

QUAKER WOMEN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

‘**B**efore you can have equal opportunities, you have to have opportunities.’ These words were used as a slogan by a group of Oxford women dons in 1991, when they were pressing for greater access to professorships for women.

Quaker women in the eighteenth century certainly had a variety of opportunities - that is, ways in which they could serve the Quaker movement, while at the same time enjoying some freedom of action and scope for personal development and for the exercise of any talents they possessed. Such opportunities were not always equal to those available for men.

There were, naturally, some women to whom special circumstances gave a chance to show their capabilities. The name of William Penn’s second wife Hannah Callowhill springs to mind immediately. When William Penn fell ill and was unable to deal with his affairs, near the end of his life, Hannah rose to the occasion and took the chief responsibility for them; and after his death she administered the government of Pennsylvania, with the assistance of James Logan, while her children were minors.¹

ELIZABETH HADDON

William Penn himself influenced the destiny of Elizabeth Haddon. Penn’s visit to the Haddon family in London, when she was five or six, and his talk of America and the Indians there fired her imagination, and she longed to go to America. When John Haddon her father purchased a tract of land in New Jersey and found that he was not free to go and settle there, Elizabeth saw the opening of which she had dreamed, and asked to be allowed to take it over. When her mother asked her if she had reflected well on the difficulties for a young woman to farm unbroken land in a new country, she is said to have replied ‘Young women have governed kingdoms, and surely it requires less wisdom to manage a farm. But let not that trouble us dear mother. He that feedeth the ravens will guide me in the work whereunto He has called me. It is not to cultivate the farm, but to be a friend and physician to the people in that region that I am called.’

During the delay advised by her father, she took practical steps to learn as much as possible about household affairs, agriculture and the cure of common diseases. She went out to New Jersey in 1701, with a woman companion and several servants, and was successful in farming the land, and later in establishing a meeting.

She is credited with having taken the initiative in proposing to John Estaugh, when he came on a religious visit. She had heard him preach at Yearly Meeting at home when she was 11 years old, and had never forgotten him. Longfellow describes the occasion delicately in his poem "Elizabeth" - 'I have received from the Lord a charge to love thee, John Estaugh'. John Estaugh, perhaps taken aback, was obliged to say that as yet he had no light to direct him, and must return to England to complete the work laid upon him there.

Longfellow's evocative lines describe the separation—

Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,
Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;
So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another,
Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence.

It is satisfactory to know that the silence was not for ever. John Estaugh returned, and they were married in 1702. He continued his travels in the ministry until his death in 1742, as well as taking part in the work at Haddonfield.

The pioneering work was Elizabeth's (she died in 1762). The town of Haddonfield paid tribute to her as its founder, when it celebrated in 1963 the 250th anniversary of its foundation.²

TACE SOWLE

In quite a different sphere was the career of Tace Sowle (1666-1749), daughter of the London Quaker printer Andrew Sowle (1628-1695). When her father's sight began to fail she took over the management of the printing business, and soon increased the production of Friends' works. When Tace married Thomas Raylton, the business was carried on in the name of her mother, Jane Sowle, but the management remained in Tace's hands. The family connection continued until Tace Sowle Raylton's death in 1749, although the name of Luke Hinde had also appeared in imprints during the last ten years of her life. In all, the press issued upwards of 300 works in just over 30 years, including George Fox's *Gospel-truth demonstrated* in 1706.³

Tace Sowle was a business woman who did not neglect the financial side of the business. When Bristol Friends left their account for books

supplied unpaid for ten years, she sarcastically reminded them that poorer places had managed to pay at the second if not the first time of asking. It seems that Friends did not always appreciate the service which was provided.⁴

These women were exceptional, and their circumstances were also exceptional.

WOMEN'S MEETINGS

For the ordinary Quaker woman (apart from those gifted in the ministry and able to travel), it was the women's meetings which provided opportunities for service, and gave them a sense of community. Not that the path towards their establishment was always smooth. John Wilkinson and John Story were not alone in seeing no service in women's meetings, except for the care of the poor. The women were not expected to take the initiative and in some places, the brethren dealt firmly with unauthorised actions by the women.

In Bristol, for instance, in 1671, the Men's Meeting appointed a committee of six men to go to the next women's meeting 'to find out on what grounds Margaret Hale and Jone Hily published a women's monthly meeting, and how it was first set up.' Significantly, the committee included William Rogers, a leading figure in the Wilkinson-Story opposition to George Fox. The episode had its comic side, because the committee had to report that the action had been taken following the receipt of a letter of George Fox's, which turned out not to be the one intended for the women, who should have received a paper against vanity and excess. It also transpired that the women did not agree among themselves about the need for a monthly meeting. They were told to defer the matter until they were in unity among themselves and with the men's meeting on the matter. The women had to know their place.⁵

Pearson Thistlethwaite, the historian of the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting has established that a women's Quarterly Meeting of Yorkshire was first held at least as early as September 1677.⁶ Here too, there may have been some difficulties. In the Leeds Women's Preparative Meeting minute book there is a copy of a paper addressed to women's meetings by Katherine Winn, dated 1706, in which she expresses thankfulness to the Lord for his favours since the setting up of the women's meetings 'remembering the great opposition & scofings then met with.'⁷

In some places, the men could not forbear to interfere. In his Presidential address to this Society in 1971, Stephen Morland, speaking of mid-Somerset Friends, noted a minute of 12th month 1706 by which

four men were appointed to 'advise the women friends to be careful in distributing their charity from the meeting to such as walk deserving;' he adds 'Men's guidance as well as God's was available for the women'. His study of the women's monthly meeting minutes for 1761 to 1793 led him to conclude that the range of the women's work was very restricted, and that after time for prayer and answering the Queries, the women 'were able to prepare food for their men'.⁸

It should be remembered however, that minutes do not reveal all the work that went on, particularly in two areas: assistance to poor women Friends, and preliminary enquiries into a couple's clearness of other ties, before they were allowed to lay their intention of marriage before the meeting.

LEEDS WOMEN'S PREPARATIVE MEETING

The Leeds Women's Preparative Meeting minutes begin in 1703, some years after the Men's Meeting minute books which begin in 1692, although a meeting had been established in Leeds many years earlier. The Women's Meeting continued its separate existence until 1904.

There was regular co-operation between the Men's and Women's Meetings, and no apparent 'subordination'. In fact, the men were anxious to be fair. In 1701, the Men's Meeting asked Brighouse Monthly Meeting's advice as to whether the women should have money from the public stock for the service of the women, or whether they should 'make pryvate Collections for publick business, which some think not so equall'. The Monthly Meeting decided that there should be only one collection for the necessities of the poor, 'yet the women are left to their freedom as to giveing a Particular Account to the men how they dispose of what they may see needfull to poor women'.⁹ Some 20 years later, the women did begin to hold collections among themselves; perhaps the need had grown greater.

In the matter of marriages, the Men's Meeting minuted on 27th of 6th month 1701 'Wee having under our consitheration the way or method of publishing the intentions of marrage in the preparative meetings; doe agree that the man first signifie his said intention at the Wooman's Meeting & after amongst the Men'.¹⁰

During the years covered by the first women's minute book (1703 to 1771), some 184 intentions of marriage came before the Women's Meeting, and the majority of couples were given leave to go forward to the Men's Meeting without further ado.

It is interesting to note, as an example of the relationship between the meetings, that in December 1708, when Aaron Atkinson and Joshua

Barber were thinking of visiting Friends in Ireland, they courteously laid their concern before the Women's Meeting as well as before the Men's.¹¹

Naturally enough, those who were in easy circumstances were those who were most active in running the meeting, travelling as representatives, and offering hospitality to visiting ministers.

Among the women who gave outstanding service in Leeds Meeting was Christiana Horner (1670-1751), wife of Benjamin Horner (1668-1740), a Leeds merchant. The Horners' house and stables in Boar Lane, Leeds, welcomed many travelling ministers, including John Griffith, back from America, who described Christiana as 'a truly openhearted woman, a mother in our Israel'.¹² Thomas Story also, was appreciative of her care, when he once arrived with a 'great cold' and was nursed until he recovered.¹³

Christiana Horner was representative to the Women's Monthly Meeting over 100 times, often going in company with Sarah Whitelock (d.1760), the wife of Isaac Whitelock (1667-1737) an oil drawer of Sheepscar, Leeds. There is still a Whitelock Street in Sheepscar. Unusually perhaps, Christiana Horner, and her daughter Tabitha each acted as Treasurer for Leeds Meeting, at various times, after the death of Benjamin Horner in 1740 and of his son Benjamin in 1742.¹⁴

YEARLY MEETING OF WOMEN FRIENDS

Many local women's meetings flourished, but the spirit of Wilkinson and Story lived on, and surfaced from time to time. Nowhere is it more clearly seen than in the curmudgeonly way in which the men staved off the establishment of a properly constituted women's yearly meeting.¹⁵

At York Quarterly Meeting in 1753, which John Pemberton¹⁶ described as 'not a time of great rejoicing', his fellow countryman William Brown of Pennsylvania 'proposed the establishment of a women's yearly meeting as in Pennsylvania'.¹⁷ The proposal was forwarded to Yearly Meeting in London, but deferred. In 1754 it was 'very weightily under the consideration' of Yearly Meeting¹⁸ but nothing happened. The initial arguments by the men were that 'it was a matter of great difficulty', and that there were not enough qualified women but in fact, they adopted the time-honoured delaying tactics so successfully employed by Quintus Fabius Maximus against Hannibal in 217 B.C. The proposal was revived in 1765, but still the men delayed. One man pompously remarked 'I see it—but not now—I behold it, but not nigh.'¹⁹ At last, in 1784, in the face of a deputation of influential

women Friends, reinforced by three American women Friends, including the highly respected Rebecca Jones, the Yearly Meeting grudgingly conceded 'that the meeting of women Friends held annually in London should be set up as the Yearly Meeting of Women Friends held in London' with however, the rider 'yet such Meeting is not so far to be considered a meeting for discipline as to make rules, nor yet alter the present Queries, without the concurrence of this Meeting'. Some men remained unconvinced. We are told that Martha Routh silenced David Barclay, but he 'surrendered very unwillingly'.

After the request had been granted, one of the brethren, who had revised his opinion, was candid about his previous opposition, 'I was no favourer of this measure, well knowing that POWER is a dangerous tool in some hands, who if one gives them an inch, may take an ell...'²⁰ Some men remained chary. Even in 1793 Anna Price, after attending the men's Yearly Meeting to tell them how the women's meeting had been conducted, felt obliged to say 'painful is the jealousy of men Friends'.

It is worth noting that the influence of American friends, both men and women, was an important factor in the decision of 1784. Rebecca Jones continued to take a keen interest in the Women's Yearly Meeting. In a letter to Joseph Williams, written from London in June 1787, she commented 'with solid satisfaction I may inform thee that the newly established women's Yearly Meeting here, increases in weight and experience; their deliberations have been profitable and solemn, and I am strong in the faith, that men Friends will not have cause to repent their *indulgence* in this and other instances.'²¹

The grudging and patronising attitude persisted among some men. It was not until almost the end of the nineteenth century that women were allowed to attend Meeting for Sufferings, and even then, as one of the first women members recalled, 'it was evident that the presence of women was not exactly welcomed by most of the other members, and the clerk impressed upon them that the Meeting was for business and not for speeches'.²²

THE MINISTRY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The men may have dragged their feet sometimes, and in some places, on the matter of women's meetings for business. They could not justify doing so when it was a matter of spiritual equality between the sexes. Women had played an important part in the first publication of the Quaker message. By the early 1700s they could assume that they had a right to preach; at the same time they were warned against seeking too

much of the limelight; the men were not prepared to take second place. The Morning Meeting had been candid about it:

This meeting finding that it is a hurt to Truth for women Friends to take up too much time, as some do, in our public meetings, when several public and serviceable men Friends are present and are by them prevented in their serving, it's therefore advised that the women Friends should be tenderly cautioned against taking up too much time in our mixed public meetings.²³

Ann Audland was held up as an example to her sex - 'it was rare for her to preach in large meetings, where she knew there were brethren qualified for the service of such meetings'.²⁴ Loquacious women were not encouraged. There are many instances in the volumes of *Piety Promoted* of women being highly praised for not exceeding the limits of their gifts, and for knowing when to stop.

To speak in meeting was a great liberation for many women, even when the initial call to the service caused great stress and anxiety. There was no shortage of women ministers, though in the first part of the century they were not so numerous as the men. Pearson Thistlethwaite's table of Yorkshire ministers deceased shows that between 1701 and 1750 there were 83 women 'ministers deceased' and 134 men; between 1751 and 1800 the numbers were more nearly equal, with 61 women and 67 men.²⁵

Outside the Society women preachers tended to be looked on as objects of curiosity, sometimes of ridicule. Dr. Johnson's dictum, pronounced in 1763, reflected a widespread attitude—'Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on its hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all'. Publicity of an undesirable kind was the last thing Friends desired. The years of hostility and persecution had left their mark, and Friends did not wish, in the civil sphere, to draw attention to themselves, except as loyal, peaceable citizens.

One of the drawbacks of individual inspiration was that it could lead to extravagant behaviour. Friends still had a message to give to the world, but it was more acceptable if it was not reinforced by sackcloth and ashes, lighted candles or other visual aids. Unfortunately, there continued to be some ministry which was undesirable and unacceptable, both from men and women, which was difficult to control. There was an element of truth in what the old Quaker Andrew Pitt (c.1675-1736) is said to have told Voltaire, that they were obliged sometimes to suffer nonsense, 'because no one knows, when a man rises up to hold forth, whether he will be mov'd by the spirit or by foolishness'. Whether he really added that two or three of the women were often inspired to speak at one and the same time, is difficult to believe.²⁶

In 1702 Leeds Friends suffered from troublesome behaviour on the part of Elizabeth Merry (née Benson), who refused to listen to advice, but 'fell into extravagant reflections & uncomly speeches'. Brighthouse Monthly Meeting was asked for help.²⁷ A visit from two weighty men silenced her - for a time; but when she removed to York about 1704, York Friends had to deal with her for speaking too much in meeting, and then found themselves criticized by the Quarterly Meeting for not giving relief to her and her children, because they did not like her ministry.²⁸ Bristol Friends had trouble of a more public nature. Sarah Dickson and Grace Smythies (who with their husbands and some others had set up a separate meeting of their own and carried it on for some years) began to go about in 1718 'preaching and praying in our publick assemblys, in which they have sometimes uttered indecent reflections on their Friends &c. Brethren, not becoming the meekness and gentleness of the spirit of Christ'. All that Friends could do was to warn other meetings against them.²⁹

There were some who meant well, but did not grasp the essence of the Quaker message. Such was Diana Caroline, wife of Thomas Hopwood, a tallow chandler of Leeds. She was brought up in the Church of England, went among the Presbyterians and then joined the Methodists. Dissatisfied with all, she began to attend Quaker meetings and insisted on speaking in meeting. When she applied for membership, Brighthouse Monthly Meeting stalled for some time, but eventually accepted her (in August 1778), at the same time warning her that if she spoke 'she must be careful to do it from a right call'. From time to time she was told that her ministry was not acceptable, and she complained of 'the great insensibility and dead formality of the meetings'. She seems to have been one of those unquiet souls who never find what they are seeking, but she was able to write down her experiences, which were published after her death. She remained a Friend, and when she died in 1799 was buried in the Friends' Burial Ground in Meadow Lane, Leeds.³⁰

The case of May Drummond (c.1710-1772) from Edinburgh, provided a cautionary tale. She commanded attention in London for her preaching, and had an interview with the Queen. Some anonymous verses, written in 1736 praise her 'soft persuasion', at the same time hinting that she worked on the emotions of her audience.

While with every theme the maid complies
She bids alternate passions fall and rise.

William Cookworthy, with whom she travelled in the west country, felt that there was something 'a little theatrical' in the management and tone of her voice sometimes, and that her style was rather too learned, though he admired her quick lively apprehension. Sadly, her preaching proved unacceptable to Edinburgh Friends: she was discouraged from preaching, and faded into insignificance. She died in 1772.³¹

Unwanted ministry, however, came only from a few. Testimonies and obituaries give evidence of ministry that was not only acceptable but warmly welcomed.

TRAVELLING IN THE MINISTRY

Many women were content to preach only in their own meetings. It was the bolder spirits who saw opportunities both for some freedom of movement, and for spreading the gospel message more widely. A divine call was the mainspring of a woman's concern to travel in the ministry, but it could also be accompanied by a sense of liberation and the prospect of freedom and semi-independence. Such freedom, of course, was available mainly to the better-off. Those with a Quaker upbringing did not have to justify themselves. Women coming newly to Friends could encounter disapproval and opposition from parents or husband. Mary Stokes (afterwards Mary Dudley, 1750-1823), who was connected with the Methodists, met with opposition from her mother, as well as strong disapprobation from John Wesley, when she was first drawn to Friends, though her mother was eventually reconciled, after hearing Mary speak at a meeting.³²

Elizabeth Ashbridge (1713-1755), who was born at Middlewich in Cheshire and emigrated to America in 1732, made trial of other churches before being drawn to Friends. When she first heard a woman speak in meeting (in Boston), she was scornful as well as surprised - 'I looked on her with pity for her ignorance (as I thought), and with contempt of her practice', and vowed that if she ever turned Quaker, she would never be a preacher. Later on, she joined Friends, and aroused great anger in her second husband. He was furious when she used the word *thee* to him; and even more annoyed to think of her speaking in public. 'I'd go to meeting', he said, 'only I am afraid I shall hear your clack, which I cannot bear'.

After the death of her husband, who had joined the army and ended up in Chelsea Hospital in London, she kept a school and also 'travelled considerably in the service of truth'. Her third husband, Aaron Ashbridge, whom she married at Burlington, West Jersey, in 1746, gave her encouragement in her concern to visit Friends' meetings in England

and Ireland. She did not return home, but fell ill and died in Ireland on 16th of 5th month 1755.³³

The length of time which elapsed between speaking in the local meeting and embarking on public ministry varied a great deal. Lydia Lancaster would have gained the approval of Samuel Bownas, who advised a gradual beginning 'be not over forward to visit Friends abroad'—since she nurtured her concern to engage in the service for some ten years, 'growing in wisdom and experience' before she came forth 'in a living powerful testimony'. Catherine Payton (1727-1794), on the other hand, had no hesitations—she appeared 'in supplication' in Dudley Meeting in 1748, and entered on her travels in the following year.³⁴

Rufus Jones's description of the itinerant ministers as 'speaking generally, persons of radiant and saintly life' hardly gives a fair idea of the diversity of character and upbringing among the ministers; and his claim that 'these itinerant ministers were without question the makers and builders of the Society of Friends during the period now under review' [that is, the later period] fails to give sufficient credit to those who stayed at home and kept up the meetings for worship and carried on the business.³⁵ The support which a minister could give to her own meeting might be lessened by frequent absences.

There was a good deal of travelling in the eighteenth century. Knaresborough Monthly Meeting, for instance, between 1719 and 1804 issued 54 certificates for travelling Friends—11 men and 10 women, about half a dozen of them making several journeys.³⁶ Many of these travellers left no memorials. Some published their journals or were the subject of memoirs, which give an insight into the character and outlook of the travellers.

In the early years of the century there were several women in Leeds Meeting who travelled in the ministry. Little is known of Edna Walker³⁷ and her companion Eleanor Walker.³⁸ Rebecca Turner (d.1756), later the wife of John Cowell, a clothier of Quarry Hill, Leeds, visited almost every meeting in England and Wales as well as taking part in pastoral visits in the Leeds area; her testimony was described as 'plain, sound and informing'.³⁹

A more prominent figure was Tabitha Horner, daughter of Benjamin and Christiana Horner of Leeds. Born in 1695, she first entered into the work of the ministry in 1722; and between 1724 and 1745 she visited Scotland, Wales and Ireland, as well as many parts of England. At home, she took part in family visits, and was frequently a representative to the monthly meeting. She was among Dr. John Fothergill's most valued correspondents: 'thy letters often do me good', he wrote to her in 1746,

and he acknowledged feelingly that there were none besides herself and Benjamin Kidd to whom he could unbosom himself 'with the utmost freedom'. He treated her as an equal. When she died, in February 1747, the Testimony drawn up by Brighthouse Monthly Meeting commended her as 'a Workwoman that needed not to be ashamed'.⁴⁰

ANN MERCY BELL

In 1747, the year when Tabitha Horner died, another Yorkshirewoman, Ann Mercy Bell⁴¹ of York, set out on the first of her journeys in the ministry, after labours mostly at home or in places nearby.

In the York Quarterly Meeting archives, now housed in the Brotherton Library in the University of Leeds, there is a bound volume of the papers of Ann Mercy Bell - journals of her travels in the ministry, letters to her husband, correspondence with Friends and others, and a copy of a printed account of her visit to London in 1753, by Joseph Phipps.⁴²

Ann Mercy was a Londoner, born about 1706, daughter of Martin and Ann Ellwood. She was educated at the newly-established Friends' School and Workhouse at Clerkenwell, and continued there as a schoolmistress for some years afterwards, teaching the children to read and write and keep accounts. Her writings do not show her as proficient in spelling. She was married on 29 April 1731 at Ratcliff to Nathaniel Bell of York (1703-1778). At that time Nathaniel was a schoolmaster, but in 1739 he set up as a bookseller in Pavement, York.⁴³ There were six children of the marriage, born between 1732 and 1742, but only two lived to grow up - Nathaniel junior (born in 1736) and Rachel (born in 1740).

The 1747 journey, to visit Friends in Lincolnshire, and to take some meetings on the way to London, began on 1st May and Mercy Bell returned her certificate to York Monthly Meeting in October. On this journey, Ann Mercy Bell seems to be feeling her way a little, at times diffident, even sometimes despondent. She felt herself given strength when she and her companion found groups of people 'sober, very attentive to hear the Gospel preached through the weaker vessel'.⁴⁴ On later journeys she was more confident, and we do not hear much about "Weaker Vessels" or "Meaner Instruments".

In 1752 Mercy Bell undertook a more extensive and more testing journey to pay a religious visit to Friends and others in London, Bristol and the west of England. Her companion at the beginning was Sarah Marsden (1707-1762), wife of Caleb Marsden of Highflatts, who had begun her ministry in 1749; and there were several others in the party,

including the blind Friend David Coulsen (1713-1765). Mercy Bell left a detailed account of the events of each day, though the chronology is not always clear.⁴⁵ The London visit, which took place in 1753, is covered in a printed account by Joseph Phipps.⁴⁶ These travels provided many opportunities to expound and explain the Quaker message to the world in general, in addition to the duty of keeping Friends up to the mark.

It would not be possible to follow every step of the minister's way, but there are aspects of Mercy Bell's travels in 1752 and 1753 which illustrate both the opportunities afforded, and the difficulties which might be encountered. To many ordinary citizens, a public meeting, especially when a woman was preaching, was a kind of show or entertainment. Curiosity was excited, and the woman preacher often had to face unseemly laughter and ridicule. They were to some extent prepared for it. Ann Mercy Bell frequently comments that 'the neighbours behaved as well as could be expected'. When she spoke in the market place in Bristol, some were anxious to listen, others were heard to say 'What doeth the woman do preaching here?'⁴⁷

Samuel Neale (1729-1792) records a public meeting in the market place at Exeter in January 1753 when he accompanied Mercy and her companion Phoebe Cartwright, and they spent about three hours proceeding through the streets, warning people to repent, 'regardless of the contempt and mocking of the profane'.⁴⁸ Sometimes there would be a snub. Members of the town council at Exeter were approached, and some agreed to receive the two ministers; but some would not admit them, saying that 'they had preaching and praying enuff to carry them to heaven'.⁴⁹

Some priests were friendly; others not so. At Tiverton, where no Friends resided, three meetings were held. The first was disturbed by an 'unruly priest' who got up to preach at the same time as our ministers; so they left him to it, but were able to have a 'pretty large opportunity' the next day, when the priest was not there.⁵⁰ Another 'unsteady priest' at Bath attended a meeting in the Town Hall; he had a newspaper with him and was reading it loudly so as to disturb the people around him, 'which he intended as much as he could by setting of them a laughing'. The sober part of the company cried shame on the priest for his unbecoming behaviour.⁵¹ At Liskeard the parson of the town was prepared to listen to the two women, and did so 'pretty patiently', though he would not believe that their visit was a necessity laid upon them by the holy spirit. They had a discussion with him about the spirit of grace and the manner of its working, until the parson, finding himself at a loss in the argument, said it was just prayer time or he would have brought 'many texts out of scripture to convince me of my mistaken notions'.⁵²

There were many such challenges to Mercy Bell's ability to give a clear explanation of the Quaker position. At Wilton, after a large and crowded meeting in the Town Hall, a magistrate said 'if ever the Gospel was preached it was preached that evening', and a man who 'had entertained an Opinion we denied the Scriptures' seemed to be convinced to the contrary, after she had treated 'a pretty deal upon them'.⁵³

Sometimes physical courage was called for. Ann Mercy Bell would not overlook sights of which she could not approve. At Looe in 1752, on the way to an evening meeting appointed for Susannah Morris (1682-1755) and Elinor Pasmore, she passed a stage, with an actor 'in full career' making sport for his hearers, 'augmenting vanity and folly almost to madness'. Going through the crowd, Mercy could not forbear saying 'Oh abominable'. Sitting in meeting, she gradually realised that she had to go out and warn the people, though it seemed hard. She went out, with her companion and a man Friend, and heard a woman 'laughing in an extreme manner at the Merry Man's takeing the Sacred Name at large'. Standing on something so as to be heard, she cried out three times 'Oh unthinking Multitude', warning them to repent and amend their ways, because the Lord was angry and would bring his judgement on the workers of iniquity. To her satisfaction, some people heard with attention, and followed her into the meeting, where Susannah Morris was speaking; and Elinor Pasmore prayed for those who were yet in vanity and folly.⁵⁴

A different encounter near 'Collham' [St. Columb] in Cornwall might have proved dangerous. Going out of the town, the party passed a group of men 'going to bait a bull'. Ann Mercy could not let that pass, and turned back and spoke what was in her mind. Some of the men seemed desirous to hear what she said, others were concerned to go on with their sport. However, having spoken, she felt at ease and was able to proceed to Wadebridge, where they lodged with Edward Fox.⁵⁵

In the summer of 1753 Ann Mercy Bell spent some time in London. Joseph Phipps, who accompanied her in her peregrinations round the metropolis, kept an account of events as they occurred, and had it printed in 1754. The title of the pamphlet illustrates his sense of the unusual nature of the ministerial activities, *A summary account of the extraordinary visit to this metropolis, by the ministry of Ann Mercy Bell*. The visit appears to have caused a stir, and was to have repercussions later. It seems that some Friends were not quite happy about it. She wrote to Nathaniel on 21st September to allay his fears that 'Frds was not satisfied that I should appear', assuring him that she had consulted some Friends, who told her that it would not be considered out of the unity of the body.⁵⁶

On 5th August 1753, accompanied by several Friends, she set out along Rosemary Lane, at the end of Red Lion Street, where there were many 'loitering people' to whom she preached the necessity of repentance and amendment, sometimes walking, sometimes standing a few minutes, 'recommending the grace of God, in mercy extended', so that tears streamed down the faces of some of her hearers, and some were smiting their breasts.⁵⁷

The stay in London lasted until the beginning of December, and except when ill health obliged her to rest, she continued her practice of walking about the streets, preaching as she went, perhaps stopping in some half dozen places to address those who followed her about. It was by force of personality that a woman preacher could turn mockery into respectful attention. 'Some' says Joseph Phipps, 'who before were light and sportive, and owned they had followed us on purpose to disturb us, were reduced to seriousness and solidity.'⁵⁸

She was not afraid to preach in the great yard of the Fleet Prison, where there were many prisoners, 'all pretty well, the circumstances of things considered.'⁵⁹ There could be hazards in the streets. Once, something was thrown at her, which narrowly missed her head; the offending party was seized by the crowd, and only released by the mediation of her friends.⁶⁰ On another occasion, 'a person in liquor, endeavoured to interrupt her by firing a gun close to the crowd, which startled and disturbed many'; but she was soon able to continue speaking, and the people soon became tolerably composed again.⁶¹

Joseph Phipps's account is in the nature of an Apologia. He acknowledged that the unusual nature of the concern 'at this time of day' rendered him somewhat dubious; but he and other Friends had gone into the affair 'in tenderness, with caution, and in dread' and had become satisfied that the concern was genuine.⁶² After the strain of the London visit Ann Mercy Bell was at home for a time, and took her part in the work of the York Women's Preparative Meeting.

After a few years, however, she was ready to be off again. She had shown herself unpredictable, and when she proposed another visit to London in 1758, Yorkshire Friends were alarmed. It seems that they had not been quite happy about her previous visit to London; possibly there had been too much extempore preaching and publicity. Also, it appears that she had earlier made efforts to gain an audience with the King. In response to her request for a certificate, York Monthly Meeting, held at Selby on 3rd May, issued a certificate addressed to Friends of the city of London and the county of Kent, expressing unity with her concern, but with a caution as to her proceedings:

But Remembering the Manner of her last Visit, she was desired to be Plain and Open with Us, whether she apprehended any Concern to a certain great Person, or to appear in a publick manner as she did then, and her Reply leaving Us in some Uncertainty; We advise her, not to proceed in either case without laying her Concern before the Meeting of Ministers and Elders in London, for that Meeting's Advice, Approbation and Assistance. And we hereby Signify that what was our Advice to her in person, Remains to be our Mind and advice now, wherein we doubt not of her Compliance, for the Preservation of Unity & good Order in the Society and in giving no example nor Precedent to the Contrary.⁶³

The Morning Meeting weightily considered the proposition, and at its meeting on 3rd July, decided to recommend that Mercy Bell should lay her concern before Meeting for Sufferings.⁶⁴ I have not found any record in the minutes of Meeting for Sufferings to show that she applied to that meeting.

The religious visit to Kent had taken place in June. In August she was writing from Southwark to a Friend, possibly Richard Partridge (1682?-1759), asking for his interest with some nobleman to procure an interview with the King. Nothing happened.⁶⁵ Things had changed since the free and easy days when Elizabeth Hooton had been able to follow Charles II to the tennis court or into the Park, until she got some response.⁶⁶

It is true that May Drummond had in 1735 a 'gracious opportunity to declare her convincement' to Queen Caroline. Possibly the Queen had some curiosity to see a noted young woman preacher.⁶⁷

Ann Mercy Bell was still in London in November 1758, and wrote to Nathaniel expressing her disappointment at not being granted a private interview with the Princess Amelia, daughter of George II, and because the King was indisposed her plans looked 'dark and obscure'. Friends had not been as helpful as she had hoped—'I am now sorry frds was Backward in giveing me Liberty & after, so slow in assistance, but as time past cant be Recaled, I hope no Oppertunity hereafter shall be let slip till I find myself free to Return to my dear Husband and children.'⁶⁸ She does not record whether she saw the King; but she did not return the certificate to York Monthly Meeting until April 1759.⁶⁹

Meanwhile it is possible that the young Bells, Nathaniel and Rachel may have been amusing themselves more frivolously than some Friends approved. In July 1758 Joseph Oxley (d.1773) a solid minister from Norwich, wrote to them after a visit to York, expressing his concern for their good, begging them to be cautious, and prudent in their choice of company, since the eyes of the world were on ministers and their families, and because 'there is a Spirit in some that Rejoyces in the miscarriage of the Lords people'.⁷⁰

MARY RICKABY

Doubts about a minister's proceedings may have been unusual, but were not unknown, as was shown in the case of Mary Rickaby (d.1752), widow of Thomas Rickaby (d.1742), weaver, of Ampleforth. Mary Rickaby arrived in London in 1747 with a certificate from Thirsk Monthly Meeting.⁷¹ She was still there in November 1750, when the Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders was perturbed by some remarks which she made, 'which we apprehend reflected on the ministry'.⁷² She was more than once advised to go home, but still she lingered. Then, on 29 July 1751 there came a complaint from some Friends about her public appearance in Gracechurch Street Meeting, 'to the great dissatisfaction of Friends, both as to matter and manner of delivery'.⁷³ A committee of four men visited her, but got no satisfaction.⁷⁴ At last, early in 1752 the Morning Meeting drew up a letter for Thirsk Monthly Meeting, expressing Friends' uneasiness at her long stay in the city, and regretting that her ministry was not always sound. The letter was sent to Roger Shackleton in York, to be transmitted to Thirsk Monthly Meeting.⁷⁵

Thirsk Monthly Meeting appointed a committee of seven; and Yorkshire Meeting of Ministers and Elders appointed a committee to advise Thirsk.⁷⁶ But Mary Rickaby never returned to Yorkshire. She died in London on 20th of 7th month 1752 and was buried at Bunhill Fields.⁷⁷

It may well be that Mary Rickaby had been in failing health, both mentally and physically for some time. Perhaps a visit from a few sympathetic women might have been more appropriate than committees of weighty men.

Unlike Mary Rickaby, Ann Mercy Bell did go home; but there were to be further constraints on her ministerial plans. In September 1770 she laid before York Monthly Meeting her concern to visit some meetings in Yorkshire and in the county of Durham. The meeting deferred the matter for further consideration; October Monthly Meeting was again asked for a certificate, 'but as divers Friends dont appear satisfied with her present Concern, William Morley and Thomas Doeg are appointed to inform her, that this Meeting requests she will endeavour to be easy to defer it.' This polite request revealed no reason for the withholding of a certificate, but York Friends may have felt that it was unsuitable for Ann Mercy Bell to preach outside Yorkshire after the scandal concerning young Nathaniel Bell and Judith Heron.⁷⁸

NATHANIEL BELL, JUNIOR AND JUDITH HERON

Judith Heron was a member of Halifax Meeting.⁷⁹ She removed to York early in 1767, but the certificate of transfer from Brighthouse Monthly Meeting was delayed for some time because 'the Friends of Halifax seem to be under much dissatisfaction concerning her present situation'. It appears that she was already a member of the Bell household.⁸⁰ In May and June 1767 Nathaniel Bell junior and Judith Heron laid their proposals of marriage before York Monthly Meeting and were given leave to proceed.⁸¹ Then came an unaccountable delay; at first Nathaniel said that there were some private difficulties, which a few weeks might remove; the delay continued; Judith said that the 'stop' was not on her side. York Friends were uneasy because the couple were living together in Nathaniel Bell senior's house, and the Quarterly Meeting was asked for assistance.⁸² A committee was appointed by the Quarterly Meeting to visit the two Nathaniels and express the disquiet of Friends. Judith was ordered to go and live elsewhere, but Nathaniel junior objected strongly, apparently supported by his father.⁸³ Nathaniel junior was disowned in November,⁸⁴ and his father was removed from the office of elder, and was told to make 'reasonable satisfaction' to Judith by paying her £100.⁸⁵

Early in 1768 however, he was discharged from his obligation, when it was found that the young couple had made a clandestine marriage at Clifford Meeting House near Tadcaster, with two York Friends, John Atkinson and William Shackleton as witnesses.⁸⁶ Judith was disowned,⁸⁷ as were the two witnesses (though John Atkinson later apologized and was reinstated).⁸⁸ York Monthly Meeting sent some Friends to visit the parents, 'concerning their son & Judith Heron's living together in their House', and also to enquire how far they were clear of countenancing or encouraging the irregular marriage.⁸⁹ In a letter of 30 June 1768 to the Monthly Meeting, Nathaniel Bell senior attributed some part of his actions to his own infirmities and the fact that 'parental affection is liable to bias the judgment'; he did not wholly excuse himself, but said that he had been to blame and was sorry. In August he resigned as an overseer.⁹⁰ Nathaniel junior eventually acknowledged the error of his ways and was reinstated (1774);⁹¹ Judith did not apply to be reinstated.

It is perhaps little wonder, therefore, that York Friends were not anxious for Ann Mercy Bell to appear outside the county as a preacher. She continued to preach locally, and kept herself up to date by borrowing one of the six copies of Samuel Bownas's *Advice to ministers and elders* purchased by York Monthly Meeting Ministers and Elders in 1768.⁹²

Among those who heard her preach was an eccentric Yorkshireman, Cornelius Cayley (1729-1780?),⁹³ who wrote her a letter in December 1771, intended to give encouragement. The letter begins with some rambling remarks about the new Jerusalem, and goes on to address her as 'Dear Mercy Bell my sister', 'Take courage! Thou has been beat and grieved by many—it shall all be made up. Go on and prosper. Preach Jesus in the warmth of thy heart, & fear not...'⁹⁴ He felt that he knew something about preaching. In his earlier years he had been a clerk in the Treasury of Augusta, widow of Frederick, Prince of Wales, but lost his place when he took to travelling about and preaching. After much travel, he settled 'near Leeds' and began to feel 'drawings towards Friends'. In February 1771 he applied for membership to Brighthouse Monthly Meeting.⁹⁵ The committee appointed to talk to him took some time to consider the application, and consulted Samuel Fothergill, who expressed a few doubts '... my jealousy arises from the activity of distinguished *self*, which loves the splendid pleasant picture'. Fothergill hoped that Friends would be tender to him, but firm and steady, 'for this will be beneficial to him if he ever come in *at the right door*'.⁹⁶ Cornelius Cayley never did come in *at the right door*. At Brighthouse Monthly Meeting in October 1771, Samuel Briscoe reported that Cayley had 'left off attending our Meetings some time since', and the application was dropped.⁹⁷ Mercy Bell may not have been greatly helped by the championship of such an unreliable person, but she kept his letter.

Towards the end of her life, Ann Mercy Bell was subject to asthma and other infirmities; but she was still concerned for the moral welfare of her fellow citizens, and was pained to see men of high rank, and their servants going to the races in York. On one occasion, she stood on a chair outside her house in Pavement, attended by her husband and son, and a few friends, and addressed the crowds passing the house on their way to Knavesmire. It is recorded that a large multitude collected, and some were convinced by her words, and said they would not go to the racecourse again.⁹⁸

Ann Mercy Bell died on 30th December 1775. A Testimony drawn up by York Monthly Meeting on 17th March 1776 (and later read and approved in the Men's and Women's Quarterly Meetings at York on 27th and 28th March 1776) commended her ministerial labours and travels, and described her as an 'affectionate Wife, tender Parent, kind Neighbour'. The troubles of earlier days were not mentioned.⁹⁹

MARY PEISLEY AND CATHERINE PAYTON

There is no hint that Ann Mercy Bell ever thought of going to America. That was left to younger women, without demanding family ties. At home in York, Mercy Bell received a letter from Edward Stabler, a York Friend who had recently settled in Pennsylvania. The letter was dated from Philadelphia, 18th of 10th month 1754, and acknowledged Mercy's letter of 27th November 1753.¹⁰⁰ He gave news of English Friends in America, and reported that Mary Peisley (1717-1757)¹⁰¹ and Catherine Payton (1727-94)¹⁰² had left the city that morning, in good health, after their visits to South and North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland, New England, Long Island and Rhode Island. He hoped their labours of love would not be without some good effort.

The young women had become friends when Catherine Payton visited Ireland, and had felt that they could be companions in a religious visit to America. It is to be feared that their work was not always carried out in a loving and charitable spirit. On first landing at Charlestown (Charleston, S. Carolina), they were highly critical of Friends there. 'It seems like a city of refuge for the disjointed members of our society', Mary Peisley wrote. They had 'very close work' in paying religious visits to everyone professing with Friends, with results which would not be welcomed today. Mary Peisley acknowledged 'I understand we have driven several from the meeting, who could not bear sound doctrine... I say amen to those leaving the profession, who are a scandal to it'. Many of her subsequent comments, as they went about the country, are in a similar uncompromising vein, as they found evidence of 'an unlawful familiarity with the world'.¹⁰³

Catherine Payton and Mary Peisley travelled together in difficult wilderness country, sharing many trials and dangers. They had to encounter cold and damp and frosty weather, swollen rivers, dangerous ferries, wild animals in the woods where they were forced sometimes to camp, even the possibility of meeting Indians. One cannot but admire their courage. At length, however, on the way to Long Island from Oblong, 'a cloud came over our spirits', and they felt incapacitated for service, until after a rest, it was made plain to them that they must separate, 'for the gospel's sake'. It is fairly clear that neither of them could stand competition. Catherine wrote, 'I had long seen it would be so, and some of our Friends before we left Europe expected, and rather pressed it, fearing that our service would be less to the church by our keeping together, than if we separated'.¹⁰⁴

Mary Peisley, for her part, felt that she had to give way to her younger companion—'I had been at times much straitened in my service

by preferring her and her gift'.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, Mary proceeded towards Philadelphia, where Catherine joined her for a time, in order to show Friends 'that our separation was not occasioned by any difference betwixt us, or other improper cause or motive...'¹⁰⁶

They did travel together on several subsequent occasions, and were in Philadelphia in March 1755, when war with French colonists seemed imminent. They endeavoured several times to persuade Quaker members of the Assembly to support Friends' peace testimony, and were accused of intruding into matters foreign to their proper business, and of being partly to blame for the continuation of calamities in the province. Catherine Payton maintained that she and her companion were clear of improperly meddling with the affairs of government, but their interference was unlikely to be welcome.¹⁰⁷ It was left for the more influential Samuel Fothergill to devote some months to patient negotiations to help the Friends concerned to come to a decision to withdraw from the Assembly.¹⁰⁸

Catherine Payton and Mary Peisley arrived home in 1756, after an absence of three years. Sadly, Mary, who had been ill more than once in America, died early in 1757, only a few days after her marriage to Samuel Neale.

Catherine had reasonably good health, plenty of confidence, and stamina. Even falls from her horse did not daunt her. She was well educated, the family was comfortably off, and there were servants to do the work of the home. There was a certain element of adventurousness in her character, though she was at pains to say that she always tried to accomplish her duties in as short a time as possible, in order not 'to afford censure to such, as being unacquainted with the humbling weight of the service, may conclude that we travel for pleasure, or to gratify a roving or curious disposition'.¹⁰⁹ Travelling in the ministry became, for her, a way of life, almost a career. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way of 'the work'. Her elderly mother, and an ailing brother were frequently left to the care of Providence. Fortunately, Providence usually obliged. She could be ruthless. Even when her sister's children had the smallpox, and the unmarried sister went to look after them, Catherine did not contemplate staying at home.¹¹⁰

When the second sister also married, Catherine, returning home, as she hoped for a rest from her ministerial labours, was not best pleased when she had to undertake some domestic responsibilities.¹¹¹

When William Phillips (d.1785), a widower with two grown up sons, first appeared on the scene as a possible husband (though they had been acquainted for many years), Catherine's first thought was not whether she would be a helpmeet for him, but whether he would be so to her, or

if he would be an obstacle to her ministerial labours. Fortunately, he was ready to support her service, though he had no share in it.¹¹² After their marriage in 1772, and removal to Cornwall, Catherine continued to travel and attend meetings, and was particularly concerned with the establishment of women's meetings in Cornwall.¹¹³ She never spared herself in her efforts to promote Truth and uphold the discipline, but there was a less endearing side to her character. Her lack of humility was noted by several contemporaries, including James Jenkins (who admittedly was often sharp in his comments). He encountered her in 1778 at a Western Circular Yearly Meeting at Launceston - 'I recollect that Catherine Phillips, like a great Autocratrix, sometimes governed, and sometimes, without succeeding, attempted to govern, this Assembly. To an austerity of conduct that had much the appearance of domination, she added a sourness of temper that disgraced the woman, and assumed an overbearance, which (at least I thought) an humbler minister of the Gospel could not assume'.¹¹⁴

She may have mellowed a little, for, in London in 1784, Rebecca Jones commented, 'Dear Catherine Phillips labours indefatigably; seldom does she sit a meeting through in silence... She is improved in humility, tenderness and sympathy. She has shown much love to *us poor little Americans*'.¹¹⁵ Catherine's labours continued until 'rheumatic gout' prevented her from moving far. In 1786 Rebecca Jones wrote to Christiana Hustler that Catherine Phillips was in a declining state of health, and that her constant companion Lydia Hawksworth (d.1788) (her aid de camp, as Rebecca Jones put it) was 'almost worn down with attending her'.¹¹⁶ It seems that her demanding nature had not changed. She died after a long illness in 1794.

REBECCA JONES

Rebecca Jones of Philadelphia was one who was influenced by the preaching in America of Catherine Payton and Mary Peisley. She was much pleased with 'divers testimonies' from the young women, and after a time began to attend meetings and to feel drawn towards Friends. Not for some years did she stand up in an evening meeting 'in great fear and trembling' and 'expressed a few sentences very brokenly'. There was a little opposition from her mother, but that soon gave way. After her mother's death, she was free to travel. Money was no problem. The school which she set up with her friend Hannah Cathrall was soon flourishing and they were 'blest with a sufficiency to live comfortably'.¹¹⁷ Rebecca Jones became a highly respected minister, both at home in America,

and in this country. She was welcomed for her gentleness, ease and grace, and the genuineness of the gospel message which she preached.¹¹⁸

In her religious visit to England, which began in 1784,¹¹⁹ she found a worthy companion in Christiana Hustler (d. 1811),¹²⁰ wife of John Hustler, of Undercliffe House, Bradford. They met at Yearly Meeting. Christiana offered herself as a companion, and the two women travelled hundreds of miles together. Not the least of the blessings which the ministers, both men and women received were the opportunities to form lasting friendships with people of different backgrounds. Rebecca Jones and Christiana Hustler became friends for life, and the friendship extended to Christiana's daughter Sarah (1765-1817) to whom Rebecca Jones wrote many loving and encouraging letters. In after years, Rebecca said of Christiana Hustler, 'I have loved her as my own soul'.¹²¹ The stay in England brought many other Friends. Even at the beginning of her visit, she wrote, in a letter to Henry Drinker, 'I love Yorkshire; many Friends in it are near to my very life'.¹²²

It is noteworthy that among the ministers of the time, both in this country and in America, there was a network of friendship and fellowship, as among equals, with no hint of patronage on the part of the men. Rebecca Jones's prestige as a minister, as well as her tact and tolerance, played a part in enabling her and some of her fellow-countrywomen to give active (and finally successful) support to English women Friends in their campaign for a properly constituted women's yearly meeting. The four years which she spent in this country were a blessing to English Friends.

CHARITY COOK

Quite different in character and background was another minister from America, Charity Cook (1745-1822), described by her biographer, Algie I. Newlyn, as 'a liberated woman'.¹²³ As new settlements sprang up on the frontiers in America, men and women worked alongside each other, building houses, planting crops, and caring for livestock, and their roles could sometimes be interchangeable. Charity Wright grew up in the back country of the South, within a group which included several Quaker women ministers. She married Isaac Cook about 1762, and they had 11 children. She began her work in the gospel ministry in the early years of the revolutionary war, when Friends in the meetings she visited were divided. She was recorded a minister in 1773 by Bush River Monthly Meeting, South Carolina, and her travels in North and South Carolina did much to strengthen the scattered meetings there. Meanwhile Isaac Cook managed the farm and brought up the family.

Charity Cook came to England on a ministerial visit in 1797, and immediately scandalised Friends in London by strolling round the town with a pipe in her mouth.¹²⁴ She was blunt of speech and sometimes gave offence. She lacked the wisdom of Rebecca Jones, who wrote to John Pemberton in June 1784, shortly after her arrival in this country, 'the little opportunity I have had among Friends here, has furnished me already with a prospect of the need of steady circumspection and holy fear, to step along rightly and safely amongst the wise and great in this world'.¹²⁵

Charity Cook was not always circumspect. She had the temerity to speak against the style of hats worn by some men in London Yearly Meeting;¹²⁶ furthermore, when she and her companion Mary Swett of New Jersey were in Bristol in 1800, they appeared 'not quite to general satisfaction', according to a Bristol Friend, Samuel Dyer, who recorded in his diary that Charity, in a first day morning meeting, had spoken on equality, and 'how hardly our servants were used'. 'Is it worthwhile?' he asked himself, 'to come from America to inculcate principles of equality? Can it be supposed that they are sent for no higher errand than this?'¹²⁷ It is pleasing to note that they were not always finding fault. Reginald Hine relates how in the interval of their ministry at Hitchin, Charity and her companion would teach English housewives 'how to make yeast, as they do in America'.¹²⁸

They appear to have visited almost all the meetings in England, with numerous visits also to families - 70 families in the Kendal area, and 60 in Liverpool, in 1798.¹²⁹ Algie Newlyn comments that Charity Cook's reputation as a liberated woman grew from her long experience as a travelling minister, adding 'generally the course which she followed was within the limits of accepted Quaker practice and was tolerated by society in general. There were times however when she seemed to steer her course close to the borderline.'¹³⁰ Nevertheless, English Friends were in general in unity with the travellers, and supported them to the full when they were here. Altogether, Charity Cook was absent from her family for seven or eight years - a notable instance of freedom and emancipation.¹³¹

THE FRUITS OF THE TRAVELLING MINISTRY

The travelling ministers often trod a difficult path, and their efforts frequently appeared unavailing. Yet, in public meetings they had opportunities to remind people in general of religious and moral issues, and perhaps to encourage a better way of life in a few. By their demeanour in the face of disagreement or even hostility, they made a

contribution towards the increase of tolerance on the part of the world's people. Among Friends, they were a support to small scattered meetings up and down the country, and the personal visits to families gave more intimate contacts and a better knowledge of individual needs.

Certainly the itinerant ministers did much to hold the Society together, but the overall picture seems to show that not a great deal was achieved in the way of inspiring the zeal of former times or of making converts. It was said of Catherine Phillips, for instance, that 'it was not permitted her to behold much fruits of her many labours'.¹³² One reason may have been that visits were random affairs, the results of individual concerns. Travelling ministers were not sent out by monthly meetings, except in so far as the meetings issued certificates. There was no overall organisation, and no follow-up to maintain the momentum.¹³³

If, as the years went by, ministers continued to complain of the weak and low state of meetings, it is reasonable to ask whether the ministers themselves did not contribute to a lack of life and growth. It may be that the 'hard close work', 'low distressing opportunities', 'hard digging times', 'exercising seasons' and so on were not wholly the fault of the meetings, but of uninspiring messages and admonishments which the meetings did not wish to hear.

Sarah (Tuke) Grubb (1756-1790), for example, especially in her early years as a minister, went about in a state of gloom; her spirit was frequently 'clothed with the garment of mourning', and the yearly meeting held over three days at Bristol in 1786 'afforded many opportunities for sufferings, and deep gloomy exercise'.¹³⁴ Others used the words 'deep draughts of the cup of suffering' and similar expressions concerning their personal feelings.

The journal or spiritual diary was a way in which some Quaker women could express themselves. It was not open to Quaker women to write novels or plays, nor even travel books in the modern sense, though there are passages in Catherine Payton's accounts of travels in the wild country in America which are vivid and immediate, and enliven the tedium of chronicles of difficult visits to dull and unresponsive meetings. Occasionally the minister gives a hint of sensitiveness to the world about her. Mary Dudley even ventured to use the word 'romantic' of a ride between very high rocks and mountains on a journey in France in 1788.¹³⁵

In general the need for plain language made for clarity; but too often the attempt to suppress the self in the chronicle of events led to obscurity and clumsiness of expression in the journals of travelling ministers. There does not appear to be any regular pattern in the writings of Quaker women in the eighteenth century. A few women

wrote verses; there were also testimonies to deceased parents or husbands, sermons or epistles addressed to particular groups, advice on behaviour and warnings to backsliders. There was the occasional short treatise on a specific subject - Mary Brooks's *Reasons for the necessity of silent waiting*, published in 1774 went into 10 editions by 1816, and was translated into French and German.¹³⁶ Mary Knowles, widow of a London doctor, published an account of a controversy on water baptism with a clergyman of Coventry, about 1776. She was better known, however, for a *Dialogue* between her and Dr. Johnson, which achieved publicity in the *Gentleman's magazine* in June 1791 and in the *Lady's magazine* the following year.¹³⁷ Catherine Phillips, true to form, went outside the usual brief, with an address to the inhabitants of Cornwall 'on the mining concerns of this county' (1791, reprinted 1792); and with an even more topical subject, in *Considerations on the causes of the high price of grain ... and propositions for reducing them*, published in 1792, at a time when Friends were incurring some criticism for allegedly helping to keep the price high.¹³⁸

In the next century there was to be a noticeable pattern of poems and stories on subjects like scripture, history, botany, geology, natural history, the seaside, and similar subjects, aimed at children and young people, attempting to make learning more pleasurable, and facts easier to remember.

EDUCATION

Inequalities between rich and poor were as much a constraint as differences between the sexes, as far as opportunities were concerned. The establishment of schools such as Ackworth was a step in the right direction, enabling both girls and boys to develop the capabilities needed in later life. Teaching provided work for some women. Ann Mercy Bell taught for a time at the school in Clerkenwell. When a workhouse school was established at Gildersome near Leeds in 1772, the children were to be taught reading, writing and accounts; in addition, the boys were to be instructed in some parts of the woollen manufactory and of husbandry; while there was to be a mistress to teach the girls spinning, knitting and sewing. The emphasis was on a useful training.¹³⁹

Many Quaker women found an occupation in running small private schools, particularly for Quaker girls, providing a much needed service as well as an outlet for their talents. Caroline Hopwood in Leeds set up a school to assist the family finances, and taught needlework, drawing, pastry &c., though she gave it up later, when it was borne in on her that she ought to settle for plain work.¹⁴⁰ Sarah (Tuke) Grubb opened a boarding school for 'female youth' at Clonmel, about 1788, and was worried at first lest it should interfere with the school at Mountmellick.¹⁴¹

Both schools flourished. Rebecca Jones spent a week at the Clonmel school during her visit to Ireland, and so endeared herself to the pupils that they worked a sampler for her as a memento of 'their close friendship and gospel unity'.¹⁴² Rebecca Jones herself had run a successful school in Philadelphia. Her biographer wrote of her that she 'had remarkable qualifications for imparting knowledge, for training the youthful mind [and] developing its powers'.¹⁴³ She was genuinely interested in education. During her stay in Europe, she not only visited the Clonmel school, but went to Ackworth School twice, and was greatly impressed by the work of the 'pious mistresses' who taught the girls,¹⁴⁴ and was keenly interested in the proposals for 'another boarding school for girls only' to be established at York [Trinity Lane], 'under the particular inspection of Esther Tuke'.¹⁴⁵ One result of the establishment and success of such schools was the manifest need for women teachers who were better equipped than heretofore, and it began to become plain that some form of further education and training were required for governesses and teachers.

There was still a long way to go in the matter of equality in some spheres, but, as the century drew to a close, there were to be inspiring causes to catch the attention of Quaker women, as well as others, and glimpses of areas in which there was much work to be done—the anti-slavery movement (especially in America), women's rights, higher education for women. All that was in the future. In the meantime, Quaker women took what opportunities offered. The organisation and structures established by George Fox benefited them and gave them a place in the work of the Society. Whether they 'ran' the local women's meetings, seeing the fruits of their labours in helping the poor, or training the children, or whether they travelled abroad to deliver the Quaker message, Quaker women were able to demonstrate to Friends and to the world at large, that authority and leadership, and a gift for organisation were not solely the prerogative of men.

It may be fitting to apply to them words which appear on the title-page of Elizabeth Bathurst's little collection of *The sayings of women, which were spoken upon sundry occasions, in several places of the Scriptures* (published in 1683):

'So did all the women that were wise in heart, manage their particular talents, to the praise and glory of God.'

Jean E. Mortimer
Presidential Address given at
Carlton Hill Friends' Meeting House,
Leeds, 25 June 1994.

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- ¹³ Thomas Story, *Journal* (1747), 600-601.
- ¹⁴ Wilfrid Allott, "Leeds Quaker Meeting". *Publications of the Thoresby Society. Miscellany, vol. 14 part 1* (1966), 27.
- ¹⁵ For a full account of the establishment of the Women's Yearly Meeting, see *London Yearly Meeting during 250 years* (1919), 93-122; see also: Margaret Hope Bacon, "The establishment of London Women's Yearly Meeting; a transatlantic concern". *JFHS*, vol. 57, no. 2 (1995), 151-165.
- ¹⁶ William Hodgson, Jr., *The life and travels of John Pemberton*. (1844), 32.
- ¹⁷ Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, minute book, 1734-1766. (Clifford Street Archives, deposited in the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, II.4), 278-9; 281; [hereafter: Clifford Street Archives]. Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting of Women Friends, minute book, 1746-1785 (Clifford Street Archives III.2.2), 21.
- ¹⁸ Epistles, advices, minutes &c. from the Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. Vol. 1 pt. 2 (Clifford Street Archives VI.19.2), fol. 130.

- ¹⁹ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*. Compiled by William J. Allison. Second edition. (1849), 64.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-67.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 138.
- ²² *Quaker faith and practice* (1995), 7.01
- ²³ William C. Braithwaite, *The second period of Quakerism*. Second edition, prepared by Henry J. Cadbury. (Cambridge, 1961), 287.
- ²⁴ *Piety promoted*. The third part. A new edition. (1812), 355-366.
- ²⁵ W.P. Thistlethwaite, *op.cit.*, 422-430 ("Ministers deceased"); see also his *Yorkshire Quaker ministers*. (1983 and Supplement 1993), 20 (Table III).
- ²⁶ F.M.A. de Voltaire, *Lettres écrites de Londres sur les Anglois. Seconde lettre sur les Quakers*. A Basle [London], (1734), 11-15; Letters concerning the English nation. [Translated by John Lockman]. (1733), 12.
- ²⁷ Leeds Friends' minute book, 1692 to 1712. (1980), 77, 92, 93n.
- ²⁸ W.P. Thistlethwaite, *Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting*. (1979), 52.
- ²⁹ Bristol Men's Meeting minute book, 1716-1727. (Transcript by R.S. Mortimer), 28, 28a; see also Braithwaite, *Second period*, 480.
- ³⁰ *An Account of the life and religious experiences of D. Caroline Hopwood, of Leeds, deceased...&c.* (Leeds, 1801); Leeds P.M. minute book, 1749-1792 (Carlton Hill Archives, E 3), 143, 144, 148; Brighouse M.M. minute books (Carlton Hill Archives, Q 6) (1767-78), 177, 179-80, 182; Q 7 (1778-86), 17-18.
- ³¹ *Dictionary of Quaker Biography; JFHS*, vol. 5 (1908), 47-8; William Cookworthy, *Memoir*, (1854), 10-16.
- ³² *DQB; The life of Mary Dudley, including an account of her religious engagements...&c.* (1825), chapter I.
- ³³ *Quaker grey: some account of the forepart of the life of Elizabeth Ashbridge, written by her own hand...* An introduction by A.C. Curtis. *The Astolat Press*. 1904. (First published Nantwich, 1774, reprinted 1806 &c).
- ³⁴ *DNB; DQB; Memoirs of the life of Catherine Phillips*. (1797), 16. [hereafter: Phillips].
- ³⁵ Rufus Jones, *The later periods of Quakerism*. Vol. 1 (1921), 195, 229.
- ³⁶ Knaresborough M.M. Certificates of Friends travelling in the ministry, 1719-1804. (Carlton Hill Archives C 11).
- ³⁷ Edna Walker, née Heaviside (1663-1712), wife of Robert Walker of Healey Lane End.
- ³⁸ Eleanor Walker née Middleton, second wife of Miles Walker; they removed to London in 1720. Eleanor Walker and her companion Edna Walker were granted a certificate in 1710 to visit Friends' meetings in Cornwall and Wales. (Carlton Hill Archives Q 2), 114.
- ³⁹ Leeds Friends' minute book, 1692 to 1712, 198-9; *Collection of testimonies*, (1760), 336-8; C.T. Clay, "An Eighteenth-century Quakeress of Leeds..." *The genealogist*. N.S.xxxvi, (April 1920).
- ⁴⁰ *Collection of testimonies* (1760), 191-193; for Fothergill's letter to Tabitha Horner, dated 20 xii 1745/6, see *Chain of friendship*. Selected letters of Dr. John Fothergill of London, 1735-1780. With introduction and notes by Betsy C. Corner and Christopher C. Booth. Cambridge, Mass. (1971), 112.
- ⁴¹ *DQB; Piety promoted*. Vol. 2. A new edition (1812), 454-5; also Vol. 3 (1854), 105.
- ⁴² Clifford Street Archives, I 10 Ann Mercy Bell: Journal and correspondence, etc. 1745-1786. [hereafter: Bell].

- ⁴³ DQB: Robert Davies, *A Memoir of the York press* (1868), 325; R.S. Mortimer, 'Quaker printers, 1750-1850', *JFHS*, 50 (1963), 100-133.
- ⁴⁴ Bell, 1-78.
- ⁴⁵ Bell, 79-154.
- ⁴⁶ Joseph Phipps, *A summary account of an extraordinary visit to this metropolis, in the year 1753, by the ministry of Ann Mercy Bell*. Printed in the year MDCCLIV. A copy of this work is bound in the Bell volume, 229-256. [hereafter: Phipps].
- ⁴⁷ Bell, 154.
- ⁴⁸ Bell, 205-8; *Some account of the life and religious labours of Samuel Neale*. Dublin (1805), 30-32.
- ⁴⁹ Bell, 145.
- ⁵⁰ Bell, 146.
- ⁵¹ Bell, 136-7.
- ⁵² Bell, 135.
- ⁵³ Bell, 127.
- ⁵⁴ Bell, 107-8, 130. The episode is mentioned briefly by Susanna Morris in her *Journal*. See *Wilt thou go on my errand? Journals of three 18th-century Quaker women ministers: Susanna Morris... Elizabeth Hudson ... Ann Moore*. Edited by Margaret Hope Bacon. Wallingford, Pennsylvania. *Pendle Hill Publications* (1994), 96-7.
- ⁵⁵ Bell, 119.
- ⁵⁶ Bell, 205-208.
- ⁵⁷ Phipps, 3-4.
- ⁵⁸ Phipps, 7.
- ⁵⁹ Phipps, 15.
- ⁶⁰ Phipps, 13.
- ⁶¹ Phipps, 9. This incident and several others in Joseph Phipps's account were wrongly ascribed by Reginald L. Hine and his editors to Mercy Ransom (c.1728-1811), whose maiden name was Bell. (*Recollections of an uncommon attorney*, 1951, 84).
- ⁶² Phipps, 21.
- ⁶³ York M.M. minutes, 5 iv. and 3 v. 1858. (Clifford Street Archives, D5, 31, 32).
- ⁶⁴ Second Day Morning Meeting of Ministers and Elders. Minutes. Vol. 5 (1734-1762), 185, 268, 361, 364, 365, 367. (Library, Friends House). [hereafter: Morning Meeting].
- ⁶⁵ Bell, 289-290.
- ⁶⁶ See Emily Manners, *Elizabeth Hooton, first Quaker woman preacher (1600-1672)*. With notes, etc. by Norman Penney. *JFHS Supplement* 12 (1914).
- ⁶⁷ *A journal of the life, travels and Christian experience of Thomas Chalkley*. Written by himself. A new edition (1818), 376.
- ⁶⁸ Bell, 273-6.
- ⁶⁹ York M.M. minutes, 1755-1777. (Clifford Street Archives D 5), 43.
- ⁷⁰ Bell, 279-282.
- ⁷¹ Thirsk M.M. Minutes. vol. 3 (1740-58) (Clifford Street Archives F 3.3), 100; Morning Meeting, vol. 5, 184.
- ⁷² Morning Meeting, vol. 5, 241.
- ⁷³ Morning Meeting, vol. 5, 250.
- ⁷⁴ Morning Meeting, vol. 5, 252-3.
- ⁷⁵ Morning Meeting, vol. 5, 262-3, 265.
- ⁷⁶ Thirsk M.M. Minutes, vol. 3 (Clifford Street Archives, F 3.3), 178; Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders, minute book, vol. 1 (1689-1798) (Clifford Street Archives, I 5.1), 128.

- ⁷⁷ A Testimony was read in Thirsk Women's M.M., 27 iii 1753 (Clifford Street Archives, F 4.1), 163. No text has been found in M.M. or Q.M. records. Mary Rickaby is recorded as having left in her Will £5 to Thirsk Women's M.M. (Clifford Street Archives F 4.1), 166.
- ⁷⁸ York M.M. Applications for membership, disownments, documents of discipline &c. 6 ix 1672 - 29 xi 1797. Nos. 69-117: Documents concerning Nathaniel Bell Junior and Judith Heron (Clifford Street Archives K 2.1); W.P. Thistlethwaite, *Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting, 1665-1966*. (1979), 139-140; W.P. Thistlethwaite, *A bygone Quaker Meeting ('Tadcaster' - 'Clifford' - 'Wetherby')*. (1988), 10-11; Stephen Allott, *Friends in York*. York (1978), 55-56.
- ⁷⁹ Admitted to membership 29 viii 1766. Brighouse M.M. minute book, 1747-67 (Carlton Hill Archives Q5) 264.
- ⁸⁰ Halifax P.M. minutes, 1758-80 (Carlton Hill Archives, EE 16bis, 405-6; EE 17, 57-8, 64); Brighouse M.M. minutes, 1747-67 (Carlton Hill Archives, Q 5), 260, 261, 264, 272; York M.M. minutes (Clifford Street Archives, D 5), 140. [hereafter: D 5].
- ⁸¹ D 5, 141, 132; and York Women's M.M. minutes (Clifford Street Archives, F 2.1), 142.
- ⁸² D 5, 143, 144, 146; see also Brighouse M.M. minutes (Carlton Hill Archives, Q 6), 9, 11.
- ⁸³ D 5, 148, 149, 150, 152; and Yorkshire Q.M. minutes (Clifford Street Archives, II 5), 15, 19-20, 27, 29, 33, 34.
- ⁸⁴ D 5, 153-4, 156.
- ⁸⁵ D 5, 150, 155, 157, 159, 162-3.
- ⁸⁶ D 5, 164, 166, 167-8.
- ⁸⁷ D 5, 170, 172. Judith Bell died 19 iv 1815, aged about 75 years, buried at York, not in membership.
- ⁸⁸ John Atkinson: see D 5, 172, 176, 177; William Shackleton: disowned for marriage by a priest, and for encouraging a clandestine marriage, see D 5, 174, 189.
- ⁸⁹ D 5, 168.
- ⁹⁰ D 5, 179; and York P.M. minutes (Clifford Street Archives, H 1.4), 142.
- ⁹¹ His application for re-admission was judged to be too hasty (D 5, 160); but he was reinstated on a second application in 1774 (D 5, 284, 287). He removed to Cottingham in Hull M.M. in 1817, died 9 xii 1824 and was buried at York.
- ⁹² York M.M. of Ministers and Elders, minute book (1709-1775), (Clifford Street Archives B 11.1), 93.
- ⁹³ Cornelius Cayley (1729-1780?) *DNB*; Smith I, 397. A copy of his "A tour through Holland, Flanders and part of France ... 1772" (Leeds, 1773) in the Library of The Thoresby Society, Leeds has inscriptions "The Author's gift to M. Wodhull 1780" and "The author died about Lady Day 1783".
- ⁹⁴ Bell, 307-310.
- ⁹⁵ Leeds P.M. minutes (Carlton Hill Archives E 3), 119; Brighouse M.M. minutes (Carlton Hill Archives Q 6), 88, 90.
- ⁹⁶ George Crosfield, *Memoirs of Samuel Fothergill*. Liverpool, (1843), 500-504.
- ⁹⁷ Brighouse M.M. minutes (Carlton Hill Archives, Q 6), 146.
- ⁹⁸ Bell, 324. The account of this event is preceded by a copy (by Nathaniel Bell, junior) of lines entitled "On the Races" by Ann Mercy Bell, written during the race week in York in the 8th month 1775. Bell, 322-3.
- ⁹⁹ D 5, 327, 328-9, 329-300; and Yorkshire G.M. minutes (Clifford Street Archives, II 5), 220, 222: *Piety promoted*. A new edition. (1812), 454-5.
- ¹⁰⁰ Edward Stabler, the younger (1730-1785). For his letter, see Bell, 257-260.

- ¹⁰¹ *Some account of the life and religious exercises of Mary Neale, formerly Mary Peisley.* Principally compiled from her own writings. [By Samuel Neale]. Second edition. Dublin. 1795. [hereafter: Neale].
- ¹⁰² Catherine Payton, afterwards Phillips; see note 34.
- ¹⁰³ Neale, 120-123.
- ¹⁰⁴ Phillips, 118.
- ¹⁰⁵ Neale, 152.
- ¹⁰⁶ Phillips, 120.
- ¹⁰⁷ Phillips, 131, 139-140.
- ¹⁰⁸ R. Hingston Fox, *Dr. John Fothergill and his friends, Chapters in eighteenth century life.* (1919), 244.
- ¹⁰⁹ Phillips, 143.
- ¹¹⁰ Phillips, 148-152.
- ¹¹¹ Phillips, 188, 206.
- ¹¹² Phillips, 207-8.
- ¹¹³ Testimony from the Monthly Meeting of Friends for the Western Division of Cornwall, held at Falmouth 6.iv.1795: read and approved in Quarterly Meeting for Cornwall, 7.iv.1795. Printed in Phillips, 305-309.
- ¹¹⁴ *The records and recollections of James Jenkins.* Edited by J. William Frost. Texts and studies in religion, vol. 18. New York and Toronto (1984), 118.
- ¹¹⁵ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 64.
- ¹¹⁶ Op. cit., 63, 129.
- ¹¹⁷ Op. cit., 1-21.
- ¹¹⁸ Op. cit., 241-2.
- ¹¹⁹ Op. cit., chapters 3-5 (48-149).
- ¹²⁰ Christiana Hustler (d. 27 vi 1811, aged 79); daughter of William and Sarah Hird; wife of John Hustler (1715-90). *Piety promoted IV* (1829), 33-6; Phillips, 192-4; H.R. Hodgson. *The Society of Friends in Bradford* (1926), 44-5.
- ¹²¹ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 149.
- ¹²² Op. cit., 124.
- ¹²³ For a full account of her life and travels, see Algie I. Newlyn, *Charity Cook, a liberated woman.* (Friends United Press), 1981. [hereafter: Newlyn].
- ¹²⁴ J. William Frost, *The Quaker family in colonial America.* New York. (1973), 210; Newlyn, 127.
- ¹²⁵ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 70.
- ¹²⁶ Newlyn, 126.
- ¹²⁷ Op. cit., 126.
- ¹²⁸ Reginald Hine, *A mirror for the Society of Friends, The Story of the Hitchin Quakers* (1929), 93; Newlyn, 130.
- ¹²⁹ Newlyn, 69-70, 71.
- ¹³⁰ Op. cit., 127.
- ¹³¹ Op. cit., 43.
- ¹³² Phillips, 308.
- ¹³³ The three *Journals* of women travelling ministers, recently edited by Margaret Hope Bacon (see note 54) tend to give an impression of innumerable journeys of many miles, with short stops and apparent anxiety to visit as many groups of Friends as possible.
- ¹³⁴ *Some account of the life and religious labours of Sarah Grubb.* Second edition (1794), 130.
- ¹³⁵ *The life of Mary Dudley* (1825), 67-8.

- ¹³⁶ Joseph Smith, *A descriptive catalogue of Friends' books*. (1867), I, 321-3.
¹³⁷ Smith, II, 73-4.
¹³⁸ Smith, II, 405.
¹³⁹ Jean, E., Mortimer, *Quakers in Gildersome*, Leeds (1990), 33-47.
¹⁴⁰ *An account of the life and religious experiences of D. Caroline Hopwood*, of Leeds. Leeds (1801), 17, 24.
¹⁴¹ *Some account of the life and religious labours of Sarah Grubb*. Second edition. (1794), 184-6.
¹⁴² *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 176-7.
¹⁴³ Op. cit., 21.
¹⁴⁴ Op. cit., 81.
¹⁴⁵ See Stephen Allott, *Friends in York* (1978), 67-8.