

‘I HAVE NO HORROR OF BEING AN OLD-MAID’:<sup>\*</sup>  
SINGLE WOMEN IN THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS  
1780–1860

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the position of single women within the Religious Society of Friends during the period 1780–1860, suggesting that they had a considerable amount of self-government and choice in the way they organised their lives. In a period in which remaining an unmarried woman was portrayed as being undesirable, it is surprising how many Quaker women apparently chose to remain unmarried. It has to be recognised that demographics played a part in this and they show that in this period it was likely that the Religious Society of Friends had a higher than average percentage of single women. Recent research is questioning the assumption that to be a single woman in this period was undesirable. It is being suggested that for many women, remaining single had advantages both for themselves and for their families. Rather than being a burden, frequently they were essential members of the family enterprise and it was choice rather than the inability to find a husband that was an element in their remaining unmarried. This paper suggests that the ethos of the Religious Society of Friends and the structure of its organisation offered Quaker women opportunities for involvement in a range of activities, both within their own and within the wider community, which encouraged them not to see marriage as being the ultimate achievement of their lives. In choosing to remain single, many Quaker women sought to preserve their autonomy and self-will, allowing them to follow their own path to self-fulfilment and happiness.

KEYWORDS

Unmarried, Quaker women, autonomy, choice, opportunities, demographics, secular society.

For women of the middling sort in the period 1780–1860, marriage to a man of equal or higher rank was seen as the pinnacle of ambition. The need to achieve this aim and the consequences of failure to do so were reinforced by images of single women that were frequently cruel characterisations, such as Jane Austen’s portrayal of the archetypal Miss Bates in her novel *Emma*.<sup>1</sup> They became the butt of jokes and were variously derided as ‘old maids’, ‘spare women’, and the pejorative ‘spinster’—all of which implied that to be single was to be effectively condemned to a life of the utmost misery, struggling to maintain or achieve self-respect.<sup>2</sup> The distinctions made

between the unmarried woman and the widow were markedly different. Society did not consider the two groups to be the same, despite the single status of both categories of women.<sup>3</sup> The disfavour with which unmarried women were regarded had its roots in seventeenth-century Protestantism that viewed celibacy as unnatural. Increasingly it was considered that the only proper sphere of activity for women was deemed to be within the confines of the home. Whilst Quakerism was an extreme form of Protestantism, the Religious Society of Friends under the guidance of George Fox developed very different ideals in respect to women. Fox argued that although men and women were originally created equal, women were subordinated as a result of the Fall but the coming of Christ with its promise of rebirth opened the way for redemption and the restoration of equality through experiencing the presence of Christ from within.<sup>4</sup> Thus women, through the redemptive nature of the 'Inward Light', were restored to full spiritual equality and were advised not to 'stand idle out of the vineyard' and to participate in the administration of the Meeting.<sup>5</sup> This had implications for women not only within the organisation of the Meeting but also in relation to their choices in respect of marriage.<sup>6</sup> The parameters within which it was believed appropriate for women to operate were being readjusted and from its inception in the mid-seventeenth-century women in the Society were to be at the forefront.<sup>7</sup> Over the following century, there developed within Quakerism a unique set of beliefs respecting gender and spirituality, creating a context within which it became an ideological conviction that Quaker women, when compared with women in other sects, had an especially close relationship to God and an exceptional ability to transmit divine knowledge. This emphasis on Quaker women's spirituality formed and shaped the way they lived and experienced their lives. Christine Trevett has commented in respect of seventeenth-century Quaker women that 'Quakerism... offered [women] unheard of opportunities for action in the sphere of religion and a rationale for public activity which was liberating. [And] Quaker women found themselves with rights, indeed obligations, to have views on essential issues of the day'.<sup>8</sup> Although by the middle of the eighteenth century Quaker women's expression of their faith and views were less strident and forceful, they were equally as active in the public sphere and free with their views and expression of their beliefs.

In this paper I want to explore how these very different ideas regarding women and women's roles affected the choices Quaker women were to exercise in relation to marriage or singleness. Were they able to satisfy their individual preferences in this respect? What level of self-government and autonomy were they able to achieve? To what extent did the living of a life within the Religious Society of Friends enable them to adhere to their own constructs of feminine behaviour and to what extent were they bound by expectations of female conduct in secular society? Phyllis Mack has discussed the secular concept of agency in relation to eighteenth-century Quakerism which allows an individual 'to act according to her own best interests and to resist oppressive power relationships'.<sup>9</sup> How useful is the concept of 'agency' to an understanding of how single Quaker women perceived themselves in relation to the governance of their own lives? Recent research is beginning to question traditional characterisations of single women and to rehabilitate them, showing them to be useful members of their communities, frequently well integrated into society as

dispensers of charity, as political and social campaigners and important in the maintenance of the wealth and status of their families.<sup>10</sup> An examination of some of the lives of single Quaker women should enable us to see how very seriously Quaker women took ideals of marriage and how they frequently remained unmarried, choosing to take control of their own lives.

It is necessary to recognise that in no period did Quakerism and or Quakers exist in a vacuum and both were affected by both societal and religious changes.<sup>11</sup> Although Quaker women lived within a Society which viewed women somewhat differently from society in general, they were not isolated from changing attitudes within secular society and were influenced by adjustments to the perceptions of and conditions for women.<sup>12</sup> This exposure to the beliefs and lifestyles of those on the 'outside' meant that some Quaker women found the life of traditional Friends to be increasingly restricting and several, such as Adelaide Darby, left the Society.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, Quakerism itself underwent considerable spiritual upheaval in this period due to the growing influence of evangelicalism, which with its emphasis on atonement through good works, served to reinforce Quakerism's existing stress on women's need to be 'useful'.<sup>14</sup> The notion that usefulness was linked to Christian morality and worldly work was potentially liberating for all women but especially single women who could claim that remaining single freed them to be of service to the community of Friends and the wider community beyond the Meeting. Evangelicalism also idealised perceptions of marriage and the choice of a marriage partner became linked to an evangelical ideal of spontaneity of feeling with true faith. Puritan representations of marriage as companionship and mutual respect were being adjusted in favour of the heady concept of 'true love' based on spiritual compatibility. Consequently if one failed to find the 'one true love', it was becoming more acceptable to remain single.

The role of religion in the lives of single women has been given some attention by historians and they have shown that for many single women it was the determining element of their lives. They wrote frequently of the conflicts arising between maintaining a religious life and the pressure placed upon them by society to conform to a more traditional domestic role.<sup>15</sup> Rebecca Solly, an Essex Unitarian writing in the late eighteenth century admitted that she could not 'conceal from myself a gradual alteration taking place in my character, a respect and love for the duties of a single life, a dread of the selfishness, the littleness, the increase of worldly cares which accompany [*sic*] marriage'.<sup>16</sup> In their struggle to unravel these conflicts, many women identified with the apocalyptic books of the Bible. In the late eighteenth century, Joanna Southcott declared that she would not '...permit the love of the creature to draw my heart from my Creator...'.<sup>17</sup> In 1796 Southcott had a vision in which she was to be the Bride of Christ not the bride of a mortal male and soon after she began publishing her prophecies.<sup>18</sup> Wesley in a pamphlet entitled *Thoughts on a Single Life* (1743) expressed the view that the single enjoyed 'a blessed liberty from *the trouble in the flesh*' and he wanted female Methodists who were converted to refrain from marrying.<sup>19</sup> Methodism in particular has been viewed as especially attractive to single women, offering them a role as preachers, class workers and as followers.<sup>20</sup> In the Religious Society of Friends, women—whether single or married—continued to be

essential both to the organisation and success of the Society and were highly visible as ministers throughout the period. In many Meetings female Ministers outnumbered male by at least two to one and it can be suggested that Quakerism might not have survived without its women members, and their importance should not be underestimated.<sup>21</sup> This expanding reliance on women as upholders of the Quaker Meeting and lifestyle had considerable implications for all Quaker women and was not without its detractors.<sup>22</sup>

#### THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF MARRIAGE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

It has to be recognised that in a small Society, which required its members to marry a fellow Quaker, there were fewer opportunities for finding a suitable partner than was the case in the population at large.<sup>23</sup> Within the general population of Britain and Ireland it has been suggested that from 1574 to 1821 single women comprised 30.2% of the adult female population.<sup>24</sup> After 1800 it is generally agreed by demographers that this figure rose and the Religious Society of Friends exceeded this trend.<sup>25</sup> From the 1750s onwards Quaker women found it increasingly difficult to find a Quaker husband and by 1840 there were 120 Quaker women for every one hundred Quaker men.<sup>26</sup> Within Settle Monthly Meeting and York Monthly Meeting approximately 32% of women over the period 1780–1860 remained unmarried.<sup>27</sup> In the same period Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting had on average 50 female members, and of these women approximately 40% died single.<sup>28</sup> These figures for Lincolnshire are alarming when comparing them with Rowntree's figures for Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting for the period 1837–1854, which suggest that around 15% of all Quakers remained single.<sup>29</sup> Comparing these figures with those of Vann and Eversley for the whole of Southern and Northern Britain and Ireland gives a greater sense of how both of these local Meetings exceeded the national rates of singleness. We find that their figures show that between 1750 and 1850, 19% of Quaker women in Southern England, 12.5% in Northern Britain and 19.9% in Ireland can be considered to have remained single.<sup>30</sup> Besides the difficulty of finding a husband, Quaker women who did marry married later than the general population. The average age at marriage of Quaker women in York between 1776 and 1860 was 28.4 years. This compares favourably with Vann and Eversley figures which suggest an average age of 29.5 years for Southern English Friends, 27.3 years for Northern British Friends and 25.6 years for Irish Friends.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, the number of Quaker women who married was nearly half that for the general population.<sup>32</sup> Whilst these figures go some way to explaining the demographic cause of the surplus of single Quaker women, added to this was an increasing idealisation of marriage by middle-class women. As the influence of evangelicalism grew in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Quaker women gradually internalised evangelical ideals and sought love and spiritual purity as a necessary requirement for marriage. For women ministers in particular, the need to find a spiritually compatible mate added greatly to restrictions on the choice of husbands, and consequently elevated spinsterhood, so that it became a

respectable alternative to marriage if no suitably compatible and loving partner was to be found. Demographic restrictions and changing idealism resulted in a surplus of single women in the Religious Society of Friends and this surplus, combined with Friends concepts of spiritual equality, contributed to a readjustment of the social mores and expectations surrounding marriage.

#### SINGLE WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

All women single or married were expected to be active in the organisation and work of their Meetings. From 1761 Sarah Champion Fox of Bristol records in her diary a pattern of attendance at Quarterly and Yearly meetings which would be familiar to many single Quaker women. Besides her annual attendance at Yearly Meeting in Bristol and London she also travelled as a representative of her Monthly Meeting to Quarterly Meeting in the various towns that made up Somerset Quarterly Meeting.<sup>33</sup> This pattern of attendance was repeated throughout the Monthly Meetings of Britain. In Lincolnshire Monthly Meetings and in Yorkshire Monthly Meetings it was single women who frequently took on the full range of organisational duties. In the Monthly Meetings of Broughton, Wainfleet and Gainsborough which formed part of Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting in this period, single women such as Mary Thornhill, Sarah Burtt and Rebecca Petchell bore the greatest burden of representation at Quarterly and Yearly Meeting.<sup>34</sup> In York and in Lincolnshire young single women were expected to become involved in the organisation of their local Meetings at an early age. Girls such as Lydia Hutchinson of Spalding Meeting, Mary Smith of Broughton Meeting and Ann and Mabel Tuke and Rebecca and Elizabeth Fothergill of York Meeting all participated in the work of the Meeting as very young women. Older single women were viewed as crucial to the stature of the Meeting, bringing not only their experience and sound judgment to the work of the Meeting but also an ability to devote more of their time to the organisation of the Meeting and the freedom to travel if 'called' to minister. Mature unmarried women such as Ellen Abrahams and Martha Routh of York, Barbara Sharples of Settle, Sarah Burtt of Broughton, Hannah Pine of Spalding, Ann Dymond of Exeter, Mary Waring of Godalming and many, many others who remained single, were essential to the organisation of their Women's Meeting and not only represented their Meetings at Quarterly and Yearly Meeting but also undertook the sensitive work of visiting errant members and overseeing marriages.<sup>35</sup> Ann Dymond, Hannah Pine and Mary Waring travelled throughout their lives, not only as representatives of their Meetings but also as ministers. The travels of Ann Dymond in one six-month period are just one example of the life lived by these women. Between March and October 1800 she travelled extensively in the Ministry to Somerset, Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire, attending Meetings, holding public Meetings and having up to 23 sittings with families in Poole on one day in April 1800, commenting that it had been hard work 'The exercise of mind has, at times since I have been here, far exceeded what I ever experienced before'.<sup>36</sup> In the same period, she also attended Quarterly Meeting and Yearly Meeting in London.<sup>37</sup>

Quaker education equipped young women with all the skills necessary to be wives and mothers whilst also emphasising the necessity to be ‘rational creatures’ instilling notions of independence of thought and spirit and cultivating ideas of autonomy. The Quaker educationalist Priscilla Wakefield emphasised that these educational ideals be encouraged in girls and advised that girls should be educated to enable them to be self-supporting if necessary. She abhorred the fatuous nature of girls’ education, which concentrated on the need to enter daughters into a competitive marriage market:

In the education of females, the same view actuates every rank: an advantageous settlement in marriage is the universal prize, for which parents of all classes enter their daughter upon the lists... To this one point tends the principal part of female instruction; ...their best years for improvement are sacrificed to the attainment of attractive qualities; showy, superficial accomplishments; polished manners; and in one word, the whole science of pleasing...an object of the most essential importance.<sup>38</sup>

She warned that this turned young girls into women who frequented ‘Crowded rooms, late hours, luxurious tables, and slothful inactivity’. She also considered that lack of education encouraged girls to become wives who gave ‘...servile, unqualified obedience as can only be observed by slaves’.<sup>39</sup> Single Quaker women were advised that marriage should not be a woman’s only ambition and that there was honour not disgrace in being a single woman.<sup>40</sup> Although Wakefield was not directing her comments exclusively to Quaker women, they contributed to the ideals and ideas surrounding the status of women within the Society, helping to shift the emphasis away from the necessity to marry.

#### CHOOSING TO REMAIN SINGLE IN THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

It is evident from reading journals and letters that whilst most Quaker women did not object to marriage, frequently they chose to remain single. For women who were ministers, this resistance to social pressure could be rationalised and legitimised by referral to the need to be obedient to the call to do ‘God’s Will’. That women who were not ministers were able to remain single or defer marriage, it might be suggested, was due the development of a culture that did not especially promote marriage as being the ultimate or even necessarily a desirable role for women. As a single Quaker woman in Bristol, Sarah Champion Fox lived a life full of activity and occupation both within her Meeting and amongst the middle-class intellectuals of polite Bristol society, and although she finally married Charles Fox in 1790 at the age of 48, she was very aware of the restrictions placed on young women by prevailing societal norms. Whilst she did not explicitly challenge these norms, she realised she did not fit comfortably within them and likened marriage to a ‘silver collar’ worn in eighteenth-century England by African slaves.<sup>41</sup> She was quite prepared to forego the pleasures of male companionship to retain her own integrity as an individual, writing an ironic letter to her sister in which she points out she would rather remain unmarried than become the wife of a man who wants a domestic angel rather than an intellectual soul mate and repudiated the restrictions that marriage would place on

her.<sup>42</sup> In 1770 she wrote, 'How far a woman ought to give up her judgement to her husband's inclination is not for me to determine—I am sure I ardently wish I never may be connected with one who may require of me anything I think inconsistent with my peace'.<sup>43</sup> Caroline and Anna Maria Fox were born in Falmouth in the early decades of the nineteenth century and they also lived in a highly intellectual environment within which the leading literary and intellectual figures of the day were everyday visitors. Remaining single throughout their lives, they were engaged not only in the scientific interests of their father Robert Were Fox, the geologist, but also pursued interests of their own in both educational and intellectual spheres.<sup>44</sup>

Private letters between friends provide us with evidence of women's deliberations as to the desirability of marriage and of suitors. Lucy Alexander discussed an offer of marriage from Thomas Maw with Elizabeth Dudley her close friend of 50 years over a period of many months.<sup>45</sup> Margaret Priestman Tanner had a close and loving relationship with her 'dear Wife' Priscilla Bright and questioned with her not only her suitability for marriage but also expressed her wish to have an equal and loving relationship and one in which she did not give up her will to his, 'I know my own high spirit too well to believe that I should be happy under such slavery, and therefore should never think of subjecting myself to it'. She had no fear of being an 'old maid'. Answering Priscilla Bright's concerns regarding her remaining single, she comments '...for myself I have no horror of being an old-maid. I do not expect it to be the happiest state but if it be the one allotted to me I durst not even wish it otherwise.' For her it was a matter of finding a man who had a mind equal to her own adding that 'Money, family or beauty I might dispense with but I think not with the absence of a superior mind to my own'.<sup>46</sup> For Sarah Darby of Coalbrookdale and Susannah Appleby, remaining single allowed them the satisfaction of a close and loving life-long friendship which was both intimate and companionable. Although it appears to have been acceptable to both of their families, Susannah's cousin, Mary Knowles, seems to have felt she had to defend the friendship, commenting that 'Sally Darby's friendship to thee impresses her character upon my mind in the high class there is in it, such a noble disdain of these narrow prejudices that govern the conduct of the generality of mankind!'.<sup>47</sup> Anna Maria Priestman admitted that she was not inclined to fall in love and would in any case only want a husband who was a true follower of the Lamb and she comforted herself and her forever single friend Jane Pease, that 'As I write one old maid after another comes into my mind, bright and useful and *unsoured*...'.<sup>48</sup> For some women the man they loved was not a Friend and this caused immense heart searching, and both Caroline Fox and Lydia Richardson decided not to marry outside the Society and chose to remain single.<sup>49</sup> Others suffered the death of a fiancé or the breaking of an engagement that meant they never considered another man. When in 1850 Anna Deborah Richardson's engagement to Jonathan Priestman was broken off, she retired broken hearted to the Lake District, building a cottage to her own design where she could live independently, entertaining her like-minded, intellectual single women friends with several of whom she had intense friendships.<sup>50</sup> It would appear that Quaker women held single women in high regard and that being unmarried did not imply a

lessening of status; in fact it could be suggested rather the opposite. When in 1818 Esther Tuke (Jr) of York intended marrying Thomas Priestman of Hull, her sister-in-law's mother made the acerbic comment to her daughter that 'Esther is of more importance as Esther Tuke than she would be as Thomas Priestman's wife'.<sup>51</sup> It is evident from the comments of these Quaker women that they felt free to recommend the single life and to challenge the notion that there was any stigma attached to remaining single.

#### SINGLE QUAKER WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY

Single Quaker women derived the most powerful and influential public expression of their status within the Society from their role as Ministers.<sup>52</sup> Since Quaker beliefs made it clear that the only possible basis for ministering was through the direct, divine inspiration of the Inner Light, women who were 'called' to minister in effect attained an element of becoming 'the chosen'. The authority that derived from this special consecration was especially significant for single women, allowing them to justify their decision to remain single. As Phyllis Mack has noted it is for these women that the concept of agency becomes problematic, having an entirely different meaning; rather than freedom to do what one wanted, it became the freedom to do what was right, to follow God's Will. Consequently, the whole concept of autonomy becomes extremely difficult when linked to Christianity. As Daphne Hampson has suggested, 'Christianity, by definition is not a religion which can allow for full human autonomy'.<sup>53</sup> Since obedience to the 'calling' to spread the 'Truth' was a non-negotiable abnegation of one's personal desires to those of God's leadings, there was an absolute necessity to place one's spiritual vocation before one's personal self-will. Consequently adherence to the demands of God created a situation in which personal autonomy was neutralised in the face of the demands of the 'Higher Authority', and many Quaker women with a calling to Minister suffered conflicts of conscience in their desire to retain their personal autonomy in respect of their personal life whilst having to be completely obedient to the need to do 'God's Will'. Advice to Quaker women frequently emphasised the need for absolute obedience and they were advised 'not to think of marriage till their errand was finished, lest they mar their service' and women who disobeyed this injunction, such as Mary Fylde, met with the disapproval of their Meeting.<sup>54</sup>

The journals of Quaker women provide us with plentiful evidence of the reality of the problems associated with personal autonomy and how they negotiated a way through these apparently conflicting demands. For some, including Catherine Phillips, their calling to Minister allowed them to justify their choice not to marry. Catherine Phillips began ministering at the young age of 18 and continued to be busy travelling in the ministry throughout her long life. As a young woman she constantly complained that domestic ties constrained her and how she resented them when she returned home.<sup>55</sup> It is likely that her dislike of the burdens and restrictions of domesticity coloured her views on marriage, for she wrote emphatically that as a Quaker Minister she felt she had a vocation and that marriage would interfere with her work:



My mind had been, and was under strong restrictions in regard to entering into the marriage state, ...for it appeared that for a series of years I should be much engaged in travelling for the service of Truth, I feared to indulge thoughts of forming a connection which, from its incumbrances, might tend to frustrate the intention of Divine Wisdom respecting me. My fear of erring on this occasion was proportioned to that superior love, which bound me to the service appointed me; in the pursuit whereof, I was desirous to relinquish every prospect and connection which might retard my fulfilling it.<sup>56</sup>

Although she did eventually marry William Phillips at the age of 45, she continued to travel in the ministry, her longest period 'confined' at home being ten months. Catherine Phillips was not alone amongst Quaker women to feel that marriage might be a distraction. Mary Capper was doubly anxious, fearing not only that marriage might interfere with her ministry but was also apprehensive that her fiancé 'could not fully enter into her religious feelings and views' and she consequently broke off her engagement.<sup>57</sup> Delay or denial was also linked to an anxiety that earthly love could become more important than the love of God and Mary Peisley Neal expressed the concern that marriage might mean that her '...own affections and the affections of others, would long since have stolen me out of His hands, who has absolute right to dispose of my body and spirit, "which are His"'.<sup>58</sup> Language such as this provides us with an image of women who had not only the freedom to choose God's demands before that of either the flesh or society without the censure of their community but who were also able to express their self-will in respect to the choice to marry. They felt free to delay or abandon marriage without censure and to choose to become 'God's Creatures' for the superior spiritual reward of following the demands of God.<sup>59</sup>

#### SINGLE QUAKER WOMEN WHO WERE NOT MINISTERS

Whilst Quaker women who were Ministers clearly had a specific and sanctified role, there were many more Quaker women who were not amongst the 'chosen'. Unmarried women from the middling ranks of society had very limited options for a financially independent existence without losing social respectability and/or status.<sup>60</sup> At best fathers or brothers might provide financially for their unmarried women kin allowing them to be independent. A study of Friends' Wills in Lincolnshire and in York has shown that some Quaker men made provision for their unmarried daughters or sisters so that they were financially independent. In 1804, Henry Hawks of Spalding, Lincolnshire left property to his sister Katherine for her 'maintenance' consisting of 100 acres of land in Deeping Fen, two houses in Spalding, farm messuages and lands in Spalding and Weston Marshes plus other land in the area, all valued at over £5,000.<sup>61</sup> Thomas Priestman of York left his daughter Ann £1200 plus a rent free house and Parker Busby left his sister Sarah his entire estate valued at over £3,000 so that she was 'comfortable for life'.<sup>62</sup> Anna Deborah Richardson of Newcastle had an independent income that enabled her to live a single life in the Lake District and Catherine Philips had inherited sufficient money to allow her to remain single and not to marry until middle age.<sup>63</sup> Whilst Mary Wollstonecraft might consider that there were 'Few...modes of earning a subsistence, and those very humiliating' and many unmarried women were forced to live in their parental or

filial homes, acting as unpaid housekeepers, governesses, nannies and so on, there is evidence that for some single women these arrangements were highly satisfying and convenient.<sup>64</sup> Alison Duncan has shown how Robert Adam, the architect, relied on his unmarried sisters, in particular Margaret, who not only managed their newly established London household but was also a facilitator of patronage.<sup>65</sup> Although financially dependent on their brothers, at the very least the sisters provided a housekeeping service in return for a roof over their heads, and in many cases were immensely important behind the scenes of an enterprise, providing loans, cultivating patronage and forming those social contacts that were essential to a successful business. Margaret Wood owned a confectioners shop in Rochdale, Lancashire and it was by this means that she successfully supported herself as a spinster. Her financial astuteness allowed her to provide financial advice and support for her family both in Britain and in America, gaining prestige and power within her family unit. Her financial independence also shaped her identity as a member of the 'industrious classes'.<sup>66</sup> Esther Maud Tuke was forced into running a business when her father died in 1752. He left her and her mother beset with financial problems largely caused by a feckless brother and they struggled to run their shop in Bradford that had to support not only themselves but also two of her brothers.<sup>67</sup> Although tempted to marry to relieve the family's financial problems, she remained single until she was thirty-eight, finally marrying William Tuke in 1765.<sup>68</sup> Several Quaker women were able to ease their financial outgoings by sharing their homes. Margaret Priestman Tanner was married and widowed twice by the age of 40. As a widow she divided her time between her own home and that of various family members, including returning to her parental home to enable her to act as governess to her niece Helen Priestman Bright for six months of the year.<sup>69</sup> Spinster aunts could also be called upon to raise orphaned children and Anna Maria and Caroline Fox raised the four sons of their brother, Barclay, after the death of their parents.<sup>70</sup>

A respectable option for single women was to devote their lives to education and Michael Anderson has suggested that most teachers were likely to be single women.<sup>71</sup> Commercial schooling for girls expanded in the eighteenth century, providing an alternative to a private education at home and creating a new source of employment for women in the public sphere.<sup>72</sup> For single women this was especially important and during this period several Quaker girls schools were founded, including Stoke Newington and The Mount in York.<sup>73</sup> These schools not only provided employment opportunities for single women, they also allowed female Quaker teachers to develop their own uniquely Quaker pedagogical theories. One of the most important mother and daughter teaching partnerships in Quaker girls education was Mariabella and her daughter, Rachel Howard. Rachel Howard, who remained single throughout her life, became one of the most influential educators of the early nineteenth century, running schools, writing text books and guides to help teachers improve their teaching.<sup>74</sup> In Broughton in Lincolnshire, Ann Gauntley was headmistress of the small Quaker school. Opportunities to teach were open to single Quaker women in the newly opened girls schools in England, and at The Mount School in York several single women came from Meetings throughout England to teach there. These included Mary Alexander, Hannah and Elizabeth Brady, Susannah Fisher and

Elizabeth Ann Morley. Lydia Rous was aware that the quality of teaching for girls needed improvement and during her tenure as headmistress of The Mount School from 1866–1879, she ran a short teacher training programme for young Quaker women who wished to teach.<sup>75</sup> Although by the mid-nineteenth century Quaker families were increasingly sending their girls away to school, some still retained governesses.<sup>76</sup> In the isolated but rich farming areas of Lincolnshire, the distances involved in travelling to a suitable school ensured that several single women were employed as governesses. Over the period 1846–1859 Joseph Binyon employed two young, single women, Susannah Green from Warwickshire Meeting and Elizabeth Nainby from Broughton Meeting, as governess to his daughter.<sup>77</sup> Anna Maria Fox had greater educational ambitions and in 1833 with the assistance of her sister Caroline she began the process of founding the Cornwall Polytechnic Society that was to become her life's work.<sup>78</sup> Lower-ranking women had wider choices and were able to run their own businesses or become domestic servants.<sup>79</sup> In both Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting and in Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting many single Quaker women had small businesses, generally working as dressmakers, confectioners and milliners, able to live their lives as independent members of the '*petite bourgeoisie*'.<sup>80</sup>

The end of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century saw increased opportunities for all women, single or married, for social and political activism. For women Friends, involvement in the campaign against slavery and the trade in slaves led many into other areas of philanthropic and political activism and by mid-nineteenth century they found themselves at the forefront of many of the nascent feminist campaigns.<sup>81</sup> Work, however, was not necessarily defined by the exchange of labour for financial reward, and leading a 'useful life' could equally be defined within the sphere of political and social action. Both Catherine Philips and Margaret Priestman Tanner were active as single women in the Anti-Corn Law League and Margaret Priestman Tanner appears to have been a skilled organiser of tea-parties, soirees and bazaar stalls and had a 'keen eye for profit' on behalf of the League.<sup>82</sup> In the 1860s she became honorary treasurer of the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts working alongside the Priestman sisters (Anna Maria and Mary) of Bristol and Josephine Butler on the National Committee.<sup>83</sup> Frequently united by kinship, friendship and the structure of the Religious Society of Friends, remaining single enabled these women to dedicate their time and lives to the early women's movement from the mid-nineteenth century, offering opportunities for political and social influence.

However, it has to be acknowledged that being single was not necessarily a happy option for some Quaker women and some suffered the indignities which Wollstonecraft so eloquently described, '...to be an humble companion to some rich old cousin, or what is still worse, to live with strangers, who are so intolerably tyrannical, that none of their own relations can bear to live with them'.<sup>84</sup> Hannah Richardson's letter to her friend Esther Tuke echoes almost exactly Wollstonecraft's warnings as she described the ambiguous status she was likely to experience as companion to Lindley and Hannah Murray in York—genteel lady companion one minute but reduced to the status of a servant out in the kitchen the next:

Sister Mary says she understood they wished to have a person who they could have to sit with them sometimes, or send into the kitchen when they chose, now I think there must have been some mistake on that head, to be sure it may sometimes occur that when there was company, my presence might be an intrusion, and at such times I should be very sorry to be in the way but I should not expect that to be the case generally.<sup>85</sup>

Security of employment could be a problem for Quaker women as it was for all women. When Isabel Richardson became housekeeper to her cousin Thomas Priestman of Hull in 1812, she formed an unacceptable romantic attachment to him, causing a rift between Thomas and his fiancé Esther Tuke, and she was eventually, and after much difficulty, removed from her post.<sup>86</sup> Generally Quaker women's patterns of employment and opportunities to earn a living were not very different from those of women in secular society. The difference lay within the culture of the Religious Society of Friends where earning a living as a single, respectable female member of the *petite bourgeoisie* brought neither stigma nor pressure to marry.

#### CONCLUSION

That Quaker women faced numerous obstacles in the search for a husband has to be recognised. Besides requiring that the man be a member of the Society and overcoming the unfavourable demographics of the Society, they had also to find a man who came from the right social and financial background, who had the same level of spiritual devotion and also be someone whom they could love. Fulfilling all these requirements in this period was difficult, and as a consequence, many Quaker women remained single. For Quaker women who did remain single, membership of the Meeting offered companionship and security as well as providing them with a forum from which they could draw strength and status, where their self-worth and self-esteem could be reinforced and reinvigorated. All single Quaker women had their work within the community of their Meeting, which gave them a sense of belonging, and opportunities for independent action were abundant for the never-married woman both within the Society and within their secular communities. Their influence extended beyond that of being a woman alone, to being disciplinarians, organisers, overseers of morals, charity workers and religious leaders as well as being vital to the success of the family enterprise and upholders of familial values and family financial success. This gave them a separate sphere within which to operate, creating a network of self-supporting and self-fulfilling relationships.<sup>87</sup> Single Quaker women who were ministers had a vocation, which enhanced their ability to justify their desire to remain single, dedicating their lives to their 'calling' from God. It attests to the value placed on all single women within the Religious Society of Friends and to their importance to the organisation of the Society as a whole that they could retain their autonomy, making their own choices as to marriage, and were able to pursue their lives without disapproval either from the membership of their own Meeting or from the hierarchy of the Society. The Religious Society of Friends had a history of upholding its own distinctive ideals and doctrine and this governed the way Quaker women were socialised and educated. It is significant that these unique social mores

allowed the development of a culture within which concepts of female singleness were redefined to enable women to choose not only to remain single but also to pursue their own preferences without pressure to conform to societal ideals.

## NOTES

\* Quoted in Holton, S.S., *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780–1930*, London: Routledge, 2007, p. 92.

1. Austen, J., *Emma*, London: Penguin, 1966. Whilst using this example of how single women could be treated, it is acknowledged that Emma was chastised by Mr Knightley for her discourtesy to Miss Bates at the picnic on Box Hill.

2. As Jean Kern has pointed out single women were portrayed as being a burden on their relatives and surplus in the economy as men increasingly took over occupations which in the Early Modern period had been both respectable and available to never-married women. Kern, J.M., 'The Old Maid, or "to grow old, and be poor, and laughed at"', in M.A. Schofield and C. Macheski (eds.), *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists 1670–1815*, Ohio: Athens, 1987, pp. 201–14; For single women in the eighteenth century, see Froide, A.M., *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; Froide, 'Marital Status as a Category of Difference: Singlewomen and Widows in Early Modern England', in J.M. Bennett and A.M. Froide (eds.), *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250–1800*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, pp. 236–69; Hufton, O., 'Women without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Family History* (Winter 1984), pp. 355–76; Anderson, M., 'The Social Position of Spinsters in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Journal of Family History* (Winter 1984), pp. 377–93; Wright, S., "'Holding up Half the Sky": Women and their Occupations in Eighteenth-Century Ludlow', *Midland History* 14 (1989), pp. 53–74. For the mid-nineteenth century, see Vicinus, M., *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850–1920*, London: Virago, 1985.

3. These distinctions had their roots in Common Law. Widows and single women enjoyed an independent legal status as *femes soles* whilst married women surrendered this upon marriage to their husbands, in legal terms becoming *femes covert*s. For more on these distinctions see Froide, *Never Married*, pp. 15–42.

4. Fox, G., *A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles, Letters and Testemonies*, London, 1698, 2:323–24.

5. Quoted in Trevett, C., *Women and Quakerism in the 17th Century*, York: Sessions, 1991, p. 82. The origins of the Inner Light: John 1.9, 'The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world'. John calls Christ the light of the world (John 1.4). Friends believed all men and women to have some measure of this soul-saving, divine light given to them as individuals.

6. William Penn writing in the seventeenth-century in a letter to his children cautioned that marriage was a matter of choice and should be entered into with great care and consideration. 'If [my emphasis] you incline to marry, then marry your inclination rather than for material gain; ... I mean what you love rather than what is rich... lay it before the Lord, proceed in his fear...'. *A letter from William Penn to his wife and children. Written a little before his first voyage to America and first published in the London Chronicle, 1761*, London, Darton & Harvey, 1797.

7. For Quaker women, see Mack, P., *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992; Plant, H., 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities 1770–1830 with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', DPhil dissertation, University of York, 2000; Wright, S., *Friends in York: The Dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780–1860*, Keele: Keele University Press, 1995; Larson, R., *Daughters of the Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700–1775*, New York: Knopf, 1999.

8. Trevett, *Women and Quakerism*, p. 14.

9. Mack, P., 'Religion, Feminism and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-century Quakerism', in S. Knott and B. Taylor (eds.), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, London: Palgrave, 2005, p. 434.

10. Duncan, A., 'Power and the Old Maid: The Never-married Gentlewoman in her Family, 1740–1835', *Women's History Magazine* 63 (2010), pp. 11–18. Alison Duncan shows in her study of the family of Robert Adam that single gentlewomen could be of immense importance as upholders of family honour and prestige. Sandra Holton has also stressed the importance of single women within the organisation and management of family life. Holton, *Quaker Women*.

11. By the first decade of the nineteenth century the Religious Society of Friends was beginning to be affected by the rising influence of evangelicalism and it was to become a source of division within the Society. Divisions would arise between those who wished to retain the original 'Inward Light' based doctrine of the Society and those who wished to espouse a doctrine which, whilst retaining the mysticism of the 'Inward Light', sought to seek revelation from the Bible. This led to two major schisms in this period. In 1800–1801 Hannah Barnard from New York caused consternation amongst British Friends with her espousal of the equalitarian principles of the French Revolution and her subsequent preaching. This was especially problematic to British Friends when Britain was engaged in conflict against Napoleon. In 1835 further divisions were caused by Issac Crewdson, a Kendal Friend who published *A Beacon to the Society of Friends* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., Darton & Harvey, 1835) which argued that mysticism had no place in the beliefs of the Society and that the Inner Light as a primary rule of faith and practice had no basis in Scripture.

12. In this period conditions for women changed considerably. In the last decades of the eighteenth century many Quaker women were still involved in the daily operation of the family enterprise, living over the shop as in the case of Elizabeth Cadbury in Birmingham and Sarah Rowntree in York. As these enterprises became more prosperous and social attitudes to women were influenced by changing perceptions of a 'woman's place', women increasingly found themselves moved out to the suburbs, becoming distanced from the family business. Although increasingly the next generation of women were no longer involved in the daily running of the family business, new opportunities were opening up for them in the wider world of philanthropy and social activism. For the changing position of middle-class women, see Davidoff, L., and Hall, C., *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-class 1780–1850*, London: Hutchinson, 1987.

13. Adelaide Darby was the daughter of Francis Darby of Coalbrookdale and Hannah Grant. She lived at Coalport, down river from the great Coalbrookdale iron works. In her early life she was fully engaged in the work and lifestyle of the Religious Society of Friends. But around the age of 23 she appears to have joined the Church of England. Thomas, E. (ed.), *The Private Journal of Adelaide Darby of Coalbrookdale from 1833–1861*, York: Sessions, 2004.

14. For a discussion on evangelicalism and the nature of evangelical religion see Bebbington, D.W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London: Unwin, 1989; Rosman, D.M., *Evangelicals and Culture*, Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984. For evangelicalism and Quakerism, see Mingins, R., 'Light within or Beacon without? An Evaluation of the Impact of Evangelicalism on Quakers 1820–1840', *Quaker Studies* 8/1 (2003), pp. 51–67; Wright, *Friends in York*, pp. 21–30.

15. Hill, B., *Women Alone: Spinsters in England 1660–1850*, London: Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 143–60; Valenze, D.M., *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 116–17; Hill, B., *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-century England*, London: UCL, 1994, pp. 221–39; Wilson, L., *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality amongst Nonconformists 1825–1875*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000; Hufton, 'Women without Men', pp. 368–69.

16. Quoted in Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 325.

17. Hopkins, J.K., *A Woman to Deliver her People: Joanna Southcott and English Millenarianism in an Era of Revolution*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982, p. 13.

18. This vision was based on a passage in the book of Revelations which declares 'Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready' (Rev. 19:7).

19. Turner, J.M., *John Wesley: The Evangelical Revival and the Rise of Methodism in England*, Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2002, pp. 157-58. Wesley was somewhat ambiguous in respect to ideas surrounding marriage—he was a married man but frequently expressed apparently contradictory ideas with respect to women and marriage.

20. The number of single women members within Methodism was much higher than amongst single men, sometimes to the tune of three to one. In a total sample of 80,564 members, the female mean was 57.7%. Hill, *Women Alone*, p. 147. Linda Wilson in her study of Baptist, Primitive Methodist, Congregational and Wesleyan women's obituaries found that references to domesticity were most frequent amongst married women and that this was most notable within the Baptist and Congregational communities, whereas within Primitive and Wesleyan Methodism, domesticity was less frequently a concern. Of the women studied, 22% were single (excluding widows) and both within the Baptist, Congregational and Wesleyan sample, references to domesticity were 100%, 93% and 95% respectively but for Primitive Methodist single women it was only 44%, indicating that emphasis on the home was not of such importance. Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, pp. 140-42. Within Primitive Methodism and the West Country based Bible Christian Connexion, single female preachers were preeminent, although upon marriage they had to cease preaching. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, p. 117; Swift, W., 'The Women Itinerant Preachers of Early Methodism: The Bible Christian Itinerant Females', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 29 (1953), p. 76. Of 28 Primitive Methodist female preachers, only one-third ever married. Primitive Methodist Ministers, list compiled by W. Leary 1970-1977 (unpublished, John Rylands Library, Manchester).

21. In the Yorkshire Quarterly Meeting between 1791 and 1836, women outnumbered men in all decades. See Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 146; Plant, H., 'Patterns and Practices of Women's Leadership in the Yorkshire Quaker Community 1760-1820', *Quaker Studies* 10 (2006), pp. 223-42; Wright, S., 'Quakerism and its Implications for Quaker Women: The Women Itinerant Ministers of York Meeting 1780-1840', *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990), pp. 405-407. But in Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting men outnumbered women in all decades. There were 25 male Ministers and Elders and 18 females in the Quarterly Meeting of Ministers & Elders between 1780 and 1860. There are several years when no female minister or elder attended Quarterly Meeting. Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting of Ministers & Elders, 28.7.1721-14.6.1865, Soc. Fr. 11 (Lincolnshire County Archives, hereinafter LCA).

22. The growing influence of evangelicalism can be seen in the considerable consternation expressed by prominent men Friends (J.J. Gurney in particular) in respect to the dominance of women Ministers at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to the extent that some considered that the practice should cease. Women, such as Sarah Lynes Grubb, fought hard to ensure that women's preaching was retained. See Gurney, J.J., *Observations on the Peculiarities of Friends*, York: W. Alexander, 1824, pp. 224-25.

23. This did not change until 1860 when the marriage rule was relaxed and Friends were no longer disowned for marrying outside the Religious Society of Friends.

24. Froide, *Never Married*, pp. 2-3.

25. Marshall, T.H., 'The Population Problem during the Industrial Revolution: A Note on the Present State of the Controversy', in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*, London: Arnold, 1974, pp. 258-60.

26. Vann, R.T., and Eversley, D.E.C., *Friends in Life and Death: The British and Irish Quakers in the Demographic Transition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 108-109, 124-25. The problems associated with finding a Quaker mate are highlighted by the disownment figures for the Society in this period. These show that in both York and Bristol Monthly Meetings marriage outside the Society was the largest cause of disownments. Rates of disownment for marriage-out in this period were Bristol Monthly Meeting approximately 28.9%; York Preparative Meeting approximately 9.7% and Settle Monthly Meetings 17%. Women in all the above Meetings were more likely to marry-out. Wright, *Friends in York*, pp. 121-28; Wright, S., 'Town and Country: Living as a Friend in Urban and Rural Yorkshire 1780-1860', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 61 (2006), pp. 3-31.

27. High Wycombe Monthly Meeting, Buckinghamshire in 1820 had 47 female members; it appears that 15 (32%) of these died single. Mellor, H., and Mellor, J., *Seekers and Finders: Quakers in High Wycombe, 1650–2000: A Brief History*, York: Sessions, 2003, p. 45.

28. Book of Burial Notes Spalding & Wainfleet Monthly Meeting, 1849–1868, Soc. Fr. 144; Book of Burial notes Spalding & Wainfleet Monthly Meeting 1839–1852, Soc. Fr. 142; Society of Friends Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting Burials Register, 1637–1837, Soc. Fr. 154 (LCA). Figures were compiled using Vann and Eversley's method of only noting those women who were buried as ever-single women. The story of Quakerism in Lincolnshire in the period 1750–1850 is of a dwindling membership and a consolidation of Meetings. Membership had fallen from a high of 1,107 in 1720–29, to a low of 165 (some of whom would have been Attenders and not in membership) recorded as attending Meeting on the Sunday of the Religious Census on 30 March 1851 in Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting. The Quarterly Meetings consisted of six Meetings for Worship, including Gainsborough, Brant Broughton and Spalding. By this period Lincoln Meeting for Worship had closed although the Meeting House was used for special events, including Quarterly Meeting.

29. These figures have to be treated with caution because the manuscript submissions are based on evidence collected by Rowntree for his prize-winning essay and the way local Meetings submitted their figures for marriages and for membership figures varied widely. Rowntree, J.S., *Quakerism Past & Present: Being an Enquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain & Ireland*, London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1859; Joseph Rowntree statistics: Marriage Regulations: Documents & correspondence, no. 1., Temp. MSS, Box 93 (Religious Society of Friends Library, London, hereafter RSFL); Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 121; Wright, 'Town and Country', pp. 3–31.

30. Vann and Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death*, p. 108.

31. Vann and Eversley, *Friends in Life and Death*, p. 105.

32. Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 120.

33. Dresser, M. (ed.), *The Diary of Sarah Fox*, Bristol Records Society, 55, Bristol, 2003, pp. 15, 31–38.

34. Extracted from Lincolnshire Women's Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 4.9.1703–15.6.1865, Soc. Fr. 8 (LCA).

35. Wright, *Friends in York*, pp. 31–39; Broughton Women's Monthly Meeting Minute Book 1778–1798, Soc. Fr. 40; Lincolnshire Women's Quarterly Meeting Minute Book, 4.9.1703–15.6.1865, Soc. Fr. 8 (LCA).

36. Dymond, A., *Some Account of Ann Dymond late of Exeter*, York: Hargrove, 1820, p. 30. Ann Dymond was born in Exeter on 10.2.1768 and died 28.6.1816. Over the sixteen-year period of her journal from 1800, she undertook six major ministerial journeys visiting most of the counties of Southern England and the Midlands. She became a minister in 1799 and lived in Exeter all her life.

37. Dymond, *Some Account of Ann Dymond*, pp. 22–42.

38. Wakefield, P., *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex: With Suggestions for its Improvement*, London: Darton & Harvey, 1817, p. 30. For a recent assessment of Quaker women's education, see Leach, C., 'Quaker Women and Education from the Late Eighteenth to the Nineteenth Century', PhD dissertation, King Alfred's College, Winchester, 2003.

39. Wakefield, *Reflections*, pp. 21, 86.

40. Wakefield, *Reflections*, p. 43. Marian Reid writing 25 years later (1843) echoed Wakefield, declaring that 'A proper education...be that training which assists the mind to look into itself, which enables it to see its own powers and to use them effectively'. She abhorred the prevailing educational mores by which girls were prevented from independent thought resulting in them being 'subdued into mere automatons'. Reid, M., *A Plea for Woman*, Edinburgh: Polygon, 1988, p. 85.

41. Dresser (ed.), *The Diary of Sarah Fox*, p. xvii. This was a very emotive and powerful comparison given Friends involvement in the campaign during this period to abolish the trade in slaves and slavery itself.

42. Dresser (ed.), *The Diary of Sarah Fox*, p. xvi. Sarah Champion Fox was born in 1742. She was not a minister in the Religious Society of Friends but had a full role in the administration of



Bristol Monthly Meeting. She also had a wide and eclectic circle of friends and was known for her intellectual interests.

43. On her 48th birthday just prior to her wedding she was downcast at the idea of this being her last birthday with her own name writing 'Second day was my 48th birthday & the last I shall have a claim to a name I have so long owned'. Dresser (ed.), *The Diary of Sarah Fox*, p. 122.

44. Monk, W. (ed.), *The Journals of Caroline Fox, 1835–1871*, London: Elek, 1972. Caroline Fox (1819–1851) and Anna Maria Fox (1816–1897). Caroline Fox's journal provides a daily record of their wide social and intellectual interests. They came from a longstanding Quaker family who had been settled in Falmouth for several decades. Their father, Robert Were Fox, was a shipping agent in Falmouth and a geologist; he was made a member of the Royal Society in 1848 and gathered around him a wide circle of scientific and literary personalities, including Thomas and Jane Carlyle, Hartley Coleridge and John Stuart Mill. Anna Maria left instructions that her journals should be destroyed upon her death. Further details of her life can be found in the DQB (RSFL).

45. Tylor, C., *Memoirs of Elizabeth Dudley*, London: Bennett, 1861. For a discussion on female friendship amongst Friends, see Wright, S., "'Every Good Woman Needs a Companion of her Own Sex": Quaker Women and Spiritual Friendship, 1750–1850', in S. Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750–1900*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002, pp. 89–104.

46. I will refer to her throughout as Margaret Priestman Tanner to avoid confusion. She married first Daniel Wheeler and second Arthur Tanner. She preferred to use the term 'domestic Associate' rather than wife. Quoted in Holton, *Quaker Women*, pp. 87–95, 97.

47. Quoted in Howe, K., "'Female Friends": The Darby Women of Coalbrookdale, 1744–1821', PhD dissertation, University of Keele, 2006, p. 227.

48. Quoted in Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 110.

49. Caroline Fox formed an attachment to John Sterling, possibly an engagement. Sterling had been a curate to Julius Hare at Hurstmonceaux but gave up the Church. Monk, *The Journals of Caroline Fox*, pp. 24–25; Letter from Sarah Richardson to Robert Coates dated 1.10.1850, Richardson family private papers. Coates was a vicar in the Church of England and she refused his proposal, expressing her life-long conviction in the beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends and saying she felt that they would have 'too important a difference of religious feeling to find happiness'.

50. Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 106–108. She encouraged her friend Emily Davis to establish a Cambridge college for the higher education of women that became Girton College, Cambridge University. O'Donnell, E., "'On Behalf of all Young Women Trying to be Better than they are": Feminism and Quakerism in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Anna Deborah Richardson', *Quaker Studies* 6 (2001), pp. 37–58.

51. Barbara Scott to Mary Maria Scott, letter dated 1780. Tuke papers, 52(Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, University of York, hereafter BIHR).

52. There was no formal ministry within the Religious Society of Friends. To become a recognised minister an individual stood up at Meeting for Worship and spoke and so long as their words were considered to be the spontaneous outpourings of God's words and their ministry was acceptable, the individual would become a recorded minister. From the earliest years of Quakerism, both George Fox and Margaret Fell advocated the ministry of women and the Religious Society of Friends accepted that women should minister. From the 1730s onwards as the Society became increasingly regulated, so did the ministry. The Meeting for Ministers and Elders was formed to record recognised Ministers within a Meeting, signalling the acceptance of their Ministry by their own Meeting, Quarterly Meeting and Yearly Meeting. This was especially relevant by the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century when doctrinal differences were beginning to emerge as exemplified by the controversy surrounding the ministry of Hannah Barnard (see n. 12). Travelling ministers were supported both financially, usually a discreet collection within their own Meeting, and practically by the Meetings to which they travelled. The visited Meeting would provide the Minister with onward travel usually by horseback, often riding pillion

or by coach and also with hospitality. Wright, *Friends in York*, pp. 43–49; Hope Bacon, M., *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986, pp. 29–41.

53. Mack, 'Religion, Feminism and the Problem of Agency', p. 439; Hampson, D., 'On Autonomy and Heteronomy', in D. Hampson (ed.), *Swallowing a Fishbone? Feminist Theologians Debate Christianity*, London: SPCK, 1996, p. 2.

54. 'John Alderson' entry in the DQB (RSFL); Mary Fylde placed her marriage ahead of the Certificate she had obtained to travel in the Ministry to America. Larson, *Daughters of the Light*, p. 136. Interestingly Larson, in her list of colonial American Quaker women ministers active between 1700–1775, shows a possible 148 single women out of a total list of 353, or just under half (pp. 320–33).

55. *Memoirs of the Life of Catherine Phillips*, London, 1797, p. 47–66, 206. Between June 1753 and July 1755 she travelled 8,750 miles through the eastern seaboard of America, as far south as South Carolina with Mary Peisley. One of many entries in her journal relates to her sister's marriage which left Catherine with a 'load of domestic concerns'; the care of her aged mother and her brother's frequent 'indispositions'.

56. *Memoirs of the Life of Catherine Phillips*, pp. 207, 210. This advice did not fall on deaf ears; Hannah Chapman Backhouse wrote that she could '...dwell on no other with satisfaction than that of becoming such a character as Catherine Phillips'. Her father also wished his daughters to emulate her commenting 'How I wish some of you would come round and make such characters as Catherine Phillips...' *Extracts from the Journal and Letters of Hannah Chapman Backhouse*, London: Richard Barrett, 1858, p. 15.

57. Backhouse, K. (ed.), *A Memoir of Mary Capper*, London: 1847, p. 73. Mary Capper remained single all her very long life—she died aged 91 in 1845.

58. *Some Account of the Life and Religious Exercises of Mary Neale formerly Mary Piesley*, Dublin: John Gough, 1795, p. 73.

59. Larson, *Daughters of the Light*, pp. 135–36. Larson found that in her sample of Quaker women ministers, whilst most did eventually marry, they were on average ten years older upon marriage than the general Quaker population.

60. Bennett and Froide, *Single Women in the European Past*, p. 17.

61. Will of Henry Hawks of Spalding, Lincolnshire, dated 1804. Quaker Wills for Lincolnshire, Brace Archives, 2–3 (LCA).

62. Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 147.

63. O'Donnell, 'On Behalf of all Young Women Trying to be Better than they are', p. 45

64. Wollstonecraft, M., *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in the more Important duties of Life*, Johnson: London, 1787, pp. 69–71. In this text Wollstonecraft extrapolated Enlightenment ideals that included the education of women. She argued that their rational natures were no less capable of intellectual achievement than were those of men. One of the most important and exceptional single Quaker women of her period was Sarah Darby of Coalbrookdale who effectively ran the Coalbrookdale ironworks from 1797 to 1821. Howe, 'Female Friends', pp. 238–73.

65. Robert Adam and his sisters were not Quakers but are an example of how sisters were of great importance in the pursuance of one man's business success. Duncan, 'Power and the Old Maid', pp. 11–14.

66. Margaret Wood's father was a clog maker and shopkeeper in Bolton, Lancashire and the family appear to have struggled to make a living. Her brother became firstly a mustard manufacturer and subsequently a cotton twister, a cotton spinner and an accountant in Bolton. He ultimately emigrated to America, as did one of his sisters. Holton, *Quaker Women*, p. 12; Holton, S.S., 'Religion and the Meanings of Work: Four Cases from amongst the Bright Circle of Women Quakers', in K. Cowman and L.A. Jackson (eds.), *Women and Work Culture in Britain c. 1850–1950*, London: Ashgate, 2005, pp. 48–69.

67. Letter from Esther Maud (Tuke) to William Tuke dated 2.12.1764, Tuke Papers, folder 1, (BIHR). In this she explains her family's financial predicament. She hints that she does not want or

expect him to marry her to help relieve her family finances. In fact he did help financially, supporting her mother until her death. Her father was a plush maker (this involved finishing off wool, silk or cotton cloth to create a rich, raised, long haired pile). She had three brothers, all of whom appear to have been financially reckless, even immoral. It was Joseph who spent £600 in two years (he disappeared to America and was never to return), crippling his father financially in his attempt to pay his son's debts and potentially threatening him with disownment.

68. Wright, *Friends in York*, pp. 133–34. Esther Maud (Tuke) was probably one of the most important and influential of the Quaker women ministers of the late eighteenth century. Born in Bingley, near Bradford in 1727, she died in 1794.

69. Holton, 'Religion and the Meanings of Work', p. 56.

70. Monk, *The Journals of Caroline Fox*, pp. 219–20. Barclay Fox (1817–1855) died in Egypt, close to the pyramids and Caroline notes in her journal that he died of the 'breaking of a blood vessel, and then he fell asleep, literally asleep—and woke in his Saviour's arms'.

71. Anderson, 'The Social Position of Spinsters in Mid-Victorian Britain', pp. 383–85.

72. Skedd, S., 'Women Teachers and the Expansion of Girl's Schools in England 1760–1820', in H. Baker and E. Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, London and New York: Longman, 1997, pp. 101–105. In Oxfordshire between 1750 and 1810 the number of girls' schools increased from 25 to 62.

73. Stoke Newington was founded by William Allen on his estate in Lordship Road and he first alluded to it in 1823. Allen, interested in the Lancasterian system, supported the Quaker girls' boarding school founded in 1824. Sturge, H.W., and Clark, T., *The Mount School, York 1785–1814 and 1831–1931*, London: J.M. Dent, 1931. The school was originally founded in 1785 by Esther Tuke, her daughters and a group of women Friends from York Meeting.

74. Leach, C., "'A Civil and Useful Life': Quaker Women, Education and the Development of Professional Identities 1800–1850", *Quaker Studies* 11(2007), pp. 166–79. The Howards were heavily influenced by the Lancastrian system developed by the British and Foreign Schools Society. In 1812 The Borough Road College was established under the BFSS. It took young women from all denominations (aged over 18) and who had frequently undertaken an 'apprenticeship' or been a 'pupil teacher' in a school. They received a certificate of competence at the end of their training.

75. In 1841, four single female teachers are listed at the Mount School and three apprentice teachers. John S. Rowntree papers, box 93, 4/72, Friends House Library, London. Lydia Rous started her teaching career as governess to Helen Bright, who was John Bright's daughter from his first marriage to Elizabeth Priestman.

76. If Quakers employed a governess, they tried to ensure she was a Friend so that their pupils would be instilled with Quaker ideals of education, lifestyle and religious feeling. However, whilst being able to educate your child at home with a governess was evidence of the success of the household, it has to be recognised that it also bore witness to the financial failure of the Quaker households from which the governess came.

77. Joseph Binyon was a farmer in Holbeach Marsh on the edge of the Wash and he had one daughter, Sarah Elizabeth. Spalding Monthly Meeting Membership List 1837–1871, Soc. Fr. 91 (LCA).

78. Monk, *The Journals of Caroline Fox*; DQB entry for Anna Maria Fox. The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society Committee was dominated by Fox family members in its early years. Anna Maria wanted to establish an environment where men could bring their inventions and designs and to have the assistance and advice of more experienced mechanics. Most of the men worked in the Perran iron foundry owned by the Fox family. The Polytechnic placed particular emphasis on art and design. It is still in existence today and has a programme of arts-based events.

79. In York, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire most middle-class Quakers had 2–3 live-in female servants; housekeepers; maids; nursery maids; cooks etc. In all these Meetings the largest number of people removing into and removing out of the Meeting were domestic servants. Certificates of Removal, Lincolnshire Quarterly Meeting, 23.10.1804–14.1.1896, Soc. Fr. 181/144 (loose sheets), (LCA); Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 179. The 1851 Census showed that domestic service provided

the largest source of employment for unmarried women 22.5%. Anderson, 'The Social Position of Spinsters in Mid-Victorian Britain', p. 384.

80. Wright, *Friends in York*, pp. 185, 195. Froide has shown that in the early eighteenth century lower-ranking single women had a surprisingly wide range of opportunities to earn their own living. Froide, *Never Married*, pp. 87-116. A more detailed study of Ludlow, Shropshire in 1851 shows that of 173 spinsters in the town, 74 were employed in trades linked to women's clothing, including hatters, mantua makers, dressmakers etc. Wright, 'Holding up Half the Sky', p. 67.

81. See Midgley, C., *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870*, London: Routledge, 1992; Wright, *Friends in York*, pp. 69-80.

82. Holton, 'Religion and the Meanings of Work', p. 56.

83. These were just a few of the many Quaker women who were increasingly involved in the various women's rights campaigns in the nineteenth century.

84. Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, p. 110.

85. Hannah Richardson to Esther Tuke, letter dated 4.3.1814. Tuke papers, 38 (BIHR).

86. A series of letters between Martha Smith and Esther Tuke reveal the problems associated with Isabel Richardson's attachment to Thomas Priestman. Letters dated 9.8.1818; 28.1.1819. Tuke papers, 41 & 46 (BIHR). She was eventually rehabilitated within the family and came to have a formidable reputation as a woman and as a preacher. She married Henry Casson of Hull Monthly Meeting on 14 January 1824, age 47.

87. For Quaker women's friendships and support systems, see Wright, 'Every Good Woman Needs a Companion of her Own Sex', pp. 89-104.

#### AUTHOR DETAILS

Sheila Wright taught eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history in the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of York until her retirement in 2007. Her publications include *Friends in York: The Dynamics of Quaker Revival, 1780-1860* and she has published widely on Quaker women, including papers on Quaker women's journals, spiritual friendship and women and the family. She is still actively involved in researching the lives of Quaker women and is currently working on a study of the role of Quaker women in the social and political life of York in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. She was President of the Friends Historical Society for 2006 and is a member of the International Review Panel for the journal *Quaker Studies*.

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