 12. See also Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York, 1990).

⁴⁵ Cited in Ann Giardina Hess, 'Midwifery Practice Among the Quakers in Southern Rural England in the Late Seventeenth Century', in Hilary Marland (ed.), *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe* (London, 1993), pp. 63–65; and Doreen Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 15.

⁴⁶ Cannon, *The Chronicles of John Cannon*, i, pp. 146, 156, original fols 140, 146, entries for 1717 and 1719.

⁴⁷ Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London*, p. 97.

life.⁴⁸ At the same time, he demonstrates that the livery companies were willing to accommodate Quakers, despite their refusal to swear oaths.⁴⁹ Whilst Quaker midwives were not granted ecclesiastical licences, it is clear that a good reputation could outweigh such handicaps. Moreover, evidence from the Quaker London Birth Notes between 1676 and 1750 even indicates that a high proportion of Quaker births were attended by women who had received an ecclesiastical licence. The Anglican midwife Elizabeth Clarke, for instance, attended almost twelve per cent of the Quaker births that were recorded in the London Quaker birth notes between 1680 and 1690 (see Appendix Six).⁵⁰ This suggests that non-Quaker midwives were often deliberately chosen by parents for the task, and not simply employed in an emergency situation when a Quaker midwife was unavailable.

The position of the midwife in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society evidently had the potential to transcend religious affiliations. A 1750 letter of introduction, written by Sophia Hume on behalf of Mary Sincrey, who was both a 'stranger' to the writer and 'not a Friend', suggests that Quaker women might even be willing to promote the services of non-Quaker midwives. In the letter, Hume explained that Sincrey 'professes midwifery' and was planning to resettle in Philadelphia, having heard of a shortage of 'skilful practical midwi[ves]' in the city. Her letter suggests a willingness to endorse a non-Quaker's profession despite the detrimental impact it might have on the livelihoods of other members of their Society. Hume even acknowledged the

⁴⁸ Dixon, 'Quaker Communities in London', p. 224.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 212–20.

⁵⁰ Data extracted from TNA, RG6/1626 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1676–1707 and Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London*, p. 96 (Table 3.3. *Licensed Midwives Who Delivered Quaker Mothers*).

'Disadvantage' her recommendation could have on 'our Friends Professing that Business' and urged her recipient not to mention her involvement in the matter.⁵¹ Sophia Hume's letter suggests that women could place the value of a skilful, non-Quaker midwife willing to attend Quaker births above religious affiliation.

'The plight of the disenfranchised': Quaker philanthropy and the Bristol Workhouse

As with their involvement in childbirth, Quaker women's work was underpinned by a strong sense of charity and good neighbourliness. Whilst we might expect post-toleration Quakerism to have been strongly focused on providing members with economic and spiritual support, it is significant that female Friends were also actively involved in causes that reached beyond their own community. Jacalynn Stuckey Welling has suggested that the experience of suffering and persecution had the counter-effect of sensitizing Friends to the 'plight of the disenfranchised'.⁵² In the British Isles it seems that much of this effort was channelled into poor relief and later prison reform—matters which many of the early sufferers had experienced first-hand. In Pennsylvania, on the other hand, where cooperation and tolerance were enshrined in the establishment of the colony, settlers were encouraged to live in harmony not only amongst themselves, but also with the indigenous population. Colonial Friends' religious and charitable concerns for individuals outside their Society can be observed through their interest in the rights and welfare of their Native American and African-American neighbours in the late eighteenth century.

⁵¹ HSP, MS Coll 484A Pemberton Family Papers, vol. 6, fol. 19, Sophia Hume to Mary Pemberton, London, 26 April 1750.

⁵² Jacalynn Stuckey Welling, 'Mission', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, p. 309.

Within the English setting, Quaker women undertook a range of philanthropic activities to assist the poorer members of their communities. The extant records of the Quaker workhouse in Bristol provide a fascinating example of both the extensive nature of female-led philanthropy and Quaker integration in practice. The independent Quaker workhouse, which came to shape the model of poor relief implemented by the Corporation of Bristol, was modelled on the London cloth merchant John Bellers's utopian vision of a subscription-funded 'Colledge of Industry' in which the poor could be given useful employment and acquire education.⁵³ Bellers, like many Friends, viewed wealth as more of a moral than a material issue and pressed for direct involvement in improving the material lives of the indigent, by encouraging the poor to voluntarily join these institutions and gain the education necessary for self-improvement.⁵⁴ Indeed, what made the Bristol workhouse stand out from contemporary institutions, including John Cary's scheme in Bristol, was its emphasis on self-help, rather than compulsory labour. It was to act as a supplementary voluntary exercise, facilitating the education of poor children, so that they could acquire the skills and resources necessary to become useful and

⁵³ See in particular: Mark Freeman, 'Quakers, Business, and Philanthropy', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, p. 423. See also Bristol Yearly Meeting, *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, 1686-1704*, ed. Russell Mortimer (Bristol, 1977), pp. xxviii-xxx.

The near-contemporary Bristol poor relief scheme, which included the founding of two new workhouses from 1698, was very similar to that implemented by Bristol Friends in 1696. The main instigator of the Bristol scheme was John Cary, who published an account of the Corporation's early years in 1700. In this, he detailed the obstacles and practicalities of the workhouse's management and how the poor were relieved, cared for, and educated. See: John Cary, *An Account of the Proceedings of the Corporation of Bristol, in Execution of the Act of Parliament for the Better Employing and Maintaining the Poor of that City* (London, 1700); and E. E. Butcher, *Bristol Corporation of the Poor, 1696-1898* (Historical Association, Bristol Branch, no. 29, Bristol, 1972), for comparisons with the Quaker workhouse see esp. pp. 10-11, 15.

⁵⁴ Deborah Valenze, *The Social Life of Money in the English Past* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 119-44.

successful citizens.⁵⁵ Production and sale of goods were negotiated through the workhouse manager Sarah Chubb, who took over its administration from her husband George in 1704.⁵⁶

Whilst the main focus of the workhouse was to offer education, paid employment, and comfortable accommodation for poor Friends of the city, many of the merchants and traders who corresponded with Sarah Chubb were not Quakers. Moreover, the type of fabrics they ordered suggests that the Quaker-produced goods were not manufactured merely for Quaker customers. In a letter sent from Cornwall in 1710, Alice Beeling Jr. ordered eighty yards of stole fabric. Like many of Sarah's customers, she enclosed a sample with specific instructions about its appearance, explaining that 'in ste[a]d of strip[e]s of black it must be a dee[p]e Red'.⁵⁷ Although we can only speculate on the type of customer such products would be aimed at, it is unlikely that such bright or patterned fabric would be primarily targeted at Quaker consumers. An epistle from Lincolnshire Women's Meeting in 1721 warned friends against wearing 'Gaudy Colour[s]' and recommended that 'green' was 'very decent and

⁵⁵ One of the pitfalls that Cary cited in his account of the Bristol Corporation was the challenge associated with getting the poor to work and getting the parents of poor children to support the scheme. He wrote, for example, that 'we had a great deal of trouble with their Parents, and those who formerly kept them, who having lost the sweetness of their Pay, did all they could to set both the Children and others against us'. He also explained that 'we found it difficult at first to bend them down to good Orders, but by degrees we have brought them under Government'. The voluntary nature of the Bristol Quaker workhouse, by contrast, meant that those who entered the workhouse did so because they wanted to better themselves. This meant that Friends did not face the same obstacles in setting their inmates to work. Cary, *An Account of the Proceedings of the Corporation of Bristol*, pp. 11, 17.

⁵⁶ The extant accounts and correspondence of the Bristol Workhouse were consulted in the following repositories: LRSF, MS Vol 294 Dix MS fols B 1 B-B 33 B; Bristol Record Office, SF/A/9/1 Records of the Workhouse and New Street Mission: Papers Illustrating the Management of the Workhouse, 1697-1809.

⁵⁷ LRSF, MS Vol 294 Dix MS, fol. B 10 B, Alice Beeling Junior to Sarah Chubb (via John Andrews), Penryn, Cornwall, 14 January 1710.

becoming us as a people'.⁵⁸ Likewise, Friends were continually warned against the buying and selling of any 'striped or flowered stuffs'.⁵⁹ When Benjamin Bond attached a piece of striped red fabric to an order in 1714, requesting 'the Best Cantaloones to this Pattern', it is unlikely that such a product was intended for Friends.⁶⁰ Naturally, there is evidence to suggest that some buyers clearly had Quaker customers in mind when they made their requests.⁶¹ Yet it is clear that the output of the workhouse extended beyond the direct local community of Friends. Not only did Sarah Chubb collaborate with non-Quaker merchants, the products and goods produced by the factory were also produced for wider society.

In channelling their wealth into philanthropic endeavours, commentators have suggested that Quakers were conforming to a 'Protestant ethic' that combined Christian motivations with economic and social advancement.⁶² This was a pattern evident in other Nonconformist groups, whose simplicity in personal life often became associated with an attachment to 'industry and frugality'.⁶³ Such activities clearly demonstrate how Friends' concerns for their own kind could be channelled into other philanthropic activities. It also underscores the unusually active place of Quaker women in

⁵⁸ LRSF, Temp MSS 747 Cash MS, fol. 17 'Extracts from the Minutes of Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting', 21 June 1721.

⁵⁹ KAC, WDFCF/1/13 Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1699–1723, minutes for 4 February 1704.

⁶⁰ Cantaloones were a type of lightweight worsted fabric manufactured at the Bristol workhouse. LRSF, MS Vol 294 Dix MS, fol. B 31 B, Benjamin Bond to the Bristol Workhouse, 26 April 1714.

⁶¹ When Francis Place requested 'a peece of the best Cantaloon' from the workhouse in 1715 for his mother, he specified that this should be of 'modist coulers'. LRSF, MS Vol 294 Dix MS, fol. B 33 B, Francis Place to Sarah Chubb, Minehead, Somerset, 11 December 1715.

⁶² See in particular: Matthew Niblett, 'The Death of Puritanism? Protestant Dissent and the Problem of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century England', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 6 (2008), pp. 251–59; and David H. Pratt, *English Quakers and the First Industrial Revolution: A Study of the Quaker Community in Four Industrial Counties—Lancashire, York, Warwick and Gloucester, 1750–1830* (London, 1985).

⁶³ Freeman, 'Quakers, Business, and Philanthropy', p. 422.

administering public charity. In many respects, it can be viewed as an extension of their roles within their separate Meetings for business, as discussed in Chapter Two, where relief of poorer members of the community was a dominant concern for the elders of the English Meetings.⁶⁴ Not only were they able to lessen the burden of poor relief on local rate payers through caring for their own religious community, they were also finding innovative solutions to the problem of poverty within wider society. The similarities between the Quaker workhouse in Bristol and those workhouses set up by the Bristol Corporation of the Poor, is indicative of the influence that Friends had in shaping local poor relief initiatives. An unnamed Quaker woman from Edinburgh gained fame in 1725 for her proposal to establish a woollen manufactory in the city. This 'Act of great Charity' found strong support in the British press, for the woman intended to 'employ all the Beggars in Work, and to give them Food and Rayment', which would be of 'great Service to the City'.⁶⁵ Such undertakings epitomise the acceptance that Quakers had attained within British society by the early eighteenth century.

Even in the American colonies, where the general wealth of Friends meant that there was less direct need for formal poor relief systems within their Meetings, women appear to have taken an active interest in the plight of poorer members of their communities. This is evidenced from the establishment of institutions like the Philadelphia Almshouse, for the employment and relief of the able-bodied poor, in 1713, and the Pennsylvania Hospital, for the aid of the sick poor, in 1751. The Philadelphian Quaker diarist Hannah Callender was a

⁶⁴ One example of the Women's Meetings' practical role in such matters was evidenced in 1679, when John Bellers purchased and provided the London Women's Meeting with cloth and flax, so that they could fashion them into clothing for the poor. Valenze, *The Social Life of Money*, p. 122.

⁶⁵ *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer* (London), 27 February 1725, p. 1.

frequent visitor to the Pennsylvania Hospital, where she provided material and financial relief to the sick inmates.⁶⁶ Despite the fact that there was less poverty amongst Friends in colonial cities like Philadelphia, the actions of female Friends like Callender show that there was an underlying recognition that their poorer non-Quaker neighbours needed support and assistance. This level of integration was also evident in Friends' later activities against slavery and the establishment of their Friendly Association with the Indians, founded in 1756. In transmuting their own experience of suffering into sympathy for the plight of others, Quaker women became actively involved in the world around them, bringing them positions of responsibility within their communities.

'[I]n the world, but not of it': Female preachers and Quaker 'plainness' testimonies

The preacher or 'Public Friend' provides one of the most compelling examples of women's liminality between the private world of the Meeting and the wider non-Quaker world. In fact, the denotation of 'Public Friend' to refer to ministers shows how Quakers understood their work to mean interaction with those who were not of their Society and did not conform to their codes and practices. Whilst the highly unorthodox behaviour of female preachers often met with criticism and scorn, their labours could also encourage conversion. The anonymous author of *Remarks Upon the Quakers* criticised the movement as late as 1700 for using female preachers as a means of attracting large audiences. '[T]he Meeting not thronged so much as it used to be, what a subtle Art the Quakers have to regain the Company, and fill the House afresh', for they had

⁶⁶ Hannah Callender, *The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of the American Revolution*, ed. Susan E. Klepp and Karin Wulf (London, 2010), pp. 68, 99, 247: diary entries for 19 and 20 September 1758, 12 April 1759, 27 and 29 March 1770.

resolved 'that a Woman is to Speak the next time, which sets the People a madding and makes them all for coming again'.⁶⁷ Whilst the cynicism of this author should be treated with caution, it is significant that non-Quakers writers were presenting the novelty of female preachers as one of the reasons for the movement's success. This is supported by anecdotal evidence from female preachers' spiritual autobiographies. Alice Hayes, for example, noted before her conversion to Quakerism in 1680 that she had attended a Meeting because she had 'heard a Report about the Neighbourhood of a *Woman-Preacher*, that was esteemed of greatly among the *Quakers*' and that she, along with some of the neighbours, had gone to see her 'in Curiosity'.⁶⁸

Encounters of this sort appear to have occurred on an even greater scale in the American colonies. The female Friend's status as an itinerant preacher travelling from place to place naturally aroused much suspicion. Mary Weston, for instance, described in her journal her concerns about visiting Connecticut, because the people 'were very much Strangers to Friends and their principles, and indeed some few years ago were bitter Enemies Against them'. She noted the aversion that the inhabitants had to women's preaching, which she admitted 'brought my Mind very low'.⁶⁹ Circumstantial evidence nevertheless suggests that her presence was sometimes welcomed as a novelty. During her visit to Newport in Rhode Island in 1750, for example, Weston reported that between '4 and 5 thousand people' had attended a Meeting where she preached.⁷⁰ It is highly probable that this was an overestimate, but the writings of other women

⁶⁷ Anon., *Remarks upon the Quakers: Wherein the Plain-Dealers are Plainly Dealt with* (London, 1700), p. 13.

⁶⁸ Alice Hayes, *A Legacy or Widow's Mite; Left by Alice Hayes, to Her Children and Others. With an Account of Some of her Dying Sayings* (London, 1723), p. 18.

⁶⁹ LRSF, MS Vol 312 Mary Weston's Journal, fol. 116.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, between fols 71-2, Mary Weston to Daniel Weston, New York, 9 December 1750.

who undertook missionary work in the Puritan colonies suggest that they too had sometimes enjoyed a similar reception. Mary Peisley, for instance, noted on her journey to New England that the people had 'thronged' to the Meetings in 'unbounded curiosity' to hear her speak, despite the hot weather. She remarked that 'it was exceeding hard to fit them, and much more trying to speak in them'.⁷¹ Evidence such as this suggests that Quaker women ministers might not only achieve eminence within their own religious society but also attain status in the non-Quaker community, viewed as objects of interest and wonder.

The acceptance and hospitality offered to female preachers during their itinerant work was frequently acknowledged by women in their spiritual autobiographies. The scarcity of Friends in some regions, combined with long distances between Quaker Meetings, often meant that preachers had to rely on the kindness of non-Quaker strangers. Recalling such conditions during her travels to the colonies in 1753, Catherine Payton noted that after travelling through 'a wilderness country for several days', she came upon a 'lodging at some planters; who, though not of our Society, readily gave us admittance into their houses, and freely entertained us according to their manner of living'.⁷² Mary Peisley even claimed that her missionary work in Ireland had been more effective amongst non-Quakers than amongst those of her own Society. When she visited the town of Sligo in Connaught in July 1751, for example, she commented that 'there seemed much more openness to declare the truth amongst those of other societies, than amongst them that go under our name'.⁷³

⁷¹ Mary Peisley, *Some Account of the Life and Religious Exercises of Mary Neale, formerly Mary Peisley. Principally Compiled from Her Own Writings* (Philadelphia, 1796), p. 104.

⁷² Catherine Phillips (née Payton), *Memoirs of the Life of Catherine Phillips: To which are added Some of Her Epistles* (London, 1797), p. 73.

⁷³ Peisley, *Some Account of the Life and Religious Exercises of [...] Mary Peisley*, pp. 61–62.

In such instances, necessity, combined with a desire to preach to an audience beyond their co-religionists, overcame denominational restrictions.

As 'Public Friends', ministers were placed in a precarious position: at whom and for what purpose should their message be directed? The difficulty in addressing the spiritual state of large mixed crowds was often commented upon by female ministers in their journals.⁷⁴ Undoubtedly they would have been forced to temper their religious exhortation when addressing a largely non-Quaker audience. However, concerns about the popularity of particular preachers could also prove a source of conflict within a movement whose leadership was becoming increasingly introverted. May Drummond, for instance, was forbidden from preaching in her native Meeting in Edinburgh, after Friends judged that her public speech was not spiritually edifying. The criticisms she faced were remarkably hostile, with one Friend declaring that 'we have farr better meetings in thy absence than when thou art present'.⁷⁵ Whilst the 'burden' Friends experienced with her preaching was cited as the reason for her forced removal from this office, it is almost certain that her popularity with non-Quaker audiences also contributed to this stigmatisation. Similar criticisms were levelled at the Staffordshire preacher Frances Henshaw, who became a recognised minister in 1737, but faced criticism for the 'popularity and applause' that her ministering efforts enjoyed, leading some Friends to accuse her of spiritual pride.⁷⁶ The evangelical and almost messianic quality of Quaker

⁷⁴ Deborah Bell commented that her popularity in Lancashire 'added much to the weight of my present exercise'. Deborah Bell, *A Short Journal of the Labours and Travels in the Work in the Ministry, of that Faithful Servant of Christ, Deborah Bell* (London, 1776), p. 13.

⁷⁵ William Miller to May Drummond, Abbay, 3 April 1765, in Miller, 'Episodes in the Life of May Drummond', p. 107.

⁷⁶ Frances Dodshon (née Henshaw), *Some Account of the Convincement and Religious Experience, of Frances Dodshon* (London, 1804), p. 36.

exhortation had disappeared from the English movement by the mid-eighteenth century. Female preachers who felt called to exhort non-Quaker audiences might now find themselves facing condemnation from their own Society.

The reaction of leading Friends against May Drummond's and Frances Henshaw's public preaching is perhaps indicative of their more general concern that members were becoming too integrated into the world. Such concerns are revealed in one 1744 letter from William Cookworthy to Richard Hingston, where he detailed his observations of May Drummond's preaching. Commenting on the 'learned' style of her ministry, he observed that 'some of her epithets rather swell too much' and were 'a little theatrical'. He went on to explain that 'She has a perfect acquaintance with the world, being what is called thorough well-bred'.⁷⁷ His observations hint at the fears of the eighteenth-century movement that Friends were becoming too integrated and thus polluting themselves with 'worldly' behaviour. This is noted by James Emmett Ryan, who argues that the eighteenth-century Quakers experienced a 'crisis in their membership that exposed fault lines within the Society'.⁷⁸ The gap between theory and practice, that is what was expected of members and how they actually behaved, was evidently a cause of concern for the Society. This seems to have been particularly true of the elders of the English Meetings, who criticised those female preachers who addressed non-Quaker audiences too frequently.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ William Cookworthy to Richard Hingston, Plymouth, 1 August 1744, in Miller, 'Episodes in the Life of May Drummond', p. 61.

⁷⁸ James Emmett Ryan, *Imaginary Friends: Representing Quakers in American Culture, 1650–1950* (London, 2009), p. 90.

⁷⁹ I have found no comparable example of colonial Friends criticising a female minister for the popularity of her preaching.

It was not just the itinerant preachers, however, who were transgressing these boundaries. One of the most visible examples of the growing 'worldliness' within the Quaker rank-and-file was through their outward dress and deportment. As Emma J. Lapansky notes, the Quaker doctrine of simplicity and plainness was '[b]alanced along the thin edge of a theology that requires being "in the world, but not of it"'.⁸⁰ We saw in Chapter Two how standards of 'plainness' varied greatly over time and in different places. It was a matter relative to wealth and, as noted, many of the more affluent colonial Meetings were more tolerant of their members transgressing such testimonies. This tension was highlighted in the reflections of Ann Warder, an English-born Quaker, who observed the unusual sociability and fashionable dress of her Philadelphian co-religionists in a journal she kept for her sister. She frequently commented on the un-Quakerly fashions of the female Friends of the city, criticising her visitors for wearing outfits 'elegant enough for any bride'. During one hot summer in the city, she explained how she had endeavoured to make 'no alteration in my dress on account of the weather', since godly 'resolution would not let me wear short gowns, which are common here'.⁸¹

The fluidity with which Quaker testimonies were adapted and understood by different groups of Friends is evidence of the tension between the public presentation of Quakerism to the world and efforts by the movement to encourage members to lead pure lives. Noting increasing disparities between Quaker prosperity and precepts of plain living, Voltaire perceived the movement's decline in England, describing how '[t]he children, whom the

⁸⁰ Emma J. Lapansky, 'Plainness and Simplicity', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, p. 336.

⁸¹ Ann Warder, 'Extracts from the Diary of Mrs. Ann Warder', ed. Sarah Cadbury, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 17, no. 4 (1893), pp. 447, 453.

industry of their parents has enrich'd are desirous of enjoying honours, of wearing buttons and ruffles; and [are] quite ashamed of being call'd Quakers'.⁸² The French writer Brissot also lamented the extravagance of a younger generation of female Pennsylvanian Friends, who fussed over curling their hair and expensive fabrics. 'These observations gave me pain', he wrote, for 'These young Quakeresses, whom nature has so well endowed [...] are remarkable for their choice of the finest linens, muslins, and silks.'⁸³ A fondness for luxury and ostentatious living was a recurring concern for the developing movement and shows how wealthy Friends struggled to balance the material status associated with their position in society with a plain and circumspect lifestyle.

Quaker women were perceptibly more closely integrated into their local communities than traditional histories of the early movement have suggested. The sympathetic response of neighbours and members of the public to Quaker women's suffering and to Quaker testimonies exemplifies the existence of amicable social relations even during the movement's fraught beginnings. Women's involvement in business and philanthropic activities provides perhaps the strongest examples of their participation in the economic structures of their communities—providing goods and services, as well as charitable relief to non-Quaker neighbours. In fact, it was the increasing wealth of the urban Friends that seems to have provided the most pronounced opportunities for women to both participate in and embrace broader societal trends. It serves as a reminder that a rigorous code of ethics was difficult to enforce within a movement whose membership base spanned such a broad social and geographical cross-section

⁸² Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (London, 1733), p. 29.

⁸³ J. P. Brissot DeWarville, *New Travels in the United States of America Performed in 1788* (Dublin, 1792), pp. 380–81.

of the Atlantic world. Interaction with their non-Quaker neighbours was a very real and unavoidable element of Quaker women's lives. However, British Friends appear considerably more vigilant than their colonial sisters in discouraging members from mixing too much with the rest of the 'world'.

This evident gap between theory and practice, or the expected behaviour versus the actual comportment of Friends, was a clear source of tension. An increasing acceptance of the movement by the rest of society led, in the eyes of its leadership, to greater potential for Quaker transgressions. Having explored some facets of toleration for female Friends at a local level, the discussion now turns to consider how non-Quaker responses to the movement shaped representations of female Friends.

2. Representations of women in non-Quaker writings

Having seen the multiple ways in which Quaker women could interact with, or emulate, their non-Quaker neighbours, the discussion will now consider another facet of their experiences, namely how their reception was affected by shifting attitudes towards the movement. Utilising a range of visual and printed materials published by non-Quakers, it will explore the changing representations of female Friends between 1650 and 1750 and consider how various social, economic, religious, and political circumstances influenced how they were portrayed in print. The women featured in these texts reflect important cultural and intellectual developments both within and without Quakerism.

Printed tracts published by the Quakers have played a vital role in shaping our understanding of women within the early movement.⁸⁴ However, how attitudes towards Quaker women manifested themselves in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century print culture more generally has received surprisingly little attention in the historiography.⁸⁵ Anti-Quaker literature had a sustained presence throughout our period, demonstrated by the large number of anti-Quaker prints that appeared shortly after the movement's establishment. Over five hundred pamphlets and books were published against Friends between 1650 and 1750 and Joseph Smith's famous *Bibliotheca Anti-Quakeriana* contains the names of over one hundred and fifty different authors who published texts 'adverse to the Society of Friends'.⁸⁶ This proliferation of texts undoubtedly helped to shape the image of Quakerism presented to the non-Quaker public, supporting Adam Fox's conclusions that written and visual sources formed part of a 'dynamic continuum' with local ideas, customs, beliefs, and intellectual trends.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Kate Peters's *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* provides a particularly important contribution to this debate. She demonstrates an important link between Quaker published tracts and the movement's successful missionary campaign. Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge 2005). See also Betty Haggund, 'Quakers and Print Culture', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, pp. 477–91.

⁸⁵ One exception to this rule is Mark Knights's use of printed and visual sources in *The Devil in Disguise*, esp. pp. 77–94. Drawing extensively on anti-Quaker polemic, Knights effectively demonstrates the intersection between published satire and popular beliefs about the movement's women, which appeared during times of local tension. See also Ryan, *Imaginary Friends*.

⁸⁶ Knights, *The Devil in Disguise*, p. 77; Charles L. Cherry, 'Enthusiasm and Madness: Anti-Quakerism in the Seventeenth Century', *Quaker History*, vol. 73, no. 2 (1984), pp. 10–11.

For the purposes of this discussion I have conducted a search for references to women in the hostile anti-Quaker texts published between 1650 and 1750. These have been identified through a number of catalogues, including a search of 'Quaker women' in the English Short Title Catalogue and a subject search of 'Antiquakeriana' on Tripod catalogue, which combines the archival material held at Haverford College, Bryn Mawr College, and Swarthmore College Libraries. This search has led to the identification of over seven hundred texts (including editions) relating to anti-Quaker polemic published in England and the colonies between 1650 and 1750.

⁸⁷ Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, p. 50.

This part of the chapter seeks to explore both negative and positive responses to female Friends that circulated in print. It will begin with an assessment of the hostile images that gained currency in the early years of the movement and consider the likely reasons for such responses. A number of themes run throughout the anti-Quaker material relevant to women, including their negative impact on family relationships; ignorance and credulity; scolding and sexual licentiousness; witchcraft and madness. The second part will then consider how such negative depictions changed over the period. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of separate Women's Meetings in the 1670s in altering the focus of how Quaker household relationships were understood and presented in hostile accounts. Part three contemplates how changes in late seventeenth and eighteenth-century society more generally may have led to the development of more supportive representations of female Friends. Here, the rise of the Enlightenment and what Judith Jennings terms 'polite Quakerliness' significantly altered how they were viewed by the non-Quaker world.⁸⁸

Whilst some attention will be paid to geographical variations, the main focus of the first part of this discussion will be on the hostile representations of Quaker women circulated by English authors. There were relatively few hostile anti-Quaker publications in the colonies, which can be linked to the slower development of regional printing even in the more established cities of New England and Pennsylvania. Undoubtedly, the liberal principles of colonies like Pennsylvania, where acceptance of religious diversity was part of everyday life, helps explain the small number of publications, since Friends and their

⁸⁸ Judith Jennings, *Gender, Religion, and Radicalism in the Long Eighteenth Century: The 'Ingenious Quaker' and Her Connections* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 2.

opponents never had the same incentive to engage in printed debates. Moreover, the majority of publications sold by booksellers and merchants in the colonies originated from the English printing presses.⁸⁹ It is highly likely that where hostile texts were in circulation, they originated from London and spread an analogous message across the Atlantic.

'Delusions of the Devil': women in early anti-Quaker polemic

Images and texts that sought to discredit female adherents of Quakerism were not in short supply. But it is important to note that many of these slurs were not exclusively applied to Friends and formed part of a long tradition of antagonism towards religious deviance. How hostile accounts of Quakerism evolved across the period nevertheless provides a strong indication of changing attitudes and understandings of female Friends.

One of the most common tropes in anti-Quaker polemic was the argument that adherence to the faith would undermine the unity of the family. Chapter One made reference to the destructive (and even violent) consequences of divided households, affected by the conversion of one spouse, or a child, to Quakerism. But it was the potential repercussions of female-initiated conversion that early critics seemed to fear most. Anna M. Lawrence argues, with reference to anti-Methodist polemic, that this stemmed from a belief that women were leading their families into new 'delusional religious and moral spheres'.⁹⁰ Likewise, evidence from anti-Quaker literature suggests that fear of household disorder led writers to present themselves as defending those

⁸⁹ Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (London, 1990), p. 31.

⁹⁰ Anna M. Lawrence, *One Family under God: Love, Belonging, and Authority in Early Transatlantic Methodism* (Philadelphia, 2011), p. 98.

traditional values, which the disruptive excesses of Quakerism seemed to be disturbing. This was evidenced in 1725 when William Walker's wife converted to Quakerism against his wishes. Walker warned that this could only create 'a House of Confusion', for he feared that by being accountable to another man, his wife would no longer submit to his authority, leading to a situation of '*Divide and Rule*'.⁹¹

An anonymous pamphlet, published in 1700, detailed a series of errors linked to the '*Quaker-Craft*', and accused Quaker preachers of seducing '*silly Women*', who would then go on to initiate the conversion of their families.⁹² It was 'not only an easie, but a very important Conquest', the author warned, 'for the *Quakers* having made sure of the Wife, they seldom miss of the Husband, who can never be at quiet till he hath Complied with her by renouncing of his Faith.'⁹³ The biblical trope of 'silly women' being deceived by heretics was a slur that was not aimed only at Quakers, and was linked to more general notions of the female constitution, with women's allegedly emotional nature and inability to discern truth from error requiring their subjection in marriage. The intensity with which the family became the focus of anti-Quaker writings, however, suggests a strong underlying recognition of the Quaker mother's position within family piety. Writing in 1653, Francis Higginson cited the deception of 'silly women' in their homes as one of the chief reasons for the proliferation of the

⁹¹ William Walker, *A True Copy of Some Original Letters, which Pass'd Between John Hall of Monk-Hesleden in the County of Durham, an Eminent Quaker Teacher, and William Walker [...] Whose Wife had the Misfortune to be Seduc'd to Quakerism* (Newcastle, 1725), p. 51.

⁹² The use of the term 'Silly Women' had biblical origins. 2 Timothy 3:6 on Evil in the Last Days described how traitors 'of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts' (King James Version).

⁹³ Anon., *Remarks Upon the Quakers*, p. 3.

sect in northern England.⁹⁴ The sheer number of women associated with Quakerism, combined with the fact that they could adopt public and itinerant roles independent of patriarchal authority, must have made the potentially disruptive effects on household order seem all the more menacing.⁹⁵

As a 'little commonwealth', divisions within the home could only be a sure sign of the conflict within society that was to come, rending the bonds of obedience that held both family and state together.⁹⁶ Indeed, it was the potential repercussions of female-initiated conversions on household order that early critics of the sect seemed to fear most. The French mystic Antoinette Bourignon described the revelations experienced by one Quaker woman, who had prophesied that her husband would die and that she would marry a young man nearly half her age, as 'Delusions of the Devil'.⁹⁷ She also reported the case of one man and his wife who had separated, claiming that the man had suffered at the hands of his wife and her friends after requesting that she turn away her Quaker servant. It was, however, revealed that the woman had 'loved her Servant more than her Husband [...] and was ready, upon Occasion, to beat her Husband rather than her Servant'.⁹⁸ The shocking implication of such a story was that female servants might be elevated to a position above that of their male masters in a divided household. It underlined the ill-effects of a woman favouring her co-religionists over her own family. Accused of violating the

⁹⁴ Francis Higginson, *A Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers Wherein their Horrid Principles and Practises, Doctrines and Manners [...] are Plainly Exposed to the View of Every Intelligent Reader* (London, 1653), sig. A6r.

⁹⁵ As in many congregational churches, women often outnumbered men in Quaker congregations. Keith Thomas remarked that rumours had even spread in the years before 1660 that the Quaker sect was confined to women alone. Keith Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', *Past and Present*, vol. 13 (1958), p. 47.

⁹⁶ William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622), p. 18.

⁹⁷ Antoinette Bourignon, *A Warning against the Quakers: Wherein the Errors of that Sect are Plainly Detected [...] Done out of French* (London, 1708), p. 16.

⁹⁸ Bourignon, *Warning against the Quakers*, pp.126–29.

marital bond and splitting households, Quaker beliefs were condemned as both disruptive and corrosive to traditional social relationships.

Approbation of public female preaching, which went against Pauline precepts of women remaining silent in church, was one of the most radical aspects of Quaker theology and, predictably, became a target of much anti-Quaker polemic. Phyllis Mack has suggested that negative reactions to female prophets stemmed from a popular fear of disorder.⁹⁹ One 1655 publication by Donald Lupton neatly encapsulated the divisive nature of public female speech. 'They like not Saint *Pauls* advise', the author wrote, but 'presume so far, even to *Railing* and *Scolding* [...] women are called houswives [*sic*], they should in modesty keep at home'.¹⁰⁰ Such concerns for domestic order are perhaps best symbolised through the hostile propaganda that discredited female prophets as 'tub-preachers', such as the one presented in Figure 3. This image was linked to laundresses who, according to Mack, had turned their washtubs upside down as makeshift pulpits to preach disorder and disobedience.¹⁰¹ The use of the tub had symbolic resonance, for in adopting such a public role critics could argue that women were literally throwing away their domestic responsibilities. It also resonated with the image of a 'world turned upside down', suggesting an overturning of traditional social, hierarchical, and gender roles.

⁹⁹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 249.

¹⁰⁰ Donald Lupton, *The Quacking Mountebanck or the Jesuite Turn'd Quaker. In a Witty and Full Dsccovery of their Product and Rise* (London, 1655), p. 19.

¹⁰¹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 56.



Figure 3 The Quaker 'tub-preacher'.
The Quakers Meeting by Egbert van Heemskerck I (c.1640–1680).

Significantly, it was not only the potential for wifely insubordination after conversion to Quakerism that shocked these authors, but the economic disruption caused to the family unit by such behaviour. If we are to take Mack's suggestion that these 'tub-preachers' represented humble washerwomen, then these women embodied the tension between the private realm of the household and women's public work. Their inversion of the tub served as a reminder that in neglecting their work, they were also disrupting the household economy. The example cited in Chapter One of Alice Hall's husband anticipating her return from preaching in Ireland in time for harvesting the oats, illustrates the damaging effect that female itinerancy could have on the economic life of the

household.¹⁰² Another example of female ministers' inverted priorities was offered by a correspondent in the *Spectator*, who explained that he was 'one of those unhappy Men that are plagued with a Gospel-Gossip [...] Lectures in the Morning, Church-Meetings at Noon, and Preparation-Sermons at Night, take up so much of her Time, 'tis very rare she knows what we have for Dinner'.¹⁰³

Others criticised the control that Quaker wives had over their husbands' resources. One anonymous author warned in 1700 that once the Quakers 'have got the heart of the Wife, they'll never want the Husbands Purse. For 'tis a certain Rule amongst the *Quakers*', he wrote, 'to support themselves by means of the Women, who think it no Sin to rob their Husbands, to pay the Speaker'.¹⁰⁴ This image was doubly satirical as it presented Quaker preachers who renounced paid ministry as hypocrites who took advantage of the more vulnerable members of their congregations. The 1679 *Yea and Nay Almanack*, authored by William Winstanley, satirised Quaker plainness testimonies, by suggesting that rather than dressing in finery, female Friends' inward pride led them to steal money from their 'Husbands pockets' and give it to their unpaid preachers.¹⁰⁵ This was paralleled in criticisms of women in anti-Methodist literature. The scandalous actions of the cobbler's wife in *The Mock Preacher*, for instance, are emphasised by her appropriation of the family finances to support a George Whitefield-like figure whilst her family starved.¹⁰⁶ Such slurs showed

¹⁰² Isaac Hall to Alice Hall, Broughton, Cumberland, 26 July 1747, in John Hall Shield (ed.), *Genealogical Notes on the Families of Hall, Featherston, Wigham, Ostle, Watson etc.* (Allendale, Northumberland, 1915), pp. 35a–37.

¹⁰³ *The Spectator*, no. 46, 23 April 1711, in Donald F. Bond (ed.), *The Spectator* (5 vols, Oxford, 1987), i, pp. 198–99.

¹⁰⁴ Anon., *Remarks Upon the Quakers*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ William Winstanley, *Yea and Nay Almanack, For the People Call'd by the Men of the World Quakers* (London, 1679), sig. A5r.

¹⁰⁶ Anon., *The Mock-Preacher: a Satyrical-Comical-Allegorical Farce* (London, 1739), pp. 15–17.

how both the social and economic stability of the household could be undermined by female sectarianism.

Anti-Quaker polemic reveals how women were viewed as a dangerous threat to the established gender hierarchy. Public female speech, as David Underdown has recognised, was explicitly associated with women who defied the authority of their husbands.¹⁰⁷ This was linked to an age-old fear that women whose tongues were loose in public were also likely to have loose morals in private. Martha Simmonds, who gained notoriety for her role in the scandalous James Nayler affair, was labelled by polemicists as the movement's 'chief *Virago*' and more suited to a cucking stool than a speaking place.¹⁰⁸ The suffering of Margaret Newby and Elizabeth Courten at the hands of Evesham magistrates also encapsulated this association between public speech and sexual immorality. The two women, as their biographer describes, were set with their legs rather than their arms in the stocks 'near a yard one from another', and when they requested a block to sit on, the mayor thrust it between their legs.¹⁰⁹ Catie Gill has suggested that this humiliating act was used for symbolic effect, supposedly acting as 'a substitute' for the sexual gratification that the women sought from their public speech.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ David Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England', in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 127.

¹⁰⁸ Lupton, *The Quacking Mountebanck*, p. 19; John Deacon, *An Exact History of the Life of James Nayler* (London, 1657), p. 25.

James Nayler gained notoriety for riding into Bristol on a donkey in imitation of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He was arrested and charged with blasphemy. A good account of the Nayler affair is provided in Leo Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996). For a detailed account of Martha Simmonds see: Crawford, *Women and Religion in England*, pp. 166–80.

¹⁰⁹ Humphrey Smith, *Something Further Laid Open of the Cruel Persecution of the People Called Quakers by the Magistrates and People of Evesham* (1656), p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community: A Literary Study of Political Identities, 1650–1700* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 59–60.

The unorthodox public nature of the female preacher evidently negated traditional feminine roles and helps to explain the popular hostility Quaker women experienced in the early years of the movement. This is supported by a strong body of anti-Quaker polemic linking Quaker membership with sexual deviance. The 1679 *Yea and Nay Almanack* satirically warned Friends of the rampant lechery of Quaker women in the spring months. The story of one Friend who had caught 'the Pox' from 'an unclean Sister' was cited as a warning to other Quakers to keep their wives under control.¹¹¹ Another hostile account described how a Yorkshire woman 'came naked from her own Bed to another womans husband'. On arriving, she 'bid him, *Open his Bed to her, for the Father had sent her to him*'. To add to the scandal, moreover, it was alleged that 'The man had at that time another man lying in Bed with him, who rose to give place to this woman'. In linking Quakers to aberrant sexual proclivities, authors sought to limit their influence upon the rest of society. The author insisted that 'no rational person' would conclude that Quakers were anything other than 'deluded people, taking their own Dreams and Melancholick Fancies for Divine Inspirations'.¹¹²

The scandal associated with the behaviour of female Quaker prophets served as proof for hostile observers that Quakerism was dangerous to the moral and social order. Writers like Thomas Danson catalogued numerous incidents of women acting in complete antithesis to their expected modest behaviour. In 1659, for instance, Danson reported that Mary Todd of Southwark

¹¹¹ Winstanley, *Yea and Nay Almanack* (1679), A7r.

¹¹² Henry Hallywell, *An Account of Familism as it is Revived and Propagated by the Quakers Shewing the Dangerousness of their Tenets, and their Inconsistency with the Principles of Common Reason* (London, 1673), pp. 110–11. The account was also published in Higginson's *A Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, p. 30; and in Deacon's *An Exact History of the Life of James Naylor*, p. 42 [mispaginated].

had 'pull'd up all her cloaths above her middle, exposing her nakednesse to the view of all that were in the Room, and walked so up and down a while, using several expressions about her practise'.¹¹³ Thomas Underhill described in 1660 the actions of one Quaker maid-servant who came into her master's parlour 'stark naked' when he was dining with friends.¹¹⁴ The act of 'going naked for a sign' in imitation of the prophet Isaiah was one of least understood aspects of Quaker testimony and seemed to confirm the validity of charges of delusion. One broadside image widely circulated in the seventeenth century, for example, depicted a Quaker woman seeking guidance from her 'inner light' with a lustful horned devil standing behind her (see Figure 4). The text surrounding the image reprimands the female preacher for giving into the temptations of the devil and for her failure to 'mind hir housewifery'. It was an image that 'crystallised contemporary anxieties', to quote Walsham.¹¹⁵ Not only did it delegitimise the divine authority of the Quaker inner light, but also it preyed upon more general fears about the public authority of women who would have less time to devote to their housekeeping.

¹¹³ Thomas Danson, *The Quakers Wisdom Descendeth Not From Above. Or a Brief Vindication of a Small Tract Intituled, The Quakers Folly Made Manifest to all Men* (London, 1659), Appendices, p. 4, 'A Narrative'.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Underhill, *Hell Broke Loose, or, A History of the Quakers both Old and New* (London, 1660), p. 30.

¹¹⁵ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, p. 124.



Figure 4 A Quaker woman is seduced to preach by the Devil
A Quaker attributed to Richard Gaywood (c.1665–1675).

The Quakers' contempt for authority, their marginalization of the Scriptures, and their rejection of the established Church were axiomatic, in that all were rooted in their adherence to the 'light within'. That the divine impulses of female preachers like the woman depicted in Figure 4 could be construed by opponents as demonic has frequently been noted by scholars. The idea of the witch as a female challenger of religious order only added to this image. Peter

Elmer has noted the 'inordinate frequency' with which accusations of diabolical witchcraft were levelled against Quakers.¹¹⁶ Rather than being divinely inspired, the critic Ralph Farmer observed in 1658, 'the souls of *beasts* had transmigrated, and shifted themselves into the bodies of *women and maidens*', who would lift 'up their voices in the very streets and *publike* Congregations'.¹¹⁷ The association of the female preacher with beastly imagery accentuated the unnaturalness of her public activities, highlighting the gulf between women's natural behaviour as quiet, civil, and meek citizens and the loud, scolding, and raving preachers. In employing bestiality to represent female converts, authors sought to dehumanise their subjects. The 1655 sensationalist account, *Quakers are Inchanters and Dangerous Seducers*, described the bewitching of Mary White after attending Quaker Meetings and reading Quaker texts. Witnesses described how 'something within her body did run up and down, and in her Fits sometime[s] she roared like a Bull, sometime[s] barked like a Dog, and sometime[s] blared like a Calf'.¹¹⁸ Such shocking images served to make the external threat that Quakerism posed appear even more menacing.

Evidently, the boundaries between religious nonconformity and other types of aberrant behaviour were easily blurred. However, the association between religious deviance, sexual amorality, and charges of heresy and witchcraft were nothing new to early modern audiences. Numerous studies have highlighted the existence of slurs of a very similar tenor against groups as

¹¹⁶ Peter Elmer, "'Saints or Sorcerers": Quakerism, Demonology, and the Decline of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England', in Brian P. Levack (ed.), *Demonology, Religion, and Witchcraft: New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology* (6 vols, London, 2001), i, p. 437.

¹¹⁷ Ralph Farmer, *The Imposter Dethron'd, or, The Quakers Throne of Truth Detected* (1658), p. 17.

¹¹⁸ Anon., *Quakers are Inchanters and Dangerous Seducers. Appearing in their Inchantment of one Mary White at Wickham-Skyeth in Suffolk, 1655* (London, 1655), p. 7.

diverse as Catholics, the French Huguenots, Jews, and Methodists.¹¹⁹ The first Friends were often alleged to be Catholics in disguise, and anti-Quaker polemic often deliberately blurred them with other separatist groups. Figure 5, for example, used a portrait of the Fifth Monarchist plotter Thomas Venner to blacken Quakers and Anabaptists. At the top of his halberd is a tablet entitled 'A strange gathering of Anabaptists and Quakers', which depicts a naked woman standing before a pulpit. Here, the association between religious radicalism and female-initiated excess is at its most powerful, despite the different affiliations of the participants. Figure 6 brands the Fifth Monarchist prophet Hannah Trapnel as 'a Quaker, and pretended Prophetess'. Trapnel's Quaker attire, combined with a devil supposedly inspiring her preaching, is strikingly similar to the devilish figure seducing the Quaker female prophet in Figure 4. Such images suggest the extent to which the behaviour of public religious women could spark concerns over the preservation of the moral and religious order. Above all, the use of such damning tropes and stereotypes suggests the combined power that religious sectarianism and public female speech had in generating fear and paranoia across seventeenth-century society.

¹¹⁹ For Catholics see: Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, c.1714–80: A Political and Social Study* (Manchester, 1993); and Peter Lake, 'Anti-Popery: the Structure of a Prejudice', in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642* (London, 1989), pp. 72–106.

For the Huguenots see Penny Roberts, 'Peace, Ritual and Sexual Violence during the Religious Wars', in G. Murdock, P. Roberts, and A. Spicer (eds.), *Ritual and Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 75–99.

For the Jews see: D. Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1996).

For the Methodists see: A. M. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked: the Satiric Reaction to Methodism in the 18th Century* (Michigan, 1960); and John Walsh, 'Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century', in G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (eds.), *Popular Belief and Practice* (Studies in Church History, 8, Cambridge, 1972), pp. 213–27.

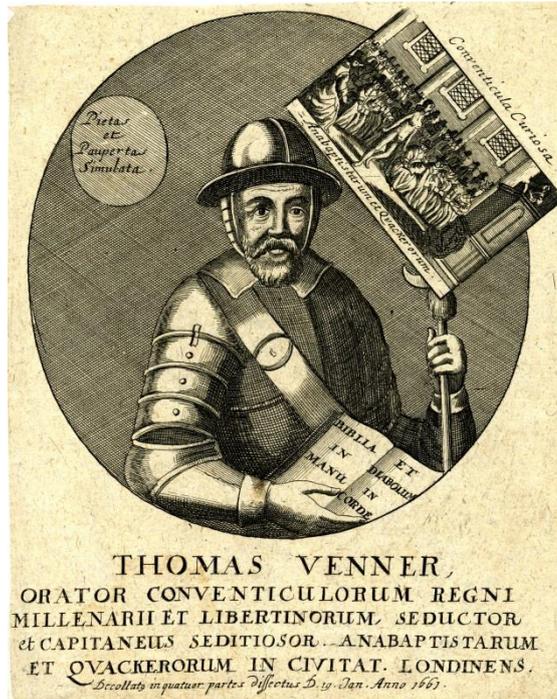


Figure 5 *Thomas Venner*, Anon. (c.1662).

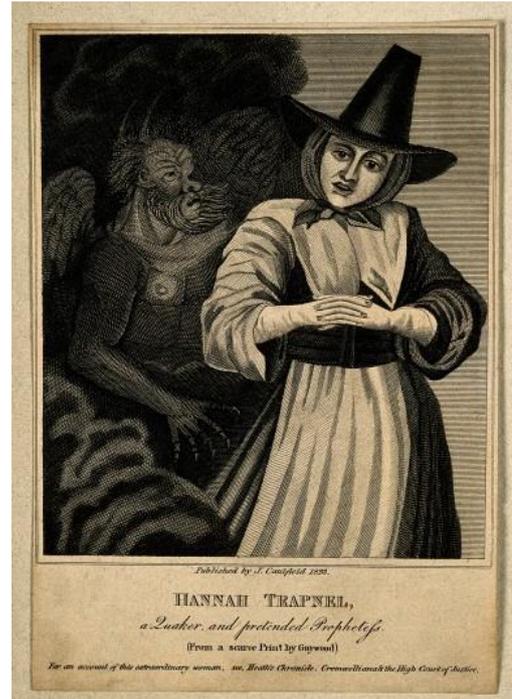


Figure 6 *Hannah Trapnel, a Quaker, and pretended Prophetess* attributed to Richard Gaywood (reprint c.1823).

'Keeping her light within': changing understandings of women in anti-Quaker satire

The images used to discredit female adherents to Quakerism, however, were by no means uniform across the period. The rise of Enlightenment rationalism and a greater impetus towards empirical observation increasingly diminished fears of witchcraft and diabolism. Influenced by new scientific understandings, a shift also began to occur in what authors believed were the causes of such eccentric behaviour. The highly derogatory tract *The Quakers Art of Courtship*, first published in 1689, could offer only one explanation why some 'She-Friends' had decided to go to Rome in 1667 to deliver their address to the Pope, where they had allegedly saluted him as the 'Man of Sin, Whore of Babylon, The Scarlet Whore sitting on the Beast with Seven Heads, with many other Apocalyptick Greetings'. It was not a demonic inspiration that caused them to greet the Pope

in such a brazen manner, the author explained, but 'some sort of Hypochondriack Distemper'. The two women were allegedly treated by Physicians before they returned home, 'having left much of their Disease behind them'.¹²⁰ In a period when piety could easily be confused with delusion, we see a transition in how the female body was understood. No longer were women's association with the excesses of radical religion linked to demonic pacts, but instead presented as an inversion of the reasoned mind, leading to madness. This was a common trope of late eighteenth-century anti-Methodist polemic. One broadside entitled *Harlequin Methodist* (Figure 7) offered a satire of the preacher George Whitefield, depicting him as a Harlequin in a play. The crowd surrounding him is dominated by women, and the set in the background offers a view of the lunatic asylum of Bedlam. Mental instability was evidently replacing demonic pacts as the major explanation for religious deviance in anti-sectarian propaganda.

¹²⁰ Anon., *The Quakers Art of Courtship, or the Yea-and-Nay Academy of Complements Calculated for the Meridian of the Bull-and-Mouth* (London, 1689), pp. 16–18.



Figure 7 Image from broadside *Harlequin Methodist*, Anon. (c.1763).

The association of Quakerism with going naked for a sign, performing miracles, and accusations of witchcraft was mainly confined to the first decade or so of the movement. The shift can largely be attributed to the outward presentation of Quakerism, with dramatic styles of proselytization increasingly treated with scorn and scepticism. In the harsh climate of the Restoration years, the leadership increasingly projected the movement in less offensive and combative ways. Authors like William Penn and Robert Barclay rejected flamboyant activities such as performing miracles, running through the streets naked, and disrupting church ceremonies. They dismissed these as the actions of eccentrics operating without the movement's authority.¹²¹ As a consequence,

¹²¹ For a detailed discussion of the later movement's refutation of the more 'eccentric' elements of Quaker worship and testimony see: Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646–1666* (University Park, PA., 2000), pp. 214–28; and Cherry, 'Enthusiasm and Madness', pp. 21–22.

there was a significant decline in the number of accounts published after the 1660s that alluded to Quaker witchcraft, sorcery or nudity.

Anti-Quaker satire linking religious enthusiasm to diabolic possession continued to appear much later, however, in accounts published in the American colonies. The New England clergyman Increase Mather described in 1684 how Mary Ross was seduced by the Devil to the 'Singing' Quakers in Plymouth, New England. It was reported that she had 'made her self naked, burning all her Clothes; and with infinite Blasphemy said that she was Christ, and gave names to her Apostles [...] declaring that she would be dead for three dayes, and then rise again'. She later allegedly danced naked with a man and woman during a ritual sacrifice of a dog.¹²² As late as the 1690s, reports of Quaker women being possessed by devils and worshipping Satan were in circulation in New England, suggesting that sensationalist Quaker-witch accounts continued to find an audience. This was at the very time when historians have argued learned demonology was in decline in England, and matches a broader pattern in the scholarship on witchcraft that sees accusations and persecutions persisting much later in North America than England.

Despite Quakerism's changing public image, English anti-Quaker polemic continued to criticise women for their disruption of the family order. But the tone of these attacks gradually shifted from fear to ridicule and contempt, much of it with a misogynist flavour. One recurring theme was the highly sexualised nature of Quaker men and the friction between them and their absurdly

¹²² Increase Mather, *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences wherein an Account is Given of Many Remarkable and Very Memorable Events which Have Hapned [sic] this Last Age, Especially in New-England* (Boston, 1684), pp. 346–47.

righteous wives. *The Secret Sinners*, for instance, depicted in dialogue form how a frustrated husband could justify committing adultery with his maidservant on the grounds that his wife spent so much time at religious meetings. Indeed, his ministerial wife was completely off-limits for 'she hath kept all her Light within, and held none forth till now of late, it has dryed her up [...] she is stricken in years and regardeth not the Flesh'.¹²³ This type of dialogue between a Quaker and his maid was published in multiple forms throughout the period, all claiming that over-zealous female elders had driven their lustful husbands to commit adultery.¹²⁴ The depiction of these women as fanatical zealots was especially hostile, often focusing on their preposterous appearance, behaviour, and outward demeanour.¹²⁵

Such rigid conformity to the movement's testimonies increasingly became the main focus of anti-Quaker satire. One such theme was the scolding wife presented as bullying her husband into submission. Drawing upon the Quaker rejection of superfluity and luxurious apparel, the London journal *True and Domestick Intelligence* published in 1680 the comical story of an adulterous wealthy Quaker whose pious wife would not permit him to leave the house in a

¹²³ Anon., *The Secret Sinners: Or, A Most Pleasant Dialogue Between a Quaker and His Maid, and His Wife Sarah* (c. 1675), in Roger Thompson (ed.), *Samuel Pepys' Penny Merriments* (London, 1976), p. 151.

¹²⁴ Similar accounts were also published in Anon., *Moll and Her Master: Or, A Dialogue Between a Quaker and His Maid* (London, 1675); Anon., *The Unconstant Quaker: Or, Sweet Susan His Servant, Unworthily Left in the Lurch, After He Had Tickl'd her Fancy* (c.1664–1703); Anon., *A Yea and Nay Mouse-Trap: Or, The Quaker in Darkness, Being a True, But Comical Account of an Eminent Quaker in Southwark, Who Being Mov'd by the Spirit to Lye with a Merchants Maid, Was Taken in Bed with Her in the Very Sporting Minute, by the Merchant Himself* (London, 1701); and Anon., *A Merry Conversation that Lately Pass'd Between a Very Noted Quaker of This City and His Maid, Upon a Very Merry Occasion* (London, c.1739).

¹²⁵ Thomas Brown's 1688 dialogue surrounding *The Reasons of Mr Bays Changing His Religion* offered one of the most savage criticisms of women attending Quaker Meetings, explaining that 'it is as impossible for a Woman to be a Quaker any time and handsome'. The author described how one Quaker woman's zeal 'had certainly discoloured and sowr'd her countenance, and made her look like the rest of her Sex in those Pagan Assemblies'. Thomas Brown, *The Reasons of Mr Bays Changing His Religion Considered in a Dialogue Between Crites, Eugenius, and Mr Bays* (London, 1688), p. 29.

velvet coat on Christmas day, which she hid from him. The story ends with his wife's discovery of him keeping a mistress and her decision to go to the local Justice for a warrant, which resulted in his imprisonment and eventual conveyance to a lunatic asylum.¹²⁶ The husband became a similar figure of scorn in Antoinette Bourignon's *Warning Against the Quakers*, first translated into English in 1708. One 'bigotted' Quaker woman, for example, was criticised for reproaching her husband after he began to doff his hat to his friends and 'began to say *Goodmorrow* to his Neighbours'.¹²⁷ The comedic undertones of such accounts served to make the male Quaker a subject of ridicule and mockery, *because* of the overpowering fanaticism of his too-pious wife, who placed zealotry before her family loyalties.

It is no coincidence that the proliferation of such accounts during and after the 1670s coincided with the formal establishment of the Quaker Meeting system and thus with the rise of separate Women's Meetings for business. These institutions, as explored in Chapter Two, provided women with unparalleled liberties in the organisational life of the Society. Indeed, they were a feature of the Quaker church culture that was deeply contested and feared by commentators both within and without the movement. As we saw, the rise of this 'Government of women' was feared because of the authority that this system gave female elders over the private affairs of men.¹²⁸ This was

¹²⁶ *True Domestick Intelligence or News Both From City and Country* (London), 9 January 1680, p. 2.

¹²⁷ Bourignon, *Warning against the Quakers*, pp. 102–04.

¹²⁸ These accounts against the Women's Meetings, often written by former members, included: William Mather, *A Novelty: Or, a Government of Women, Distinct from Men, Erected Amongst Some of the People Call'd Quakers* (London, 1694); William Mucklow, *The Spirit of the Hat, or, The Government of the Quakers Among Themselves as it Hath Been Exercised of Late Years by George Fox* (London, 1673); Henry Pickworth, *A Charge Of Error, Heresy, Incharity, Falshood, [...] Mostly Exhibited, and Offered to be Proved Against the Most Noted Leaders &c. of the People Called Quakers* (London, 1715); and William Rogers, *The Christian-Quaker* (London, 1680), esp. Part 1.

encapsulated in one hostile account published in 1715 by Henry Pickworth, an ex-Quaker, who faced condemnation after he tried to attend his wife during childbirth, but was refused by a leading member of the Women's Meeting, Frances Ostill. He described her as 'a starch'd *Quaker Pharisee*, who [...] took upon her to rebuke me for my said kindness to my Wife'. Pickworth's presence in the birthing chamber was alleged by Ostill to have caused his wife to be 'twelve Hours in her Labour than otherwise she would have been'. Although members of the Men's Meeting had advised lenience, Pickworth noted that when the matter came before the Women's Meeting 'the *Pharisaical Zealots* amongst them, being the Majority, [...] would by no means be prevailed on to cease their Prosecution, till they had drawn up their Paper of my Condemnation'.¹²⁹ The rise of the Meeting system, which served to centralise and consolidate Quaker testimonies, must have seemed to hostile critics to be unnaturally placing women in positions of authority.

Unlike other anti-sectarian propaganda, little reference is made in anti-Quaker polemic to the activities or behaviour of women in the Meeting House itself. Whereas anti-Catholic writings depicted cloisters as sites of debauchery and railed at unchaste disorderly nuns, anti-Quaker authors rarely speculated about the behaviour of female Friends when they met together.¹³⁰ What occupied a central place in their accounts instead, was how women's authority in church governance affected other aspects of their relationships with men.

¹²⁹ Pickworth, *A Charge Of Error, Heresy, Incharity, Falshood*, pp. 246–48. Almost all contemporaries, of course, would have been shocked by the idea of a husband being present at his wife's labour.

¹³⁰ The negative depictions of convent life are explored by Claire Walker in *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 53–54. See also: Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, pp. 254–55; and Arthur F. Marotti, 'Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England: Recusant Women, Jesuits, and Ideological Fantasies', in Arthur F. Marotti (ed.), *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern English Texts* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 1–34.

The female elders of the Meetings were frequently presented as over-zealous shrews, wielding unnatural authority over their male brethren. These sometimes bawdy satires played on popular fears of gender subversion and the effect that female ascendancy in matters of religion might have upon the patriarchal order. The tragic story of the *Quaker Turn'd Jew*, for instance, detailed how a Quaker preacher had seduced a godly female Friend, but felt so guilty afterwards that he circumcised himself. His act of contrition, which involved presenting his 'unruly member' to the Men's and Women's Meetings, was rejected by the so-called 'She Friends', who opposed his readmission. The author recounts how these women had claimed that 'no person unfit for the Work of Generation, ought to be admitted to their Communion'.¹³¹ This rejection by the Women's Meeting served to deepen the man's status as an outcast. Their control over the disciplinary process and decisions regarding the admission of members underscored suppressed fears surrounding female authority within church governance.

The authority that female Friends held over their husbands and other male members of their Society was a theme that pervaded the *Yea and Nay Almanack*, published annually by William Winstanley between 1677 and 1680. Whilst retaining many of the tropes about Quaker women found in earlier anti-Quaker satire, such as their promiscuity and spiritual pride, the author acknowledged their unusual power by juxtaposing a chronology and calendar with sardonic comments about the movement. One section, which satirised Quaker testimonies in the form of a catechism, questioned whether there were

¹³¹ Anon., *The Quaker Turn'd Jew. Being a True Relation, how an Eminent Quaker in the Isle of Ely, on Monday 18 April 1675 Circumcised Himself, out of Zeal for a Certain Case of Conscience, Renounced His Religion, and Became a Prosolited [sic] Jew* (London, 1675), esp. p.7.

any occasions when Quakers might pull off their hats. The answer: 'Yea, yea, we pull them off when we go to Bed with our Yoke-fellows, because we Honour the Woman as the weaker Vessel, nay we Honour them so much as we often times [go] down on our knees to them'.¹³² It would therefore appear that the rise of gender-segregated Meetings altered the way in which Quaker women were understood and presented in satirical literature. No longer were they vulnerable women apt to confuse sexual urges with religious enthusiasm. Instead, they were assertive viragos predisposed to subverting their place within both the household and the Church, by ruling over men.

'Sweetness [...] in your Society': sympathetic non-Quaker accounts

The unparalleled public roles given to female Friends continued to fuel the debate about the relationship between gender and authority in the church. Indeed, women continued to occupy a highly public and visible place within Quakerism throughout our period. Yet one of the most striking features of eighteenth-century anti-Quaker polemic is how infrequently the movement's female members are discussed at any great length. At least two hundred and twenty-seven tracts hostile to Quakerism were published between 1700 and 1750.¹³³ However, only three of these have been identified as explicitly targeting Quaker women.¹³⁴ This discrepancy is surprising, especially since

¹³² Winstanley, *Yea and Nay Almanack* (1680), sig. C6v.

¹³³ This figure has been calculated by doing a subject search of 'Antiquakeriana' on the Haverford, Bryn Mawr, and Swarthmore combined 'Tripod' catalogue. This figure is not comprehensive and may also include some texts that were sympathetic to Quakerism, but were responding to a specific anti-Quaker text. It nevertheless gives an indication of the scale of continued anti-Quaker feeling during this period.

¹³⁴ These were: Anon., *A Comical New Dialogue between Mr. G-F A Pious Dissenting Parson, And a Female-Quaker (A Goldsmith's Wife) Near Cheapside* (London, 1706); Walker, *A True Copy of Some Original Letters, which Pass'd between John Hall of Monk-Hesleden [...] and William Walker*; and Anon., *A Dissertation Upon the Liberty of Preaching Granted to Women by the People Call'd Quakers* (Dublin, 1738).

there is evidence of women becoming more visible in Quaker culture and taking on leading organisational roles during this period.¹³⁵ The absence of women from these printed debates would therefore suggest that the public response to female Friends was changing. Indeed, the opening example of May Drummond's status as a 'celebrated' preacher reminds us that eighteenth-century Quaker women were acquiring eminence not only within their own religious society but also as public figures beyond the Quaker community.

I have briefly noted the impact of Enlightenment rationalism in changing how Quaker women were understood and represented in hostile accounts. However, the Enlightenment also influenced a new generation of non-Quaker writers, who perceived the movement and its female members in far more positive ways. The following section explores the various reasons behind this changing reception of female Friends. It will show how the Quaker 'Holy experiment' in Pennsylvania and wider changes in colonial religious life shaped European perceptions about the place of women within the church. The female preachers of Quakerism, however, were not passive recipients of these changing cultural shifts and one theme that runs throughout this discussion is the agency of the individual female Friend in shaping ideas and knowledge.

Other tracts published during this period did include references to the movement's female members, but very few engaged in sustained debate about their roles within the movement. This included the highly derogatory anonymous tract *The Quakers Art of Courtship*, which contained extensive negative portrayals of female Friends and went through multiple editions during this period.

¹³⁵ Larson, for instance, has suggested that the proportion of female to male preachers was actually increasing between 1700 and 1775. Moreover, in many Meetings, especially in the colonies, female elders were outnumbering the men. A detailed discussion of this is provided in the Introduction. See also Larson, *Daughters of Light*, pp. 63, 334 (Appendix Three) and Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 14. This is a theme that has been observed more generally in relation to colonial patterns of church attendance and will be explored later in this section.

The idealisation of the movement and its female members was particularly pronounced in the remarks of French philosophes and travellers, who had immersed themselves in Pennsylvanian Quaker customs and culture. In his *New Travels in the United States*, Brissot brought the nuances of American Quaker life to European society in 1788.¹³⁶ As Barry Levy argues, such a reception was part of a broader French admiration for new forms of egalitarian domestic life.¹³⁷ It was also motivated by a desire on the part of these writers and commentators to observe the effects of religious toleration on social relations. Brissot, for example, commented in detail on the lifestyle of American Friends during his stay on a Quaker farm in Pennsylvania, where he attended Meetings and funerals and interviewed a number of Quakers during his travels. Like many of his contemporaries, he believed that Quaker women occupied a separate sphere of moral and social life, as paragons of femininity and virtue. They were 'faithful to their husbands, tender to their children, vigilant and economical in their household, and simple in their ornaments'. Moreover, Brissot noted that their sober dress and outward appearance meant that they were able to 'reserve all their accomplishments for the mind'.¹³⁸ Underlying such a declaration was a strong sense that Quaker principles and the behaviour of female Friends were compatible with Enlightenment values.

Quaker women were particularly visible in colonial America, where Friends formed the third largest religious group and dominated Pennsylvanian government.¹³⁹ It is therefore possible that these positive responses may have been the product of a wider admiration of new social, religious, and political

¹³⁶ Brissot, *New Travels in the United States*, pp. 223–50

¹³⁷ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, pp. 7–9.

¹³⁸ Brissot, *New Travels in the United States*, pp. 224–25.

¹³⁹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 303

approaches to governance and worship. Ryan has even described the French philosophes' admiration for Penn's 'Holy experiment' as a 'lengthy infatuation'.¹⁴⁰ A letter of 1723 to 'the venerable Doctor Janus', by an anonymous 'Traveller', remarked on the general happiness of the Quaker communities he had encountered during his travels in the colonies. The letter, which was published in the *New England Courant*, praised Friends for their speech, honesty, integrity, and simplicity. The commentator reserved his warmest praise for the modesty of the women; 'the neatness and decency of their *Apparel*', he notes, 'is very delightful to the Eye'. 'Who ever saw a *Quaker-Slut?*', he asks, 'Tis a Contradiction in Terms'.¹⁴¹ Such an expression stands in sharp contrast to the sexual slurs used by earlier writers to discredit female preachers. Moreover, it highlights how the Quaker utopian vision in America carried great weight for those enlightened travellers, seeking alternative models on which to base their own social visions.

Praise for the Quakers during the eighteenth century, however, was not limited to a narrow circle of French thinkers commenting on Quaker domesticity in the American colonies. In his *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, the major Enlightenment figure Voltaire brought the London Quakers to the attention of the world, as an 'extraordinary people' respected for their honesty, virtue, moderation, peaceable nature, and rational approach to religion.¹⁴² In his *Letters* Voltaire gives more attention to the Quakers than to any other religious movement. Such an attitude on the part of eighteenth-century intellectuals was foreshadowed by a hitherto unknown letter that John

¹⁴⁰ Ryan, *Imaginary Friends*, p. 90.

¹⁴¹ *New England Courant* (Boston, Massachusetts) 6 May–13 May 1723, p. 1.

¹⁴² Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, pp. 1–33.

Locke sent to Rebecca Collier and Rachel Buckon after attending a Quaker Meeting in London where they had both preached. The letter, dated November 1696 and accompanied by a packet of sweetmeats, showed a great admiration for Quaker female preaching. Commenting on 'the sweetness I found in your society', Locke wrote:

Outward hearing may misguide us, but internal knowledge cannot err. We have something here, of what we shall have hereafter, to know as we are known; and thus we, with our other Friends, were even at first view mutual partakers. [...] Women, indeed, had the honour first to publish the resurrection of the spirit of love, and let all the disciples of our Lord rejoice therein, as doth your partner. John Locke.¹⁴³

The letter is a copy and its authenticity cannot be guaranteed, but Locke's sympathetic attitude towards Quakers like Benjamin Furly and William Penn is well documented.¹⁴⁴ Much can be inferred from the remarkable language employed in the letter. Of particular note is the apparent shift in how intellectuals like Locke viewed the Quakers' inner light. Instead of viewing the movings of Quaker preachers like Rebecca Collier as 'delusions of the Devil', Enlightenment observers were associating these internal promptings with the reasoned mind. Under both the formulation of the 'Light Within' and 'Enlightenment Reason', the 'Light' functioned as a primary source of truth and

¹⁴³ LRSF, Temp MS 745/37 Robson MSS, 'A Letter from John Locke to Rebecca Collier and Rachel Buckon' (copy), Gray's Inn, London, 21 November 1696, fol. 92.

¹⁴⁴ For more on Locke's relationship with other leading Friends, see: Jeffrey Dudiak and Laura Rediehs, 'Quakers, Philosophy and Truth', in Angell and Dandelion (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, pp. 510–11; and W. Hull, *Benjamin Furly and Quakerism in Rotterdam* (Swarthmore, PA, 1941).

authority, which could be accessed by the individual in an unmediated way.¹⁴⁵ Locke's words thus reflect a new approach to religion, no longer viewing unorthodox individual conscience as inherently heretical. It is interesting that he chose the personal pronoun 'we' to refer to the collective experience he felt with his two female readers, as if he too had been touched by what he felt during this Meeting for worship. This was further highlighted by his choice of salutation 'partner' to close the letter.

Like his attitudes towards women more generally, Locke's position on women's public speech was never consistent and often fell short of modern feminist ideals. Nonetheless, his endorsement of female preaching at this Meeting is significant, linking the Gospel story of the women spreading news of Christ's resurrection to the proselytising activities of the women in Quaker Meetings for worship. Moreover, the manuscript account in which the letter was transcribed claimed that after hearing Rebecca Collier preach, Locke was inspired to alter a passage in his *Paraphrase and Notes*.¹⁴⁶ In the final version, published posthumously, he modified St Paul's view that women should keep silent in church, explaining that where a woman was directly inspired by God, she might speak and prophesy.¹⁴⁷ We can never be certain that Locke made a conscious decision to adapt his interpretation of St Paul based on this encounter. It is nevertheless indicative of how the public presence of women within Quaker Meetings was increasingly treated as a subject of admiration by

¹⁴⁵ Dudiak and Rediehs, 'Quakers, Philosophy, and Truth', p. 513.

¹⁴⁶ LRSF, Temp MS 745/37 Robson MSS, 'A Letter from John Locke to Rebecca Collier and Rachel Buckon' (copy), Gray's Inn, London, 21 November 1696, fol. 92.

¹⁴⁷ '[T]hat the spirit of God and the Gift of Prophesie should be poured out upon Women as well as Men, in the time of the Gospel is plain.' John Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul to the Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians* (London, 1707), p. 65.

leading intellectuals. Such a scenario also attests to the importance of individual women like Rebecca Collier in transforming ideas and knowledge.

As Locke's willingness to attend a Quaker Meeting for worship suggests, the new intellectual climate could sometimes be accommodating and open-minded towards the idea of the female preacher. It is perhaps indicative of a realisation that there were many religious options available within the eighteenth-century Atlantic. This idea of a 'religious marketplace' is something which Carla Pestana has suggested led religion to become a commodity that was 'sold' and consumed'.¹⁴⁸ This widespread religious experimentalism is highlighted in a report from 1753, written by the Quaker Thomas Chalkley, which alludes to the broad public acceptance that May Drummond received whilst preaching in London. 'The kind Treatment, and good Reception, she had with the *Queen*', writes Chalkley, 'spread so in City and Country, that many Thousands flocked to hear her, and more of the Gentry and Nobility than ever was known before to our Meetings'.¹⁴⁹ The competition between different religious ideas was particularly prevalent in the colonies, where the diversity of religious life and absence of institutional support encouraged individuals to seek new spiritual experiences. The Quaker diarist Elizabeth Drinker recorded how she had attended a Methodist meeting during an evening walk, remarking that the audience 'appear'd quiet and attentive'.¹⁵⁰ The ability of individuals to 'alter their beliefs and dabble in other faiths' is an aspect of eighteenth-century culture that has recently been explored by Annette Laing, with reference to the

¹⁴⁸ Carla Gardina Pestana, 'Between Religious Marketplace and Spiritual Wasteland: Religion in the British Atlantic World', *History Compass*, vol. 2 (2004), p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Chalkley, *A Journal or Historical Account of the Life, Travels, and Christian Experiences of [...] Thomas Chalkley* (3rd edn, London, 1751), pp. 279–80.

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Drinker, *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker: The Life Cycle of an Eighteenth-Century Woman*, ed. Elaine Forman Crane (Boston, MA, 1994), p. 228, diary entry for 2 September 1800.

conversion of two eighteenth-century colonial women.¹⁵¹ The frequent presence of the social elite at May Drummond's meetings certainly suggests an increasing desire on the part of educated and higher status members of society to participate in different forms of religious worship, and is an aspect of eighteenth-century religious culture that demands further attention.

This non-Quaker acceptance of Quaker preachers may also be linked to a much broader change underway in eighteenth-century society that saw women coming to dominate some aspects of religious life. The Protestant churches, as noted in the Introduction, were increasingly becoming feminine institutions, at least in numerical terms. Recent work by historians of American religion have estimated that between the late seventeenth and mid-nineteenth centuries sixty to seventy-five percent of the church members and of those 'responding to revivalist "awakenings" were women'.¹⁵² It is therefore possible that one of the broader reasons for this non-Quaker acceptance was owing to the fact that, by the mid-eighteenth century, it was far more common to see women in this type of role. Movements like the Methodists, Moravians, French Prophets, German Pietists, Unitarians, and Baptists advocated some form of official role for women within the public life of the Church. Some more liberal writers even came to praise and admire the authority that Quakers permitted to their female members. Thomas Clarkson, for instance, defended Quaker women in his

¹⁵¹ The women concerned are Ann Curtis Clay, who was raised a Quaker, but later converted to the Church of England and Elizabeth Ashbridge, who converted from Anglicanism to Quakerism. Annette Laing, 'Crossing Denominational Boundaries: Two Early American Women and Religion in the Atlantic World', in Emily Clark and Mary Laven (eds.), *Women and Religion in the Atlantic Age, 1550-1900* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 89-121.

¹⁵² Gail Malmgreen, 'Domestic Discords: Women and the Family in East Cheshire Methodism, 1750-1830' in Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper and Raphael Samuel (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (London, 1987), p. 56.

Portraiture of Quakerism as more spiritual than the men and acknowledged that they have 'that which no other body of women have, a public character'.¹⁵³

This 'feminisation' of religion was also influenced by the space in which it often came to be performed: the domestic sphere. The important place of the family in advancing religious teachings has often been cited as one of the positive effects of the Protestant Reformation, which gave women frequent opportunities to exercise domestic religious power.¹⁵⁴ The influence that women had over the religious life of their families is frequently acknowledged as central to the proliferation of women in eighteenth-century religious life. Susanna Wesley, for example, is regarded as having an important influence over the spiritual upbringing of her sons Charles and John Wesley, who went on to found Methodism.¹⁵⁵ The strong domestic focus of colonial Quakerism may have transformed the image non-Quakers held about female Friends. No longer were they characterised as dangerous deviants with the power to lead their families into new delusional spheres, but instead were praised by writers like Brissot for their devotion and attentiveness to their families' spiritual welfare. '[I]n consequence of denying themselves the pleasures of the world', wrote Clarkson, Friends 'have been obliged to cherish those which are found in domestic life'.¹⁵⁶ Levy has suggested that the high regard travellers had for colonial Friends was linked to their belief that their religious values and economic success were

¹⁵³ Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*, iii, p. 288–89.

¹⁵⁴ See for example: Davis, *Women on the Margins*; and Steven E. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (London, 1983).

¹⁵⁵ As Lawrence notes, she was the evangelical head of her family and instituted weekly meetings with her children to examine them on their spiritual well-being. Lawrence, *One Family under God*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁶ Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*, iii, p. 257.

closely tied to their formation of 'special families to produce and perpetuate sacred lives'.¹⁵⁷

An evident change had clearly taken place in how eighteenth-century audiences understood the place of the female preacher. The epigraph to this chapter cites part of a poem 'On the noted and celebrated Quaker Mrs Drummond', written by a young woman, which was published in September 1735 in *The Gentleman's Magazine*. It has been suggested that the poem, which compared Drummond to the mystic Saint Teresa of Avila, was originally intended to celebrate Mary Astell.¹⁵⁸ It is curious that this text was applicable to both these women, who came from such different social, religious, and political backgrounds. Astell was among the first to equate 'women's spiritual capacities with their intellectual potential'.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it was Drummond, the missionary from Scotland, who was hailed in the twenty-four lines of couplets as a 'generous heroine', brought to the nation to reform its corrupt morals and values. She was praised for her 'pious maxims' and 'wisdom', and for showing 'your sex's aptitude and worth', freeing women from 'that false brand of Incapacity'.¹⁶⁰

It would appear that the recognisably public position of the female preacher was increasingly viewed as compatible with the advancement of proto-feminist causes. Cartesian philosophy, after all, had come to discern the reasoned mind as 'naturally equal' in all human beings. The concept of rational thought gave female advocates like Astell the confidence to believe that women

¹⁵⁷ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁸ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, p. 288.

¹⁵⁹ Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion*, p. 7.

¹⁶⁰ A Young Lady, 'On the Noted and Celebrated Quaker Mrs Drummond', *Gentleman's Magazine: or, Monthly Intelligencer*, January 1731–December 1735, September 1735, p. 555.

should share the same access to learning and religious instruction as men. This led to her proposal for an all-female college for 'Religious Retirement', a kind of 'secular convent' where women could lead an independent intellectual life devoted to study, contemplation, and religious devotion.¹⁶¹ Her ideas had some affinity with Quaker theology, which viewed the female mind as equally receptive of divine guidance as that of the educated male Friend. Moreover, as Mark Knights observes, it was an issue taken up by many Quaker authors, who believed in 'the importance of education or learning as a means carving out a legitimate role for women'.¹⁶² The structure of Quaker worship and discipline, with its gender-segregated Meetings for business, arguably paralleled the communities of women envisioned by writers like Astell.

This new form of 'polite Quakerliness' demonstrates the changing ways in which Friends engaged with the non-Quaker public about their beliefs. The rise of both spoken and printed discussion found its most famous example in the figure of the Quaker Mary Knowles, who became famed for debating with Dr Johnson. One such occasion occurred in April 1778, at a dinner party hosted by John and Charles Dilly, whose dining room 'had become the gathering place for one of the most influential literary coteries in London'.¹⁶³ Here, Knowles disputed with Johnson over the right of women to independently join religious movements. The dialogue, which was recorded by James Boswell in his *Life of Johnson* and published by Knowles in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1791, allegedly began after Johnson criticised a young woman, Jane Harry, for

¹⁶¹ Ruth Perry, 'Mary Astell and Enlightenment' in Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (eds.), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 360.

¹⁶² Knights, *The Devil in Disguise*, p. 123.

¹⁶³ Jennings, *Gender, Religion, and Radicalism*, p. 49.

renouncing the Church of England and joining the Quakers.¹⁶⁴ Clearly old stereotypes about Quaker ensnarement of naive individuals had not gone away, for Johnson began by declaring aggressively: 'I hate the odious wench for her apostasy: and it is you, Madam, who have seduced her from the Christian Religion'. Knowles, however, begging leave 'to be heard in my own defence', countered with a justification of Quakerism, which she insisted was not a departure from Christianity. '[A]s an accountable creature', she argued, Harry had every right to 'examine and to change her educational tenets whenever she supposed she had found them erroneous'.¹⁶⁵ By assuming what Amanda Vickery has described as 'the mantle of politeness', Knowles was able not only to defend her religious beliefs within a largely male setting, but also to present Quaker doctrines in a clear and coherent manner for both her listener and readers.¹⁶⁶ This was a new form of proselytization that no longer depended upon an uncompromising and confrontational approach to Quaker opponents in highly public places.

As this largely amicable exchange suggested, Friends now preferred more peaceable and less combative outlets for their testimonies. Polite public and epistolary conversations were viewed as potential arenas for converting others and relaying their opinions to a wider audience. Sophia Hume, for

¹⁶⁴ The account Boswell published of the debate between Knowles and Johnson is radically different from Knowles' version of the events. Indeed, according to Knowles, it was Boswell's failure to accurately represent the conversation that forced her to publish the 'Truth' in the *Gentleman's Magazine*: James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. Comprehending an Account of His Studies, and Numerous Works, in Chronological Order* (2 vols, London, 1791), ii, pp. 231–32; and Mary Knowles, 'An Interesting Dialogue Between the Late Dr. Samuel Johnson and Mrs. Knowles', *Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle, January 1736–December 1833*, June 1791, pp. 500–02.

¹⁶⁵ Knowles, 'An Interesting Dialogue Between the Late Dr. Samuel Johnson and Mrs. Knowles', pp. 500–01.

¹⁶⁶ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London, 1998), p. 9.

instance, in her publication addressed to the inhabitants of South Carolina, explained that having 'the Testimony of a good Conscience' her published exhortation was justified. She also claimed to have come to a 'rational conclusion'.¹⁶⁷ Such a statement is suggestive of the way Enlightenment ideas about rationality and reason could be appropriated for women's radical proselytising. The Quaker preacher Elizabeth Webb entered into an epistolary debate with the Pietist leader Anthony William Boehm, published in 1781.¹⁶⁸ Despite Webb's Quaker identity, Boehm remarked on how refreshing it was to meet with 'a fellow pilgrim' in Philadelphia and expressed his desire to continue a correspondence with her, adding that 'I shall always be ready to answer your kindness'.¹⁶⁹ The use of the term 'fellow pilgrim' to refer to individuals of different religious persuasions fits into a tradition which Pink Dandelion suggests marks a distinction between guarded Quakerism and worldly piety.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, as Tessa Whitehouse's research into the eighteenth-century dissenters has shown, authors like Boehm were influenced by a new model of religious expression that sought to move beyond 'institutional walls'. In engaging in these literary debates, women like Elizabeth Webb had become part of this wider culture of religious exchange, guided by the ideas they held in common with others about 'useful godly service'.¹⁷¹ In other words, Quakerism, like other religious movements, was forced to negotiate and adapt the public presentation

¹⁶⁷ Sophia Hume, *An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the Province of South Carolina, To Bring Their Deeds to the Light of Christ, in Their Own Consciences* (London, 1752) pp. 9, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth Webb, *A Letter From Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm, with His Answer* (Philadelphia, 1781).

¹⁶⁹ Webb, *A Letter From Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm*, p. 44.

¹⁷⁰ Pink Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity and Engagement with "the World": The Separate Spheres of Quaker Quietism', *Common Knowledge*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2010), p. 104–5.

¹⁷¹ Tessa Whitehouse, 'Godly Dispositions and Textual Conditions: The Literary Sociology of International Religious Exchanges, c. 1722–1740', *History of European Ideas*, vol. 39, no. 3 (2013), p. 401.

of its beliefs to the non-Quaker world, in the hope that some might be instructed and perhaps even 'enlightened' by the debates which ensued.

3. Conclusion: 'A mixed multitude'

In a letter to Anthony Boehm, Elizabeth Webb explained that 'we are grown to be a mixed multitude, much like the children of Israel when they were in the wilderness'.¹⁷² The Christian foundation of the Society, combined with a need to survive within the world, left great scope for connections and bonds to be forged with individuals beyond the immediate community of believers, where the 'mixed multitude' which Elizabeth Webb describes extended to individuals beyond the circle of co-religionists. In embracing a Quaker lifestyle, female Friends could never live an exalted spiritual life in isolation from the rest of society, as women in some other denominations may have done.

It is the very flexibility of the relationships that Quaker women could develop with their non-Quaker contemporaries that this chapter has explored. At times, their place within society depended upon their resilience in withstanding attacks and aggressive responses from members of the public. At other times, both non-Quaker reactions to female Friends and their own attitudes towards the rest of the 'world' appear surprisingly flexible as they negotiated life as members of communities while still adhering to the movement's testimonies. In other words, Quaker women's religious identities both served to shape and were shaped by the relationships they developed outside their immediate circle of co-religionists. The evidence presented here

¹⁷² Webb, *A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm*, p. 24.

suggests that women's place in their communities and the reaction of critics reflected their participation in, rather than their separation from, everyday life.

Clearly aspects of Quaker behaviour antagonised and distanced them from the rest of society. However, it is important to remember that non-Quakers could also be sympathetic to some of their testimonies. Evidence exists of a strong supportive context in which women were able to maintain amicable relationships with their neighbours in spite of their religious affiliation. This was true of the emotional and material support some families received during the height of persecution, as well as the inter-denominational appeal that certain Quaker testimonies received, such as the issue of tithes and later, female preaching. This meant that they were frequently forced to interact with individuals outside of the Society. Such extensive assimilation into everyday life was evidently a matter of great concern to the Quaker leadership. At the very time the world was coming to accept Quaker virtues, fewer Friends were actually living up to the rigorous standards expected by the movement's leadership.

We have seen a variety of images and stereotypes that gained currency throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, undoubtedly helping to shape both popular and intellectual attitudes. Critics of Quakerism understood and utilised a variety of images, ideas, and representations to discredit Quaker women in print. Their campaign was shaped both by the movement's behaviour and their own assumptions. None of these stereotypes was unique to Quakerism, having resonance and even connections to a range of other religious nonconformists. However, these images evolved as the movement and its testimonies became more widely understood, and led to a repositioning of

Quaker women in the popular press. This is particularly true of accounts discussing the rise of the separate Women's Meetings, which had an important impact in shaping the printed representation of female Friends. From the evidence presented here, it is clear that Quakers continued to be mocked by critics throughout the eighteenth century. The passage of the Toleration Act in 1689 was not a decisive turning point in representations of Quakerism. Instead, the evolving character of the movement gradually altered perceptions and representations of female Friends, with broader cultural factors helping to explain this shift.

We have observed, too, how social and intellectual changes also altered how Quaker women were understood and represented. These were largely influenced by the repercussions of the Enlightenment, which Larson has suggested served to transform 'the 'heretics' of the seventeenth century into harbingers of 'the Age of Reason'.¹⁷³ Without doubt, the Quaker movement saw women in much more prominent roles, and in greater numbers, than any other religious movement during this period. It is not surprising that eighteenth-century thinkers increasingly held up the Quaker model as a means of questioning and debating the place of women within eighteenth-century religious culture more generally. Whilst admiration for Quaker life did not necessarily equate to imitation of or conversion to Quakerism, patterns of Quaker worship evidently altered attitudes towards female Friends. In the early years, their actions were often regarded as immoral and depraved; later, the pious 'otherness' of Quaker women came to be viewed as something to be emulated and admired.

¹⁷³ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, pp. 249–50.

Associated increasingly with virtue and moderation, female Friends were now often understood and presented to the non-Quaker world in a completely different way. These trends ran parallel to Quaker understandings of the reasoned mind, as well as the place of educated women as preachers, teachers, and equals within the Church. The increasing acceptance of Quaker women preachers within elite and educated circles revealed how they had successfully adapted their proselytising activities outside their own religious community by assimilating new forms of polite sociability and positioning themselves within established socio-cultural frameworks.

Despite some regional variations, it is clear that female Friends were never as geographically or economically isolated from the rest of society as traditional histories would lead us to believe. This meant that despite their best efforts, polemicists and persecutors were never able to destroy the movement. Equally, Friends were never able to live the fully segregated lives to which the Quaker leadership aspired. Rather than being isolated or shunned by the world, Quakers underwent a complex process of assimilation, continually forced to renegotiate and balance their lives both with one another and with the world.

Conclusion

In July 1747 the Women's Meeting in London composed one of many long and affectionate epistles to their 'dear sisters' in Pennsylvania. Written on an annual basis, their letters skilfully combined news about the current state of the Society with expressions of a spiritually edifying nature. Noting their spiritual oneness, they saluted their distant readers by describing the 'Union of Spirit, that [...] abounds in our hearts', spreading 'over sea and land' and making 'as one family the whole household of faith'. Here, the female authors invoked the power of spiritual fellowship, suggesting that through their positions within the Quaker family and their own roles within the household they could be united as one, despite their physical separation.¹

This thesis has explored how Quaker women adapted and brought meaning to their relationships within and without the transatlantic world of Quakerism. The lives and experiences of women in both England and the American colonies were deeply affected by joining the movement and adhering to its peculiar testimonies. From evidence in their writings—in correspondence, spiritual autobiographies, epistles, Meeting minutes, and life accounts—we have seen how these women successfully fashioned their identities on the very margins of society. Through their roles as wives and mothers, church elders, friends, and missionaries, Quaker women were able to assume many identities. As the letter above suggests, they were able to bring meaning to traditional domestic concerns whilst simultaneously participating in a radical culture of

¹ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671-1753, Epistle from the Women's Meeting in London to 'Dear and Wellbeloved Friends', 27 July 1747, fol. 55.

sectarian dissent that brought them into remarkably public roles as leaders and spiritual elders within the Society.

In exploring different types of gender relationships within a variety of spaces, each chapter has assessed the lives of a wide range of Quaker women across the British Atlantic: some famous for their radical public preaching, others simply for their supportive role within the household, the Meeting, or as hostesses to travelling ministers. A set of testimonies sought to separate adherents from the corrupting influences of the world, and a distinctive set of attitudes and behaviours defined Quaker women's relationships within the household and the wider religious and social community. No ideal type exists of an 'ordinary' Quaker woman, for as we have seen, the everyday lives of both non-ministering and itinerant female Friends were defined by an extraordinary set of values and experiences.

This thesis has sought to chart the extended impact of confessional divergence on female Friends in the dynamic context of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Atlantic. It therefore seems appropriate to conclude this investigation by considering how Quaker women's experiences compared to those of women in other religious denominations during the same period. Exploring the four main themes of dissenting women's experiences discussed in the chapters of this thesis—in the household, the religious meeting, the religious community, and interaction with individuals outside the movement—the Conclusion will consider the lives and experiences of Quaker women alongside those of women in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Baptist,

Methodist, and Catholic movements.² All these denominations provide an interesting point of comparison, since their experiences were similarly defined by life on the margins of early modern society. Like the Quakers, they too transplanted their ideals and beliefs from the British Isles into the American colonies with varying degrees of success. In identifying the inherent differences between the denominations' attitudes towards their female congregations, the discussion will highlight the unique model of gender relations that developed within early Quakerism.

1. The home-maker and the preacher

Returning the analytical lens to the household and domestic setting, Chapter One challenged traditional interpretations of the Quaker movement that equated the decline in women's missionary and publishing activity with their loss of status within the movement. Instead, a range of evidence showed how the stable and traditional social identities of Quaker women as wives and mothers provided a supportive framework for the nascent movement. Of particular importance was the non-itinerant wife, whose forbearance in the wake of great emotional, economic, and physical hardship provided an important pillar of support at a time when the future of the movement itself was highly uncertain. Families stood to suffer greatly from a patriarch's adherence to Quaker testimonies, which could result in distraint of goods and loss of income as a result of repeated imprisonment. It was therefore of great importance that wives should display solidarity, both emotional and practical, in the face of the hardships early Quakers endured.

² Some attention will also be directed towards other Nonconformist movements in England and Moravian church culture in Colonial America.

The domestic orientation of the movement, which treasured the family as a site for the promotion and preservation of the Truth, valued women's contribution in the maintenance of the faith. The marital relationship was a partnership in the true sense of the word, for husband and wife were viewed as spiritual equals within the Quaker household and in the eyes of God. Whilst Puritan idealists, like William Gouge, viewed household responsibilities as an important public work, Quaker theorists went much further in their emphasis on domestic life as the lifeblood of the faith. Like the Puritan wife, Quaker women were able to exercise great spiritual authority over their children and servants through their exemplary behaviour and counsel. The increasingly isolationist character of eighteenth-century Quakerism, and subsequent decline in membership, served to heighten the role of the mother in family piety in nurturing a future generation of believers. As Helen Plant states, the Quaker family and household were 'twin bulwarks in the struggle to maintain the membership and spiritual vitality of the movement'.³ The efficacy of Quaker testimonies was only possible through women's supportive role within the household, for it was only through the correct rearing of their children and training of servants that the faith could be preserved. The emphasis on the demands of daily life thus became a key theme in the construction of narratives of obedience to God.

The missionary zeal of eighteenth-century Methodism exhibits strikingly similar characteristics to the model of itinerancy developed by its Quaker predecessor. But while the Quaker Meeting system had many parallels to the

³ Helen Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities, 1770-1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', University of York, PhD thesis (2000), p. 61.

Methodist band and class meetings, a Methodist preacher had no stable congregation and was thus forced to adopt a lifestyle of constant itinerancy. The demands of ministerial life compelled preachers to move around their circuits on a daily basis, preaching in different houses and chapels. Such continuous and unpaid service was almost incompatible with a normal family life. A celibate lifestyle was preferred, as it was believed that family life and secular concerns could interfere with spiritual service. Such a policy, Russell Richey has argued, promoted a celibate class of single men and threatened the ethos of domesticity.⁴ Family relationships were even viewed as hindrances to attaining spiritual perfection, if an individual 'loved too much'.⁵ The difficulties of maintaining a family life were compounded by the fact that no financial support for the wives and widows of Methodist preachers was provided before 1775. Quakerism, by contrast, seems to have found a balance between recognising the necessity of the family and the needs of the individual in undertaking God's work. Initiatives such as the Kendal Fund and Box Meeting were organised for the relief of Quaker families in financial distress through the loss of the male breadwinner. Such a sense of cohesion and charitable concern for the families of Quaker ministers highlights the compatibility of Quaker theology and the continuation of traditional relationships.

Although the early modern woman is traditionally viewed as an infrequent traveller confined to the domestic sphere, for eighteenth-century Quaker women, extensive travelling was neither unprecedented nor unusual.

⁴ Russell Richey, *Early American Methodism* (Bloomington, IN., 1991), pp. 1–20, cited in Anna M. Lawrence, *One Family under God: Love, Belonging, and Authority in Early Transatlantic Methodism* (Philadelphia, 2011), p. 81.

⁵ Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 97.

The movement's emphasis on the individual's relationship to God and their ultimate submission to His divine will validated a culture where women were able to leave their domestic obligations when irresistibly moved by God to perform religious service. Naturally, there was some variation, indicated by the smaller number of women undertaking transatlantic travel in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, compared with the first three decades of Quakerism. Pennsylvanian women also appear to have been less likely to undertake public missionary service in the early years of settlement. This discrepancy may provide further evidence of the dissenting lifestyle being harmonised with normative family relationships. The conditions of frontier life made it necessary for women to direct their attention towards the needs of the family and everyday survival, rather than the needs of the movement as a whole.

Quakerism was also highly unusual in permitting women to preach and travel, irrespective of their family circumstances. 'No other movement', argues Phyllis Mack, 'had attempted with so much fervor to project domestic values into the public sphere; nowhere had women been given such great spiritual authority without being told to lead a celibate or retired life.'⁶ Catholic nuns, for instance, were generally forced to live a life of strict enclosure that involved a renunciation of all family ties and commitment to a chaste and celibate life. A similar type of community emerged in the Moravian settlements in the American colonies, where members lived cloistered lives in sex-segregated 'choirs'. In the Catholic, Moravian, and later Methodist cases, work for the higher religious family took precedence, ultimately leading to what Anna M.

⁶ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 246.

Lawrence has described as the 'devolution of individual families'.⁷ Whilst recent scholarship has noted that many of these self-contained societies were viewed by their female inmates as liberating from secular distractions, Quakerism seems to have found a balance between a life of voluntary segregation and service to God through women's domestic roles.⁸

Even within movements like the Baptists and Methodists, where preaching and active church service were open to some women, these were limited to unmarried and widowed women. The Baptist office of the deaconess, for example, was carefully modelled on 1 Timothy 5, where those who were approved were usually widows over the age of sixty, who were not permitted to remarry. At the other end of the spectrum was the Methodist stance towards female preachers, which held up single unattached members as ideals of religiosity. Wesley's encouragement for his followers to remain single and celibate, lest obligations to spouse and family interfere with their collective religious goals, meant that service to the spiritual family took priority over biological families. Gail Malmgreen even argues that some women (and men) used conversion to Methodism as a means of delaying marriage or avoiding it altogether.⁹ Moreover, female preaching or missionary work was never permitted as a general practice within Methodism as it was within Quakerism.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of Moravian church and its influence on Methodist culture see Lawrence, *One Family under God*, pp. 23–30.

⁸ See for example Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 49.

⁹ Gail Malmgreen, 'Domestic Discords: Women and the Family in East Cheshire Methodism, 1750–1830', in Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper and Raphael Samuel (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (London, 1987), pp. 60–61. This is supported by Dee E. Andrews's survey of membership records in the Middle Atlantic region of America, where she found the 'prototype' Methodist laywoman to be aged between sixteen and twenty-four years, unmarried, and still living at home or making her living as a servant. Dee E. Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760–1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton, NJ., 2000), p. 114.

Occasionally a Methodist woman was authorised to preach by virtue of what became known as an 'extraordinary call', a belief that God could occasionally inspire women to speak. By 1803, however, female preaching was forbidden by the movement altogether.¹⁰

Quakerism was therefore unusual in providing such an integrated model for women to conduct spiritual service on behalf of the dissenting church whilst also enabling them to maintain traditional domestic relationships. Friends' belief that women could combine the exercise of domestic and religious responsibilities was symbolically encapsulated in the Biblical appellation 'Mother in Israel', which was used to define female elders who displayed a particular gift for enhancing the spiritual welfare of other women in the Society. Whilst Methodists and Baptists in the eighteenth century also designated spiritually advanced women as Mothers in Israel, these were entirely divorced from traditional female roles. Methodists did not envisage Mothers in Israel as domestic figures; celibate sisters were more likely to fulfil this office than their married counterparts.¹¹ Moreover, in contrast to Quakerism's early emphasis on family discipline, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Methodist literature offered guidance on women's domestic duties, the rearing of children or how to support the household.¹²

The domestic sphere evidently provided an important means of shaping the public identities of female Friends, despite the fact that their divine callings had removed them from traditional domestic roles. It has been common for scholars of early Quakerism to appeal to a 'separate spheres' paradigm to show

¹⁰ Paul Wesley Chilcote, *John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism* (London, 1991), pp. 253–56.

¹¹ Lawrence, *One Family under God*, p. 156.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

the ways in which the increasingly domestic orientation of the movement restricted women's roles. However, such interpretations overlook the centrality of the private world of the household as a formative influence on Quaker women's experiences and as a site for shaping their public identities as preachers or members of religious communities. Evidence from the correspondence and writings of itinerant Quaker women from both England and the colonies suggests that the feminist argument that they radically chose to renounce their family obligations fails to carry weight. One of the most striking things about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quakerism was the balance which members managed to achieve between their spiritual and everyday lives. As Mack has suggested, Quaker theology was based upon the assumption that every aspect of daily life, whether in the household or Meeting House, was spiritualised. Once in the light, she argues, the individual's outward behaviour would automatically answer to divine standards.¹³ In fact, one of the most distinctive elements of early Quakerism was not so much the radical roles it gave to its women as public preachers as its recognition that such work should be combined with the traditional elements of everyday life within the household and the family.

2. Community life: the Women's Meetings

Women's contribution to the Society through their roles within the local community provides an outstanding example of Quaker domestic values projected into the public sphere. Chapter Two provided a detailed comparative analysis of the roles and functions that evolved within the Women's Meetings of

¹³ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 260.

the English Northwest and the American colonies. Without a full-time clergy, the emphasis on lay participation provided an important outlet for women's involvement in Church governance. The demanding nature of the roles of elder and overseer, combined with the fact that an individual's status within the Meeting was defined by her presence within and knowledge of the local community, highlights the special esteem in which Friends held non-itinerant women. Indeed, it is arguable that the sense of permanence and stability they provided not only enabled these women to make a crucial contribution to the public life of a community, but was also something that received implicit and explicit recognition from the leadership of a movement characterised by its peripatetic nature.

The creation of separate Meetings for women was shaped by Friends' distinctive interpretation of the meaning of gender within everyday life, since they recognised the significance of women's position within the household and as protectors of female virtue. Indeed, it was the family that was to become the focus of women's efforts. Control over the formation of new households, and the need to provide a circumspect example of living for Quaker children, meant that regulation of marriage was the most time-consuming and dominant element of Quaker women's functions within their Monthly Meetings. It was also the aspect of women's responsibilities that posed the most radical challenge to patriarchal authority, since they held joint jurisdiction with the Men's Meeting in approving prospective marriage partners. The intensive means by which the Women's Meetings gathered intelligence and reports on their members' behaviour, particularly in relation to marriage, is indicative of the very real public presence and communal identity of female overseers outside of both the household and

Meeting. It also reveals the ways in which the notion of 'an internally open and visible community life transcended concepts of public and private space'.¹⁴

The institution of Women's Meetings has been received ambiguously by historians. Many have suggested that their emergence signalled a decline in women's real status within the movement. It has even been suggested that their hierarchical structure, where the women Friends were expected to coordinate with the men, limited opportunities for women's active participation in church governance. Indeed, the gender-segregated Meetings for business have been viewed as restrictive spaces where their male brethren directed all aspects of their work. This view, however, provides a misleading picture of the avenues through which Quaker women were able to gain influence within this system, as the example of their involvement in the marriage discipline procedure illustrates clearly. Moreover, as current research into European convent life has demonstrated, female enclosure was not necessarily a negative force.¹⁵ Claire Walker, for instance, found that the female inmates found ways to negotiate patriarchal constraints. St Teresa of Avila, for instance, regarded strict enclosure (*clausura*) as a central tenet of her Carmelite reforms, whilst continuing to remain actively engaged in the spiritual and political affairs of the Catholic Church.¹⁶ Compared to the space provided for Quaker women through their Meetings, however, the position of Catholic nuns within the wider life of the church appears severely limited. The self-contained nature of the convent

¹⁴ Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent', p. 158.

¹⁵ Robin Briggs, for example, has shown how the religious authorities of Counter-Reformation Europe inadvertently created autonomous communities of women behind convent walls. He uses a case of demonic possession in a Catholic nunnery to show how women were able to manipulate male authority, even in the most oppressive of religious climates. Robin Briggs, 'From Devilry to Sainthood: Mère Jeanne des Anges and the Catholic Reform', in Emily Clark and Mary Laven (eds.), *Women and Religion in the Atlantic Age, 1550–1900* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 33–48.

¹⁶ Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe*, p. 49.

meant that the nuns were prevented from developing meaningful relationships with men, as well as remaining completely isolated from the rest of society.

The view that the Women's Meetings provided a restrictive rather than liberating space for women also overlooks the unparalleled nature of such a formalized gathering of women in religious history. The nineteenth-century reformer Thomas Clarkson reserved the highest praise for Friends in terms of the position they accorded women in their community. '[T]hey have admitted them to a share in the administration of almost all the offices which belong to their religious discipline', he wrote, 'so that, independently of their private, they have a public character, like the men.'¹⁷ Even by Protestant standards the outward-focus of the Quaker Women's Meetings was highly unusual. Some Baptist congregations occasionally permitted women to vote on issues pertinent to church governance, such as the election of new ministers. The Particular Baptist Church in Southwark, for example, allowed women members to vote at Church meetings, 'being equally with the brethren members of the mystical body of Christ'.¹⁸ However, the Baptist model in both England and the colonies provided women with very few opportunities to participate directly in church discipline, as they were barred from assuming formal positions of church office-holding. Thus despite women having the numerical advantage, Janet Moore Lindman explains that colonial Baptist church governance was an institution 'where male dominance and female subordination was the rule'.¹⁹ In contrast to the Quaker Meeting system, where the roles assigned to male elders

¹⁷ Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*, iii, p. 250.

¹⁸ John Briggs, 'She-Preachers, Widows and Other Women: The Feminine Dimension in Baptist Life since 1600', *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 7 (1986), p. 341.

¹⁹ Janet Moore Lindman, *Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2008), p. 117.

were paralleled within the organisation of the Women's Meetings, Baptist women were prevented from serving as clerks, elders, treasurers, and ministers. The only formal avenue available to them within the oversight of the church was through the role of the deaconess, who was broadly responsible for the administration of charity.

Eighteenth-century Methodists similarly failed to grant women temporal equality in the church, despite recognising their spiritual parity. The formalization of chapel government and the emergence of regional and national assemblies dominated by paid clergy increasingly prevented women from participating in church governance. Women's powers to exhort and discipline were even restricted within private band meetings, where they could only address their own sex and were prevented from speaking outside of their local circuit. Such an exclusion, as Malmgreen argues, had 'a crushing effect' on women's public activity, as they were forced to turn to tasks such as sick visiting, fundraising, and hospitality.²⁰ It is therefore arguable that women's lack of formal and institutionalized power within the Baptist and Methodist churches impaired their ability to exercise authority consistently within church government.

Quaker women's power within their Meetings was never uniform. Local circumstances as well as changing relationships with their male brethren affected the types of tasks that women oversaw in their Monthly Meetings. It is arguable that the particular emphasis that American Friends placed upon the family, as opposed to public ministerial service, had the effect of giving colonial women more powers of supervision within their local communities. From the

²⁰ Malmgreen, 'Domestic Discords', pp. 66–67.

evidence presented in the minutes, one of the most striking differences between the Women's Monthly Meetings of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, in comparison with their English sisters in the Northwest of England, was the considerable independent authority they seem to have held in the discipline of their female members. The difficult conditions surrounding settlement in the frontier environment, with its associated focus on the formation of Quaker households, may have originally forced women to take on more responsibility in their Monthly Meetings. In addition, the more mobile and concentrated nature of colonial Quaker settlements meant that much of the female Friends' energy was spent looking into and granting requests for removal to other Monthly Meetings. The poorer Meetings of the English Northwest, by contrast, were more heavily involved in the relief of deprived members of their local communities, which provided an important accompaniment to the work of the Men's Monthly Meetings. These crucial auxiliary tasks resembled the role of the sick visitor or deaconess in English Methodist and Baptist church order. However, the activities of these female committees were much more extensive, since they operated on a nationwide scale and were directed towards male as well as female members of the local community.²¹

Despite the considerable potential for tension between the Men's and Women's Meetings the day-to-day activities of the female elders provide a powerful example of women's spiritual and domestic roles being directly translated into positions of authority within the Church. The Mother in Israel figure promoted an exemplary private life, whilst acting as a leader in the

²¹ Both Baptist and Methodist women's relief work was conducted within a homosocial world, where sick visitors and deaconess could only interact and offer guidance and counsel to the female members of their communities. See Mack, *Heart Religion*, pp. 150–51.

spiritualised Quaker household. The integration of domestic responsibilities and religious authority was a potent image in Quaker theology that found few equivalents in other dissenting movements. Thomas Clarkson declared Quaker women's responsibilities within their Meetings as 'a new era in female history', for they had 'a public character' that 'no other body of women have'.²² Such participation, he believed, encouraged among women Friends the 'thought, and foresight, and judgment' that gave them a 'new cast' of character.²³ To some extent, the Quaker experience paralleled developments in wider society, as suggested by Mary Astell's proposal for a college of spiritual retirement, where women could develop their full intellectual and spiritual capacities by devoting themselves to learning and contemplation. Yet, once again, the Quaker model appeared to give female elders a considerably more spacious role within their communities by granting a separate space for them to meet and discuss church business, whilst also enabling them to carry out work within the wider community.

3. The wider community and Quaker Friendship

The rise of gendered spaces within Quaker church order provides an important example of an alternative form of female sociability operating in practice. In continuing to move the lens outwards, Chapter Three considered Quaker women's alliances at their broadest geographical scope, focusing on the relationships that evolved between female Friends within the wider Atlantic Quaker community. Quakers developed a distinctive understanding of friendship, linked to their spiritual rather than physical alliance. They

²² Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism*, iii, p. 246.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

frequently referred to themselves as 'Friends' and, as a collective, eventually became known under the appellation 'Society of Friends'. Quakers believed in the ubiquitous nature of the 'Inner Light' in initiating a world-wide conversion. In the earliest years of the movement this meant that members often chose to address their persecutors, opponents, and even rulers as their 'Friends'. In this respect, Quaker understandings of friendship indicated an individual's relationship to 'Truth', rather than to each other or to wider society, emphasising how a spiritual alliance with God was available to the unregenerate, as well as to the faithful.

In practice, however, the challenges of everyday life made an all-encompassing notion of friendship impractical. This led to an increasing emphasis within the movement on perfect friendship as only attainable between individuals who shared the same religious bond. As a consequence, the so-called 'badges of faith' that made Quakers identifiable from wider society, such as their choice of language, dress, and denial of typical social activities, served to solidify the bonds between believers, whilst simultaneously separating them from the 'corrupt friendship of the world'.²⁴ As their feelings for one another were understood as a form of spiritual, rather than personal connection, rich evidence of powerful relationships evolving exclusively between Quaker women survives in their correspondence and writings.

Adherence to the Quaker faith generally prevented women from participating in the kinds of social, alliance-building activities practised by most Protestant women. This meant renouncing pastimes shared between female

²⁴ J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends* (New York, 1973), p. 210; London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends Held in London, From its First Institution* (London, 1783), p. 25.

friends, such as dancing, gift-giving, and theatre-going, as well as discounting some of the customs surrounding social visiting, gossiping, and birth, marriage and death. Nevertheless, the practice of such activities was open to both personal and geographical variation. The patterns of Quaker settlement in the colonies, for example, where large numbers of Friends lived and worked together, meant that women were much freer to socialise with one another and thus maintain more traditional patterns of female friendship. Whilst limiting their intimate connections to members of their religious community, colonial Friends continued the ritual of social visiting, which appears to have been much more prevalent and widespread within Pennsylvania than it was in Britain.²⁵ Female Friends living in rural England would have resided within smaller mixed communities, where only a few Quaker families lived in a particular locality. As a consequence, it is highly likely that association with fellow-believers was much more intimate and thus made the need for visitation practices redundant.

Despite such discrepancies, the dominant pattern of Quaker women's relationships on both sides of the Atlantic involved providing spiritual edification and religious instruction to their friends and acquaintances. Whilst Quaker devotion was intensely personal, linked to solitary prayer and private contemplation, its practice was highly collaborative. Judith Kegan Gardiner has

²⁵ A number of Philadelphian Quaker diarists began their journals as a means of keeping track of their social obligations. See for example the published diaries of Hannah Callender and Elizabeth Drinker: *The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of the American Revolution*, ed. Susan E. Klepp and Karin Wulf (London, 2010); and *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker: The Life Cycle of an Eighteenth-Century Woman*, ed. Elaine Forman Crane (Boston, MA., 1994). The English diarist Ann Warder's observations on Philadelphia society reflect the significance as well as frequency of social calls, for she commented frequently on the unusual 'sociability' of her new acquaintances. 'It is the custom to visit here more than with us', she wrote, 'and they destroy the social freedom of it by too much dressing'. Ann Warder, 'Extracts from the Diary of Ann Warder (Concluded)', ed. Sarah Cadbury, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1984), p. 52, diary entry for 22 September 1786.

argued that Quaker authors 're-gendered' individualism by shaping 'an affective familialism that did not divide the individual from her community'.²⁶ The institution of separate Women's Meetings, for instance, stressed the importance of female society and friendship in encouraging the individual to adhere to the collective corporate outlook. Another example of how female Friends were successfully able to incorporate ideas about spiritual friendship into their alliances was the partnerships which evolved between women undertaking transatlantic ministerial service. Exposed to a host of physical, spiritual, and emotional adversities, female missionaries modelled themselves on the Apostles and endeavoured to mitigate the hardship of travel by forming same-sex pairings with women of their faith.

Early modern authors devoted a great deal of attention to the care that women should take to choose their friends and, once selected, how they should maintain them.²⁷ However, what made Quaker missionaries' understandings of friendship distinctive was the subjection of the individual to the irresistible power of providence, which dictated with whom they should undertake their service, where they should travel, and when they must separate. The Quaker conception of female companionship, moreover, was enshrined within church polity, since Meetings had the power to refuse those women for travel who did not have a female companion to accompany them. This stood in contrast to the experiences of Methodist preachers, who on receiving an extraordinary call to

²⁶ Judith Kegan Gardiner, 'Re-Gendering Individualism: Margaret Fell Fox and Quaker Rhetoric', in Jean R. Brink (ed.), *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England* (Kirkville, MO., 1993), p. 224, cited in Katharine Gillespie, *Domesticity and Dissent in the Seventeenth Century: English Women Writers and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 50.

²⁷ According to Amanda E. Herbert prescriptive texts like Hannah Woolley's *Gentlewoman's Companion* and N. H.'s *Ladies Dictionary* dispensed a great deal of advice on how to make and keep female friends. See Amanda E. Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (London, 2014), pp. 44–51.

preach were expected to carry out this work alone. This was partially owing to the emphasis placed by Methodists on the individual conversion experience. It can also be attributed to the fact that Methodist women never undertook extensive missionary service and thus never had the same physical or emotional needs for supportive companionship.

Like Quakers, Methodists expressed friendship as a form of spiritual, not natural affection. It was an open and mutual relationship shared between one friend and another, as well as between themselves and God. However, their relationships with other like-minded women encouraged them to renounce all familial ties and obligations to marriage and even to live in same-sex communities. This meant that friendship was expected to act as a substitute for, rather than an accompaniment to the biological family. Lawrence argues that it was important for Methodist writers to see themselves as orphans and thus separated from their natural families before they could initiate a new set of relationships within their new religious family.²⁸ The Methodist preacher Mary Bosanquet, for example, chose to live with her female co-religionists, rather than with her family. According to Mack, Bosanquet even described herself as the daughter of her friend Sarah Ryan, a choice of expression that enabled her to 'replace her own critical and distant natural mother with a friend whose love was both ardent and protective'.²⁹ Thus unlike Quakerism, the intensity of the same-sex spiritual connections which emerged in Methodist church culture meant that friendship became incompatible with the continuation of domestic relationships. Instead, Methodist women like Bosanquet and Ryan created new

²⁸ Lawrence, *One Family under God*, p. 70.

²⁹ Mack, *Heart Religion*, p. 160.

domestic arrangements where their enhanced opportunities for companionship led to a renunciation of traditional household order.

Whilst many of the day-to-day practices of friendship within Quakerism were never as isolated from wider social customs as we might imagine, it was the distance over which these female alliances were conducted that made them truly remarkable. The strict nature of Methodist church culture, which limited where women could travel and with whom they could worship, meant that strong emotional ties usually emerged between women of the same class or band meeting. This meant that their friends and social acquaintances were usually situated within their own localities. Clearly, there was also a localised supportive element to Quaker women's connections, which involved an exchange of goods, care, emotional support, and natural affection. Yet such ideals of friendship could also be transplanted on an international scale. Female Friends could become active participants in a transatlantic cultural exchange, as writers, ministers, and hosts, simply by their adherence to the movement and its testimonies. Indeed, many friendships were formed between individuals who had no formal acquaintance and whose only essential commonality was their desire for salvation. Like the previously quoted communication between the Women's Meetings in London and Pennsylvania, female Friends viewed themselves as being united in the Spirit, despite being absent in body and were thus able to develop relationships of mutual love and support without physical contact.

The powerful spiritual bond forged between believers therefore encouraged the formation of close transatlantic ties, unparalleled in any other religious movement of the time. Both the intimate and the informal alliances

that developed between Quaker women gave the nascent movement a sense of solidarity and support during times of crisis and persecution. The networks of hospitality that developed across the Atlantic, which were dominated by female Friends renowned for their generosity to strangers, enabled non-itinerant women to have a central place in the developing community. As well as opening their homes to co-religionists, they provided food and financial assistance, and acted as local guides to visiting ministers. Quaker hosts were indeed central in the evolution of a more 'respectable' image of travelling missionary service, for their hospitality limited an itinerant minister's contact with non-Quaker populations, prevented the accumulation of debts, and curbed accusations that ministers were mere vagabonds. The intense spiritual sociability that characterised such relationships provides conclusive proof of alternative forms of female friendship operating in practice. The powerful spiritual bonds forged between believers served to reinforce their sense of religious community and overcame the great distances that separated its female participants.

4. Associating with the wider 'world'

Quaker women's religious affiliation was central in defining their social and domestic lives. The power of what Amanda E. Herbert terms 'sociable religiosity' with other women of the same faith evidently provided them with positive inspiration.³⁰ However, it was not the sole ingredient of their personal identities and as Chapter Four sought to demonstrate, interaction with and responses by the wider non-Quaker world had a crucial role in shaping women's experiences. Complete isolation from wider society was never a reality

³⁰ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, p. 181.

for Quaker women, since they were expected to continue to serve God through the ordinary interactions of daily life. The privacy of their religious meetings provided only a temporary retreat. Thus, unlike their Catholic counterparts, they did not neatly separate themselves from the world in order to pursue intense spiritual regimes. Instead, it was through the observance of their 'peculiar' testimonies that members were afforded spiritual protection without the need to pursue seclusion or a cloistered life.

Despite abundant early evidence of hatred and hostility in England, a surprising degree of tolerance and even sympathy for persecuted Quaker neighbours also appears to have existed at the grass-roots of seventeenth-century society. There was, moreover, a growing tendency in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society to view Quakers as 'useful and loyal' citizens, increasingly respected for their business acumen and moral integrity.³¹ They also often remained bound to their Anglican neighbours by ties of love, friendship, family, and neighbourhood that 'blurred the confessional divisions that theoretically divided them'.³² The widespread inter-denominational support that Quaker women received for their economic involvement in their local communities, including their opposition to tithes in the very early years of the movement and their business connections, not only demonstrates how they engaged in civic life, but also how their neighbours were willing to accommodate them. The gulf between the Society and other denominations, for instance, began to be slowly bridged through co-operation in philanthropic and

³¹ See for example: Simon Dixon, 'Quaker Communities in London, 1667-c.1714', Royal Holloway, University of London, PhD thesis (2005), pp. 222-25.

³² Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), p. 309.

humanitarian concerns.³³ In America, this included efforts to obtain peace with Amerindian populations and later to end the slave trade. Even in England, where the experience of persecution still prevailed in collective memory, an increasingly outward concern for the relief of destitute members of society gave rise to burgeoning cross-denominational networks and organisations. As a consequence, English Quaker women were highly dependent upon the relationships that they maintained with their wider communities, particularly in pursuing sex-specific activities characteristic of good neighbourliness, like charitable relief and attending the births, deaths, and marriages of their circle of acquaintances.

In many respects, the significant level we find of Quaker women's integration conforms to a pattern of sectarian dissent that had long characterised relationships between non-conformists and wider society. John Bossy has suggested that a 'moral tradition' existed in post-Reformation Europe, whereby a desire to preserve peace and remain 'in charity' with one's neighbours' superseded tensions between rival denominations.³⁴ Margaret Spufford's edited collection on rural dissent provides ample evidence of religious sectarians being integrated into the social and economic life of their societies.³⁵ Derek Plumb, in his contribution to Spufford's collection, was able to assert from his research on sixteenth-century Buckinghamshire that the Lollards were not a socially insular group, but 'lived a conventional life among

³³ The cross-denominational philanthropic work of Quaker and Unitarian women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is explored by Plant, in 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent', pp. 208–239.

³⁴ John Bossy, *Peace in the Post-Reformation* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 88–92.

³⁵ Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725* (Cambridge, 1995).

neighbours who were well aware of their proclivities'.³⁶ A similar pattern seems to have emerged within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quakerism, where members in many areas were able to live in peaceful co-existence with their neighbours despite being marginalised by the state and its institutions.

It therefore seems possible to conclude that despite its increasingly introspective nature, Quakerism was successful in balancing an exclusive spiritual piety with significant participation in community life. One such example is the readiness of itinerant female ministers to address large non-Quaker audiences. Eager to spread their message beyond the boundaries of their community, Quaker women preachers, like May Drummond, became very visible and in some cases accepted members of eighteenth-century society. As Mack observes, Quaker theology allowed women to live "in the body" without regarding the bodily aspect of their existence as necessarily polluting'.³⁷ This stands in contrast to other eighteenth-century dissenting women, whose religious individualism encouraged them to focus on their own godly communities.³⁸ The seventeenth-century Nonconformist Sarah Savage, for instance, placed her private spiritual life above all other connections. Like many of her Quaker contemporaries, she refused to participate in the traditional customs of female sociability characteristic of good neighbourliness. However,

³⁶ Derek Plumb, 'A Gathered Church? Lollards and their Society', in Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters*, p. 162.

³⁷ Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 246.

³⁸ It was only on very rare occasions and under very exceptional circumstances that an eighteenth-century Methodist woman would address mixed public audiences. Wesleyan Methodists did recognise the necessity of women to preach when they experienced an 'extraordinary call', but, unlike female Friends, they were never permitted to pursue a lifestyle of complete itinerancy. 'With very few exceptions', notes Mack, 'women were forbidden to act as ministers, explicating doctrine by using biblical texts in formal sermons'. Thus whereas Methodist male preachers frequently pursued itinerant careers and rarely saw their families, the place of women within early Methodism was 'a relatively stable collective environment', based around the local class and band meetings. Mack, *Heart Religion*, pp. 140, 135–36.

as Herbert has noted, Savage shunned almost every occasion for social interaction.³⁹ In contrast to Puritan and Nonconformist women like Savage, converts to Quakerism actively sought opportunities to engage with the non-Quaker world without fearing for their own salvation. Eager to act as moral examples to individuals outside of their religious community, they balanced their private faith with the need to reach out to nonbelievers. This meant that both ordinary members and preachers could often attain a surprising level of harmony with women of other religious denominations.

One unwelcome consequence, however, was that leaders on both sides of the Atlantic exhibited concern that many members were becoming drawn into worldly customs and habits. Evidence from the Women's Meeting minutes in both Pennsylvania and rural England suggests that there was often a wide gap between the conduct expected of members and the *actual* behaviour of Friends. In the wake of Toleration, Quakers, like many other dissenting movements, faced new tests to their faith. John Bunyan aptly foreshadowed these trials in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, when he noted that Christian, having passed through a range of trials, including the death of his companion Faithful, met with even greater trials and temptations when he and his new companion, Hopeful, reached 'a delicate Plain, called *Ease*', where wealth and lucre came to dominate their thoughts. '[T]hat Treasure is a snare to those that seek it', Christian declared, 'for it hindreth them in their Pilgrimage'.⁴⁰ Indeed, observations recorded both by the leadership and impartial observers would suggest that with the passage of Toleration Friends were increasingly drawn into the

³⁹ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, p. 174, see also Chapter Six, pp. 169–93.

⁴⁰ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to that Which is To Come Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream* (London, 1678), pp. 137–42.

customs and economic structures of the wider society. For the movement, this was a matter of particular concern, for it was feared that adopting the fashions, lifestyles and customs of the 'world' would inevitably distract members from the quest for salvation.

Moreover, it is possible that the popularity of female preachers and Quakers' integration into community life helped intensify the criticism and hostility still prominent in English print culture. A widely held perception was that those women, who converted independently of patriarchal authority, were dividing families and leading their households into delusional religious and moral spheres. Anxiety over the unparalleled liberties given to female converts was at the root of many attacks on Quaker women. They faced charges of witchcraft, madness, scolding, and sexual indecency. The rise of the Women's Meetings in the 1670s increasingly shifted the focus of criticism away from an image of moral excess towards an unflattering depiction of them as bullying their male brethren and husbands into conformity. Their unparalleled involvement in the government of the church, and their potential authority over men, thus led to an altered presentation of female Friends as narrow-minded fanatics. The virulence with which authors sought to discredit the female members of the movement illustrates the ways in which early Quakers were a revolutionary community.

Many of the slurs they encountered were not unfamiliar to women of other dissenting movements, who also found themselves the subjects of attack, mockery and scorn in early modern print culture. Opposition towards Catholics and the Jews, for instance, continued to dominate much of the hostile propaganda circulated in print throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries. Anti-Catholic propaganda depicted convents as sites of debauchery and nuns as immoral and sexually depraved despite their vows of chastity.⁴¹ Such depictions drew on a traditional view of female weakness, since women were held to be more naturally prone to confuse sexual and religious enthusiasm. Women in several evangelical religious movements, like the Baptists and Methodists, also came to be criticised as 'silly women', apt to be deceived by the lures of illiterate lay preachers. *The Methodist Lady*, for instance, not only used the family finances to support a Whitefield-like leader, but also neglected her wifely duties, placing her religious priorities before her household ones.⁴² Conversion to the movement thus became associated with women neglecting their duties as mothers, 'contrary to the Laws of Nature.'⁴³ As with Quakerism, concerns about the disruption of the patriarchal family and the inversion of traditional hierarchies consistently underpinned these attacks. However, as Lawrence acknowledges with reference to anti-Methodist propaganda, Methodist women were presented as the susceptible and passive victims of religious seduction.⁴⁴ In anti-Quaker literature, by contrast, women were far from weak or passive. Instead, they were portrayed as the active and dominant seducers of both men and women, reflecting their distinctive and confrontational roles as public preachers.

Despite its fraught beginnings, however, Quakerism was unusual in the degree of acceptance that it came to receive, even in elite intellectual circles.

⁴¹ See Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 53–54.

⁴² Anon., *The Story of the Methodist-Lady: Or the Injur'd Husband's Revenge, a True History* (London, c.1770), pp. 11–12.

⁴³ 'Doctrines and Divisions of the Methodists', *Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle*, January 1736–December 1833, vol. 11 (June 1741), p. 320, quoted in Lawrence, *One Family under God*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Anti-Quaker polemic continued to view their peculiar customs with contempt. But by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Quaker women were being routinely praised in the dominant non-Quaker culture. Many of the greatest intellectual thinkers of the time, such as Locke, Voltaire, Brissot, and Crèvecoeur, reserved high praise for Quakerism in terms of its alternative model of social relations, which emphasised inward knowledge and truth above all external influences. Quaker women led lives of far greater freedom and responsibility than those within the wider society, and their sober and modest behaviour was often admired by observers.

The ideal of gender relations advocated by Quakerism was never divorced from its theological origins and was never cited by later feminist authors as an acceptable basis for sexual equality.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the praise which mainstream authors reserved for Quaker women's behaviour and conduct shows how their daily lives both shaped, and were shaped by, their relationship to the wider world. The establishment of the Women's Meetings, for example, created a form of institutionalized sectarian authority that thinkers like Astell were arguing should be available to women more generally. Her proposal for a college of Religious Retirement was in accord with Quaker values, since it was to be established on the basis that 'the vain pomps and pageantry of the world' would be exchanged for learning and cultivation of a 'true Practical knowledge'.⁴⁶ Patricia Howell Michaelson has suggested that a belief in simple and plain living, and a 'corresponding de-emphasis on money, power, or

⁴⁵ This is discussed by Patricia Howell Michaelson in 'Religious Bases of Eighteenth-Century Feminism: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Quakers', *Women's Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1993), pp. 281–95.

⁴⁶ Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (4th edn, 2 parts, London, 1697), i, pp. 38, 51.

worldly success', was urged by thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft as essential for women to attain equality within society.⁴⁷ The radical lifestyle that Quakers promoted for their female members thus arguably provided an important complement to, or strand within, broader debates on the place of women in public life. The lives of Quaker women both as preachers and homemakers suggest how religious radicalism could challenge the institutions and values articulated at the heart of early modern society.

* * *

The aim in introducing a comparative dimension into this concluding chapter has been to suggest a possible path forward for research into the relationship between women's everyday lives and the experiences of sectarian dissent. Scholarship on women and religion often tends to be quite narrowly focused on particular types of experience and is usually confessionally segregated. Thus by placing the relationships developed by non-itinerant women, as well as by missionaries, at the centre of the analysis, this thesis has provided one possible methodology for exploring the lives and experiences of women in other dissenting movements. There is now a general consensus amongst historians that religious diversity was not the socially divisive force it was once held to be. Far more research is required to determine the extent to which religious sectarianism affected the experiences of other nonconformist women, like the women of the seventeenth-century Baptist Churches and those of the eighteenth-century Methodist, Catholic, and Unitarian movements, who have traditionally been considered only in relation to their public activities.

⁴⁷ Michaelson, 'Wollstonecraft and the Quakers', p. 284.

Similarly, to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of ordinary Friends we clearly need to explore how membership also affected the gendered identity of male Quakers. As historians have been keen to observe in recent years, the ideal of womanhood was linked to the construction of masculinity and should thus be observed from a relational perspective. Whilst the thesis has touched upon the relationships that evolved between male and female adherents of Quakerism, there is a strong case for the need to examine how masculine identity was affected by the relative power accorded to women within both the household and church. The attachment of eminent male Friends to their families and home life was often highlighted as an exemplary trait in their characters. But we are left to question how the domestic orientation of the movement affected their outlook. How far, for example, did domestic concerns affect the lives of male ministers who were forced to leave their homes and families to undertake divine service? We are also led to question how the husbands of missionary women felt about being left at home to care for their children whilst their wives were travelling. Clearly, the highly emotional language of the movement altered how masculine values were expressed. William Robinson, for example, addressed his fellow-prisoner Christopher Holder, as 'my dear beloved, my soul doth greatly love thee', declaring that 'the remembrance of thee doth ravish my soul'.⁴⁸ How far affiliation to the movement altered their masculine identities and affected their relationships to

⁴⁸ William Robinson to Christopher Holder, c.1659, in Hugh Barbour and Arthur O. Roberts (eds.), *Early Quaker Writings, 1650–1700* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1973), pp. 128–29.

friends, family members, and social acquaintances remains an unexplored aspect of the movement's history.⁴⁹

In adopting an integrated approach towards women's experiences within British and colonial Quakerism, the thesis has also sought to show how the lenses of gender and religion can refigure what we mean by the term 'Atlantic community' in this period. Quakers took on the common trappings of a religious community, where members identified themselves by separation from what surrounded them, which meant that they were forced to seek alternative forms of communal expression. We have seen how Quaker values were transplanted and adapted by Friends who settled in the American colonies and how this affected women's experiences. Overall, between 1650 and 1750, American Quaker women appear to have had a greater degree of authority over their families and local affairs than did British Friends, whilst simultaneously playing a less active role in public missionary work.

Despite such differences, however, we find a remarkable consistency in the models of order and regulation that developed across the Atlantic. A surprising similarity in values and ideas seems to have developed among women across the transatlantic world of Quakerism despite the absence of any overarching bureaucratic authority or structure. The mass emigration of Friends to the colonies forged a powerful network of families and friends whose correspondence and connections helped them 'maintain a sense of shared

⁴⁹ Recent contributions to this debate on the relationship between masculinity and religious emotionalism have come from studies of eighteenth-century Methodism, including Lawrence's, *One Family under God* and Mack's *Heart Religion*. Bernard Capp's article on male tears and the early modern debates surrounding their acceptability provides a refreshing approach to this field: 'Jesus Wept But Did the Englishman? Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern England,' *Past and Present*, vol. 224, no. 1 (2014), pp. 75–108.

family membership and common national identity'.⁵⁰ Sandra Stanley Holton has suggested that the sense of belonging to a 'peculiar people' encouraged Quaker women of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to develop what she terms 'a cosmopolitanism that encouraged transnational as well as national networks'.⁵¹ Such connections were reinforced by several factors, which encouraged the growth of intimate relationships and networks of support across the Atlantic, among them the frequent exchange of Quaker ministers and their spiritual writings; the trade-routes and migration networks that grew up between British and American Friends; the multi-tiered Meeting structure; and complex patterns of intermarriage among Quaker families.

Such long-distance exchanges were facilitated by powerful webs of correspondence and epistles. As a non-hierarchical movement dispersed across the Atlantic, physical ties between members were often weak. Through letters and epistles, however, close bonds of community were woven between Meetings, individuals, and local Quaker populations. These 'community conversations' provided a backbone for the nascent movement that has hitherto received little acknowledgment.⁵² The exchange of correspondence between Meetings meant that English and American Friends were repeatedly forced to compare their experiences and adjust their practices and behaviour accordingly. This helps to explain why Quaker women's everyday customs and practices were so uniform without order being imposed from any central organisational structure. When the Women's Meeting of London composed an

⁵⁰ David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 213.

⁵¹ Sandra Stanley Holton, *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780–1930*, p. 228.

⁵² Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660–1800* (Oxford, 2009), p. 152.

epistle in 1749 reporting on the spread of 'Truth' within the English Meetings, they did so in order to emphasize the value and emotional power they placed on their transatlantic spiritual alliance. 'It is not possible', they wrote 'to be unmindful of each other: the ground, and cement of [our] Fellowship, being that divine Charity.'⁵³ The intimate relationships they shared within the 'household of Faith', despite never having met, created a sense of common identity which transcended national borders and united a highly dispersed and socially diverse community of women across the Atlantic world.

The spheres of religion and everyday life for the women of early Quakerism were co-extensive, and Quaker ideals within the household and the structure of the movement were mutually reinforcing. The Quakers' domestic lives were harmonised with their spiritual authority, whilst affiliation with the Church reinforced and could even expand their network of personal relationships. Quaker women's domestic identities should thus be celebrated as the pivotal force of their experiences as religious dissenters. Their roles as wives, mothers, elders, Meeting overseers, philanthropists, Friends, hostesses, and preachers enabled them to transform their experiences within the household into public action. At the same time, a constant exchange of ideas and practices influenced the way Quakerism was enacted on both sides of the Atlantic. Whether undertaking ministerial work or remaining at home, Quaker women helped to strengthen their family relationships and the social networks that operated within early Quakerism. They communicated a set of values, ideas, and beliefs, which distance could not impede, which ultimately helped to

⁵³ LRSF, Quaker Women's Box Meeting MSS, 1671-1753, Women Friends of the Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia to Women Friends of the Yearly Meeting in London, 20 September 1749, fol. 58.

usher in a new era in which women and the household were placed close to the very centre of religious and public life.

Appendix One

The Women's Monthly Meeting Meetings: Sources and Methodology

The decision to undertake a comparative sample of the Women's Meetings of England and the American colonies was based on the premise that the best way to understand women's day-to-day experiences and activities was through detailed examination of the transactions of their Meetings. The Meetings: Marsden in Lancashire, Kendal in Westmorland, Chester in Pennsylvania, and Burlington in West Jersey, were selected as being all rural Meetings, linked to much larger Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings. Each of the four Meetings possessed a complete set of minutes for both the Women's and Men's Monthly and Quarterly Meetings between 1700 and 1750. The location of each of the Meetings is highlighted on Maps 1 and 2 below.

Although Friends in the American colonies had successfully transplanted the multi-tiered Meeting structure established in England by the early 1680s, few minutes survive for the years before 1700. Jean R. Soderlund has attributed this to the youth and inexperience of the settlers, and the women's preoccupation with setting up households in a frontier environment.¹ Chester and Burlington were chosen because of their unusually detailed set of minutes for the late 1690s and early 1700s. Whilst the Meetings of the Delaware Valley and Philadelphia have received sustained historiographical attention, the more remote and less urban areas of Pennsylvania and West Jersey have largely been overlooked. Chester minutes have received some acknowledgment, although

¹ Jean R. Soderlund, 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings, 1680-1760', *The William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series, vol. 44, no. 4 (1987), p. 730.

the Women's Meetings remain relatively neglected.² The thriving population of Burlington Monthly Meeting is, however, notable for its absence from Quaker history and thus provides an interesting point of comparison.

For England, the various Meetings of London women have loomed large in the historiography on account of the range of tasks they were expected to undertake in response to exceptionally high rates of persecution. In northern England the minutes of Swarthmoor Women's Monthly Meeting have been subject to a number of investigations, where the figures of Margaret Fell and her daughters have received a large share of the focus.³ However, few of the minutes of the smaller Women's Meetings of Lancashire, Cumberland, and Westmorland have been explored in any depth. The extant minutes for Kendal Monthly Meeting in Westmorland and Marsden Monthly Meeting in Lancashire therefore provide an interesting point of comparison about how the experiences of women Friends could differ in a more rural context.

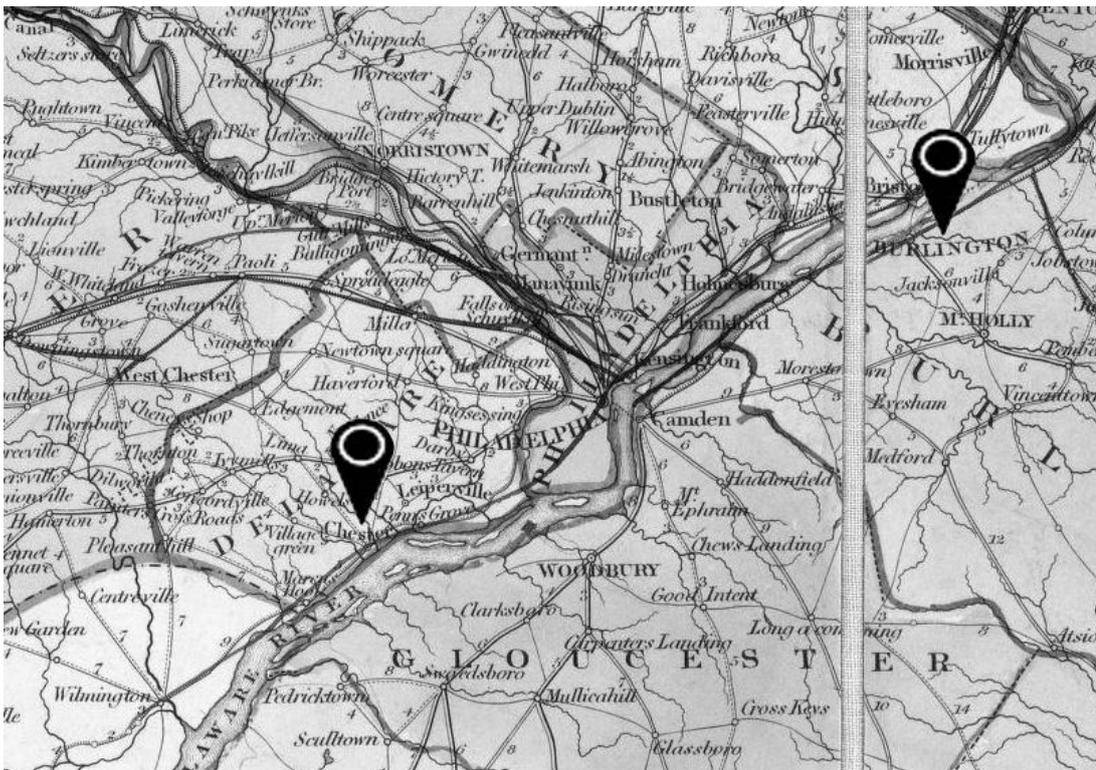
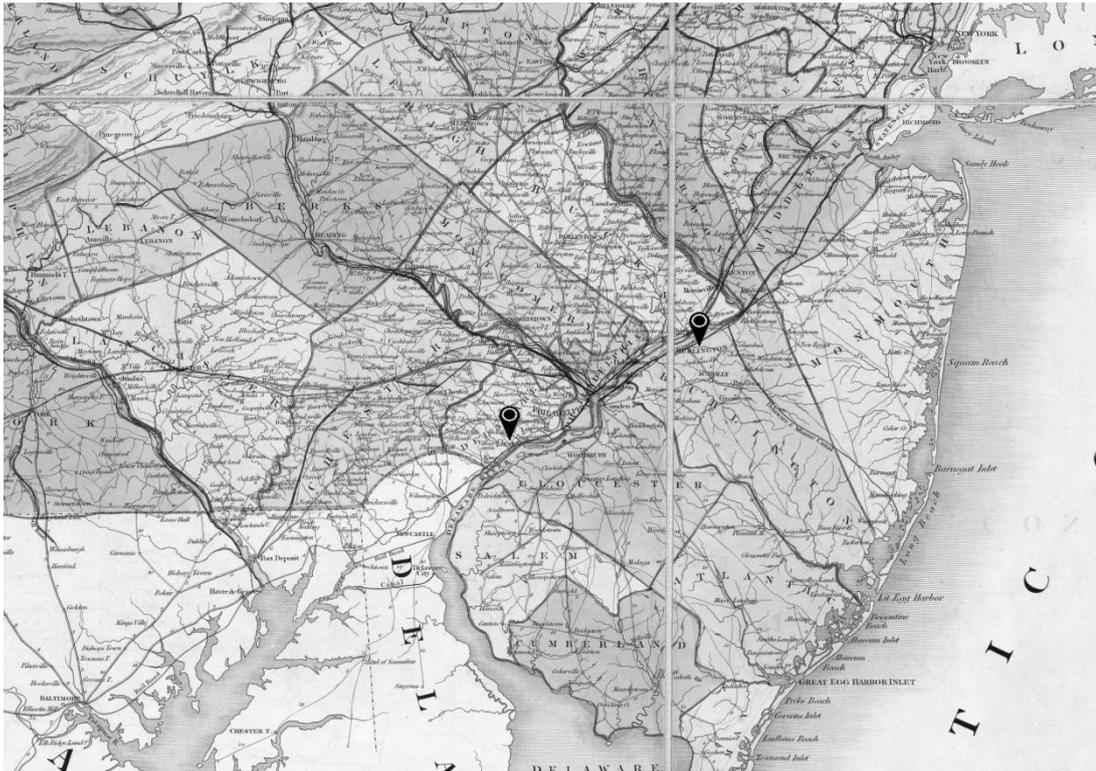
In order to determine the impact of local circumstances on the outlook of the Meetings, a database was constructed for each of the four Monthly Meetings, which listed every activity completed by both the Men's and Women's Meetings in the sample periods from early 1700 to early 1705 (March 1700–February 1705) and from early 1745 to early 1750 (March 1745–February 1750). Each of the activities undertaken was then grouped under a broader category for ease of quantification.

² The surveys which have made use of Chester Minutes are: Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*; and Soderlund, 'Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings', pp. 722–49.

³ See especially: Beatrice Carré, 'Early Quaker Women in Lancaster and Lancashire', in Michael Mullett (ed.), *Early Lancaster Friends* (Lancaster, 1978), pp. 43–56; Bonnelyn Young Kunze, *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism* (London, 1994); Bonnelyn Young Kunze, "'Poore and in Necessity': Margaret Fell and Quaker Female Philanthropy in Northwest England in the Late Seventeenth Century', *Albion*, vol. 21, no. 4 (1989), pp. 559–80; and Norman Penney (ed.), *The Household Account Book of Sarah Fell of Swarthmoor Hall* (Cambridge, 1920).



Map 1 The English Northwest 1695 with location of Kendal and Marsden Monthly Meetings highlighted



Map 2 Nineteenth-century map of Pennsylvania and West Jersey with location of Chester and Burlington Monthly Meetings highlighted

Appendix Two

Tasks Undertaken by the Women's Monthly Meetings

The information presented in Figures 1 and 2 was drawn from the minutes of each of the Monthly Meetings under examination.

Tables 3 and 4 below provide a numerical breakdown of each of the tasks listed under each grouping for the two sample periods. Because of large variations in the number of tasks performed by each Meeting, each activity has been calculated as a percentage of the total number of tasks. The graphs therefore demonstrate the distribution of activities rather than the actual number of tasks. The types of activities were grouped under the headings of: **Marriage; Discipline; Church oversight; Philanthropy; Removal and settlement; Travelling ministry; Tithes; Accounts and Estates; and Advice and Queries.** Following Table 4 is a breakdown of the different tasks that fell within these categories.

Table 3 Distribution of tasks for Chester, Burlington, Marsden, and Kendal Women's Meetings, 1700–1705

*The figures listed here are the *actual* number of activities performed under each category, from which the percentages in Figures 1 and 2 have been calculated.

| Tasks | Chester | Burlington | Marsden | Kendal |
|------------------------|---------|------------|---------|--------|
| Marriage | 38 | 46 | 25 | 56 |
| Discipline | 4 | 35 | 6 | 2 |
| Church oversight | 16 | 21 | 31 | 1 |
| Philanthropy | 1 | 30 | 50 | 5 |
| Removal and settlement | 8 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| Travelling ministry | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Tithes | 0 | 0 | 9 | 6 |
| Accounts and Estates | 8 | 66 | 8 | 0 |
| Advice and Queries | 0 | 0 | 58 | 4 |
| Total | 75 | 212 | 189 | 74 |

Data extracted from the following sources: FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695–1733; FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747; LA, FRM/1/24 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1678–1738; and KAC, WDFCF/1/22 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1671–1719.

Table 4 Distribution of tasks for Chester, Burlington, Marsden, and Kendal Women's Meetings, 1745–1750

*The figures listed here are the *actual* number of activities performed under each category, from which the percentages in Figures 1 and 2 have been calculated.

| Tasks | Chester | Burlington | Marsden | Kendal |
|------------------------|---------|------------|---------|--------|
| Marriage | 62 | 96 | 17 | 56 |
| Discipline | 35 | 40 | 1 | 5 |
| Church oversight | 30 | 27 | 27 | 34 |
| Philanthropy | 0 | 5 | 58 | 37 |
| Removal and settlement | 103 | 82 | 1 | 7 |
| Travelling ministry | 4 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| Tithes | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 |
| Accounts and Estates | 10 | 79 | 20 | 0 |
| Advice and Queries | 0 | 5 | 56 | 61 |
| Total | 244 | 335 | 182 | 221 |

Data extracted from the following sources: FHL, MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1733–1779; FHL, MR-Ph 63 Burlington Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681–1747; and 1747–1799; LA FRM/1/25 Marsden Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1738–1760; and KAC, WDFCF/1/22 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1719–1756.

Breakdown of tasks under each activity

Marriage: Intentions for marriage presented for the first or second time; reports from overseers after the marriage has taken place; certificate requested in order to marry a Friend of another Meeting; certificate for marriage produced by Friend of another Meeting; papers requested after courtship has ended (after broken marriage intentions).

Discipline: Friend to be disciplined or admonished for courting or marrying a non-Quaker; for clandestine marriage, i.e. marriage by priest or magistrate; for fornication before marriage; for attending a 'disorderly marriage' (i.e. acting as a witness); for general misconduct; petition of repentance by Friend wishing to be reunited to the Meeting; paper of denial produced against a member and to be made public.

Church oversight: Appointments to attend the Quarterly Meeting; new clerk, treasurer or overseer/s appointed for a particular Preparative Meeting/locality; arrangements to be made for purchase of Meeting books; Friend/s appointed to sit in the Meeting for Ministers and Elders; arrangements made for transfer of Minute and Account Books between elders; Friend/s appointed to view, correct, and transcribe the Clerk's rough minutes into fair copy; Friend/s appointed to attend regional Yearly Meeting; formation of new/change to existing structure of Preparative Meetings; Friends to inspect attendance at Meetings (especially week-day Meetings).

Philanthropy: Money or practical assistance given to relieve a poor or sick Friend; necessity of poor inquired into by Meeting; overseers appointed to visit family and see if they stand in need of relief; money loaned for relief of Friends during hardship.

Removal and settlement: Certificate of removal (outgoing) requested by Friend and produced and signed by overseers; warning issued to Friend/s who joined with Meeting without certificate; certificate of removal (incoming) presented to Meeting.

Travelling ministry: Friend/s acquaints Meeting with drawings to visit another Meeting and requests certificate; Friend/s return from visit, return the certificates attesting to behaviour, and make a report to the Meeting about how they found things; certificate requested for Friend to act as companion to a minister from another Meeting.

Tithes (English Meetings only): Account given by Overseers of a Friend's clearness in relation to tithes; report given to Meeting of Friends suffering on account of tithes; separate Meeting to be appointed to inquire into clearness of Friends from paying tithes and church rates.

Accounts and Estates: Collections ordered to be made to cover the cost of relief/administration; recording of legacies; accounts inspected and balanced; money collected and sent to the Quarterly or Yearly Meeting; money paid out of Meeting stock; new trustee appointed to hold bonds of Meeting.

Advice and Queries: Advices of the Quarterly or Yearly Meeting to be read and implemented; queries read and reports given, over issues such as: neglect in attending Meeting on week-days and at hour appointed, drowsiness and sleeping in Meetings, moderation at births, marriages and burials, against superfluity and needless fashions, and against keeping company with those of other societies.

Appendix Three

The Responsibilities of Kendal and Chester Men's and Women's Meetings, 1700–1745

The proportion of tasks shared between Kendal Men's and Women's Meetings has been calculated from two separate databases, one listing the activities performed by the Men's Monthly Meeting between 1700–1705 and another for the respective Women's Meeting. Table 5 represents the total number of tasks performed by Kendal Men's and Women's Meetings and Table 6 represents those of Chester Men's and Women's Meetings.

Table 5 Tasks performed by Kendal Men's and Women's Meetings between 1700 and 1705

| Tasks | Number performed by Men's Meeting | Number performed by Women's Meeting |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Apprenticeship | 51 | 0 |
| Arbitration | 30 | 0 |
| Marriage | 1 | 56 |
| Discipline | 77 | 2 |
| Church oversight | 68 | 1 |
| Philanthropy | 3 | 5 |
| Removal and settlement | 13 | 0 |
| Travelling ministry | 13 | 0 |
| Tithes | 25 | 6 |
| Accounts and Estates | 31 | 0 |
| Advice and Queries | 24 | 4 |
| Total | 346 | 74 |

Data extracted from KAC, WDFCF/1/13 Kendal Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1699–1723; and WDFCF/1/22 Kendal Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1671–1719.

Table 6 Tasks performed by Chester Men's and Women's Meetings between 1700 and 1705

| Tasks | Number performed by Men's Meeting | Number performed by Women's Meeting |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Arbitration | 17 | 0 |
| Marriage | 57 | 38 |
| Discipline | 24 | 4 |
| Church oversight | 18 | 16 |
| Philanthropy | 2 | 1 |
| Removal and settlement | 14 | 8 |
| Travelling ministry | 6 | 0 |
| Accounts and Estates | 9 | 8 |
| Advice and Queries | 3 | 0 |
| Total | 150 | 75 |

Data extracted from FHL, MR-Ph 92 Chester Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1681-1721; and MR-Ph 98 Chester Women's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1695-1733.

Appendix Four

The Quaker Birth Notes

The Birth Notes, which were recorded by London Friends from 1676, named the midwife who officiated at a Quaker birth, along with the witnesses who were in attendance. Although recording witnesses at Quaker births was not a general practice, London and Buckinghamshire Friends have left particularly detailed minutes for our period.

One reason for their relative neglect in histories of Quakerism is the fact that after the original Birth Notes had been surrendered under the Non-parochial Registers Act of 1840, Quakers made copies of their birth, marriage, and death registers in a digested, tabular form. The marriage and birth digests omitted the names of the witnesses attending these events, however, and many demographic studies have relied upon these digested registers, rather than the originals. Simon Dixon, in his recent survey of the London marriage and birth records, recognised their points of difference but also chose to use the digests rather than the originals in compiling his data, explaining that they provided ‘an accurate and easily exploitable summary of the original registers’.⁴

The original Birth Notes are now located at the National Archives, under the Public Record Office classification number: RG6. For the purposes of this study I have used those London records that contained Quaker births between the institution of the Birth Notes in 1676 and 1750:

RG6/1626 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1676-1707.

RG6/1627 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1707-1718.

RG6/1628 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1718-1725.

RG6/1629 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1725-1769.

⁴ Simon Dixon, ‘Quaker Communities in London, 1667-c.1714’, Royal Holloway, University of London, PhD thesis (2005), pp. 289–90.

Appendix Five

A Recurring Network of Gossips

The original copies of Friends Birth Notes for London and Middlesex are unique in the details they provide of the witnesses attendant at the birth of Quaker children. From the original documents a database was created, entering the names of those witnesses whose names could be identified from the signatures entered on the births notes between the years of 1720 and 1735.

The act of witnessing births was clearly reciprocated by women like Margaret Cross, who attended only the deliveries of her fellow gossips. The enduring friendship networks surrounding the births of Margaret Cross's children can be seen below. They indicate that close networks of support operated between Quaker women at this most intimate and local level. For clarity, recurring names of the female gossips have been highlighted in **bold**.

Margaret Cross was attended by the following women at the birth of her daughter Margaret in March 1720 at St Saviour's parish:
Elizabeth **Earle** (midwife); Elizabeth Hawkes; **Elizabeth Willet**; **Mary Knight**; **Sarah Mason**; Elizabeth [] and **Mary Bockett**.

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross's daughter Sarah on 5 October 1723 at St Olave's parish:
Elizabeth Stapleton (midwife); **Elizabeth Willett** and **Mary Knight**.

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross's son Joseph on 26 October 1724 at St Olave's parish:
Elizabeth Stapleton (midwife); Elizabeth Curtis and **Elizabeth Willett**.

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross's daughter Mary on 26 September 1725 at St Olave's parish:
Elizabeth Stapleton (midwife); **Elizabeth Willett**; Ann Hill and **Mary Knight**.

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross's son Peter on 8 January 1727 at St Olave's parish:
Elizabeth Stapleton (midwife); **Elizabeth Willett** and Elizabeth Drinkwater.

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross's daughter Margaret on 15 June 1728 at St Olave's parish:

Elizabeth Stapleton (midwife); **Mary Bockett** and Abigail Fennley.

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross's daughter Margaret on 8 September 1730 at St Martin Orgars parish:

Elizabeth Stapleton (midwife).

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross's son Joseph on 17 September 1732 at St Martin Orgars parish:

Elizabeth Stapleton (midwife); **Mary Knight**; **Barbara Willett** and **Elizabeth Willett**.

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross' son John, on 18 November 1733 at St Martin Orgars parish:

Elizabeth Stapleton (midwife); **Elizabeth Willett**; **Mary Knight**; **Barbara Willett** and Hannah []

The following witnesses attended the birth of Margaret Cross' son John, on 4 November 1734 at St Martin Orgars:

Elizabeth Stapleton; **Elizabeth Willett**; **Mary Knight**; **Barbara Willett**; Hannah Willet and Frances Rudd.

Of the births that Margaret Cross is listed as having attended between 1720 and 1730 she appears on the following records:

4 June 1720 at the birth of Elizabeth Knight, daughter of **Mary Knight**, at St Butolph's parish, with the following witnesses: **Elizabeth Earle** (midwife); **Elizabeth Willett** and Ann King.

26 December 1720 at the birth of Margaret Mason, daughter of **Sarah Mason**, at St Saviour's parish, with the following witnesses: Mary Draper (midwife); Hannah [Routh]; Rachel Bowman and Elizabeth Fawcett.

11 October 1721 at the birth of John Knight, son of **Mary Knight**, at St Butolph's parish, with the following witnesses: **Elizabeth Willett** and **Elizabeth Knight**.

2 May 1723 at the birth of Mary Knight, daughter of **Mary Knight**, at St Butolph's parish, with the following witnesses: **Elizabeth Earle** (midwife); **Elizabeth Willett** and **Elizabeth Knight**.

24 October 1724 at the birth of Priscilla Knight, daughter of **Mary Knight**, at St Butolph's parish, with the following witnesses: **Elizabeth Stapleton** (midwife) and **Elizabeth Willett**.

25 November 1725 at the birth of Samuel Knight, son of **Mary Knight**, at St Butolph's parish, with the following witnesses: **Elizabeth Stapleton** (midwife) and **Elizabeth Willett**.

13 September 1734 at the birth of Wilmer Willett, son of **Barbara Willett**, at St Lawrence Jewry parish, with the following witnesses: Margaret Sparrow (midwife); **Mary Knight**; Margaret Lucan and Elizabeth [].

Appendix Six

Ecclesiastical Licensed Midwives at Quaker Births, 1680–1690

Table 7 Midwives attendant at Quaker women's births between 1680 and 1690, as recorded in the London and Middlesex Birth Notes

| Name of midwife | Known ecclesiastical licence?* | Number of births attended, 1680–1690 | Years |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Albrighton, Anna | | 7 | 1683–1689 |
| Basket, Ann | | 1 | 1687 |
| Benett, Mary | Yes | 1 | 1689 |
| Berrisford, Barbara | | 1 | 1690 |
| Boulton, Alice | | 1 | 1689 |
| Bridges, Margaret | | 1 | 1686 |
| Clarke, Elizabeth | Yes | 5 | 1682–1689 |
| Douglas, Rebekah | | 1 | 1689 |
| Gibson, Elizabeth | | 1 | 1688 |
| Grand, Annbell | | 1 | 1682 |
| Harrison, Margaret | | 12 | 1682–1689 |
| Hoard, Dorothy | | 1 | 1682 |
| Howell, Mary | | 2 | 1689–1690 |
| Kendal, Martha | | 1 | 1688/9 |
| Lovell, Elizabeth | | 1 | 1687/8 |
| Spencer, Elizabeth | | 1 | 1688 |
| Whyte, Elizabeth | Yes | 2 | 1683–1689 |
| Unknown** | | 3 | |
| Total | | | |
| 18 | 3 | 43 | |

Data extracted from RG6/1626 London and Middlesex Birth Notes, 1676–1707.

* Information about ecclesiastical licences extrapolated from Table 3.3. *Licensed Midwives Who Delivered Quaker Mothers* in Doreen Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 96.

**Includes those records where folios are either damaged or the name of the midwife is illegible.

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