

'MY DEAREST FRIEND': COURTSHIP AND CONJUGALITY IN SOME MID AND LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY QUAKER FAMILIES¹

'Sexes make no difference since in souls there is none..' (William Penn, *Works*, 1726).²

'I want a companion. One whom I can feel is nearer to me than all the rest of the world'. (William Poole Bancroft to Emma Cooper, 4 June 1874).

Quaker families have been described as in the forefront of modernity regarding relations between the sexes. Their marriages, it is claimed, were based from the earliest times 'on a bond of mutual love and respect rather than on the reciprocal mistrust induced by the Fall'.³ Barry Levy, comparing Quaker and Anglican families in the Delaware Valley in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, argued that American Quaker families established a modern family pattern: 'their marriages were formed voluntarily on love; conjugal households were economically autonomous early in their careers; men and especially women were devoted to childbearing; and the scheme of childbearing was non coercive and based on ideas of intimate spiritual communication in a nurturing environment'.⁴

Was there something special in relations between Quaker men and women which insisted on mutual responsibility in family life, even extending to reproductive decision-making? Richard Vann and David Eversley highlight the distinctiveness of British and Irish Quaker patterns of nuptiality and fertility. They too point out that Quakers were demographically distinctive in that they are thought to have practised family limitation, at least on a smaller scale, from as early as the seventeenth century.⁵ Wells also suggests, of the eighteenth century, that a cohort of American Quaker families deliberately practised family limitation well in advance of such behaviour in the wider community.⁶ While Wells is prepared to acknowledge the innovative reproductive behaviour of his small

cohort he is loath to offer any explanation for it. In this reticence he is typical of most demographers. Few are prepared to venture into the terrain of relations within the reproductive couple.⁷

'How can we penetrate the distinctive dynamics of the Quaker family?', asked Richard Vann in a review of J. William Frost's *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*: how do we enter 'the largely unrecorded circle of the nuclear family?'⁸ These questions are still pertinent, perhaps even more so as the period since Frost wrote has been characterised by a vast output of writing in the area of gender relations, of many attempts to penetrate the subjectivities of early modern, eighteenth and nineteenth-century men and women.⁹ Vann has engaged at much greater length with his own questions in later work. In *Friends in Life and Death* he and David Eversley speculate that 'this-worldly ascetism in the Quaker ethic and mentality', and the tendency 'to glorify love between men and women as spiritual and inward' may have contributed to Quaker early family limitation.¹⁰

There are major issues at hand here. Why were Quakers, a society whose spiritual issues can be characterized as pre-modern, leaders in modern relations between the sexes as well as in the modernization of the family? Much has been made of the new 'companionate marriages' of the early twentieth century in recent social history. The transformation of the role of wife from subordinate to equal – at least in terms of the social relations of the marriage – is sometimes assumed to have evolved with modernization, or with women's entrance into higher education and the professions. Yet an historical engagement with both the principles and the practice of Quaker marriages suggests another earlier wellspring of this equality – the religious belief that men and women were equal in the sight of God, that the inner light shone equally fiercely in the breasts of either and that women as well as men could testify and bear witness in the name of God.

George Fox wrote in 1672: 'For man and women were helps meet in the image of God...' After the fall, Fox maintained, the man was to rule over his wife, but, 'in the restoration by Christ, into the image of God, and his righteousness and holiness again, in that they are helps meet, man and woman, as they were in before the fall'.¹¹ This professed spiritual equality was eventually translated into a form of social and domestic equality and was well noted outside the household. Anglican cleric and anti-slavery worker, Thomas Clarkson, commented in 1806 of Quaker domestic life that husband and wife often visited together, whereas 'in the fashionable world,

men and their wives seldom follow their pleasures together'.¹² The importance of companionship, Milligan claims, may be detected in a tendency for parity of age in Quaker marriages in Britain by the end of the eighteenth century, indeed to some cases where the wife was older than the husband – for Quaker men... 'seem to have preferred greater congruity in experience to whatever delights of the flesh which might be supplied by younger women.'¹³

To suggest that religious belief is an important component of a changing family mentality, even leading to demographic change, raises the necessity of identifying particular aspects of the religion which may have been significant. Within Quaker belief was it that the Puritan/activist strand, one which sought to dominate nature, triumphed over the contemplative mystical side, as Vann and Eversley have suggested?¹⁴ Although marriage and child-bearing were not seen 'purely or even primarily as matters of economic calculation' Vann and Eversley suggest that Quaker cultural life and religious beliefs worked towards a 'rational', even if unconsciously rational, demographic response.¹⁵ Quaker marriages, subjected to the scrutiny of the business meeting which attempted to reject unsuitable or impulsive marriages, placed emphasis on the 'prudent' marriage.

Were the Puritan and the mystical, those 'two cardinal elements underlying Quaker theology',¹⁶ inextricably linked or variously weighted in Quaker marriage choices? This is a difficult point to establish, perhaps impossible. Historians of Quakerism point out that devotion to the strongly mystical or to the more evangelical and 'rational' varied greatly in Quaker practice over time and space. How was it played out in particular approaches to matrimony and the begetting of children? Phyllis Mack has drawn our attention to the creative tension between Quaker's tenacity for a 'pre-modern spirituality' and the associated (and apparently contradictory) tendency to accept enlightenment/rationalist concepts in areas such as banking, commerce and science.¹⁷ Perhaps the two elements went hand in hand in marriage choices. This is a difficult point to demonstrate. For, as Vann and Eversley admit, '... we lack first-hand information about the actual matrimonial strategies of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Friends'.¹⁸

In this exploratory paper, however, I venture briefly onto that difficult terrain, seeking to illuminate issues of power and influence within the Quaker couple. I draw from several nineteenth-century Quaker courtships and marriages, seeking to detect the 'matrimonial strategies', the workings of a modern sensibility or 'subjectivity' towards marriage, love and family relations. Through several series

of letters over two generations patterns of distinctive courtship and conjugal relations can be glimpsed. Notions of dominant nineteenth-century femininity and masculinity are put to the test, reminding us that any attempt to define masculinity or femininity must be 'part of a critical science of gender relations and their trajectory in history' as Bob Connell recently claimed.¹⁹

Some middle-class Quaker men appeared to exemplify in their personal relations a romanticism, a spontaneous simplicity, and sensitivity.²⁰ Emotional expression, the admission of vulnerability and domestic tenderness had not given way to a later, harsher responsibility of separate spheres where women took responsibility for emotional life. Was it still the case in the nineteenth century, as Patricia Crawford believes of an earlier period, that the roles allowed Quaker women made them 'more willing to challenge and transcend the constraints of sex and gender'?²¹ Did the fact that women explicitly abstained 'from professing to obey their husbands' place them on an equal footing?²² Can we find evidence in the nineteenth century of a loosening of the boundaries of gender similar to that described of earlier times?²³ Did men and women seek the promptings of the inward light in choosing their partners: did 'God-inspired love'²⁴ genuinely displace the lure of physical attraction, wealth and romance? And, more speculatively, might such differences exhibited by Quaker men and women translate into changes in reproductive strategies?

William Poole Bancroft, a Delaware millowner and textile manufacturer, was thirty-eight years old when he began to court the considerably younger Emma Cooper.²⁵ The courtship was a lengthy one, as Emma was not initially inclined to view William as a potential husband. But he insisted, marvelling at times at his own patience, wondering even if he were a cold lover.²⁶ William began his correspondence cautiously: 'Respected friend', he wrote, 'I would like very much to know more of thee, and that thee should have opportunity to know more of me. In order that we may become thus more acquainted I do not know what better to do (especially as thee is likely to be so far away for a while) than to ask thee to allow me to write to thee in such a way as to show thee as much as I can of myself: & to ask a return correspondence from thee, as far (and as far only) as thee may believe it best to give it.'²⁷

William's desire for mutual knowledge and self-revelation was a continuing one. Over the first few years of the relationship he often returned to the theme. Even an unexpected thwarting of his plan to see Emma alone could be used to advantage. 'As it turned out I hit on

a time when you had a great many callers', William wryly reflected, 'I suppose it was as well as thee could see something about how I do in such a situation, as well (I believe I can truly say) as in all others.'²⁸ Six months after the initial letter he again expressed his desire 'to do what I can to give thee opportunities to know me...'²⁹ Setting an example the hopeful lover expounded his own views on first day schools, on novel reading (he was not overly fond of them), on music, on temperance (a teetotaler he nevertheless counselled moderation) and on his religious convictions. 'Do not be in a hurry to answer', he cautioned Emma, 'Do not move too much in the dark'.³⁰ He was at all times scrupulously honest, a virtue which he valued above all others. When William felt sure enough of Emma's affections to press his suit he explained that he wanted a 'loving, loved and lovely wife': 'and in thinking what qualities are essential that a wife shall be lovely I believe honesty has always appeared to have the first place'.³¹ In the high value placed on honesty, as in his urge for mutual disclosure, William Poole Bancroft was entirely in accord with Quaker principles and with the notion that a Quaker marriage was 'one step in the long journey of two personalities in their growth together.'³²

In the 1850s in Lancashire, England, another Quaker swain, younger than William Bancroft, boldly took the first step in another long journey of two personalities, one that resulted in a happy marriage of almost fifty years. Jonathan Abbatt, in common with his later American counterpart, also revered honesty and plain speech. 'Esteemed Friend', he began his first letter to Mary Dilworth, 'I have thought much of thee this long time past a[nd] trust I may be allowed to esteem thee as something more than a friend. Thou will perceive I have used no high flown or extravagant expressions of admiration as is frequently the case on occasions like this which I consider much out of place and prefer the simple honest truth ungarnished'.³³ Like William Bancroft, Jonathan Abbatt attempted to disclose his character to his beloved: 'I always write as I feel, that thou may judge my character whether it be congenial to thy tastes or not, and shall feel glad if I say anything contrary if thou will name it, we should have a thorough understanding of each other..³⁴

Mutual exchanges of confidences and self-disclosure over a lengthy period clearly led to a deepening of affection as Mary Dilworth realised: 'The last time thou was here thou asked me what I thought of myself: and having confided so much matter into thy keeping thou might well ask that question after receiving such a letter as this I think... has thou not confided as much and perhaps more into my particular charge?'

While William Bancroft's courtship of Emma Cooper was entirely prudent (she was from a similar Quaker family) it was clearly much more than a marriage of convenience. Similarly, while Jonathan Abbatt and Mary Dilworth both came from Friends' families in neighbouring parts of Lancashire the desired outcome of the courtship required considerable patience on Jonathan's part – patience he was prepared to demonstrate, fondly suggesting that Mary was teaching him the virtue. Clearly both men were determined to persist, suggesting a strong strand of earthly attraction, one which could not be openly spoken of to the reluctant fiancées or perhaps, even acknowledged by these introspective men. Tual suggests that Quaker expressions of love and courtship were not so much directed to a person of flesh and blood, as to the spiritual entity of the 'Light Within' inhabiting the loved one.³⁵ In spite of this prescription the modern reader marvels at the persistence of Quaker men in the light of the frequently expressed doubts and hesitations of their intended brides. Perhaps their perseverance was understandable in the light of their own propensity for soul-searching. Quaker men, as J. William Frost reminds us, were supposed to 'hearken to the leadings of the Lord', to ensure that their desires were based on God's will and that consideration and judgement preceded [romantic] love.³⁶

In William Bancroft's courtship of Emma Cooper as well as the platonic and spiritual there were intimations of repressed desire – at least on William's part. We do not have Emma's letters but we feel her shadowy presence in William's responses. William sought of his reluctant correspondent the same openness and honesty he offered. She was initially hesitant, declaring herself a poor letter writer. As the letters came to include increasing elements of self-disclosure Emma spoke of her perceived deficiencies, which she felt might dispose William to look elsewhere. William was not deterred: 'but I feel that there is that about thee that attracts me', he wrote 'and that it would be a pleasure to bear any deficiencies, and an unequalled one to have thee assist me in amending mine'.³⁷ In May 1874 Emma deferred William's offer of marriage, requesting a delay until they knew each other better. Further she suggested that he may have merely wanted a wife and housekeeper, a suggestion William was quick to rebut. 'I want a companion', he claimed, 'one who is closer to me than the rest of the world.'

William's conviction that Emma was his destined wife, and his patience in the face of her indecision over several years, caused him considerable introspection. 'I ask myself the question sometimes', he

mused, 'could I if I had the love a man ought to have for woman he asks to be his wife, help but show it more than I do, or be as contented as I am to await her decisions?' Was he too detached, altogether too reasonable? Was this the response of a rational rather than a passionate lover? 'But when I consider it', he wrote, '... I always believe I have done right in asking thee: & if I try to put myself in thy place by inquiring how I would feel if I knew that thy feelings towards one were as mine are to thee, I feel that I do love thee well enough to continue to ask thee for thine. I do hope the day will come when thee can acknowledge it is so. I hope it may come soon.'³⁸ His patience may have sprung from determination rather than the feared coolness. There is no direct reference to a spiritual prompting from within. On another occasion William confessed that he could not always keep his mind off Emma 'as much as I would wish in meetings, and at other times when it would seem my thoughts ought to be more of other things'.³⁹ A spiritual dimension did not seem uppermost here but, as we shall see, William considered his spiritual side less developed.

The young Quaker women to whom William and Jonathan addressed their suit not only took a long time to decide to marry (both took well over two years), but clearly regarded the step as a highly significant one, probably the most significant of their lives. At the very least it meant leaving comfortable and loving homes to strike out on their 'arduous paths'. Language often betrays the gravity of the step. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall quote an elder of a Quaker congregation who wrote in the commonplace book of an Essex ironmonger about to be married: 'I consider you now entering the most arduous scenes of Life and filling more important Stations... on your entrance into the arduous paths, be wisely directed, for much depends on this important *crisis*.'⁴⁰ Curiously Jonathan Abbatt also used the word 'crisis' in a self-mocking dialogue with his dear 'Polly' [Mary]. Speaking of the obvious happiness of newlywed friends he laments that their own nuptials seem far off: 'but I can fancy thee saying really what a queer fellow thou art, thou lets no opportunity to pass when thou can refer to this *momentous crisis*'.⁴¹ Was Jonathan gently mocking Mary for her hesitations, for viewing marriage as so momentous? Another young Quaker woman referred, not entirely in jest, to her coming wedding as her 'execution'.⁴²

Whilst they did not appear to be able to initiate a courtship, these young women had a good deal of power in deciding whether any particular marriage would take place. The lengthy period of letter-

writing and occasional visits permitted the exploration of a wide range of issues from theological differences, political outlooks, to attitudes to family members. They could retreat if appeals to the 'inner light' dictated. They thought long and hard about possible incompatibilities testing not only their future husband's patience but their adaptability and their kindness. Emma Cooper's doubts and retreats can be deduced from William's responses and from her decision to withdraw from the relationship for over a year. Mary Dilworth made herself clear in ways which undoubtedly caused her young lover considerable pain. From the first however, she was careful to make it clear that she welcomed his affection while reminding him 'that we are almost entire strangers to each other, and that in bestowing our affections we may not do it without careful consideration and above all may we seek for divine direction in this important step.'⁴³

Jonathan sought assurance of her affection and was often rewarded. Early in the relationship Mary set the tone of openness and honesty: 'Agreeable to thy earnest wish I must now inform thee what my thoughts were at our last pleasant meeting', she wrote, 'especially as I have to assure thee of my increasing affection, and feel that ere long I may be unto thee all that the most ardent lover could desire'.⁴⁴ Jonathan fulsomely acknowledged these signs of growing tenderness, writing 'the reassurance of thy never failing affection is certainly delightful to hear and seems as it were to rivet the bonds of love that have bound thee to me...'⁴⁵ Assured of her affection and her commitment to share his life he dealt manfully with doubts and constant setbacks to his hopes for an early marriage.

A year and a half into the courtship Jonathan urged marriage but was gently put in his place. 'So thou thinks we might as well put away all *ifs* and *buts* now, not yet, dear J. we must wait a short time longer ... perhaps a long time', his cautious beloved replied.⁴⁶ A few months later Jonathan joked: '... really Polly we are a long way behind some folks and shall be thought by some to be very cool in our courtship...'⁴⁷ At the close of 1854 he looked to the new year with joy anticipating their union (they were indeed married in 1855). In spite of Mary's reluctance to name a date Jonathan continued with the acquisition of a house and furniture: 'What an amount of preparation we men have to make before you consent to say "I will", he reflected.⁴⁸ Mary was less ecstatic: '... at the same time, (now do you blame me) I do wish 1855 at a greater distance than it is, bright as the picture is at present, has its clouds, so thou need not wonder if I am sometimes a little timid at its near approach...'⁴⁹

The realm of feeling was very carefully charted by young nineteenth-century Quaker women. They took their 'emotional temperature' frequently, testing whether the affections they felt for their admirers was deep enough to last a lifetime. Helen Priestman Bright's letters to William Clark during their eighteen-month courtship in the 1860s reveal another earnest young woman grappling with her feelings with total honesty and self-examination. 'The thought of you makes me sometimes unhappy and uneasy', Helen Bright wrote to William Clark, several months into their correspondence, 'I think it would be the greatest relief if you did not care for me, though it is very pleasant to be loved – but I am afraid I may never be able to make amends for the pain I have given you already, for I don't mistake the quiet liking that kindness produces for the deeper feeling.'⁵⁰

Helen Bright, later a leading figure in radical politics and the British suffrage movement,⁵¹ was at pains to express not only her ambivalence about her feelings for William but her concern at the restrictions of marriage. She would not be a subservient wife: 'I expect to carry out in practice what I have advocated in theory! I assure you I have all sorts of doubts as to how we shall get on – and I don't like the feeling of being bound...' She concluded by assuring William that she would try to love him as he deserved, adding 'and I hope it will be all right'. In common with Mary Dilworth, Helen Bright did not relish the thought of leaving her beloved home. Nor did she wish to hasten wedding plans. While prospective husbands such as William Bancroft, Jonathan Abbatt and William Clark clearly derived much pleasure from preparing the nuptial home, Helen, like Mary, seems to have taken little interest: 'I don't like writing about the house however', Helen wrote, six weeks after her engagement, 'for it seems to imply that things are far more settled than I feel them to be – I think next summer will be too soon'.

Helen's doubts were clearly grounded in her 'horrible suspicion that nine marriages out of ten are very unsatisfactory'. She also doubted her own feelings: 'Sometimes I feel more indifferent, and as though I should never love you enough,' she wrote, 'This is a painful doubt ... but I pray that it may be all right as it is'. She wished that the engagement had been 'a sort of conditional one, without any immediate consequences'. This admirable honesty must have been extremely painful to her fiancé, who seems nevertheless to have proceeded with the wedding plans on the assumption that her doubts would vanish as the marriage approached.

Can we assume from these instances that these young Quaker

women were entering marriages in which a measure of equality can be detected? Or companionship? Certainly the long courtships and the long processes of negotiation and self-disclosure which their correspondences reveal indicate the presence of an ingredient considered essential for the late twentieth-century partnership – strong communication and emotional intimacy.⁵² William Bancroft, William Clark and Jonathan Abbatt were all at pains to share everything with their future wives, even the details of their business life although, as Jonathan Abbatt apologised, '... I must not bore you with trade news too much for I have a notion most women are not much interested in trade concerns'.⁵³ Close communication between husband and wife is now seen as essential for family limitation, allowing for discussion and negotiation of sensitive issues which have often been taboo.⁵⁴ The concern, indeed respect, expressed by the three Quaker grooms for the delicacy of their future wives' feelings, their total honesty in relation to their beliefs and values, boded well for communication and understanding in relation to decision-making within their marriages, even no doubt within the controversial realm of reproductive decision-making. In these three instances we can, of course, come to no conclusions: while the spacing of the Abbatts' and the Bancrofts' four children does suggest the possibility of family limitation unusual for its time, the Clarks produced six offspring, the last when Helen Clark was forty years old.

Within the Quaker courtship and marriage there was, however, an element very different from the companionate marriages of the early twentieth century. While the twentieth-century companionate marriage acknowledges a sense of self in which sexuality is a central dimension,⁵⁵ these Quaker courtships reveal some of the puritan suspicion and wariness of sexual passion, while at the same time emphasizing tenderness and trust. If men and women appeared to be at odds on the progress of courtship towards eventual marriage they were agreed on the need for mutual assistance in shaping each other's character and in seeking divine direction in their lives. Mary Dilworth hoped with help to curb her lively 'self': 'I must tell thee', she confided to Jonathan in the first months of their correspondence, 'that I do at times find it exceeding hard work to keep that *much loved* self of mine in its proper place and that it is very apt to assume a spirit of independence. Nevertheless I am not without hope that thy influence and sometimes gentle chiding may have in some degree the desirable effect of bringing me nearer to Him who alone can subdue all things to Himself'.⁵⁶

Jonathan too accepts Mary's gentle reminder, when planning for their earthly home, that he must turn his thoughts to 'another and more important home'.⁵⁷ Mutual assistance was crucial. 'My prayer is each will assist the other in temporal as well as in spiritual concerns', Mary Dilworth wrote, 'for without a Heavenly hand to guide and bless how can we expect or look for new happiness...'⁵⁸ Helen Bright, eventually comfortable at the thought of her marriage, turned to William Clark for help: 'I long for you to help me give freely', she urged, 'I don't mean in money – but in tenderness and sympathy, in proportion as all my life I have received such rich full measure'.⁵⁹ The correspondence of these nineteenth-century couples is filled with dignity and respect, and a sense (as William Bancroft advised his niece Lucy many years later) of loving God's image in each other.⁶⁰

The slow and uneven progression of Quaker courtships and the later development of the autonomous conjugal couple did not take place in isolation. The Quaker community played a large part in ensuring the suitability of marriage partners and of their freedom to marry. William Bancroft was part of such a close-knit Quaker community. His part in that society reveals some of the sources of his actions. Faced with a possible appointment as an elder, William committed his doubts to paper and enclosed a copy to his new correspondent. Acknowledging the beauty and goodness of the society William nevertheless felt that he was not what would be generally called 'a convinced friend'. 'I do not understand (clearly) the "inward light" ', he wrote.⁶¹ This letter to Meeting is interesting in that it spells out William's faith in the Society of Friends as one which above all else was 'an association for mutual care, care and encouragement in doing what we individually or generally believe to be right'. It was the communitarian rather than the mystical which appeared to primarily guide his actions. The prospective elder vowed, however, to use the light he had, 'trying not to assert in word or act that the degree of light is different from what it is'.⁶²

A spiritual dimension was deemed central to Quaker marriage and at times caused anguish to young Friends who were at times unclear as to their true motives in relation to the young women they wished to marry, as we have seen. The letters in many ways reveal more earthly doubts than spiritual shortcomings. Yet all looked to their future partner for help on their spiritual journeys. Perhaps the marriages did result in a spiritual growth for both partners. As parents themselves the way seemed clearer. William Bancroft could clearly advise a niece on the spiritual aspect of marriage, the concern

to 'love God's image in each other' or, as he explained, to love what was good in each other. Helen Priestman Bright Clark, much later the mother-in-law of William Bancroft's daughter Sarah, expressed her views of marriage to her son Roger in 1896. She was concerned that the younger generation might be blurring distinctions of good and evil. There could be no foundation to marriage, she believed, 'where the spirit does not absolutely rule the body'. She feared that Roger's tendency might be 'rather to materialize your spirits than to make your whole being spiritual'. Such a tendency would lead to much unhappiness, '& leave less chance, & as it were material, for a thoroughly happy marriage'.⁶³ Was it that later in life the urge for self-expression could lead to self-transcendence?

In seeking to identify strands of 'Quakerliness' revealed in Quaker courtship and marriage which might be described as leading to modernity I initially attempted to disentangle the Puritan/activist side from the contemplative, mystical dimension in Vann and Eversley's terms. Such a distinction may well prove unproductive. It is tempting to assert that while the 'young' couples encountered here seemd to be struggling with wordly hopes and desires, doubts and hesitations, in mid-life, and as parents, they could convey a sense of a measure of peace achieved, of a realisation that joy proceeded from a recognition of the spiritual, and a subduing of the worldly, a better road to peace than the worldly and temporal. Yet at the same time, all were successfully engaged in wordly pursuits which led to material wealth and status in the community. The spiritual and moral development of marriage partners was an integral and distinctive part of the companionship of Quaker marriages. The link between that development and modernity, between the sexual and 'this-worldly ascetism' remains to be explored, an ongoing and central preoccupation of this project.

Hugh Barbour asserts that an understanding of the inner religious experiences of Friends, and an analysis of the power these inner experiences exert over outward reality, is an important challenge for Quaker historians.⁶⁴ An analysis of Quaker courtships, marriages and reproductive strategies may well illuminate the distinctiveness and power of Quaker spirituality. Equally importantly, such an analysis can contribute to an understanding of 'modern' relations between men and women and the factors leading to fertility decline, broadening demographic explanations to include not only the cultural but the spiritual.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 This paper is part of a larger project, 'Quaker families and the construction of social difference'. I am grateful to my fellow investigators Sandra Holton and Margaret Allen for their collaboration and to the project's research fellow Kerri Allen for expert assistance. The project was funded by the Australian Research Council. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Quaker historians workshop at Haverford College, Pennsylvania, on June 4 and 5, 1996.
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- 33 John Dilworth Abbatt, *A Victorian Quaker courtship: Lancashire love letters of the 1850s*, (William Sessions Ltd., York, England with Friends United Press, Richmond, USA, 1988), 49. All letters cited are from this collection.
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- 40 Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes*, 323 (my emphasis).
- 41 J.A. to M.D., 3 April, 1854 (original emphasis).
- 42 Helen Priestman Bright to William Clark, Clark Archive, Street, Somerset. I am grateful to Sandra Holton for sharing extracts from this correspondence and for discussion on the following points.
- 43 M.D. to J.A., 7 February, 1853.
- 44 M.D. to J.A., 13 June, 1853.
- 45 J.A. to M.D., 8 October, 1853.
- 46 M.D. to J.A., 8 May, 1854.
- 47 J.A. to M.D., 17 September, 1854.
- 48 J.A. to M.D., 20 November, 1854.
- 49 M.D. to J.A., 23 November, 1854.
- 50 Helen Priestman Bright to William Clark, Clark papers, Street. All further extracts are from this collection.
- 51 Sandra Holton, 'From Anti-Slavery to Suffrage Militancy: the Bright circle, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the British Women's Movement', in Caroline Daly and Melanie Nolan (eds), *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, Auckland, (Auckland University Press, 1994).

- 52 See for instance P.E. Hollerbach, 'Power in families, communication and fertility decision-making' in *Working Paper No. 53*, (Centre for Policy Studies, The Population Council, New York, 1980).
- 53 J.A. to M.D., 4 March, 1855. The implied lack of interest was not typical of all the couples here. Helen Priestman Bright, for example, daughter of John Bright, was very politically aware and took a great deal of interest in asking William Clark about the conditions of agricultural workers in this country.
- 54 Pat Quiggan, *No Rising Generation: women and fertility in late nineteenth century Australia*, (Canberra, Department of Demography, 1988), iii.
- 55 Even if women's sexuality is distinguished from that of men by its morally uplifting nature. Lucy Brand, *Banishing the Beast: English feminism and sexual morality, 1885-1914*, (London, Penguin, 1995).
- 56 M.D. to J.A., 11 April, 1853 (original emphasis).
- 57 J.A. to M.D., 14 June, 1853.
- 58 M.D. to J.A., 14 September, 1854.
- 59 H.P.B. to W.C., n.d.
- 60 W.P.C. to Lucy Biddle, 7 August, 1883.
- 61 W.P.B. to E.C., 6 February, 1874.
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 Helen Priestman Clark to Roger Clark in Percy Lovell, *Quaker Inheritance 1871-1961*, (London, Bannisdale Press, 1970), 90-91.
- 64 Hugh Barbour, Introductory address to Quaker historians workshop, Haverford College, June, 1996.