

**The Power of Preaching: Female Identity, Legitimacy, and Leadership in
American Quakerism, 1700-1776**

by

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Abstract

Although 18th-century Quakerism allowed Quaker women ministers to preach as “enlightened” women, in many ways, they still had to transcend the colonial social conventions that inhibited their leadership. Because their willingness to challenge social norms was intricately tied to their willingness to “follow God,” they utilized their spiritual journals to deal with the internal tensions that were a central part of their gendered spiritual identities. Through their journals, they demonstrate the methods they used to negotiate authority and to circumvent challenges to their leadership as women and as preachers (or Public Friends).

Because their claims to authority were shaped by their gendered conceptions of spiritual identity and the specific challenges they faced as female Public Friends, the content, language, and structures of their journals elucidate how the interaction of Anglo-American cultural values and Quaker beliefs affected their personal struggles and spiritual triumphs. A textual analysis of the internal workings of their religious beliefs in their personal lives suggests the limits and extent of their authority as leaders, and provides a point of departure for assessing both the “exceptionality,” and the congruence of Quaker women’s lives with those of other colonial religious women.

As public ministers and participants in a larger controversy over individual authority and the meaning of spirituality during the revival period, the lives of the female ministers discussed here exemplify the potential for female leadership within the Society of Friends and within the broader 18th-century American religious culture. As promoters of charity, role-models for female piety, and overseers of their families and religious community, they also represented the potential for expanded female roles within the new Republic. As the forebears of 19th-century Quaker female reformers, who were instrumental in reforms such as suffrage, temperance, women's rights, abolition, and prison reform, the experiences of these 18th-century Quaker female preachers suggest the roots of female empowerment in a controversial religious group.

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Rebecca Jones

Jones, Rebecca. "Memorials of Rebecca Jones."
Compiled by William J. Allinson. Philadelphia: Henry Longstreth, 1849.

Introduction

By prioritizing women's spiritual lives and placing some women in positions of authority, the Religious Society of Friends allowed some Quaker women to act as spiritual exemplars within the group and as public representatives within the larger colonial American society. Between 1700 and 1775, historian Rebecca Larson found that anywhere from 1,300 to 1,500 female Quakers traveled within the British Empire to spread their faith.¹ By recording and preserving their experiences, the Society of Friends insured that many of these women would not be among the women hidden from history. The careful and extensive records of women's activities within the Society of Friends and the number of autobiographical works written by Quaker women present a unique opportunity to understand women's experiences from the perspective of an "alternative" religious culture.²

As adherents of an unconventional faith and members of a distinct religious community, many Quaker women developed a keen sense of their own importance as "divinely inspired" women. Female Friends were honored by their Quaker

¹ Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 110-111.

² Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 222. See also Catherine Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), especially 7-10, 31, 44-45, 52, 63, and 67 for a discussion of the sources available for other religious women and the reasons for their absence in the historical records. As Larson points out, Quakerism was one of several religious alternatives open to white women. See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 4. The same opportunities for leadership within the Society of Friends were not open to black or native women. See Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 122. See also Jean Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 12, 177, and 183. Some black people in the area of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting did speak at all-black meetings conducted by white Quaker ministers, though such vocal participation was apparently rare. See also Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 84-85.

contemporaries in letters, diaries, deathbed statements, and memorials; fellow Quakers described the importance of women as daughters, wives, mothers, ministers, and elders.³ As many women recorded their own experiences in letters, diaries, and journals, they participated in a long tradition of Quaker autobiographical writing, which encouraged their participation and their leadership.⁴

As Quaker women wrote about their experiences, they were aware of the instructive power of their spiritual journeys and the relevance of their personal struggles for future generations. This awareness was, perhaps, most acute among Quaker female ministers, whose roles as Public Friends gave their lives added significance. As conduits of “God’s word” and as certified leaders within their religious community, these women were an elite group, believed to have a special calling.⁵ Many were also likely among the most literate Quaker women,⁶ and were, perhaps, the most likely to recognize the religious and historical significance of their ministries and their writings.

Like many of the celebrated male and female preachers before them, some felt “compelled” by God to compile their experiences in journals, providing their readers with

³ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 222.

⁴ For a sampling of some early Quaker women’s narratives see Mary Garman and others, eds., *Hidden in Plain Sight: Quaker Women’s Writings, 1650-1700* with a foreword by Rosemary Radford Ruether (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1996), 151-306.

⁵ All Quakers believed that Christ dwelled within all people and directly spoke to every Quaker member. In the late 17th and 18th century, Quaker leaders began to record or certify specific members as ministers. Although all members could speak publicly as they felt “led,” those members who received frequent revelations (deemed beneficial to the whole group) were encouraged to continue speaking and were eventually certified as Public Friends. Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 5.

⁶ Quaker women ministers were likely among the more literate women in colonial society, though this point should not be overstated. See the discussion of Quaker female literacy in Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 83. Some of the women ministers discussed here may have been able to read well but may not have been able to write. Some journals may have been transcribed by others or may have survived only in the handwriting of others.

composite summaries of their spiritual lives and their ministries.⁷ Through conversion narratives, spiritual diaries, travel accounts, letters, prayers, and even snippets of sermons often included in their journals, female ministers encouraged, instructed, and extended their spiritual mission in the tradition of their forebears.

Despite the relative abundance of 17th and 18th-century writings about and by Quaker women, and the value traditionally placed on Quaker women's writings by the Society of Friends and Quaker historians, Quaker history has unfortunately not escaped the tendency to marginalize the contributions of female Friends. Although Quaker women have traditionally been more historically visible than other colonial women, their writings and contributions have not been *as valued* as those of Quaker men. As Mary Garman points out in *Hidden in Plain Sight* (1996), Quaker women's writings have not been anthologized like those of Quaker men, and their "insights"—"theological and practical"—have not been fully integrated into historical interpretations of significant

⁷ Many of the women whose journals have survived were transatlantic ministers, whose successful missionary travels in the American colonies culminated in the extension of their spiritual mission and influence abroad. Memorials, short biographies, travel certificates, and letters were sometimes added to autobiographical accounts of their childhood, conversion, and travels, usually following their deaths by family members or friends before their journals were circulated and/or published. These documents were often compiled by the ministers themselves or preserved with a composite journal in mind. Some journals were recopied by descendants, published, passed down to descendants, and included in books of discipline, according to Margaret Bacon. See Bacon, *Wilt Thou Go*, 13-14. Quakers freely edited their own journals and those of others. Journals were often edited (typically after the death of the Quaker writers) by family members, friends, or even by editing committees appointed by yearly meetings. Journals selected for publication often underwent extensive editing for content deemed nonessential or controversial for furthering the Quaker faith. For details on Quaker editing, see Luella Wright, *The Literary Life of Early Friends* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932; reprint New York: AMS Press, 1966), 74-238 and George J. Willauer, "Editorial Practices in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia: The Journal of Thomas Chalkley in Manuscript and Print," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107 (April 1983): 217-234.

events and developments within the Quaker movement.⁸ At the source of this problem, she points out, is the failure to differentiate between women's and men's experiences.⁹

Because the foundation of Quaker theology rests on assumptions of spiritual equality, Garman's criticism of Quaker historiography remains particularly relevant.¹⁰ Because the spiritual experiences of Quaker men and women have been viewed as identical, few comparative studies of men's and women's spiritual journals have been conducted by historians. Because many Quaker journals were written by ministers, the tendency to overestimate the practical application of the Quaker belief in spiritual equality has contributed to rather vague historical assessments of female ministerial experience. The general assumption that spiritual equality was realized more fully in the female ministry¹¹ has also, I think, discouraged discussions about the complex challenges Quaker female ministers faced both within the Society of Friends and within the larger colonial American society. While historians tend to make general assessments about the

⁸ Garman, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, 8.

⁹ Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost in their survey of Quaker history use the journal of Quaker Thomas Chalkley to "show the life patterns of many Quaker ministers" and also to "shed light upon the distinctive culture of early Pennsylvania," for example. Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 102.

¹⁰ For example, historian Howard Brinton focuses on the common patterns of spiritual experience that emerge in the journals of men and women, but not the gendered differences in their accounts. Howard Brinton, "Stages in Spiritual Development as Recorded in Quaker Journals (1938)" in *Children of Light in Honor of Rufus M. Jones* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1938). Catherine Blecki's comments in an article published in the 1970s suggested the persistence of the trend among historians and literary scholars, alike. She noted that women's spiritual narratives have often been used by literary scholars as examples of characteristic patterns in Quaker autobiography rather than explored for their contributions to the writing of autobiography or their specific experiences. See Catherine La Correye Blecki, "Alice Hayes and Mary Penington: Personal Identity Within the Tradition of Quaker Spiritual Autobiography," *Quaker History* 65 (1976): 19. Although literary scholars have done a lot to reverse this trend, historians have not focused a lot of attention on the divergent experiences depicted in men's and women's spiritual autobiographies.

¹¹ A fairly recent dissertation makes this point. See Christina Marie Devlin, "Piety Promoted: Female First-Person Narratives in Eighteenth-Century Quakerism and Methodism" (Ph. D. diss., University of Chicago, 2001), 107.

developing nature of women's participation within the government of the Society of Friends, for example, women's ministerial roles have not been given the same attention.¹²

The nature of the autobiographical sources that focus on Quaker religious experiences has also, I think, discouraged historical studies to some extent. Studies like the one undertaken here, which focus on Quaker spiritual lives, tend to rely primarily on autobiographical sources, which lend themselves more to subjective and less definitive conclusions,¹³ while other sources like disciplinary guidelines, proceedings, and meeting minutes often yield less tangential conclusions. Although a few studies have evaluated the limits and extent of female authority and shifting behavioral expectations for female

¹² For example, evidence of internal resistance to American female ministers is scant in most recent histories that focus on 18th-century Quaker women. Larson's monograph on Quaker women who traveled as ministers within the American colonies and abroad emphasizes their reception among non-Quakers rather than the challenges they faced as women within the Society of Friends. See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 232-304. Internal resistance to female ministers is dealt with only briefly in other histories and usually focuses on the 17th-century English context. See for example, Bonnelyn Young Kunze, "'vesells fitt for the masters us[e]': A Transatlantic Community of Religious Women, The Quakers 1675-1753," in *Court, Country, and Culture: Essays on Early Modern British History in Honor of Perez Zagorin* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1992), 193-194. Kunze gives a few examples of resistance to female ministers in the 1680s and 1690s in her article; and mentions the loss of flexibility in some Quakers' attitudes toward women's public ministry especially by 1700 (the year of founder, George Fox's death). See also Jean E. Mortimer, "Quaker Women in the Eighteenth Century: Opportunities and Constraints," *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* 57 (1996): 228-259. Mortimer's article on English female ministers, "Quaker Women in the Eighteenth Century" (1996): 228-259, for example, provides the most compelling evidence of internal resistance to female ministers. Her article also suggests the wealth of information available within the American context, when biographical and autobiographical sources are fully explored. Brief mention of resistance is made in Elise Boulding's "Mapping the Inner Journey of Quaker Women," in *The Influence of Quaker Women on American History: Biographical Studies*, vol. 21 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 82. See also Carla Gerona, "Mapping Ann Moore's Secrets: Dream Production in Eighteenth-Century Quaker Culture," *Journal of Feminist Studies* 16 (2000): 43-54, which discusses some of the anxieties associated with Quaker female preaching and the strategies (particularly dreams) utilized by Quaker women to overcome barriers to their leadership. See also Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 141-150.

¹³ Sometimes it is unclear whether perceptions (expressed in journal accounts) fit the facts, and often the facts are not fully divulged in enough detail to provide an adequate basis for analysis. Although this is true to some extent with other sources (like those mentioned above), journal accounts are especially biased in favor of the autobiographer. Literary scholars have more often than historians taken up this kind of textual analysis and have provided theoretical approaches for addressing these issues in Quaker journals.

Friends over time, for example, many spiritual journals have not been examined for the same purposes or within the American context.¹⁴

Despite some gaps in the scholarship, at present, several books and numerous articles by scholars who have studied colonial American Quaker women have added to our knowledge of Quaker women's spiritual experiences, their authority as leaders, and their contributions within the Society of Friends. The interest of literary scholars in the journals of specific female Friends has also called attention to Quaker women's contributions to the writing of autobiography and their experiences as women, more generally.

The work of scholar, Margaret Hope Bacon, has contributed a great deal to the ongoing process of integrating the history of women's contributions into the general history of American Quakerism. By describing the role of Quaker women ministers in achieving mid 18th-century internal reforms within the Society of Friends in *Mothers of Feminism* (1986), for example, Bacon began to fill some of the gaps left by Jack Marietta's influential study, *The Reformation of American Quakerism* (1984). In describing the experiences of Quaker female ministers in "Quaker Women in Overseas Ministry" (1988), she also laid the groundwork for Rebecca Larson's exploration of the experiences of Quaker female ministers who lived or traveled in the American colonies between 1700 and 1775 in *Daughters of Light* (1999). By discussing the symbiotic relationship between women's meetings and the female ministry, Bacon also pointed to

¹⁴ See for example, Jean Soderlund, "Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (October 1987): 722-749; Jack Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984); and Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

the importance of a transatlantic religious culture created by Quaker women. Further research on the connections between women's meetings in such works as Bonnelyn Kunze's "'vesells fitt for the masters use[e]'" (1992) also demonstrates the contributions women made in sustaining the transatlantic Quaker network.

Local studies concerning the limits and extent of female authority within the government of the Society of Friends have also yielded some important preliminary results. Jean Soderlund's study, "Women's Authority in Pennsylvania and New Jersey Quaker Meetings" (1987), focused on meeting minutes to examine the level of support given to women's business meetings by male leaders, for example. Although she focused on the complementary roles of men's and women's meetings and found that in most cases men's veto power (at least in the meetings she studied) amounted to a formality rather than an exercised right, other local studies suggest the variability of women's experiences. More recently, Matthew Zimmerman's study of female authority in the Salem, Massachusetts Monthly Meeting of Friends suggests that men's support for women's meetings depended on specific circumstances and the personalities involved.¹⁵ Margaret Hope Bacon's discussion of women's influence within various levels of the meeting system also suggests the diversity of experiences as does James LeShana's study of North Carolina meetings.¹⁶

¹⁵ Matthew Zimmerman, "Accommodating the Faith: The Salem, Massachusetts, Monthly Meeting of Friends, 1650-1780" (Greenville, North Carolina): Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists, Guilford College, 2005, manuscript in possession of the author.

¹⁶ See Bacon's brief review of scholarship on women's meetings in "'Wilt Thou Go on My Errand,'" 23-24. Bacon suggests that in the first half of the 18th century women may have begun to challenge male authority. Bacon's discussion of the authority of women's meetings also suggests reluctance on the part of Quaker men to use their veto power, and the varied experiences of women within the meeting structure. See Margaret Hope Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 42-54. See also James David Le Shana, "'Heavenly

Scholars have also made important strides in detailing the spiritual (and psychological) struggles of women in the American colonies. In “Mapping the Inner Journey” (1986), Quaker sociologist, Elise Boulding, for example, examined the gendered religious experiences of 25 Quaker women (including some from the American colonies) and detailed the emotional problems they encountered as women and as ministers during the 18th century. Phyllis Mack’s study of English Quaker women in *Visionary Women* (1992) also transfers easily to the American context and suggests how the cultural values of the larger Anglo culture influenced attitudes about Quaker women, their religious experiences, and their identities. Helen Plant’s recent article-length study, “‘Subjective Testimonies’” (2003) focuses on how 18th and 19th-century English Quaker ministers reacted in their journals to the complexities and ambiguities of discourses on gender and religious authority, and provides an important opportunity for comparison with American female Public Friends; as does Jean Mortimer’s earlier study, “Quaker Women in the 18th Century: Obstacles and Constraints” (1996) which includes an analysis of the gendered experiences of English Quaker ministers.

Studies that deal with the gendered roles and expectations that influenced 18th-century Quakers have also contributed to our understanding of how colonial social norms functioned within the Society of Friends and within the Quaker family. Jack Marietta’s quantitative analysis of disciplinary proceedings in *The Reformation of American Quakerism* (1984) revealed important insights into the differing behavioral expectations

Plantations’: Quakers in Colonial North Carolina” (Ph. D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 1998), 254-279.

and punishments meted out for men and women in the mid 18th century by the Society of Friends in Pennsylvania. Barry Levy's *Quakers and the American Family* (1988) considered how American cultural values influenced the domestic lives and leadership roles of Quaker women, and how they, in turn, contributed to the expansion of women's roles within American society.

Historians of women and gender have also begun to integrate the experiences of Quaker women into the larger framework of colonial American history, and have made some preliminary conclusions about the experiences of Quaker women compared to those of other colonial women. Mary Maples Dunn's important article, "Saints and Sisters" (1978) pointed out how the Quaker beliefs in spiritual rebirth, the Divine Light, and lay ministry, affected women's influence over doctrine, discipline, marriage, and membership. Like, many other studies, her work suggested the "exceptionality" of Quaker women compared to other colonial women. More recently, scholars like Jean Soderlund in "A Model of Diversity," (1991) emphasize how the preeminence of the New England model and the relative lack of studies of non-Quaker religious women have led to the premature labeling of Quaker women as marginal and "exceptional."¹⁷

Nancy Woloch's recent synthesis, *Women and the American Experience* (2006), reflects the growing balance in scholarship on religious women in the American colonies. Woloch emphasizes the commonalities that existed between Quaker and non-Quaker religious women in her brief discussion, while also recognizing that the Quaker religion

¹⁷ Mary Maples Dunn, "Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period," *American Quarterly* 30 (1978): 582-601; Jean Soderlund, "Women in Eighteenth-Century Pennsylvania: Toward a Model of Diversity," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* CXV (April 1991): 163-181.

gave some women exceptional opportunities. Following this trend, for example, Karin Wulf's monograph, *Not All Wives* (2000) contextualizes the experiences of Philadelphian Quaker women within the broader framework of American religious diversity in her comparison of their beliefs and practices with those of local Moravian and Ephratan women.¹⁸

Studies on women preachers in the American colonies have also created the potential for valuable interdenominational comparisons. Catherine Brekus's monograph, *Strangers and Pilgrims* (1998) with its focus on evangelical women involved in the Great Awakening (with brief comparisons to Quakers) provides a good starting point for assessing the social and religious climate that compelled and limited the vocal participation of women as exhorters and preachers in the American colonies. Rebecca Larson's *Daughters of Light* (1999), discussed previously, compliments Brekus's study of non-Quaker women, by providing a crucial foundation for understanding the experiences of Quaker female ministers in the American colonies, including how the religious climate created by the revivals influenced their reception among non-Quakers.

Other scholars have also added considerably to the visibility of Quaker women's writings and offered insightful approaches to the study of men's and women's spiritual autobiography. Numerous studies of Quaker journals by literary scholars have highlighted the individual spiritual experiences of a few 18th-century American Quaker ministers, like John Woolman and, most notably, Elizabeth Ashbridge. Daniel Shea's

¹⁸ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 4 ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2006), 72-73. Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 75-83. Mary Maples Dunn, "Latest Light on Women of Light" in *Witnesses for Change: Quaker Women Over Three Centuries* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 73-75. Dunn's brief discussion of the differences between the experiences of American and English Friends based on how Quakerism developed in the American colonies also suggests the importance of comparative studies on Quaker women from different geographic regions.

Spiritual Autobiography in Early America (1988) compared the religious journals of Ashbridge and Woolman, and offered insight into how the process of writing autobiography created new sites of conflict for Quaker writers. Building on the seminal work by linguistic anthropologist, Richard Bauman, *‘Let Your Words Be Few’* (1983), Shea’s study detailed how group standards and expectations figured into narrative construction.¹⁹ Susan Imbarrato’s study, *Declarations of Independency* (1998), focuses on how the process of self-examination involved in writing spiritual autobiography led to growing subjectivity in the 18th century, for example, and includes a comparative study of the journals of Jonathan Edwards and Elizabeth Ashbridge. William Scheick’s *Authority and Female Authorship* (1998) compares Ashbridge’s journal to the religious writings of other colonial women and focuses on how women registered underlying tensions between personal and orthodox authority in their texts. Joanna Brooks’s dissertation, “Works of the Spirit,” (1999) provides a comparative approach to the literary productions of a

¹⁹ Daniel Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988) and Richard Bauman, *‘Let Your Words Be Few’: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence Among Seventeenth-Century Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; London: Quaker Home Service, 1998); Cristine Levenduski, *Peculiar Power: A Quaker Woman Preacher in Eighteenth-Century America*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); Cristine Levenduski, “‘Remarkable Experiences in the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge’: Portraying the Public Women in Spiritual Autobiography,” *Women’s Studies* 19 (1991): 271-281; Julie Sievers, “Awakening the Inner Light: Elizabeth Ashbridge and the Transformation of Quaker Community,” *Early American Literature* 36 (2001): 235-262; Etta Madden, “Quaker Elizabeth Ashbridge as ‘The Spectable and Discourse of the Company,’” *Early American Literature* 34 (1999): 171-189. Other works on Quaker women’s autobiography include: Althea Stuart, “Good Quaker Women, Tearful Sentimental Spectators, Readers, and Auditors: Four Early Modern Quaker Narratives of Martyrdom and Witness,” *Prose Studies* 29 (April 2007): 73-85; Mary Anne Schofield, “‘Women’s Speaking Justified’: The Feminine Quaker Voice, 1662-1797,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 6 (Spring 1987): 61-77; Carol Edkins, “Quest for Community: Spiritual Autobiographies of Eighteenth-Century Quaker and Puritan Women in America,” in *Women’s Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 39-52. Phebe Davidson, “Workings of the Spirit: Religious Impulse in the Autobiographies of American Women, c. 1630-1893” (Ph. D. diss., Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 1991); Felicity Nussbaum, “Eighteenth-Century Women’s Autobiographical Commonplaces,” in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women’s Autobiographical Writings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 147-171.

diverse group of 18th-century writers (including Quaker ministers, Jane Hoskens and David Ferris), and discusses the history of a shared religious language or “discourse of the Spirit” during the Great Awakening period. D. Britton Gildersleeve’s “I Had a Religious Mother,” (2001) contrasts the experiences of Woolman and Ashbridge and details how religion functioned in the life of Ashbridge, as a woman and a new convert. By focusing on the maternal images in her journal, he outlines the contours of her quest for spiritual identity and “Truth.”²⁰

Despite many positive assessments by scholars, several negative tendencies have also emerged in the scholarship on Quaker women. The reluctance of some scholars to recognize the importance of Quaker religious beliefs in their assessments of Quaker autobiography has contributed to the misrepresentation of Quaker female experiences. The assumption that Quaker autobiographers utilized fictional conventions, without evidence that they even read popular fiction, for example, ignores basic aspects of Quaker faith and practice.²¹ The literary categorization of religious works has often contributed to the mistaken view that Quaker journals represent incomplete realizations of self-expression.²² This is certainly the case in works by literary scholars who associate

²⁰ Susan C. Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency in Eighteenth-Century American Autobiography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 14-39; William Scheick, *Authority and Female Authorship in Colonial America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 82-106; Joanna Brooks, “Works of the Spirit: American Literatures and Religious Cultures, 1771-1797” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1999), 70-119; D. Britton Gildersleeve, “ ‘I Had a Religious Mother’: Maternal Ancestry, Female Spaces, and Spiritual Synthesis in Elizabeth Ashbridge’s Account,” *Early American Literature* 36 (2001): 371-395.

²¹ See, for example, Schofield, ““Women’s Speaking Justified,””61-77. I concur with Patricia Howell Michaelson’s criticism in “Religious Bases of Eighteenth-Century Feminism: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Quakers,” *Women’s Studies* 22 (1993): 292.

²² This observation follows from the discussion in Devlin, “Piety Promoted,” 2. See for example, Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency*, especially 11-15. Imbarrato’s study, which traces the growing

secular autobiographies with intellectual progress and spiritual autobiographies with antiquated ideologies and repression. As Phyllis Mack points out, religion does not remain stagnant but reflects the changing cultural values, which are often associated with progress and secularization.²³

Questions of Quaker female agency have also been complicated by anachronistic standards and current feminist agendas in a number of scholarly works, leading to a devaluation of Quaker religious beliefs and the imposition of modern feminist goals on the lives of Quaker women. Some literary scholars and historians, for example, have conflated Quaker women's feelings of empowerment (as expressed in their writings) with motives for empowerment, when female Friends were uninterested in self-expression or self-promotion.²⁴ At the other extreme, at least one historian has devalued 18th-century Quaker female agency to the extent that Quaker women appear only as "passive pietists,"

subjectivity of 18th-century autobiography, tends to value secular autobiography more highly than spiritual autobiography.

²³ This association of secularization with progress is also ingrained in the way historians approach history. See the discussion in Phyllis Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problems of Agency: Reflections on 18th-Century Quakerism," *Signs* 29 (2002): 149-177.

²⁴ See Michele Lise Tarter, "Nursing the New Wor(l)d: The Writings of Quaker Women in Early America," *Women and Language* 16 (Spring 1993): 22, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed April 29, 2010). Tarter, for example, falls into this in assuming that Quaker women were willing to die for "a voice," for example. See the last paragraph of the article. See Su Fang Ng, "Marriage and Discipline: The Place of Women in Early Quaker Controversies," *Seventeenth Century* 18 (2003), 117 and 133. Ng also tends to present Quaker women as questing after power in their attempts to "seize leadership through public preaching" and to "take control of church government." She also argues that "despite their notions of spiritual equality, Quaker men were not unlike their peers in the established church or in the nation at large." According to Ng, Quaker men "found powerful [Quaker] women threatening and tried to contain these women." In my opinion, she misconstrues the motivations of Quaker women and men and underestimates their religious beliefs. See also the discussion in Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problems of Agency," 149-177.

aberrations in the history of Quaker feminism—valid studies only from the perspective of 19th and 20th-century Quaker activism.²⁵

Because the overriding motives for Quaker women were not secular, it is essential that the language of their journals be understood from the standpoint of their religious motivations. As Margaret Hope Bacon points out, Quaker women often realized spiritual equality gradually and unevenly precisely because they were often inconsistent in their efforts (or even their desire) to realize it.²⁶ It is equally important that the religious emphasis on qualities like obedience and suffering not detract from the agency some Quaker women assumed as ministers. As Phyllis Mack points out, and I concur, the source of female agency matters less than the positive effects of female empowerment.²⁷

The moments of pride expressed in the journals of the Quaker women discussed here clearly reveal their sense of empowerment—the “power of preaching”—and the methods

²⁵ Carole D. Spencer, “Evangelism, Feminism, and Social Reform: The Quaker Woman Minister and the Holiness Revival,” *Quaker History* 80 (1991): 24. See also Linda J. Webster, “Among Friends: Establishing an Oratorical Tradition among Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Era,” in *Rhetoric, Religion, and the Roots of Identity in British Colonial America* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 222. Webster gives the 18th century very little mention and ends her article with an overview of Quaker women reformers in the 19th century.

²⁶ Margaret Hope Bacon, “A Widening Path: Women in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Move Toward Equality, 1681-1929,” in *Friends in the Delaware Valley* (Haverford, PA: Friends Historical Association, 1981), 173. See also Kunze “vesells fitt for the masters u[s]e,” 197. Kunze suggests a lack of competition between men’s and women’s business meetings and no desire to liberate themselves expressed by Quaker women. Michaelson, “Religious Bases,” 291. As Michaelson points out it was the Quakers’ “willingness to wait for consensus on any decision” that helped “to distinguish ‘mere’ individual desires from true ‘leadings.’”

²⁷ According to Mack, this is part of a larger problem--our inability to reconceptualize our views on modernity and to recognize the importance of religion, along with secularization. This leads us to equate secularization with female empowerment and religion with the suppression of female agency, which does not fit with historical facts concerning female activists in the 19th and 20th century, Mack points out. See Mack, “Religion, Feminism, and the Problems of Agency,” 149-177. See also Michaelson, “Religious Bases,” 291. She argues that for “both of these prominent eighteenth-century proponents of women’s gifts [Quakers and Wollstonecraft], feminism was a necessary consequence of religious belief.” She concludes that Wollstonecraft’s rational religion was more conducive to the “rhetoric of individual rights and republican virtue” than the religious beliefs of Quakers.

or strategies they used to cope with and confront the cultural norms challenged by their spiritual authority and their influence.

This study primarily focuses on Quaker women's journals in an effort to elucidate the motivations of female ministers and to reassess their gendered values in light of their religious beliefs and practices. It also places them within the context of 19th-century activism without minimizing their religious experiences and their lives, and attempts to evaluate their lives by their own standards, with respect to their agency or (sense of empowerment) and its "perceived" source. By providing a comparative approach, it also attempts to fill a void in the historiography by focusing on the gendered spiritual experiences of American Quaker female ministers through a textual analysis of the content, language, and structure of women's and men's spiritual journals. By demonstrating the potential for a multi-disciplinary approach to Quaker journals, this study also highlights some of the personal and gendered conflicts that were central to women's (and men's) conceptions of identity and experience in the colonial period.

My approach builds on the work of numerous scholars from several fields—and from the approaches of the Quaker journal writers, themselves. Like linguistic anthropologist, Richard Bauman, I focus on the tension between speaking and silence as a central component of the Quaker experience. I carry many of Bauman's insights concerning the process or spiritual struggle involved in speaking in the 17th century into the 18th century, and focus on how the conflict involved in preaching affected American Quaker female ministers, in particular. I also extend his discussion of speaking to include the act of writing. I am concerned with how women, in particular, altered the "conduct of expressive practice or the conduct of religious communication"—in speaking and

writing—to augment and retain control over the “prophetic form and practice” that defined their ministerial authority and shaped their personal spiritual journeys.²⁸

My approach also draws from sociologist Elise Boulding’s discussion of the process of spiritual formation for Quaker women ministers and the ongoing process of self-discipline involved in the Quaker faith. Unlike Boulding, I focus on how the continual process of self-suppression prepared ministers for the act of preaching and how the repetition of this process functioned in women’s spiritual lives and in their written accounts. While Boulding makes brief and general comparisons to men’s experiences, my approach involves a detailed textual analysis of the gendered spiritual experiences of both male and female ministers.²⁹

Phyllis Mack’s approach to the study of 17th-century English Quaker women has also influenced the general framework for my analysis of the gendered language of Quaker texts. Like Mack, I focus on the extent to which Quaker female ministers were able to come to terms with the gendered discourse of the larger culture, and how they shaped this discourse to their own spiritual ends. I also explore how they reconciled elements of their traditional feminine identities with their religious beliefs, and how this influenced their language and behavior, as well as their relationships with Quaker men. While Mack demonstrates this for the 17th century, I examine the 18th century-American context.³⁰

²⁸ The quoted phrases are from Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 150-151.

²⁹ Boulding, “Mapping the Inner Journey,” 81-150.

³⁰ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 141-142.

Rebecca Larson's exploration of Quaker female identity (though not the act of speaking) and her detailed description of the experiences of 18th-century itinerant Quaker female ministers has also inspired this study and made it possible. Cristine Levenduski's description of one Quaker woman "bringing herself to language and empowerment" through speaking and writing has also piqued my interest in colonial Quaker women, as have many other studies. Though the internal conflict associated with Quaker preaching has been documented by historians like Hugh Barbour and William Frost, the journals discussed here provide new insight into the impact of Quakerism on the formation of identity and contribute to our understanding of the spiritual authority wielded by Quaker women.³¹

The first two chapters provide general information about Quakers in England and the American colonies and establish the historical context for interpreting the journals of Quaker men and women ministers in the chapters that follow. The first chapter discusses the corporate development of Quakerism, the group's adoption of oppositional positions and tactical strategies to maintain group unity and survival. It also details the group's transition to the American context and places Quaker ministers within the ideological framework of 18th-century American revivalism. The second chapter discusses the influences of Quaker female ministers on the development of Quakerism, and their adoption of specific strategies to enhance their own roles and those of Quakers in 18th-century American society. It also focuses on the implications of their vocal participation

³¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light* (1999); Cristine Levenduski, *Peculiar Power: A Quaker Woman Preacher in Eighteenth-Century America* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 108; Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers* (1988), 6 and 97.

in American colonial society as women and as ministers during the revival years, and compares their experiences to those of other colonial women.

The third chapter explores how Quakerism functioned in the lives of male and female preachers and how the commingling of religious and social values influenced the self-perceptions of female Public Friends. My approach involves focusing on the references to gender within men's and women's journals and the anxieties associated with the act of preaching, particularly for women. I detail how the convincement (or conversion) of Quaker women and their "calls" to the ministry empowered them to overcome their past experiences, religious obstacles, inhibitions, and social status to embrace their new identities as preachers and missionaries.

The fourth chapter compares the journals of Quaker ministers Elizabeth Hudson and Jane Hoskens, and discusses how life experiences influenced the content and approach of their autobiographies. It also details how their journals functioned in their spiritual lives to reconcile personal issues and to support their spiritual authority. My approach involves viewing their journals as a defense against criticism, both real and imagined, and looks for evidence of their personal motivations through textual analysis.

The fifth chapter compares the gendered language of men's and women's spiritual journals to elucidate the anxieties associated with female preaching and the strategies utilized by female writers to authenticate their "divinely inspired" messages. This chapter examines how autobiography is constructed to support the gender-specific needs of Quaker men and women. It suggests that male and female writers established authority and legitimacy in writing and preaching differently, and explores how Quakerism functioned in women's lives on a practical level. My approach in this chapter

involves analysis of gendered language and an imagined oppositional stance taken by the Quaker writer. This allows me to focus on the gendered qualities women and men felt most comfortable with expressing and the character attributes that some women felt compelled to explain or suppress.

The sixth chapter details how Quaker women ministers dealt with gendered stereotypes and how they confronted the cultural challenges to their ministerial authority in a changing social and religious climate. In particular, it suggests that their deployment of traditional feminine qualities as measures of their spiritual authority influenced perceptions about their preaching. It also suggests how women's claims to "divine authority" contributed to the reform impulse and sanctioned active female participation in mid 18th-century Quaker reforms.³² The study concludes with a discussion of the legacy of Quaker female ministers and the implications of their version of female spirituality for women in the New Republic.

The journals included here are primarily those of female Quaker ministers living in the American colonies between 1700 and the end of the colonial period, 1776. Men's journals are included for comparative purposes and often yield more explicit discussions of gender issues than the women's (where gender seems to be taken for granted). In

³² My use of the term "reform" in this study primarily refers to organizational, structural, and moral initiatives *within* the Society of Friends. Although sectarian goals or the moral welfare of Quaker members was the primary concern of the 18th-century reform-minded ministers discussed here, certain reforms also combined humanitarian and sectarian objectives. In the mid-18th century, many of the ministers discussed in this study conveyed to non-Quakers and Quakers alike the need for social reforms, such as limiting the use of strong liquors and promoting abolition. Other reforms, at mid century, like the expansion of women's meetings and curtailing marriages to non-Quakers were sectarian concerns. It is important to note that reform always had a broader meaning to Quakers (and other Christians), as well. Ultimately, it was through personal reformation and the group's example that Friends hoped to transform the world. See also Levy's discussion in *Quakers and the American Family*, 253-254.

some cases, I have slighted political boundaries, as a means of comparing the experiences of American Friends with those of English and Irish Quakers, as they were part of a transatlantic community and a shared religious culture. The lives of the people discussed here spanned roughly three generations and so their experiences sometimes extend backward into the 17th century and forward into the 19th. Although ministers were a select group, a minority, within the Society of Friends, their experiences reveal a great deal about the experiences of Quakers, in general, and the implications of the Quaker faith for female Friends, in particular.

The journals that I found most helpful are those that are most complete—they contain autobiographical information on the journal writer, a conversion experience, letters, and a travel narrative. I have also tried to include “testimonies” and other biographical accounts of Quaker female preachers and “less” complete journals, as they are relevant, to consider the experiences of more Quaker women. I found 33 American women’s journals, in varying degrees of completeness, and many more men’s journals (selected on the basis of what they contribute to this study). Two Quaker women’s journals (one written by Jane Hoskens and another by Elizabeth Ashbridge) were published posthumously by the Society of Friends in the 18th century for the perusal of American colonists, while many more men’s journals made it to the colonial press.³³

³³ Hosken’s journal was published posthumously in 1771 and was the first published by an American Quaker woman. Ashbridge’s journal circulated for years before it was published in 1774 in England. See Sievers, “Awakening the Inner Light,” 257 and 255. See Daniel Shea, “Elizabeth Ashbridge and the Voice Within,” in *Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women’s Narratives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 142-144 and Levenduski, *Peculiar Power*, 8. Taken together, Shea and Levenduski’s studies found 13 published versions of Ashbridge’s account carrying various titles. As Wright pointed out, the early Quakers used publicity to alter public perceptions about the group and censorship to ensure that publications met Society standards and furthered the aims of the group. Wright, *The Literary Life*, 9. Quaker leaders in the 18th century continued to follow this tradition, publishing and censoring writings based on their benefit to the Society. A list of Quaker journals published in the

Many men's and women's journals were disseminated by the Society of Friends for the instruction and encouragement of their own members. Printed and primarily handwritten copies of spiritual narratives were carried via traveling Friends between meetings within the colonies and abroad to reinforce the religious faith and encourage unity within the Society of Friends.³⁴ Because Quakers believed that their speaking and their writing were divinely inspired, I view their writings as an extension of their ministries.³⁵ Writing, like speaking, was about channeling the inward light (or the indwelling Christ (discussed more fully in the following chapter). Just as there was no perceived limit to Christ's influence on earth, the influence of Quaker ministers transcended the life of the individual minister.

The Quaker journals discussed here follow the common patterns of Quaker spiritual autobiographies, outlined in detail by other scholars.³⁶ The communal nature of their spiritual writings is indisputable and inseparable from the personal details revealed

American colonies in the 18th century appears in Brooks, "Works of the Spirit," 247-249. Also see pages 73-76 for a discussion of the print history of Hosken's journal. See Bacon for details about the journals of Elizabeth Hudson, Susanna Morris, and Ann Moore in 'Wilt Thou Go,' 20-21. I attempted to use the earliest and/or most complete versions of the Quaker journals that I found. All of the journals discussed here were published in some form in the 19th and/or 20th centuries.

³⁴ See Peters, *Print Culture*, especially 24-28 for a discussion of the importance of letters between ministers.

³⁵ The audience for Quaker journals is typically wider than the journal writers claim to address. While Susanna Morris, for example, writes to encourage her children in the faith, according to one of the early passages in her journal, she also gives advice to a broader audience, including fellow ministers and potential converts. See Susanna Morris, *The Journal of Susanna Morris*, in 'Wilt Thou Go On My Errand?': *Journals of Three Eighteenth-Century Quaker Women*, ed. Margaret H. Bacon (Wallingford: PA: Pendle Hill Productions, 1994), 41, 45, 70-71, 72, 76, and 78.

³⁶ See for example, Brinton, "Stages in Spiritual Development" (1938); Edkins, "Quest for Community" (1980); and Wright, *The Literary Life* (1932; 1966), 155-164. Editing, in part, accounts for the formulaic quality of Quaker journals. See the brief discussion in Bacon, 'Wilt Thou Go,' 14-15. Despite the common patterns that emerge in Quaker journals, the journals are also very different based on the individual experiences of the Quaker writers.

in their life stories. However, the emphasis here is not on how their journals benefited group goals and objectives, but rather how their journals supported their individual ministries.³⁷

Although female Friends were among the earliest preachers within the Quaker movement, the theological rationale for Quaker women's spiritual roles developed over many years as Quaker leaders searched the Bible and their ongoing "revelations" to defend the Quaker practice.³⁸ In many ways, the exemplary lives detailed in the journals of the Quaker female preachers discussed here represent subtle defenses of the Quaker belief system, and particularly, the act of female preaching. Because Quakerism developed in opposition to dominant social mores, the controversies surrounding the Quaker faith from the earliest years of the movement suggest the personal struggles inherent in becoming a Quaker and a preacher.

How Quakers altered their collective identity to meet the challenges they faced as a persecuted minority and as a controversial religious group in England and within the American colonies is the subject of the following chapter. The contrast between the experiences of 17th-century Quakers and their 18th-century counterparts suggests both the adaptability of the Society of Friends and their resistance to social and religious conformity. The success of Quakerism as a denomination and a counterculture within American colonial society in the 18th century also attests to the vitality of the Quaker faith within the competitive context of American religious revivalism.

³⁷ The writing of spiritual autobiographies or journals reinforced the development of individualism among Quakers, even as it emphasized group cohesion and solidarity. See the discussion in Mack, *Visionary Women*, 358.

³⁸ See Ng, "Marriage and Discipline" (2003) and Wilcox, *Handmaids of the Lord: Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism* (Lewiston: NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995).

Chapter 1: Quakers and the Development of a “Peculiar” Identity

When George Fox founded the Society of Friends in 1648 in England, the Friends were a group known for their eccentric behaviors. In the early years of the movement, Quakers were often associated with strange bodily movements, with public demonstrations or “signs” (sometimes involving partial nudity),³⁹ and with disruptions of other religious services. By disregarding greetings and other social formalities and by expressing the unwillingness to fight, take oaths, or pay tithes, Friends resisted English social customs and questioned governmental authority.⁴⁰

The distinct demeanor and beliefs that set Quakers at odds with their contemporaries both strengthened and defined their expanding movement. They marked themselves as members of the Society of Friends as they spoke in “plain” language and dressed in “plain style.”⁴¹ They positioned themselves as opponents of the Anglican Church by rejecting formal, planned worship services and the hiring of ministers. They also became general critics of English society, decrying the moral decadence and spiritual waywardness they believed characterized their nation. As members of a controversial movement, Friends accepted persecution for the sake of “Truth,” defended their beliefs, and furthered their cause.

³⁹ See Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 84-94 for his discussion of nudity as a symbolic act and other sign performances. By the mid-1670s, sign performances had been deemed counterproductive and were discontinued. See also Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 121 for a discussion of some Quaker women in New England appearing “naked” in public.

⁴⁰ By 1660, Quakers rejected military service. See Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 17.

⁴¹ As the movement grew, Quakers were increasingly known for addressing others using “thee” and “thou” and for wearing dull-colored, unornamented clothing. See Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 7 and 43-55 for a discussion of Quaker use of “plain” language as a “symbolic classifier.”

The foundation of the Quaker faith was the Quaker belief in the “light within” or the indwelling Christ in everyone. This belief in the inward Light separated the Quakers from other Protestant groups and distinguished their manner of worship and the nature of their ministry.⁴² All members of the Quaker fellowship, male or female, believed that God dwelled within and spoke directly to them. Quaker Sarah Blackborow explained that “one spirit, one light, one life, one power...brings forth the same witness and ministers forth itself, in the male and in the female.”⁴³ For Friends, worship was necessarily spontaneous, and reserved for those moved by God to speak. Because those moved to preach included both educated and uneducated women and men, Quakers articulated a radical extension of the Protestant belief in spiritual equality. As Phyllis Mack aptly states, “Quakers in the light perceived themselves as having transcended not merely the boundaries of their individuality but the entire visible social order.”⁴⁴

By including female Friends in their leadership, Quakers challenged the patriarchal social order that governed English society. By speaking authoritatively on religious and political matters, female Friends rejected the customary submissiveness associated with their gender, and also implicitly denied their subordination to men. As they spoke in the voices and with the boldness of male biblical prophets, they were regarded by many of their contemporaries as unfeminine and even unnatural, as their

⁴² See Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 24. Some individuals on the fringes of other groups also embraced this doctrine without becoming members of the Society of Friends. See J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1973), 14-15. Early Quaker leaders like George Fox, William Penn, and Robert Barclay, along with “all eighteenth-century Friends” linked the historic Jesus to the Christ within. The phrase most commonly associated with the main tenet of Quakerism, the “inner light,” was not used by 17th and 18th-century Quakers.

⁴³ Sarah Blackborow [Blackbury] (1660) quoted in Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 36.

⁴⁴ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 242.

prophecies (or “heresies”) linked them in the popular mind to witches and to Satan, himself.⁴⁵ As Quaker women ignored the critics who encouraged their silence and their subordination, they came to epitomize the threat of the Quakers to the social and political order in England.⁴⁶

The visibility of Quaker women ministers, like that of other sectarian female preachers, left the group vulnerable to allegations of sexual deviance, female insubordination—and persecution.⁴⁷ In published tracts, Quaker leaders defended Quaker women’s public ministries by extending their belief in the inward Light to bolster female authority, encourage group unity, and counter criticism. Their defenses targeted non-Quakers who cited the Apostle Paul’s biblical injunction against women speaking in church to oppose the practice of female preaching, and a minority of Quaker men whose concern with “uncontrolled” female authority (or “misgovernment”) and the group’s public image discouraged female leadership. As male and female Quaker leaders articulated defenses of the unconventional roles of Quaker women, they clearly defined the movement and its members as a peripheral group.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 55, 89, 249-250, and 133. Quaker women were viewed as less feminine than other female visionaries, and feminine in negative ways, as Mack points out. They were sometimes associated with scolds and witches, for example. See David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 254. See also Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 55-56 for a general discussion of how Quakers were viewed by their 17th-century English contemporaries as subversive of the social hierarchy.

⁴⁶ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 133-134.

⁴⁷ Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 123. Crawford describes how critics viewed women involved in separatist churches and “enthusiastic” religion.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of women’s roles in defending their position within the Society of Friends see Elaine Hobby, “‘Handmaids of the Lord’ and Mothers in Israel: Early Vindications of Quaker Women’s Prophecy,” in *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1995), 88-98. See Peters, *Print Culture*, 125, 129, and 138 for details on how

From Persecution to Establishment

As men and women chose to identify with the Society of Friends and the “peculiar” practices associated with the group, they chose to become members of a persecuted minority. Their sufferings functioned both to encourage the growth of the movement and to disrupt its progress. While some 60,000 people joined the Society of Friends (amidst executions) in the first decade of the group’s existence alone, the imprisonment of Quaker leaders often stymied efforts to sustain and bolster converts. Between 1660 and 1680 about 12,000 Quakers were jailed and of those, 366 died as a result of their imprisonment. Although leaders often conducted their ministries from jails via letters and other publications, they were increasingly forced to develop additional strategies to secure the religious legacy of their movement and to avoid persecution.⁴⁹

In the latter part of the 17th century, the Quaker leadership enacted a series of internal reforms aimed at altering public perceptions about the group and creating greater stability within it.⁵⁰ These reforms played an important role in the consolidation of the

Quaker leaders, male and female used the printing press to defend Quaker gender practices. For a brief discussion of the Quaker tracts written in defense of women’s authority and the arguments of Quaker critics during the internal debate over the creation of women’s meetings see Ng, “Marriage and Discipline,” especially pages 121-135. Ng suggests that arguments which defended female preaching were expanded to include their participation in the Quaker government during the Wilkinson-Story schism, discussed in the following chapter. See also Wilcox, *Handmaids of the Lord: Theology and Women’s Ministry*, 145. Wilcox’s study of the development of Quaker theology suggests that defenses of female preaching were developed in order to defend the practice long after Quaker women began preaching. According to Wilcox, the developing rationale on behalf of female preachers and the developing nature of Quaker ideals about the practical implications of female spiritual equality demonstrate a variety of sometimes conflicting arguments published in support of female preachers.

⁴⁹ The persecution of sectarian groups like the Quakers intensified after the Restoration of 1660. Mack, *Visionary Women*, 133-134, 247, and 266.

⁵⁰ Internal reforms were only one part of the Quaker strategy. For a discussion about how the Society of Friends actively sought to control their public image in print see Wright, *The Literary Life*, 233. For a discussion of the history of Quaker persecution and the reasons why Quakers in the American colonies chose to alter their image see Carla Pestana, “The Quaker Executions as Myth and History,” *The Journal of American History* 80 (September 1993): 441-469. She details the reasons for the confrontational

Quaker movement and its transition into a formally organized church. To better control members and encourage greater unity within the organization, leaders established hierarchical meetings, required permanent residences for members, recorded approved ministers, and created general guidelines for discipline.⁵¹ Local monthly meetings and regional quarterly meetings were established in each county and centralized meetings in London (the Yearly Meeting, the Meeting for Sufferings, and the Morning Meeting) created a hierarchy to consolidate authority and increase communication within the Society of Friends.⁵² Increased control over the movements of members protected the process of enacting marriages, issuing charity, and disciplining members.

While specific dicta about the acceptable behavior of Quaker members, in general, encouraged a more uniform and eventually a more disciplined church; ministerial reforms, in particular, addressed many of the problems that led to public

style of American Quaker writings and discusses the competition among Quakers and Puritans for a positive public image in the aftermath of the Quaker executions in Massachusetts Bay. See also Wilcox's detailed study of the loss of the Quaker eschatological vision and its influence on their theology and behavior. Wilcox, *Handmaids of the Lord: Theology and Women's Ministry* (1995).

⁵¹ See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 364-365.

⁵² Preparative meetings were business meetings at the most local level which sent representatives to a monthly meeting. Monthly meetings consisted of representatives from several preparative meetings in a given area and handled issues related to the oversight of members—disciplining members, recording births and deaths, authorizing marriages, and providing poor relief. Quarterly meetings represented groups of monthly meetings on the county level and handled disputes that could not be worked out in the monthly meetings. Yearly meetings, at the top of the three-tiered meeting system, covered a significant regional area and handled larger policy issues. Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 30-31. One of the main functions of the yearly meetings was to develop the disciplines, which were then codified in a book of discipline, which guided local meetings in regulating their activities and the behavior of their members. Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 42-43. The Meeting for Sufferings, established in 1676, was made up of male leaders responsible for lobbying Parliament and the monarchy on behalf of persecuted Quakers, and was part of the struggle to gain government toleration. Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 35. It also organized care for those in prison and their families during the years of persecution. The Morning Meeting was a body of men who edited and approved or denied the publication of Quaker writings in England and was responsible for overseeing the ministry. (The London Yearly Meeting founded an editorial committee in 1672. Later, the task of standardizing Quaker doctrine through editing was transferred to the Second Day's Morning Meeting.) Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 36. See also Mack, *Visionary Women*, 284.

criticism and division within the group. The Nayler and Perrot schisms (in 1656 and 1660, respectively) demonstrated problems inherent in the group's dependence on a loosely organized lay ministry and in their belief in divine inspiration. James Nayler's impersonation of Jesus on a donkey in the streets of Bristol (a re-creation of Christ's entry into Jerusalem), and John Perrot's revolt against the Quaker practices of hat removal during prayer and "planned" meetings both exemplified how the personal revelations of individual leaders could lead beyond the "Truth" and the unity of the group.⁵³ As the individual excesses of some members challenged the Quaker belief in one Truth delivered through different human messengers, it became increasingly necessary for the Quaker leadership to establish a framework for evaluating valid messages and competent messengers—and for silencing those who left the group open to public ridicule, hostile criticism, and persecution.

The recording of ministers became a means of identifying which Quaker members were more consistently "inspired" to speak. Under the new meeting system, ministers held a great deal of authority and were instrumental in the appointment of local meetings and in the selection of local elders.⁵⁴ In turn, the system created safeguards for

⁵³ See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 28-29 for a brief discussion of the two schisms. Male Quakers customarily removed their hats only when they prayed as a sign of honor to God. Perrot also rejected regularly scheduled meetings because they were not called based on the immediate leadings of the Spirit. For a discussion of Perrot's logic on hat removal see Mack, *Visionary Women*, 270. According to Mack, the controversies that would arise in the Society of Friends over the next 40 years "would revolve around the issue that Perrot posed: the meaning and justification of outward forms for a people dedicated wholly to the cultivation of the inner light." See page 272. See also Bauman, 'Let Your Words Be Few,' 137-153. Bauman details how the "corporate response of Friends" to the Perrot schism in 1666 accomplished the "routinization" of the ministry by the end of the 1670s.

⁵⁴ Ministers also exercised a degree of authority over fellow ministers through letters written, copied, and circulated among the ministry. See Peters, *Print Culture*, 22-29. Peters also extends Bauman's argument about how Quaker ministers consolidated their spoken authority to include their writings. See Richard Bauman, "Speaking in the Light: The Role of the Quaker Minister," in Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, eds, *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

evaluating the words and behavior of Public Friends. Under the new meeting system, elders took a prominent role in appointing ministers, in overseeing their spiritual welfare and improvement, and in monitoring their doctrine and practices as they traveled in the ministry.⁵⁵ New regulations simplified the supervision of ministers, as they were required to claim an official residence, and, thus, a home meeting to accept responsibility for funding their missionary efforts and overseeing their ministry. Communication between meetings also supervised ministerial activities as public testimonies (often in the form of letters) revealed their acceptance (or their improprieties) as “divine” messengers. In the 18th century, certificates were more widely carried by traveling ministers as identification to extant meetings and to convey their authority to travel as instructed by their monthly and quarterly meetings. In addition, oversight of Quaker writings by the Morning Meeting (a regulatory body designed to edit and reject publication of controversial works) had the power to change or to limit the circulation of sermons, autobiographical works, and religious tracts—and thus, circumvent the influence of preachers, particularly among non-Quakers.⁵⁶

The net result of these reforms was a more coherent Quaker message, a more unified “community” of extant meetings, and a more influential role for “certified” ministers, who became the harbingers of reform and the standard bearers of group beliefs

1974), 144 and Peters, *Print Culture*, 23. Ministerial status was also reflected in the raised benches Quaker ministers began to occupy during worship meetings. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 274. Elders played a dominant role in supervising and advising ministers. Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 40.

⁵⁵ Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 144-145.

⁵⁶ See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 36.

and practices.⁵⁷ Together with explicit disciplinary guidelines for all Quaker members, a more effective system for enforcing discipline, and greater oversight of ministers and their messages, Quaker leaders in the late 17th century and early 18th successfully altered the negative stereotypes associated with their group, toning down many of the behaviors and censoring many of the invectives that encouraged division and incited persecution.

As internal reforms offered a more respectable image to the world, some elements within the reforms also represented compromises with the larger Anglo culture. Quaker ideals about effective leadership changed, for example, as status was increasingly conferred on Quaker leaders based on their age and on years of exemplary living. The image of the quintessential Quaker leader shifted from the young, ecstatic prophet of the early years to an older, more sober minister by century's end. Emphasis on the family as a stabilizing influence within the Society of Friends also led to the use of patriarchal, symbolic elements that corresponded more closely with English social norms. In their writings, Quakers increasingly spoke of their most esteemed leaders as "mothers" and (less frequently as) "fathers" in Israel, signifying the earthly roles that differentiated men and women and the power God manifested in his more seasoned servants.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See Frederick Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 29. Ministerial authority increased as a result of the new meeting system. Ministers not only delivered "divine" messages to extant meetings, but also played an essential role in creating the rules for Quaker behavior and enforcing them. For a brief history of the rise of ministerial authority, see Jon Butler, "'Gospel Order Improved': The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (July 1974), especially 439-442.

⁵⁸ Both men and women accepted public identities "in which traditional gender roles were acknowledged and enhanced as never before." Rather than emphasize the images of the babe in Christ or the passive vessel of God, founder George Fox increasingly emphasized the image of the spiritual parent, a more mature adult. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 344 and 288-289. See also Ng, "Marriage and Discipline," 124-135. Ng emphasizes the status conferred on leaders within the new meeting system and the age differential between those select leaders and the general membership.

As a result of the reforms, the preaching of Quaker ministers also became somewhat more restrained. As Quakers increasingly based their “inspired” leadings on a theology that emphasized reason and judgment, Quaker ministers altered their style of preaching, replacing confrontational prophesies with more coherent sermons.⁵⁹ Some evidence also suggests that ministers’ sermons became more uniform, as a certain style and cadence may have become the hallmark of good preaching, affecting both the acceptance of ministerial messages as inspired and the expectations of congregants who knew inspiration when they heard it.⁶⁰ The preaching and interaction of Quaker female ministers with their male co-religionists may have also changed slightly to fit more closely with the gendered expectations of non-Quakers—a topic discussed in the following chapter.

By the turn of the 18th century, Friends had largely separated themselves from the enthusiasm (the erratic, instantaneous spiritual experiences) associated with the worship and public demonstrations of early Friends. Friends were unlikely to lapse into trances or full-body quakes, to “go naked as a sign,” or to prophesy in public places or in worship meetings when non-Quakers were present.⁶¹ As Quakers in the 18th century increasingly embraced a more mystical (and a less physical) religious experience, they also embraced a more rational process of gaining communion with God, often called “quietism,” which involved silently waiting for the Spirit to move, fear of personal will, and intense self-

⁵⁹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 274. Bauman speculates about the shift from the incantatory style of preaching to the catechetical style of preaching, and discusses how this shift would have affected ministers and their audiences. See ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ especially 75-78 and 147-149.

⁶⁰ See the discussion of preaching style, content of sermons in Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 100-101.

⁶¹ Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 100-101.

analysis.⁶² As the dominant characteristic of Quaker spirituality in the 18th century, quietism influenced the experiences of 18th-century American Quakers.

Though changes in worship and demeanor in the latter part of the 17th and early 18th century were significant, continuity in the “peculiar” traits that characterized early Quakers also continued to influence the identities of 18th-century Friends. Members of the Society of Friends continued to identify with the group through visible modes by wearing dull and unadorned clothing.⁶³ They also continued to address people of any social status with informal “thees” and “thous.” Although their unwillingness to fight, take oaths, and pay tithes continued to set Friends at odds with societal mores and with some government officials, Quakers became generally known as good citizens rather than potential anarchists.⁶⁴

⁶² Quietism, a prevalent trend among 18th-century Quakers, emphasized the “subordination of self-will in the meeting for worship and in daily life.” It represented the failure of the Quakers to reconcile the human capacity for reason—whether the truth could be found by thinking or feeling. See Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 6 and 97. Tolles points out that quietism did not inhibit action but made Friends “hyperconscious” about acting out of selfish motives. See Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 94.

⁶³ Marietta points out that Quakers did not make much of an effort to discipline language or dress infractions in the 18th century. See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 22.

⁶⁴ Quaker politicians were sometimes complicit in the arrests of other Quakers for not paying taxes, which they believed were to be used in ways that violated their pacifism. This created conflicts among members within the Society of Friends. See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 155. Quakers were less likely to be viewed as immediate threats to the political order and persecuted as they had been in Puritan New England in the 17th century. They became “good” citizens in that they were generally supportive of government authority, despite their qualms about taxation, oath-taking, and military service. Quaker passivism from the 1660s on also contributed to the image of the “benign” Quaker. The peace testimony was formalized during the organizational and structural reforms of the latter 17th century. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 273. See also Jonathan M. Chu, *Neighbors, Friends, or Madmen: The Puritan Adjustment to Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts Bay* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), x-xi, 7, 19, 25, 98, 106, 116-117, 139, 154-163. In New England, for example, Chu observes that colonists came to distinguish between “neighbors, friends, and madmen.” Despite the distinctiveness of Quakers as a group, they also became integrated into the larger society and were accepted as responsible citizens. For Puritans, the maintenance of public peace became more important than theological orthodoxy.

By 1661, Quakers were no longer executed for their beliefs; and by 1689, tolerance became the official government policy toward Quakers within the British Empire.⁶⁵ By the mid-18th century, Friends were more likely to garner the respect and even admiration of some of their contemporaries. Although Friends remained a numerical minority within British society, in the American colonies and elsewhere, the growing number of Quakers reflected their newfound stability and success. As Quakerism spread to places within the empire like Barbados and Bermuda and elsewhere to places like Holland and France, the success of their conservative reforms and the continuity of their radical message continued to have important implications for male and female Friends. In the American colonies, Quakers were more widely accepted by the 18th century, but their own experiences or those of their forebears in the recent past continued to influence their identities.

Success, Continuity, and Change—From England to the American Colonies

When the earliest Quakers arrived in the British American colonies in the latter part of the 17th century, they were persecuted as they had been in England. Such was the case for Quakers like Mary Austin and Anne Fisher, who arrived in Boston in 1656 to preach, only to be searched for witches' marks, imprisoned, and banished. Other Quaker preachers who returned to Massachusetts Bay after previously being deported, even faced martyrdom, as William Robinson and Marmaduke Stephenson did in 1659 and Mary Dyer in 1660 (after her reprieve in 1659). While Quakers in colonies like Pennsylvania,

⁶⁵ The last execution of a Quaker occurred in 1661 in Barbados. See Pestana, "The Quaker Executions," 441.

Rhode Island, and the Jerseys fared better, early on, Quakers continued to be viewed as a “peculiar” people, even as they grew in numbers and reputation as a denomination.⁶⁶

Early patterns of Quaker settlement often reflected their membership in a persecuted minority—and, eventually, their successful establishment as a transatlantic denomination. To escape persecution, facilitate economic success, and enhance their spiritual lives, many Friends settled in family units in communities where tolerance reigned and where other Quakers were already well-established. While some settlers only converted to Quakerism after they settled in the American wilderness,⁶⁷ Quakers in every colony eventually adopted the three-tiered structure of the Society of Friends, forming monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings.⁶⁸ By the mid 18th century, they had established 250 meetings for worship, extending the length of the English settlement from present-day Maine (Casco Bay) to South Carolina (Charleston).⁶⁹ Although Quaker populations were present throughout the American colonies, the vast majority of Quakers resided in Quaker-founded Pennsylvania throughout the colonial period—more than half of the estimated 40,000.⁷⁰ Together with London, Philadelphia served as a central

⁶⁶ See Rufus Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1966) for a detailed account of Quaker experiences in each colony.

⁶⁷ See Le Shana, ““Heavenly Plantations,”” 27-29 for details on the settlement of North Carolina, for example.

⁶⁸ Yearly meetings in the American colonies had a slightly different organization from those in England. In the colonies, yearly meetings appointed committees to oversee publications. In England, the Morning Meeting of ministers and elders, which met in London, handled censorship. Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 5. For a discussion of the “overseers of the press” who were part of a committee within the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting see Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 193-194.

⁶⁹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 8. Quaker populations were greater in New Jersey, Rhode Island, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

⁷⁰ Wright, *The Literary Life*, 193-197.

location for Quaker populations within the British Empire and functioned as a communication and coordination center within the transatlantic Society of Friends.⁷¹

The vitality of this transatlantic Quaker network encouraged the growth and stability of Quakerism in the American colonies. American Friends corresponded with family and friends abroad, and American missionaries often traveled in the ministry with Quakers from England, Ireland, and other places. Meetings in England and the American colonies also shared publications, letters, and even financial support among them.⁷²

While time and distance did affect the exchanges between Friends, the arrival of itinerant ministers reminded many Friends that they were part of a larger mission.⁷³ In the early years of settlement, persecution encouraged coordination among Friends within the British Empire. In the 18th century, ongoing discrimination toward Quakers served as a

⁷¹ See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 110-111. For a discussion of the relationship between London Yearly Meeting and Philly Yearly Meeting see Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 5-6. Yearly meetings in the American colonies held independent jurisdictional authority, but the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and the official epistles of London Yearly held a great deal of weight within other yearly meetings. See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 9 and 41. London Yearly established a committee of correspondence to keep in contact with each colonial yearly meeting. See also Arthur J. Worrall, *Quakers in the Colonial Northeast* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1980), 81-91.

⁷² Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 34. Ministers' travels to a destination were usually funded by their home meeting, but their return was often funded by the meetings they visited. According to Bacon, by withholding funding from itinerant ministers, local meetings could assert some control over them. See also Margaret Hope Bacon, "Quaker Women in Overseas Ministry," *Quaker History* 77 (1988), 106-107 for a discussion of the communication between women's yearly meetings in the 18th century and the close coordination of women ministers from distant places who traveled together in the ministry. See also Kunze, "vesells fitt for the masters us[e]," especially 182-183. Kunze credits women's meetings, in particular, with functioning as a "transatlantic letter nexus" and discusses the importance of the correspondence between women's meetings in the American colonies and England in the 18th century. She does note that their correspondence became "increasingly formal and formulaic in terms of...religious expression," but argues that their letters were also full of "revealing comments," reflecting changing values over time.

⁷³ In the southern colonies, where travel was more difficult, fewer Quaker missionaries visited before the mid 18th century. Quakers in North Carolina were often more isolated than Quakers in places like London and Pennsylvania where large numbers of itinerant ministers gathered before traveling elsewhere. See Le Shana, "'Heavenly Plantations,'" 358-362.

reminder to Friends, on both sides of the Atlantic, of their shared goals and their common heritage.⁷⁴

Contemporary attitudes toward Quakers also continued to reflect their position as members of an unconventional religious group. While published attacks against Quakers, for example, apparently differed little from those circulated in the 17th century, Cristine Levenduski found that in 18th-century anti-Quaker tracts published in the American colonies Quakers were regarded as “agents of madness” rather than “agents of evil.” While these representations demonstrated a change in the perceived threat posed by Quakers, they also continued to reflect the disdain held for them by their staunchest critics.⁷⁵

The role of women within the Society of Friends also continued to invite criticism. The actions of early Quaker women were often resurrected by critics in 18th-century anti-Quaker literature to depict all Quakers in a negative light. Women like Deborah Wilson and Lydia Wardel (who both went “naked as a sign” in Puritan Massachusetts) served as stock characters in anti-Quaker literature, representing the ongoing Quaker “propensity” for social (if not political) disorder.⁷⁶ Even as Quakerism became one of the larger denominations by mid-century, the visibility of Quaker female

⁷⁴ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 266.

⁷⁵ Levenduski, “Remarkable Experiences,” 275. Although I am emphasizing the prejudices that continued to unite Quakers during the 18th century, such virulent criticism of Quakers did not reflect the general attitude of American colonials toward Quakers in the mid 18th century. As James Ryan’s study shows, various representations of Quakers in American culture reveal ambivalence, animosity, and admiration toward Friends. While aspects of Quaker belief and practice were always fascinating to many Americans, Ryan aptly notes that Quakerism has consistently been admired from a distance by the vast majority. See James Emmett Ryan, *Imaginary Friends: Representing Quakers in American Culture, 1650-1950* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), especially 130, 185-186, and 226. See also Larson’s discussion of Quaker female reception by non-Quakers in *Daughters of Light*, 232-295.

⁷⁶ Levenduski, “Remarkable Experiences,” 275.

leaders in the American colonies continued to reinforce the unconventional nature of the Quaker faith.⁷⁷

As Quakerism gained more respectability as a denomination within American colonial society, Quaker men and women enjoyed new opportunities and new challenges. In general, Quaker migration to colonies within the British Empire relieved many of the social and political tensions that characterized the lives of Friends in England. Settlement in the American colonies gave many Quaker families the chance to practice their faith and to prosper. Male Friends came to dominate politics in Pennsylvania and to hold powerful positions in other colonial governments. Many Quaker families also created lucrative businesses and successfully reshaped negative attitudes about their group by becoming influential members of colonial society.⁷⁸

While migration contributed to the stability of Quakerism, it also created new challenges for the Quaker fellowship. As Quakers settled in the American colonies, the oversight of meetings became increasingly important for the group, as did reliable communication among members. Technological innovations, improvements in

⁷⁷ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 303 and 110-111. See also Jerome R. Reich's *Colonial America*, 5 ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), 216-217 for statistics comparing Congregationalists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, which he respectively deems the first, second, and third largest denominations in the American colonies at the time of the American Revolution. See Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 87-127 for a regional and denominational comparison of churchgoers and the problems inherent in calculating membership.

⁷⁸ Quakers dominated the Pennsylvania Assembly from settlement to 1756 and from 1760 to 1776. From 1729 to 1755, Quakers occupied 70 percent of the seats, though by the 1740s Quakers made up only about 20 percent of Pennsylvania's churchgoing population, at the very most. Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 156. See also Frederick Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 51-62.

transportation and communication in the 18th century facilitated travel within the American colonies and the empire⁷⁹ and encouraged a more unified Quaker church.

Other changes however tended to undermine the solidarity of the group and to raise questions about the spiritual welfare of many members. While the majority of Quakers remained committed to pacifism, frontier wars consistently challenged their position. Some tacitly supported defense against native peoples, despite their commitment to diplomacy and non-violence.⁸⁰ Quaker politicians, especially in Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania, for example, faced increased scrutiny as the series of Indian wars at mid century stultified their leadership and culminated in the resignation of most Friends from government offices.⁸¹ The decline of Quaker political influence in Pennsylvania affirmed general perceptions of spiritual decline within the Society of Friends.

The burgeoning consumer culture of the American colonies also heightened concerns, as financial gains made living the faith more difficult for some. The commercial success of many within the Society of Friends increasingly altered their commitment to a simple life, leading them to continually redefine “plainness” even as

⁷⁹ Ship size and speed increased and better charts and lighthouses made sea travel safer in the 18th century. Thanks in large part to the growth of the mail service, wider roads were built between large towns, and more bridges and inns also improved land travel in the American colonies. After 1760, stagecoach lines began operating regularly. See Reich, *Colonial America*, 162-163. The number of transatlantic voyages doubled between 1675 and 1740 as commerce increased between the colonies and Britain. Inter-colonial shipping also increased during this period. See Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic: An Exploration of Communication and Community, 1675-1740* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 92-93.

⁸⁰ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 255.

⁸¹ See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 150-168.

they stressed the need for modest living and strict morals.⁸² Some economic and social divisions within the Society of Friends arose over the paradoxes associated with the principles and practice of the Quaker faith. While many Quaker men became “grandeens” in their own right with considerable political and economic clout, reform-minded ministers (both male and female) increasingly criticized the wealth and extravagance of Society members. Their disdain for extravagant living, as well as the exploitation of many for the wealth of a few also led to the Quaker critique of slavery.⁸³

Internal reforms carried out in Pennsylvania around mid century reflected many of the reform trends that influenced Quakers throughout the British Empire as the century progressed. As many itinerant ministers from the American colonies traveled with Quakers from various parts of the British Empire and met for yearly meetings in Philadelphia and London, they shared concerns, and, in turn, conveyed those to extant meetings. Though local conditions dictated when and whether reforms were carried out,

⁸² See Frederick Tolles, “‘Of the Best Sort but Plain’: The Quaker Esthetic,” *American Quarterly* 11 (Winter 1959): 484-502. Tolles discusses how some Quakers compromised as they enjoyed the luxuries of wealth and prestige. While they were becoming more like the world, they were still maintaining the “peculiarities” that distinguished their Quaker lifestyle, according to Tolles. Tolles found that what was “peculiar” was simply redefined by the Pennsylvanian Friends to manage the internal conflicts created by their prosperity. See also Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 73-90. While reform-minded leaders promoted a return to simpler times, they also criticized established customs like slavery and identified other social ills like the overindulgence in alcohol. The success of reformers’ efforts was largely due to the appeal of their reactionary message and their dedication to Quaker orthodoxy, according to Marietta. They also drew widespread support among key leaders within the organizational hierarchy. See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, especially 34-51 and 73-96.

⁸³ See Tolles, *Meeting House*, 240-241. Quakers who held slaves or used slave-produced goods found themselves increasingly under scrutiny and/or discipline in the latter part of the 18th century. Marietta states that the Quakers believed the ownership of slaves impaired Quaker values like modesty, humility, temperance, and reserve. See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 61. See also Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 256-262 for well-known Quaker anti-slavery advocate, John Woolman’s rationale concerning Quakers and slavery. For a discussion of the limits of Quaker abolitionism, see Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 173-187. Among reformers in the area of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, sectarian concern for the cleansing of the Society from the sin of slavery outweighed the broader humanitarian concern for ending slavery in the rest of the world, according to Soderlund.

there was a growing desire among reformed-minded leaders to maintain the strict morals and principles that they believed were the basis of their faith.

Many Quaker leaders, for example, came to believe that birthright membership within the Society of Friends (common in the early decades of the 18th century) undermined Quaker values, particularly in regard to mixed marriages between Quakers and non-Quakers.⁸⁴ In Pennsylvania, for example, membership became more restricted, as the offspring of exogamous unions were more carefully screened for evidence of a Quaker religious education. Reform-instigated disciplinary actions directed at youth who chose to marry outside the Quaker faith also became increasingly common, though such proceedings were adopted based on local situations, as problems arose.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ For most of the early 18th century, the Society of Friends admitted as full members the offspring of mixed or exogamous marriages. By the 1760s, many Friends had decided that these members were not as faithful compared to the children of parents who were both Quaker. See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 62-68. According to Marietta, Quaker reformers placed a growing emphasis on the family as admissions to the Society of Friends were less likely to be individuals (as in the early years of the movement) and more likely to be the offspring of Friends. Natural increase and not conversions allowed the Society of Friends to maintain its size in the 18th century. Increased disciplinary proceedings against members by the mid 18th century led to a declining membership, at least among Quakers in Pennsylvania. Membership in places like North Carolina did not experience a decline in numbers during the same period. The migration of Quakers from the northern colonies from 1751 to 1772, according to Le Shana, provided the North Carolina Yearly Meeting with the greatest amount of growth. Le Shana also characterizes the years between 1672 and 1750 as a “dynamic early period of conversion growth.” He also argues that no major reformation occurred in North Carolina prior to the American Revolution, and that disownment for exogamous marriage actually declined after the 1740s rather than rose among North Carolina Friends. Le Shana, “‘Heavenly Plantations,’ ” 88-89 and 224-226.

⁸⁵ Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, especially 13-22 and 236-250 explains why some children were increasingly inclined to marry outside the Quaker faith. Levy views this perceived spiritual problem as a familial crisis created by the Quaker commitment to its own kind of domesticity, which was very child-centered and largely dependent on Quaker economic achievement. According to Levy, the Quaker family system involved the “thorough spiritualization of marriage, the granting of spiritual authority to women comparable to that of men, painful self-discipline in childrearing, and the creation of enormous amounts of wealth to give households the resources to accomplish such tasks.” See page 21. A changing economic and social environment in Pennsylvania contributed to a growing disparity between wealthy and poorer Quakers. The inability of many Quaker parents to maintain the economic support given to their children (particularly land) needed to sustain Quaker domesticity contributed to the declining value of some Quaker youth in the marriage market and to the increasing number of exogamous marriages among second-generation Quakers. Poorer Quakers were more likely to marry outside the faith. The increasing

While reformers pointed to exogamous unions as evidence of spiritual decline, they also blamed some local leaders for encouraging spiritual complacency in their failure to enforce the codes of discipline outlined by yearly meetings.⁸⁶ These formal guidelines advised Quakers in quarterly and monthly meetings about policies regarding the organization of meetings and the regulation of marriages, and defined expected behaviors related to issues like dress, gaming, drinking, business, government, and the militia.⁸⁷

Along with offering these guidelines, reform-minded leaders also tightened the organization and communication within the three-tiered meeting system. Committees, established for the purpose of monitoring disciplinary enforcement by yearly meetings, were made up of male and female leaders commissioned to inspect the quarterly and monthly meetings under them and to have those meetings report on their disciplinary proceedings.⁸⁸ More monthly meetings of ministers and elders were also added and,

commercialization of the Pennsylvania economy also encouraged youth not to prolong their dependency on their parents but to accumulate their own wealth--and to make their own decisions regarding marriage.

⁸⁶ London Yearly Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting were at the top of the meeting system. Other yearly meetings sometimes sought counsel from Philadelphia Yearly and especially from London Yearly. London Yearly was often a clearinghouse of sorts for communications even among monthly meetings within the American colonies. Six autonomous yearly meetings existed within the American colonies: Pennsylvania and New Jersey (usually called Philadelphia), New York, Maryland (also called Baltimore), Virginia, North Carolina, and New England. Their decisions were (in theory) binding on all quarterly and monthly meetings within their jurisdiction. See Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 3-5 for a detailed discussion of the way the meeting system worked and a detailed comparison of the interrelationship between meetings in the American colonies and England. See also Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 189-194 on Quaker organization and discipline.

⁸⁷ Gerona, *Night Journeys*, 100. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, for example, first compiled and circulated the "Disciplines" in 1704 and added to them in 1719, 1747, and 1762 and published them as a collection in 1785.

⁸⁸ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 54. For a detailed analysis of disciplinary proceedings in Pennsylvania during the early part of the 18th century see pages 46-72. He traces the impact of Quaker reforms on Quaker practice over time.

more women's business meetings were put in place to handle the increasing volume of disciplinary proceedings. These additional meetings reflected the importance of male and female ministers and elders in the movement for reform, and, particularly the efforts of women in the area of discipline.⁸⁹

As a growing number of Quaker youth gained birthright membership and as new converts joined the Society of Friends in the early part of the 18th century, the need for strict discipline became an imperative to many leaders who wanted to preserve Society principles. Unfortunately for reformers, their messages were not always well-received. Mid-century efforts by many itinerant ministers to encourage greater discipline within the meeting system, for example, sometimes led to resistance. Many Quaker members resented the preaching of male and female itinerants who attacked both the laxity of local leaders and the practices of individual members.⁹⁰ In some areas, reforms had little or no appeal—as the reform spirit likely only resonated with listeners who heard messages that they believed were relevant to local circumstances. While some “signs” of religious decay were present among Quakers in Pennsylvania at mid century, for example, some

⁸⁹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 38. Reforms of church government included a national meeting of ministers and elders to meet prior to the London Yearly Meeting convocation (a practice which already took place at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting); and, a yearly meeting for women in London.

⁹⁰ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 38-42 and 79-80. Some meetings within the American colonies, like the Bradford Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania resisted reforms because they were against answering to a more hierarchical structure. Resistance to mid-18th century reforms was strongest among London Friends. London Monthly attempted to restrain the influence of female reformers by keeping them out of the Meeting for Ministers and Elders held just prior to the London Yearly Meeting proceedings. Marietta emphasizes the importance of female reformers in the mid-century reforms, in England, Ireland, and in the American colonies. According to Marietta, female members of the reform movement included Elizabeth Wilkinson, Anne Emlen Mifflin, Mary Weston, Hannah Harris, Mary Peisley, Catharine Payton, and Sophia Hume. American, Susanna Wright of Hempfield Monthly Meeting was among the conservatives. Marietta credits English Friend, Samuel Fothergill with starting the movement and American Friend, John Churchman, as the most important indigenous reformer. Mary Peisley and Catharine Payton are credited as two of the most important female reformers, although we get few details about their specific contributions, or those of other women.

reforms were not implemented or even adapted to local conditions until decades later in places like North Carolina.⁹¹

Even when the words of reform-minded ministers spoke to local conditions, personal dilemmas also determined reception. Family situations often complicated the implementation of widespread internal reforms. Abolitionism, particularly in the southern colonies, affected the financial livelihood of families over many generations, making the acceptance of this principle difficult for many Quakers.⁹² Land availability, decreased parental control, and the availability of marriage partners in some geographic regions also helped to create situations where the adoption or rejection of disciplinary reforms held significant emotional weight. Barry Levy, for example, found that many parents in Pennsylvania were forced to place conscience over love, and even support their children's disownment for "marrying out" as disciplinary reforms were adopted.⁹³

While many reform concerns reflected the incongruity of the Quaker faith with the beliefs and practices of the larger Anglo-American society, Quaker itinerants also understood that the perceptions and reality of Quaker conformity threatened the integrity

⁹¹ Le Shana, "'Heavenly Plantations,'" 226. See Worrall, *Quakers in the Colonial Northeast*, 81-95 for a discussion of the acceptance and adaptation of reforms in New England.

⁹² Soderlund, for example emphasizes the difficulties 18th-century Friends encountered as they moved toward abolitionism. See Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 4. See also Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 234-235. Quaker slaveholders even in Pennsylvania, for example, were increasingly pressured to release their slaves and jeopardize the financial welfare of their families, affecting not only their children's ability to marry within the Quaker fold, but also the ability of their children to recreate the self-maintaining spiritual households that supported religious education and religious faithfulness in the generations to follow. Levy suggests that to disown many of the poor children who married out due to their financial circumstances, reformers also had to attack slaveholding and the wealthy Friends whose practices sustained their own children's financial status, making it easier for them to marry other Quakers. In 1774, Friends began disowning those who bought, sold, and transported slaves, and ordered slaveholders to prepare their slaves for freedom through religious and secular education within the timeframe normally associated with indentured servitude. See Levy, page 253.

⁹³ Between 1750 and 1790, Levy found that Delaware Valley Quakers disowned close to fifty percent of their youth, for example. Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 256.

of the Society of Friends. As Quakers struggled to maintain their distinctiveness, mid 18th-century Friends faced an identity crisis of sorts.⁹⁴ By emphasizing the Quaker family, many reform-minded leaders hoped to alter negative perceptions about the Society of Friends. They also hoped to build a firm foundation for religious education within more stable family units. By controlling personal behaviors, reform-minded leaders worked to sustain the reputation of Quaker members and to restrain the antinomian tendencies that divided and marginalized Quakers in the recent past. They also hoped to maintain strict discipline by reasserting the boundaries between their membership and the world, even if their membership and the political influence of the Society of Friends declined in the process—as it did in Pennsylvania.⁹⁵ As Quaker leaders evaluated their relationship to the world and saw within their fellowship the roots of spiritual decay, they also saw the solution for spiritual renewal—both within themselves and within the “world’s people.”

Quaker Revivalism and the Contours of Spiritual Authority

In their spiritual concerns, Quakers were not alone.⁹⁶ Their struggles mirrored those of other religious groups in the American colonies, as the “awakenings” of the mid-18th century undermined and/or revised their practices and principles. Enlightened Quakers shared with Pro-Awakening revivalists⁹⁷ a sense that “true” religious faith was

⁹⁴ See the discussion in Bauman, *Let Your Words*, 153.

⁹⁵ See Tolles, *Meeting House*, 239; Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 127 and 150-168; and Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 6, 16-17 and Chapter 7.

⁹⁶ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 80 and 93.

⁹⁷ “Pro-Awakening revivalists,” “Great Awakening revivalists,” or “revivalists” will refer to ministers among the New Light Congregationalists, Separatists, Baptists, and Methodists in this discussion. Jon Butler pointed out that the phrase, “Great Awakening,” leaves the impression of a unified and coherent

declining. Like other groups, Quakers experienced reformism and had their own “Awakening” in the mid-18th century.

Although most historians have generally considered Quakers on the periphery of the Great Awakening revivals,⁹⁸ historian Carla Gerona has recently reassessed the scholarship, and she argues that if the Great Awakening is loosely defined, Quakers, indeed, had their own “Awakening.”⁹⁹ She maintains that if scholars can agree that the Great Awakening evoked personal and emotional responses from individuals who felt spiritually enlightened or reborn, that between the 1730s and 1760s it involved reorganization of many denominational churches and reevaluations of their beliefs, and that it created a leveling impulse that installed new leaders and privileged individual experience, then Quakers “participated on all counts.”¹⁰⁰ Historian Rebecca Larson also emphasizes the similarities and points out that despite many differences, the Quakers and

religious movement where none existed. See Jon Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” *Journal of American History* 69 (1982): 305-325. Frank Lambert also views the phrase as an “invention” shared among revivalists (who established through their writings the belief that a coherent mass movement was at work) and among historians who have studied the period and kept the revivalists’ misconceptions alive. As a descriptive term for the “period’s felt sense” that a unified, larger movement was at work, the term remains helpful. See Frank Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 6. See the discussion in Sievers, “Awakening the Inner Light,” 256.

⁹⁸ Works that emphasize the Quakers peripheral involvement in the revivals include, for example, Butler, “Enthusiasm Described,” 311; Frost, *The Quaker Family*; Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*; and Carla Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 176-177.

⁹⁹ The description of a Quaker “Awakening” is Gerona’s. See Gerona, *Night Journeys*, 125-129. The discussion here focuses on the general call for reform that influenced the Quaker ministry and their perceptions of spiritual authority within the larger context of 18th-century revivalism. The coordinated efforts of Quaker reformists to revive the Society of Friends in the middle decades of the 18th century, and their sense that they were part of a larger movement for spiritual reform allows for my limited use of the term, “Awakening,” as a descriptor of the period. Recent scholarship suggests that there were many “awakenings” in 18th-century Quakerism. Pestana points out that no single reformation of American Quakerism occurred. See Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists*, 183-184.

¹⁰⁰ Gerona, *Night Journeys*, 126-127.

revivalists shared common attitudes including the idea that grace was superior to formal education, the belief in the need for a spiritually revived clergy, discontent with the formalities of the Anglican Church, and a desire for stricter morality.¹⁰¹

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear to scholars that 18th-century Quakerism cannot be fully understood apart from the larger context of religious developments within the American colonies and abroad. It is also apparent that the “quietism” practiced by 18th-century Quakers did not interfere with their desire to proselytize or their ability to do so.¹⁰²

Like other religious groups caught up in the spirit of revivalism, Quakers enjoyed a sense of renewal that came from within their ranks and from without. While the atmosphere of the revivals contributed to a general openness among non-religious and religious people of different persuasions, ideological and principled beliefs in the need for revival compelled itinerants of many denominations to travel rough terrain in the American wilderness and to risk their lives in order to spread their message.¹⁰³

The revivals that swept the colonies in the 18th century were first and foremost about spiritual renewal. They were a reaction to uneasiness about materialism in an increasingly market economy. They were also about the concomitant tensions between

¹⁰¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 270.

¹⁰² The idea that evangelizing declined by the mid-18th century is expressed in Kunze, “vesells fitt for the masters u[s]e,” 191, for example. Webster also writes that “by the end of the colonial period, the sect was quietist, no longer seeking convincements but strengthening the existing population.” Webster, “Among Friends,” 222. Most of the Quaker journal writers discussed here conveyed eagerness and consistent interest in reaching out to non-Quakers throughout their ministries.

¹⁰³ Dating the “Great Awakening” is as difficult as defining it. As early as the 1720s, revivals occurred in the Middle Colonies among the Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian churches. In the 1740s, Puritan revivals were occurring in New England; and, in the South, Baptist revivals were going on in the 1760s. The American revivals were also part a transatlantic movement that involved England and Scotland. See Brekus’s summary of the scholarship in *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 33-34.

individual self-interest and communal welfare, which contributed to perceptions of worldliness and spiritual decline.¹⁰⁴ Among religious leaders who reflected on declining church attendance or societal woes, the development of deistic and Enlightenment thinking further challenged their belief systems and encouraged secular worldviews even among their congregates.¹⁰⁵

The same intellectual currents that influenced Quakers also affected groups traditionally associated with Great Awakening revivalism like New Light Congregationalists, Separatists, Baptists, and Methodists.¹⁰⁶ Their reaction to the rationalist thought proposed by Enlightenment writers is particularly pertinent here. Through reason and moral insight, writers suggested that people could recognize, comprehend, and live in harmony with the natural laws that governed their universe and better understand their own value and perfectibility within it.¹⁰⁷ Both revivalists and Quaker ministers had to reconcile the place of reason and emotion within their religious experiences and delineate the role of God and man in generating a “true” religious experience.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). See also Christine Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts, 1690-1750* (New York: W. M. Norton and Company, 1984).

¹⁰⁶ See the discussion of Separate Congregationalists or Separatists in Joseph A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 188-189.

¹⁰⁷ See the overview in Reich, *Colonial America*, 246.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Barclay's *Apology* was the dominant authority for articulating and shaping Quaker beliefs in the 18th century. His *Apology* was widely read and instrumental in creating the quietist impulse of 18th-century Quakerism. See Rufus M. Jones' introduction to William C. Braithwaite's *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), xxx-xlv. See also Mack, *Visionary Women*, 280.

For Quaker ministers, the issue of divine inspiration was supreme and the suppression of personal thought and human intellect was paramount in speaking the “Truth” in Quaker meetings. For pro-Awakening revivalists who shared a common belief in God’s revelation through the Holy Spirit,¹⁰⁹ divine inspiration flowed from the true conversion of the minister. For reform-minded Quakers and for revivalists, alike, the reception of inspired messages was dependent on an enlightened flock whose individual religious experiences gave them discernment over Truth and over the ministers who supposedly delivered it.

Emphasis on conversion or on inspiration led to the questioning of ministerial authority, as groups like the Congregationalists and the Quakers considered the role of grace and divine inspiration and the role of book learning and human intellect within the realm of spiritual experience. The “inspired calling” of ministers was one point of contention, particularly volatile within the New and Old Light Congregational controversy. Questions arose about whether Congregationalist ministers were self-appointed or divinely sanctioned and, more seriously, whether they were converted in the first place or just pretenders misleading their flocks? Such questions created doubts about ministerial authority and flowed from larger discussions of the nature of human spirituality. Questions about requirements for church membership and the level of

¹⁰⁹ See Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 105-106. According to Tolles, from this shared belief in direct revelation, other commonalities followed: agreement about the depravity of unregenerate natural man, free will and Christ’s universal atonement, and the potential for man’s perfection on earth. Because of their shared emphasis on the indwelling Spirit, both shared a prophetic element in their preaching and a strict moral code, a humanitarian impulse, a devaluation of reason and theological education, and a democratic tendency. Quakers in the 18th century viewed the unregenerate natural man as fallen and corrupt. Robert Barclay’s *Apology* emphasized man’s depravity, which influenced the development of quietism in 18th-century Quakerism.

participation offered to those who were not full members also complicated the recognition of “visible” saints within American Congregationalism.¹¹⁰

For Congregationalists, conversion resulted from the extension of God’s grace to the individual. For Quakers, conversion came through an understanding of the grace that was already extended, inherent in the individual from birth. For New Lights, conversion involved an immediate, transforming power. For 18th-century Quakers it was a gradual process of spiritual awareness that culminated in a final communion with God.¹¹¹

While the religious awakenings that arose in the American colonies grew out of the Calvinist belief in original sin and the perceived need for a spiritual transformation and rebirth,¹¹² the Quaker belief in the preexisting presence of the Holy Spirit in the individual offered a different view of human spirituality. The possibility of universal salvation (implied in the Quaker belief in the indwelling light) led to a more positive valuation of human potential than the Calvinists advanced.¹¹³ The Quaker belief that

¹¹⁰ As in Congregational churches, the line between members and non-members in Quaker churches was increasingly blurred. Although birthright membership created problems within the Society of Friends, as discussed previously, Quakers did not debate or expound upon the issue at length. Congregationalists exerted a great deal of energy in their disputations for and against the Half Way Covenant and in their dilemma over who should or should not partake of the sacraments. See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 67-72. While Quakers had considerable problems with ascribed members, they never made ministerial conversion an issue.

¹¹¹ For a comparison of enthusiastic and mystical types of religious sensibility see Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 110. He compares Great Awakening revivalists and 17th-century Quaker enthusiasts to 18th-century Quaker mystics.

¹¹² Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 181. Quakers did not focus on sin, but rather believed that they were gradually more insulated from it as they followed God’s will in their spiritual lives. See Mary Cochran Grimes, “Saving Grace Among Puritans and Quakers: A Study of 17th and 18th Century Conversion Experiences,” *Quaker History* 71 (1982), 25.

¹¹³ Quaker attitudes about human nature were not overly positive. The Quakers regarded the unregenerate person just slightly better than the Calvinists. In the 18th-century, Quakers tended to emphasize the depravity of man more than their 17th-century counterparts, for example. See Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 106. See Frost, *The Quaker Family*, 10-29 for a more detailed discussion of this and other theological issues. See also Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists*, 67. See Wilcox’s discussion

Christ had already returned to the earth and indwelled within his people¹¹⁴ also provided a powerful validation to Quaker inspiration. The Quaker use of the Bible as a supplementary text but not a superior authority to ministerial inspiration also offered an alternate view of how spirituality was attained.

The Quaker focus on divine inspiration inherently placed greater importance on Quaker ministers¹¹⁵ and led Quaker leaders and laity, alike, to deliberate on “the source” of ministerial authority. Although divine inspiration was the means by which some New Light revivalists and Quakers delivered their sermons, the nature of the Quaker faith led to an ongoing evaluation of ministerial sanction¹¹⁶ that far surpassed the Congregationalist concern with the calling and conversion of ministers.¹¹⁷ Divine inspiration (rather than conversion and calling) was the basis of Quaker ministerial authority.¹¹⁸ For Quaker ministers an ongoing conflict over the relationship between the

of how the meaning of the inward light shifted in the late 17th century, and what this meant for 18th-century Quakers. Wilcox, *Handmaids of the Lord: Theology and Women's Ministry*, especially 96-127.

¹¹⁴ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 152.

¹¹⁵ By placing emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the force that moved them to write or speak and viewing the Holy Spirit within them as the “original word of God,” Quakers placed greater weight on their own spoken and written words than on the Bible. In contrast, the Bible was the only word of God to Congregationalists and other revivalists. The Quaker speaker or author was then of maximum importance within the Quaker faith—surpassing the importance of non-Quaker ministers within their respective churches. See Peters, *Print Culture*, 30.

¹¹⁶ See Bauman, “Speaking in the Light,” 151 and 155-160. Bauman explains that it was the relationship between silent waiting on God and speaking in worship meetings that signaled whether the speaker was divinely inspired in the early period of Quakerism. If the message was “authentic” it would arouse the Spirit of God in receptive audience members. Receptive audience members could confirm the source of the message based on how it resonated in their own lives. Because Quakers believed that the inward light was everywhere unitary and identical, Truth reached the conscience of the listener just as it reached the conscience of the speaker. Quakers believed that no human authority authorized their messages, only God. See Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words*,’ 39, 78, and 130.

¹¹⁷ See the discussion of Weber’s theory on the ongoing need to validate the prophet’s authority in Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 150.

indwelling spirit and the human capacity for reason (emphasized by Enlightenment thinkers) created anxiety for ministers who had to constantly distinguish between self-creation and divine revelation even as they delivered their spontaneous sermons.¹¹⁹

The questioning of ministerial authority manifested itself internally for many Quakers, as they were judges of whether “inspiration” was that of human reasoning or divine providence. “Quietism,” a term used by historians to describe the central religious principle of 18th-century Quakers, reflected the Quaker emphasis on listening to the inner Christ or the “light within” and urging others to listen for God’s direction. In some ways, this preoccupation with the gradual process of coming into communion with God heightened the anxieties associated with receiving direct revelations in unstructured Quaker worship meetings (a topic discussed further in Chapter 2). Though these tensions were inherent in the Quaker emphasis on direct revelation from the inception of the faith, the dilemma over whether “Truth” could be found by thinking or feeling was central to Great Awakening revivalism in general. For Quakers, the voice of God or the “light

¹¹⁸ Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 42. Bauman argues that legitimate speaking was the “only basis and means” of Quaker ministerial authority.

¹¹⁹ Bauman, “Speaking in the Light,” 159-160 and 155. This tension, as Bauman points out, was always present in Quakerism. Words were an “earthly faculty,” according to Bauman. Silence was reached by self-suppression. Speaking involved a state of “spiritual silence” or a giving up of the earthly nature which was fundamentally tied to the act of speaking. The process involved in coming to an “opening” to preach or pray also became more rationalized and central to judging one’s own leadings as divinely inspired or self-induced in the 18th century. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 280. See also Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 102 and 97-99 for a detailed discussion of Quaker thoughts on the relationship between reason and revelation and how attitudes differed somewhat by region and within the British Empire. According to Barbour and Frost, rational Quakerism (which more easily combined reason and revelation) suited most of the needs of 18th-century British Quakers in urban areas—they valued tradition, ethical behavior, and were firmly Christian and genteel. Although they tended to be quietistic in their worship meetings, quietism (which tended to juxtapose natural reason and the Inward Light) was more prevalent in colonial Quakerism and in rural provinces rather than in English cities like London. My research on American Quaker women’s journals supports this finding as well.

within,” the deepest part of their innermost conscience, put them in harmony with universal moral “Truth.”¹²⁰

Authority for ministers, then, differed for Quakers and non-Quakers. Quaker authority stemmed from the “unity of the spirit” felt by other Society members (i.e. their acceptance of each ministerial message as inspired or un-inspired).¹²¹ For non-Quaker revivalists, the Bible was the basis for all ministerial authority and individual inspiration was secondary. While Congregationalists commonly read from the Bible in worship meetings, for example, Quakers only cited verses on the basis of memory (or “God’s leading”). While the Bible became more important as a reference for members of the Society of Friends to affirm the “inspired” words delivered by Quaker ministers,¹²² the experiential nature of Quaker inspiration generated schisms, as discussed previously. As late-century reforms created a framework for establishing order and group consensus within the Society of Friends, problems related to individual “movements of the Spirit” no longer jeopardized the group to the extent that they had in the early years.

Just as Quakers in the latter 17th century worked to resolve many of the antinomian tendencies that created conflict within the Society of Friends, other groups were forced to face many of the same problems associated with religious enthusiasm in the 18th. As men and women followed the “leadings” of the Spirit in 18th-century revival meetings, the same kinds of excesses that undermined the unity of the early Quaker

¹²⁰ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 135-136.

¹²¹ Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words*,’ 39 and 130-132. Bauman writes that “Truth was felt in the resonant chord struck within one’s conscience by another’s message.”

¹²² See Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 101. Divine revelations were expected to agree with the Bible, but they were “not subject to it.” Both the Bible and divine revelations presumably came from the same source, the inward Christ. See also Frost, *Quaker Family*, 22.

movement also effectively challenged the stability of “awakened” churches. While other groups dealt with the problems inherent in relying on direct inspiration and individual responses to the Spirit, the sober behavior of 18th century Quakers offered a stark contrast to the ecstatic experiences of revival enthusiasts.¹²³

As the next chapter will discuss, the success of Quaker leaders in resolving issues related to spiritual authority had a great deal to do with their regulation of ministerial claims to “divine inspiration” and their willingness to institutionalize Quaker female leadership in the 17th century. As organizational and structural changes formalized women’s position within the Society of Friends, female ministers, in particular, played an important part in reinventing the Quaker image and in establishing the new Quakerism. The history of Quaker women’s participation within the Society of Friends and the consistency of the Quaker concern for the equality of the sexes are particularly relevant in discussing the contrasts between the Quakers and non-Quakers in the American colonies in the 18th century—and the “Quaker alternative” for colonial women.

¹²³ See Tolles, *Quakers in the Atlantic Culture*, 101-102 for a discussion of 18th-century Quakers’ reactions to the “excesses” of the revivalists.

Chapter 2: Quaker Women and the Gendering of Authority

Prior to late 17th-century reforms, Quaker women, like Quaker men, enjoyed a great deal of individual freedom as they traveled in the ministry and proclaimed their faith. From the earliest years of the movement, women Friends took an active role in establishing Quakerism. Women like Elizabeth Hooten and Margaret Fell Fox were among the first converts to Quakerism and among the first women responsible for spreading the Quaker faith. Women such as Ann Austin and Mary Fisher were among the first Quakers to preach in the American colonies; and, Mary Dyer was among the early Quaker missionaries in the colonies martyred for her faith.¹²⁴

The participation of Quaker women in the ministry of the Society of Friends was essential to the growth of the movement in England and its colonies. Of the first “Publishers of Truth” (who were responsible for the initial spread of Quakerism in England), 22 out of 66 were female.¹²⁵ Many early female preachers also took their message abroad. Out of a group of 59 who crossed the Atlantic to the American colonies between 1656 and 1663, for example, 26 (or 45%) were women—and only four of these traveled with their husbands.¹²⁶ Of 141 ministers listed as traveling from the American colonies to England between 1685 and 1835, 47 (or 34%) were female.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, 3-4. Note that Mary Dyer’s hanging in Massachusetts in 1660 compelled the monarchy to end the death penalty for Quakers in Massachusetts. See the discussion in Elaine C. Huber, “‘A Woman Must Not Speak’: Quaker Women in the English Left Wing,” in *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 171.

¹²⁵ See Barbour’s discussion of the combined data on the proportion of women compared to men in Hugh Barbour, “Quaker Prophetesses and Mothers in Israel,” in *Seeking the Light: Essays in Quaker History in Honor of Edwin B. Bronner* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1986), 57. See also Webster, “Among Friends,” 212. She notes that 12 of the first 22 Quakers to New England before 1660 were women.

¹²⁶ Dunn, “Saints and Sisters,” 597.

From the movement's inception, female Friends were responsible for the vitality and sustainability of Quakerism. Many Quaker women aided poor and imprisoned Quakers, petitioned government officials and sometimes met with them, corresponded with Quaker leaders, published religious works, ministered to the spiritual needs of fellow Quakers, and preached in public places to all who would listen. Female Friends were also involved in public demonstrations that incited persecution, and were arrested like their male counterparts for prophesying publicly, interrupting non-Quaker church services, making shocking symbolic gestures, harassing clergy, and refusing to pay tithes and swear oaths. Out of 360 Quakers who were involved in the interruption of church ministry in England between 1654 and 1659, for example, 34% were women.¹²⁸ While female Friends were active participants in the early years of the movement, their visibility also had an ambiguous effect on the group's survival.

While advocacy of female leadership became an important aspect of the group's identity and may have encouraged some to join the movement, the unconventional boldness and the sometimes impertinent behavior of Quaker women toward government officials and other religious leaders also garnered widespread criticism. Due to the cultural inhibitions about their leadership, their actions were often viewed as more offensive than those of their male counterparts. Women's aggressive preaching, in particular, contributed to perceptions of social disorder and as some scholars have suggested may have amplified the physical backlash toward Quakers. For the crime of

¹²⁷ Bacon, "Quaker Women in Overseas Ministry," 94.

¹²⁸ Trevett, *Women and Quakerism*, 15.

speaking aloud in church (deemed a violation of Saint Paul's injunction against women doing so), women, such as English Quaker Dewens Morrey, were convicted in court and "whipt untill the Blood did come."¹²⁹ For outspoken women, like Quaker Elizabeth Hooten, who visited Massachusetts in the 17th century, elaborate torture and humiliation (including being stripped to the waist and publicly whipped) were apparently necessary to silence and punish her.¹³⁰

Whether viewed as disorderly or sinister, the vocal participation of early Quaker female leaders contributed to negative perceptions about the group—and affected Quaker strategies for achieving tolerance.¹³¹ The eccentricities of individual leaders (as discussed previously) created the need for some of the internal reforms enacted in the latter part of the 17th century; and Quaker women, whether fairly or not, were often associated with the charismatic excesses that generated public scorn. Some female leaders were implicated in the schismatic controversies that threatened the unity of the early Quaker movement. Women, such as Martha Simmonds, who supported James Nayler in his notorious ride through Bristol (1656) were blamed by some Quakers (including Nayler, himself) for various indiscretions, including encouraging his lack of good judgment, his excessive pride—and even for “bewitching” him. The women who

¹²⁹ Huber, ““A Woman Must Not Speak,”” 164 and 168.

¹³⁰ Webster, “Among Friends,” 215.

¹³¹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 276. Some Quaker men, as suggested by their printed tracts, believed that women were easy targets for ridicule. Negative descriptions of female preachers by non-Quaker critics, in general, denote an intense level of anxiety created by women's public presence within the Quaker faith.

supported John Perrot were likewise accused of encouraging his errors and generating the controversy (even by George Fox, himself).¹³²

Attitudes about Quaker women within the Society of Friends were complex, and were not completely removed from the negative cultural stereotypes that gave women secondary status in the 17th and 18th centuries. The familiar interpretation of Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden—the beguilement of Eve, her seduction of Adam, and the curse that made Adam master of Eve—offered ample “evidence” to many within English and American society of women's weak intellect, her vulnerability to sin, her ability to seduce, and her need of male supervision. Although Quakers rejected this common interpretation of the fall as evidence of women's intellectual or spiritual inferiority, most Quakers accepted the subordinate status of Quaker women, at least in *temporal* terms.¹³³

Ambiguous Discourses and the Complexities of Gendered Authority

The coexistence of competing attitudes about female susceptibility to external forces (whether divine or Satanic) complicated Quaker conceptions of feminine piety and Quaker arguments on behalf of women leaders, especially in the 17th century.¹³⁴ The ad

¹³² See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 206-278 for a detailed analysis of the implications of women's involvement in the Nayler controversy and the Perrot schism; See also Ng, “Marriage and Discipline,” 116 for a summary of the historiography on women's involvement in the Nayler incident. See Trevett, *Women and Quakerism*, 28-42 for a discussion of Quaker beliefs regarding witchcraft in the 17th century and Trevett's discussion of women's involvement in the Nayler controversy.

¹³³ As theologian Catherine Wilcox explains, the Quaker separation of spiritual and temporal realities in the 17th century corresponded with subtle shifts in Quaker theology. The loss of their eschatological vision in the latter part of the 17th century altered their goals for gender equality on earth. Their acceptance of some level of female subordination and the emphasis on gender differences (exemplified in their creation of separate roles for women and men within the new meeting system) also contributed to the persistence of negative cultural values, both within the Society and without. See Wilcox, *Handmaids of the Lord: Theology and Women's Ministry*, especially 235-253.

¹³⁴ In the 17th century, character traits were perceived as not fixed or fluid, making individuals less “predictable.” External forces were believed to have a broad influence over the minds and actions of people. Due to perceptions of women's physical weakness, women were more likely to be overtaken by

hoc nature of the Quaker defense of women's preaching and the inadequacy of their biblical exegesis concerning the concept of male headship also undermined the Quaker consensus on the issue of female leadership. The loss of the urgency surrounding the Quakers' eschatological vision and their growing acceptance of female subordination *in the world* as a matter of expediency for the long-term survival of the group also represented the conservative undercurrents that shaped Quaker reforms in the latter part of the 17th century.¹³⁵

Enlightenment ideals, which emphasized human rationality and more fixed character traits, increasingly influenced Quaker attitudes about female Friends and their conceptions of female authority.¹³⁶ By the 18th century, Quakers increasingly equated wisdom with individual rationality and with "divine" enlightenment.¹³⁷ As female Friends became less likely to be associated with witchcraft and possession by external Satanic forces, their speech carried less weight as a source of enchantment or delusion and more weight as the rational outgrowth of a deliberate process of spiritual preparation and divine sanction.¹³⁸ Because "inspiration" was increasingly determined by other

forces beyond their control, and thus, more susceptible to outside influences. Due to women's "proclivity" to pride (based on Eve's motivations for eating the fruit), women were also perceived to be more susceptible from a moral standpoint, as well. See for example, the discussion in Mack, *Visionary Women*, 245.

¹³⁵ Wilcox, *Handmaids of the Lord: Theology and Women's Ministry*, 95-119.

¹³⁶ See Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency," 162-163.

¹³⁷ See the discussion in Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency," 162-163. This should not be overdrawn in the American context, however. Level of education was an important factor, and is particularly relevant in discussing American Quaker women. See also the discussion in Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 102 and 97-99.

¹³⁸ Mack points out that while 17th-century audiences had to decide whether Quaker women preachers spoke with God's voice or the devil's, 18th-century audiences had to determine whether they spoke as with God's voice or their own. Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency," 165.

Quaker members, and ministerial roles were more regulated within the Society of Friends, personal reputation as a virtuous and “enlightened” woman played a considerable role in creating female spiritual authority, particularly during the 18th century.¹³⁹

Because Quaker attitudes about female leadership continued to develop alongside and in response to negative assessments of female “nature,” Quaker arguments were limited by the desire to transcend cultural limitations rather than directly challenge them. By neglecting to attack the temporal aspects of female subordination, which informed the lived experiences of Quaker female leaders, Quakers were forced to conceptualize Quaker women’s authority in terms that (in some ways) reinforced the status quo.¹⁴⁰

The dominance of cultural constraints against female public speech and female spiritual authority led some Quakers to separate the temporal and the spiritual in their attempts to conceptualize and justify “enlightened” female leadership.¹⁴¹ Because the Quaker justification of female leadership emphasized women’s transcendence of their gendered identities as passive conduits of “divine” messages,¹⁴² recognition of women’s authority *in gendered terms* was especially problematic for some early Friends. Because some Quakers continued to question the capacity of women who operated “in the body”

¹³⁹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 292.

¹⁴⁰ See the discussion of Quakers and feminism in Michaelson, “Religious Bases of Eighteenth-Century Feminism,” 286.

¹⁴¹ See discussion in Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 32.

¹⁴² Mack, *Visionary Women*, 111.

(or in their gendered social identities) to assume authoritative positions,¹⁴³ particularly over Quaker men, a latent uneasiness with female leadership would surface periodically within the Society of Friends.

Wilkinson-Story and the Undercurrents of Resistance

This uneasiness was, perhaps, most apparent in the controversy surrounding the adoption of the meeting system—often called the Wilkinson-Story schism. One of the central questions in the controversy was whether women should gain formal inclusion in the government of the Society of Friends. The issue of creating separate women’s meetings and the subsequent authority given to those meetings to oversee Quaker marriages were major problems for opponents of the new system.¹⁴⁴ The Society of Friends split between a group led by George Fox who advocated the meeting system and female leadership and those who followed the lead of John Wilkinson and John Story and opposed the formation of women’s business meetings, and the new meeting system in general.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 32. For Quaker George Keith (who later converted to Anglicanism), preaching remained the domain of men, except in extraordinary (or supernatural) circumstances. In a tract written in 1674, he argued that in situations where God “moved” neither men nor women to speak, only men had the authority to do so.

¹⁴⁴ See Ng, “Marriage and Discipline,” 128 and 132. Ng makes a strong case that female authority over young men who wished to marry made the power of women’s meetings over the marriage process particularly controversial for some opponents of the new meeting system, who were outraged by women’s authority over men in any context. The oversight of women’s meetings over the remarriages of sometimes wealthy widows and older men would also add an economic dynamic to their control over the process. Ng suggests that the marriage discipline could be used as a means of punishment or social control.

¹⁴⁵ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 293-304. The severity of the divide is often characterized by historians who quote a male opponent of the meeting system. He suggested that women stay home and wash dishes rather than serve in formal leadership positions within the Society. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 276.

The resistance to the development of separate women's business meetings reflected a combination of the cultural constraints against female leadership held by some Friends and some principled objections to the new organizational structure. Although women's right to preach was never at issue during the controversy, the episode revealed a prejudicial subtext in the history of Quakerism¹⁴⁶ that affected the full integration of women within the government of the Society of Friends for many years. While Fox and his followers successfully implemented the new meeting system and shaped the direction of the movement, opponents of the system did succeed in halting the creation of some women's meetings in England for many years.¹⁴⁷ Although the primary resistance to the establishment of women's meetings centered in London, reservations about women's leadership continued to influence Quaker practices and to affect the experiences of female Friends.¹⁴⁸

In the government of the Society of Friends, for example, American female leaders encountered less resistance than their English counterparts, but faced ongoing

¹⁴⁶ Margaret Hope Bacon (*Mothers of Feminism*, 1986), Phyllis Mack (*Visionary Women*, 1992), and more recently, Su Fang Ng ("Marriage and Discipline," 2003) have emphasized the resistance to female leadership that existed within the Society of Friends. Some Quakers who resisted the creation of women's meetings were women. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 392-393 for a discussion of Susanna Blandford, an opponent of the new meeting system.

¹⁴⁷ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 264-304. See also Kunze, "vesells fitt for the masters us[e]," 180.

¹⁴⁸ Female leaders in England and in the American colonies worked in concert beginning in 1753 to start a London Yearly Meeting for women, a struggle which was not successful until 1784. American female leaders involved in winning approval for the meeting include, Susanna Morris, Rebecca Wright, Patience Brayton, Mehetabel Jenkins, and Rebecca Jones. Bacon, "Quaker Women in Overseas Ministry," 106. Earlier efforts by Philadelphian Quaker women like Ann Moore, Susanna Lightfoot, Esther White, and Margaret Churchman are also discussed in Bacon, "A Widening Path," 180. In contrast to London Quakers, Dublin Quakers developed a separate women's meeting as early as 1679. See Bacon, "A Widening Path," 175.

obstacles to full participation.¹⁴⁹ American female Friends did not gain full integration into every level of the meeting system until 1740.¹⁵⁰ Although they were left out of some committees at various levels of the meeting system,¹⁵¹ they did notably participate at the highest level of the system—with a separate yearly meeting as early as 1677 (compared to the London Women’s Yearly Meeting established in 1784). Even in colonies slow to develop women’s yearly meetings, like New England, Virginia, and North Carolina (which established yearly meetings only after the internal reforms of the mid-18th century), strong monthly and quarterly meetings of women may have compensated.¹⁵² As in England, some women’s meetings likely took greater initiative, enjoyed more support, and had more influence than others.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ See Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 46-47 for a comparison of American and English meetinghouses appropriated for the use of women’s meetings. American meetinghouses, she finds, were constructed from the beginning with “more or less equal space for women.”

¹⁵⁰ Dunn, “Saints and Sisters,” 599. Women were finally included as elders in the Select Meeting of Ministers and Elders. This outcome evinced the resolution of debates over whether women should serve as elders (held in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting) as late as the 1730s.

¹⁵¹ Their joint participation with men in committees would increase following the reformation in the mid-18th century, according to Bacon. See Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 54.

¹⁵² Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 49-50. Even though men’s meetings retained the right to overrule women’s meetings in cases of discipline and marriage oversight, they did not always exercise the right, according to Bacon. Some women’s meetings did not even consult the men’s meetings, at all, concerning their decisions. Others did not hold the same authority that other women’s meetings held—like oversight of marriage. See Le Shana, “Heavenly Plantations,” especially 254-271. Le Shana’s research into some NC women’s meetings provides a helpful counterpoint to more positive evaluations of women’s influence within separate meetings for business. However, the conclusions he draws from the evidence he provides are sometimes questionable. When he discusses the Symons Creek meeting’s decision to expand the building to provide women with a separate place to assemble, he finds “As with every other instance, the minutes are silent regarding any female input, formal or informal, on the matter.” See page 267. He also finds no evidence to indicate that women played any role in deciding on where to locate new meetinghouses. Where the records are silent, he assumes women played no role. Based on Leslie Lindenauer’s more recent research on the importance of that issue, in particular, for women in Congregational, Dutch Reformed, and Anglican churches (who played less formal roles within their respective churches and like many Quaker women had to be able to get to meetings often with large families in tow), his conclusions are likely in need of revision. Leslie J. Lindenauer, *Piety and Power: Gender and Religious Culture in the American Colonies, 1630-1700* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 122.

As women gained access to Quaker government, questions about women's capacity to hold authoritative positions within the Society of Friends came to a climax. While historians have speculated that George Fox decided on separate women's business meetings to entrust women with gender-specific duties or to offset women's tendency toward deference in mixed-gender meetings,¹⁵⁴ it is clear that the decision represented some compromise with the larger culture.¹⁵⁵ While the decision to institutionalize female authority offered Quaker women unprecedented access to church government,¹⁵⁶ it also institutionalized female subordination—though only in qualified form.

While men's meetings did hold veto power over the women's meetings, the reliance on "divine inspiration" during business meetings allowed women some levity. Because women's "inward guide" was presumably the same as the men's, male leaders may have been more inclined to approve than to reverse decisions made by "inspired" female leaders. While the requirement of presenting decisions for approval to the men's

¹⁵³ Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 49-50. Instead of just maintaining that the records are inconclusive on some matters, Le Shana tends to make grand and rather negative leaps in arguing that women's spiritual equality had little practical application in North Carolina. His discussion of a Quaker female minister's negative treatment by male leaders, for example, fails to take into account the questionable circumstances involving her application to travel in the ministry in the first place—she wanted to visit her daughter. He fails to consider how she presented her "concern" to travel and the spiritual beliefs involved in what constituted a questionable request in the first place—was her request "divinely motivated"? See Le Shana, "'Heavenly Plantations,'" 274-276. Her husband's infidelity in her absence also likely confirmed (at least from their perspective) that her motivations were not God-inspired (i.e. the trip turned out to be disastrous from the standpoint of her marriage). Still, the men overruled her husband to let her go on another trip to visit her daughter following her husband's adulterous affair—obviously, her ministerial role was not the primary purpose for the second trip (if it had been on the first). The evidence he provides suggests that they felt sorry for her because her husband was still seeing his mistress. Le Shana uses this story to represent how female *ministers* remained "subordinate" to men. It was their spiritual "leadings" or their "divine" authority that allowed women to overcome subordination—he completely misses the point in this analysis.

¹⁵⁴ Webster, "Among Friends," 222.

¹⁵⁵ Phyllis Mack makes this point. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 309.

¹⁵⁶ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 31.

meetings involved subordination, the recognition of female “spiritual” authority may have mitigated male oversight in many cases.¹⁵⁷ Some men’s meetings, apparently, went beyond their normal duties to handle certain situations or make decisions, and it is also evident that some women’s meetings did as well.¹⁵⁸

The Implications of Compromise

In sum, while studies suggest that the right to teach, preach, and lead did not negate the social subordination experienced by female Friends in the 17th and 18th centuries, the influence and authority held by Quaker women as ministers, elders, and leaders in women’s business meetings was likely significant and not mere “tokenism.” As “inspired” ministers, female Friends (whether married or single)¹⁵⁹ held real authority based on their personal competence, integrity, and their roles as spiritual vessels. As elders, women exercised formal power by making decisions concerning the social, personal, and economic activities of other Friends. As leaders in women’s business

¹⁵⁷ The relationship between members of the men’s and women’s business meetings may have also influenced male support for women’s decisions. In the four women’s meetings studied by Soderlund, most of the female leaders were married to well-respected Friends who participated in some capacity in the men’s meetings and over half of the men also held an office. Soderlund, “Women’s Authority,” 728.

¹⁵⁸ Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 44. Male leaders held more responsibilities in the meeting system and the final word on discipline. More severe disciplinary cases were referred to men’s meetings. The power of disownment, for example, was the men’s alone. See the discussion in Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 189-190.

¹⁵⁹ Although Wulf focuses on unmarried Quaker ministers, the experiences of married and unmarried ministers (at least in the context of their travels and in terms of their spiritual authority) seem to have been very similar in my estimation. See Wulf’s discussion in *Not All Wives*, especially 67-69. Age and experience in the ministry were likely more important than marital status in determining the degree of authority held by Quaker women ministers. Su Fang Ng, for example, notes the importance of age in establishing authority in the early Quaker meeting system. See Ng, “Marriage and Discipline,” 134-135.

meetings, some women also held jurisdictional authority over marriage, giving them the right to counsel and even discipline male relatives and neighbors.¹⁶⁰

Despite the practical limits of female leadership within the Society of Friends, scholars generally agree that the group created a more egalitarian basis for women within Quaker families and the Quaker community than those which existed in the larger Anglo-American culture. While Quakers did not reject the patriarchal structure of their families or their society, they did challenge the temporal context of women's spiritual lives by radically redefining the parameters of their life experiences.¹⁶¹ This was especially true for Quaker women who usurped the conventional roles of male religious leaders by preaching and traveling in the ministry.

For women who chose to become Quaker preachers, the psychological ramifications of their leadership were many. As historian Su Fang Ng's work suggests, the same undercurrent of opposition within the Society of Friends that challenged women's leadership in Quaker government also compelled defenses of Quaker female preaching.¹⁶² As structural and organizational changes within the Society of Friends set

¹⁶⁰ See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 288-289. Note that I have applied Mack's discussion to American Quaker women in the 18th century. Dunn in "Saints and Sisters" 582-601 supports the idea that Quaker women's authority within American Quakerism was substantial, especially compared to Congregationalist women. Soderlund's study of American women's meetings in the 18th century also suggests that the authority they wielded was real, though she emphasizes the limits. See Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 189.

¹⁶¹ As Barry Levy explains, Quaker women, in general, held special authority within Quaker households. Female oversight of marriage in the Society of Friends placed female elders as overseers of women's decisions related to their marriages and households, and forced men to concede to their authority when proposing marriages, for example. Fathers and husbands shared influence with Quaker female leaders. Female elders, for example, continued to exert influence in women's marriages and households. See Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 79.

¹⁶² Ng, "Marriage and Discipline," 113-140. Ng argues that some early arguments made in tracts defending female preaching were expanded in later tracts to broaden women's authority and participation

new standards for female leaders, the latter 17th and the early 18th century became an important transitional period in Quaker gender relations. As Quakers compromised with the larger culture to sustain their movement, gender issues played a central role in defining the organization and in establishing the Quaker church.

The Politics of Becoming a Respectable Body

Late-century reformism not only formalized women's roles as ministers, elders, and leaders in women's business meetings, it also increasingly encouraged their leadership on the basis of their status as "enlightened" women. By appropriating women's authority within the new meeting system and establishing their leadership on the basis of new behavioral guidelines, the Society of Friends expanded women's leadership and also embraced a conservative strategy to redefine its public image. As Quaker women in the latter part of the 17th and early 18th century began to increasingly integrate their spiritual lives with their domestic ones, to identify with feminine attributes as strengths in their religious lives, they moved closer to conventional gender norms.¹⁶³ Although Quaker female ministers had always confronted the gender constraints that encouraged their silence and their subordination within English society,¹⁶⁴ they were, perhaps, increasingly aware of how their womanhood influenced their reception by the late 17th century.

in the new meeting system. Larson references defenses of female speaking in the 18th century, as well. Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 278.

¹⁶³ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 309. Mack argues that the acceptance of more conventional gender roles by the Society of Friends was essential to developing the new public presence that would end persecution and transform Quakerism from a loosely organized group to a well-established church.

¹⁶⁴ Peters, *Print Culture*, 140-141.

From the earliest years of the movement, Quaker female preachers internalized their positions as instruments of God and as controversial figures within English society. Early Quaker women often strategically took on the public personas of male biblical prophets, speaking with the authority of the Apostles. By denying their gender differences and speaking through the “inward Christ” as “disembodied spirits” (rather than as embodied women constrained by societal norms), Quaker women ministers were able to defend their public authority and gloss over many of the personal inhibitions that discouraged their leadership.¹⁶⁵ On rare occasions when female Friends explained their positions in gendered language and confronted the cultural implications of their deviant actions *as women*,¹⁶⁶ they ran headlong into the theological and psychological constraints that kept all English women in a subordinate (and often a silent) position.

In eschewing the cultural inhibitions against their leadership, Quaker women had to continually redefine their own attitudes and assumptions about women’s roles. As Phyllis Mack suggests (in modern psychological terms) the net result of their ongoing conflict with contemporary social norms was a more fragmented sense of self, compared to Quaker men.¹⁶⁷ From a psychological and a strategic standpoint, their confrontation with English social mores offered only a limited resolution of the negative stereotypes

¹⁶⁵ See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 49.

¹⁶⁶ Peters, *Print Culture*, 140-141. Peters modifies Phyllis Mack’s argument that Quaker women’s preaching was based on the negation of their gender. She suggests that women were more likely to express their behavior in gendered terms verbally rather than in print. She emphasizes non-Quaker male opposition to the behavior of Quaker women and the necessity of defending women’s roles within the Society of Friends in gendered terms. She also argues out that Quaker leaders (like George Fox and Richard Farnworth) defended women’s speaking in order to contain and justify the ministries of women Friends.

¹⁶⁷ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 134.

associated with women. Even as female Friends overcame the psychological burden of speaking by delivering their messages in the voices of male biblical prophets, they reinforced the negative cultural association between female passivity and female corruptibility that placed them in company with Eve—and with Satan, himself.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, by preaching publicly in any voice, masculine or feminine, Quaker female ministers challenged the idea that women were somehow less righteous and therefore naturally subordinate to men.¹⁶⁹

As Quaker women embraced a more feminine demeanor and identified with their domestic roles and responsibilities more fully in the latter part of the 17th century, they made gender a central part of their spiritual identities. This new emphasis on gender differences within the Society of Friends granted women new authority, while also amplifying the distinct feminine attributes that made them subordinate (and more acceptable) among their contemporaries. As female Friends opted for a less radical denial of gender mores by ceasing to speak in the masculine voices of biblical prophets, they increasingly represented themselves in writing as women, legitimizing their value as spiritual leaders in gendered terms and basing their authority on their roles as virtuous daughters, wives, and mothers.¹⁷⁰

Leading female Friends increasingly adopted expanded roles within the Quaker community as “mothers in Israel” or female exemplars who would maintain “the family

¹⁶⁸ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 133-134. See also Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 12-54. Reis discusses the association between female passivity and Satanic possession or witchcraft.

¹⁶⁹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 133-134.

¹⁷⁰ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 309, 222 and 372.

as a locus of worship, moral education, and spiritual shelter,” and extend the traditional female roles of nurturer, family overseer, and dispenser of charity to the broader Quaker community.¹⁷¹ They were expected to behave as a parent to younger Friends and to guide younger women ‘to be sober, to love their own husbands, to love their children and to be discreet, chaste keepers at home.’¹⁷² They also adapted their visionary experiences to their domestic lives, and, used their spiritual strengths to augment their authority.

As women’s roles were increasingly emphasized and formalized within the organization, the relationships between Quaker men and women also changed. Phyllis Mack points out that Quaker women felt the implications of new restrictions on their behavior and movement more than Quaker men.¹⁷³ Some evidence suggests that women were advised against excessive speaking in meetings and expected to defer to male ministers, especially when non-Quakers and capable male Friends were present. Further evidence suggests that married women ministers may have been more likely than men to suspend their travels and put their husbands’ ministries before their own.¹⁷⁴ Although these findings are tentative and based on a few examples, it is clear that by emphasizing

¹⁷¹ Mack, *Visionary Women.*, 218 and 309. According to Mack, George Fox’s introduction of the mother in Israel was a progressive measure in that it widened the moral and political aspects of female Friends’ traditional role; but it was also conservative in that it was a strategy designed to create internal stability within the movement and protect Friends from persecution. For a discussion of the influence of Margaret Fell in creating the maternal role for Quaker women and maternal imagery in women’s writings, see Tarter, “Nursing the New Wor(l)d,” (1993). Su Fang Ng suggests that younger Friends sensed that they were being “demoted” as the primary leaders or exemplary paradigms of Quaker piety, in favor of more conservative and “older” models as the new meeting system was established. See Ng, “Marriage and Discipline,” 134-135.

¹⁷² Quoted in Mack, *Visionary Women*, 287.

¹⁷³ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 366.

¹⁷⁴ See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 366-367 and 384-385.

gender differences, Quakers placed limits on their own behavior, and articulated new self-conceptions that affected their interactions with the opposite sex.¹⁷⁵

Although Phyllis Mack has begun the discussion of shifting gender norms at the turn of the 18th century in the English context and in a fairly recent article has carried that forward into the 18th century,¹⁷⁶ more emphasis should be placed on how the Quaker belief in the inward light mediated changing gender conventions in the American colonies—and more specifically, how American female Friends applied these changes to their lives and ministries as the century progressed.¹⁷⁷ Although women were encouraged to defer to men in public meetings and in matters of general policy, for example, they were not discouraged from speaking or exercising leadership when they received visionary insights from God.¹⁷⁸ While the range of their expression became tied to appropriate behavior based on their roles as daughters or wives,¹⁷⁹ they continued to speak (and write) as they felt led. Even in the Wilkinson-Story controversy

¹⁷⁵ Note that the language and preoccupations of women's polemical writings also reflected sharper gender differentiation. While Mack notes that women "acted as competent administrators and thinkers within the household and meeting," she documents a shift in their public policy. She finds that while they discussed issues of suffering and mutual love and unity within the meeting system, female writers tended to regard issues of church structure and politics as taboo subjects in their published polemics. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 311. See also Mortimer, "Quaker Women in the Eighteenth Century," 228-259 for more examples of attempts to regulate women's preaching.

¹⁷⁶ See Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency" (2003).

¹⁷⁷ Although Phyllis Mack clearly recognizes the importance of religious faith, she sometimes equivocates on its importance. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 276. One example occurs when Mack states that Quaker women were "prevented from preaching and writing as they were moved in the later years of the century." On page 311, she points out that they were not discouraged from speaking or exercising leadership based on their divine leadings.

¹⁷⁸ Ng, "Marriage and Discipline," 121-123 suggests that tracts, like Margaret Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified* (1667) may have more subtly promoted an extension of women's active role in church administration by promoting female speaking, which unlike female prophesying allowed women to participate in the everyday working of the church.

¹⁷⁹ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 405 and 407.

surrounding the adoption of structural and organizational reforms, as Phyllis Mack points out, it was not women's right to speak that was at issue, but rather the extent of their authority within the new meeting system.¹⁸⁰

Although the Quaker organizational and structural changes in the latter part of the 17th century stifled individual expressiveness to some extent¹⁸¹ and gave women limited authority in church government (compared to Quaker men), the institutionalization of women's roles within the Society of Friends also protected the participation of women. Phyllis Mack notes the importance of separate women's meetings as institutions that in the 19th century encouraged woman's suffrage, abolitionism, peace activism; and, in the 20th century, modern feminism. She also points out that in the short run, smaller, segregated women's meetings "appear to have sustained more vitality" than larger administrative bodies that included both sexes.¹⁸²

As Quaker female ministers achieved formal status as certified preachers, they also increasingly held *individual* authority based on their own integrity and morality within the Society of Friends. They spoke in their own voices as women; and held

¹⁸⁰ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 264-304. Mack suggests a strong link between antinomianism, femininity, and female support for the Nayler and Perrot schisms of the 17th century.

¹⁸¹ Phyllis Mack argues that the structural and organizational changes of the late 17th century stifled individual expressiveness to the point that it created "a rigid uniformity of dress, thinking, and behavior." Mack, *Visionary Women*, 356. I would not go that far. I tend to view their belief in the inward Light as a check and balance on behavioral restrictions. Larson makes the point that the quietist trend and its emphasis on passive meditation and the denial of self-will may have offset the tendency to conform to a "male-deferential, order of speaking," by allowing female ministers to reassert their messages on the basis of divine inspiration and God's authority over human will. See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 39. Other examples of nonconformity challenge Mack's point. At least in the colony of Pennsylvania, Jack Marietta finds that there was "a conspicuous absence" of recorded infractions related to Quaker dress and "plain" speech among Friends in the early part of the 18th century. He also points to journals and letters as evidence of the lack of conformity in the use of "thee" and "thou." See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783*, 22-23. Frederick Tolles further substantiates Marietta's points. See Tolles, "'Of the Best Sort but Plain,' 484-502 and Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 73-90.

¹⁸² Mack, *Visionary Women*, 348-349.

authority based on their gendered social identities, using examples of female biblical figures, as well as their own “domestic expertise” to augment their authority.¹⁸³

Increased ministerial regulation insured that, like their male counterparts, they would be held accountable for the messages they delivered and for the personal influence they exerted as ministers.

Increased emphasis on the Quaker family from the late 17th century on also ensured that *as women* they would be central players in the development of the new Quakerism.¹⁸⁴ By embracing their femininity for the good of the movement, in the face of staunch persecution from British authorities, female ministers protected and sustained their leadership as Quakerism became more well-established. As Public Friends, they also reinforced their distinctive mission and personified the group’s ongoing oppositional stance to the cultural and religious values of the larger society. By serving as public representatives of American Quakerism, Quaker women ministers redefined female piety and represented the potential for expanded female roles within the larger colonial American society.

American Friends and the Idealization of Female Virtue

Shifting conceptions about female adherents within the Society of Friends in the latter part of the 17th century presaged and likely drew from broader changes in gender attitudes and relations. In the American colonies, gender differences became increasingly important in establishing the ideological parameters for Quaker female participation in

¹⁸³ See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 326.

¹⁸⁴ Mack emphasizes the importance of the Quaker family in the late 17th century. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 290. The issue of family instability may have contributed to the idealization of women’s roles and their maternal influence in the home. Policy changes, like archetypal ideals, probably followed from perceived problems and desires for solutions. See the discussion about the destabilization of the Quaker family in the 18th century in Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 67-72.

the late 17th and early 18th century. As more positive attitudes about female spirituality were expressed by male religious leaders, women of all denominations likely benefited from the positive press.

Beginning in the late 17th and 18th centuries, religious women began to be idealized for their feminine innocence and their innate moral authority by New England ministers. The same was also true for evangelical revivalists in the mid-18th century. These positive endorsements elevated the importance of women's domestic roles, as women began to be increasingly viewed as moral guardians of their homes.¹⁸⁵ With the publication of sentimental literature (primarily from Britain) in the American colonies from the 1740s on, the ideal of the "moral mother" and its later Anglo-American incarnation the "Republican Mother" gained wider appeal.¹⁸⁶ While it was only in the late 18th and in the 19th century that American conceptions of women as moral guardians of their homes and society became widespread, competing ideals of womanhood emerged

¹⁸⁵ Dunn, "Saints and Sisters," 582-601. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1977). Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 126-159. Laurel Ulrich Thatcher, "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 20-40. See also Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 111-115.

¹⁸⁶ See Ruth Bloch, *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 42-54. See also Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), especially 269-288. For a brief response to Kerber's discussion of republican mothers as a "revolutionary invention" see Rosemarie Zagari, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother" *American Quarterly* 44 (June 1992): 192-215. Zagari views what Kerber calls "Republican Motherhood" as a "broad, long-term, transatlantic reformation of the roles and status of women." See page 193. See Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, 17-21 for a brief discussion of how the ideology of domesticity was conveyed by New England family reformers and intellectuals to 19th-century American society.

earlier and offered alternative values that portrayed women's nature and their intellectual abilities in a more positive light.¹⁸⁷

As women were increasingly perceived as naturally pious rather than naturally passionate, emphasis on their receptivity to God rather than Satan offered a new foundation for conceptions of female virtue. As Enlightenment ideals emphasized women's rational qualities over their passionate ones, greater valuation of the female intellect led to positive advances in female education and a growing emphasis on women's abilities—and their potential contributions within their families.¹⁸⁸

As these trends influenced attitudes about women, they also coalesced with the belief system and development of Quakerism in the American colonies. American Quakers promoted the moral influence of “mothers in Israel” and their broader influence within the political organization and ministry of the Society of Friends. These recognized leaders also predicated the increasing emphasis on the maternal influence within the home and in American society, at large.¹⁸⁹ As families became the “material and metaphorical basis of the new Quakerism” in the internal reforms of the late 17th century and early 18th century, American Quaker women became central in regulating marriage,

¹⁸⁷ Negative attitudes about women's nature and intellect did continue to coexist with more positive portrayals of women, of course. Bloch, *Gender and Morality*, 72-73. Intellectual discussions about whether virtue derived from reason (associated with medieval scholasticism) or from sentiment (associated with English and Scottish Enlightenment philosophy) also shifted in the direction of emotion as the basis of natural morality and, thus, in favor of women. Great Awakening revivalists promoted an intense emotional response to God's grace.

¹⁸⁸ Bloch, *Gender and Morality*, 74.

¹⁸⁹ Levy credits the Quakers with originating and establishing the “institution of the morally self-sufficient household in American society,” or a version of domesticity that was almost identical to that co-opted by New England reformers in the 19th century. See Levy, *Quakers and the American Family*, especially 5 and 22.

educating children, and modeling piety within their homes and meetings.¹⁹⁰ Problems related to lax discipline, birthright membership, and exogamous marriage were brought to the fore by some Quaker reformers in the mid-18th century; and internal reforms (as they were adopted) reinforced the importance of women leaders in matters of female discipline and in oversight of marriage.¹⁹¹

By actively engaging in mid 18th-century reforms, many reform-minded female leaders solidified their social, economic, and political authority within American Quakerism, particularly in areas where they were assumed to hold special authority as women. As female Friends participated in the meeting system as elders, ministers, and women's business meeting leaders, they extended many of their domestic roles into the larger religious community. By embracing conventional female roles and expanding those to make their mark, particularly in the area of discipline,¹⁹² many female leaders contributed to the stability of the Society of Friends in the 18th century and proved their effectiveness as leaders—some with transatlantic influence.

In the American colonies and abroad, a network of reform-minded female ministers made important contributions to the development of Quakerism. English female missionaries, like Catherine Phillips and Rachel Wilson, were instrumental in the transatlantic reforms that altered Quakerism in the American colonies; and American Quaker women, like Ann Moore, Susanna Morris, Patience Brayton, and Rebecca Jones

¹⁹⁰ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 290.

¹⁹¹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 38.

¹⁹² Male and female reformers maintained that women's oversight of female conduct in their own meetings was the impetus for reformation. Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 38.

contributed to similar reforms in Britain.¹⁹³ All of the women discussed in this study were engaged in the reformation of the Society of Friends.¹⁹⁴

As these Quaker female preachers brought their message to the world, they became visible symbols of a radically different lifestyle created by their alternative theology and their identification with the Quaker community. Even as these 18th-century female ministers brought Quakers closer to the religious mainstream by basing their authority on their feminine attributes and their “divine sanction,” they continued to expand—and turn on end—many of the common characteristics associated with Anglo-American womanhood, as discussed in the following pages.

While the emphasis on positive female virtues often encouraged Quaker women to assume and even expand gender-specific roles within the Quaker community, defenses of their formal leadership based on their positive, innate qualities as women also reinforced biological differences, and contributed to persistent gender stereotypes that undermined their expanding authority. By accepting gender differences as natural determinants of character, Quaker women (including female ministers) faced the same gendered restrictions and inhibitions that created barriers for other religious women.

¹⁹³ For a discussion of how reforms spread between the American colonies and England see Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, especially 32-96. Marietta’s focus remains mostly on male Quaker leaders involved in mid-century Quaker reformism. Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 70-85 details the influence of female Friends during the reform period.

¹⁹⁴ Though some did not embrace all of the reforms (at least in their journals), their accounts of their ministries suggest that they shared a number of reform concerns. Reform issues mentioned in the journals of the women ministers discussed here include their concern for worldliness among Quaker youth, strict discipline, marrying non-Quakers, dress infractions, materialism, slavery, and abstaining from or limiting tobacco and alcohol use, for example. For these women, internal reformation would eventually lead to widespread social change. While sectarian concerns may have been their primary focus as ministers, they also preached against slavery and other social ills before non-Quakers. See the discussion of slavery and the “humanitarian and tribalistic reform traditions” among Delaware Valley Quakers in Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 177-187.

Along with such positive evaluations of women, more negative assessments of female sinfulness also continued to thrive in the American colonies during the 18th century. The coexistence of two dominant cultural images of women (one which depicted them as naturally pious and the other as naturally passionate)¹⁹⁵ influenced the experiences of female Friends within the Society of Friends, as well as, their non-Quaker counterparts. A comparison of the mores that influenced religious women of other denominations and the revivalism that challenged those norms reveals many of the differences that set Quaker female ministers apart. The social norms associated with female public speech, in particular, suggest the problems inherent in the vocal exercise of faith and the underlying association with authority that accompanied the act of public speaking.

Female Spiritual Authority and Limited “Awakenings”

While most religious women in the American colonies were accustomed to singing during church services, most were not encouraged to express themselves vocally in other ways. But when the “open” atmosphere of the revival meetings contributed to the loosening of conventional practices, some evangelical women expanded their public speech to include exhorting and even preaching. As the speech of many Baptist, Separatist, and Methodist women was imbued with spiritual authority by revivalists and revival adherents alike, women’s public roles in worship meetings came to represent one of the most controversial aspects of 18th-century American revivalism. As greater lay participation and individual spiritual sanction undermined the authority of some church leaders during the revivals, new conceptions of spiritual authority invited discussion and

¹⁹⁵ Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 73.

criticism. How female spirituality figured into the practice of the Christian faith became an increasingly pressing issue for “revived” churches.¹⁹⁶

Perceptions of moral decline and questions about the true nature of spirituality led to reassessments of ministerial roles during the revival period. Categories like gender, social status, and education became less important as indicators of spiritual authority, opening new forms of religious participation to a broad range of revival adherents. The ability to “experience” God undermined normal restrictions on female behavior; and the basis for religious authority was radically redefined during revival meetings. As female revivalists shook or wailed from the “movement” of the Spirit that overtook them, as some rejected their own cultural inhibitions to deliver their conversion experiences publicly, or boldly exhorted listeners to repent and receive the new birth, they enhanced their influence within their churches and shared in experiences that bolstered their authority as “true” Christians and “chosen” instruments.¹⁹⁷

Some of these “awakened” women assumed vocal roles as conduits of “divine revelations.” Like Quaker women, they established authority on the basis of their personal relationships to God and their personal access to divine Truth. As some revival leaders associated female public speech with the Spirit’s “leading,” they inadvertently compelled women to challenge the social constraints that often encouraged their public silence.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ See the discussion in Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 33-67.

¹⁹⁷ See Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, especially 24-67.

¹⁹⁸ See Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 37 and 57.

Because governing the tongue was an important female discipline in colonial society, which demonstrated the restraint associated with Christian humility and with female modesty, many colonial women were culturally conditioned to know when to speak and when to remain silent.¹⁹⁹ While women did speak publicly on special occasions, in courts, in church business meetings, and in other public venues on religious issues, few spoke with the same authority held by male leaders.²⁰⁰ As some female revivalists began giving testimonies and delivering exhortations, they challenged the cultural assumptions that encouraged their vocal restraint.

Like their Quaker female contemporaries, some used a common rhetoric and mode of expression to represent (or defend) their actions. By claiming their authority based on their “divine” empowerment and by avoiding the presumption of authoritativeness, some evangelical women were able to emphasize positive Christian traits like humility to counter negative cultural associations. As they distanced themselves from negative attributes like corruptibility and pride (allusions to Eve’s fall), which were commonly associated with female speech, they also challenged negative conceptions of female spirituality more generally.

In the atmosphere of the revivals and the enthusiasm surrounding the Spirit’s “movement,” feminine traits like passivity²⁰¹ became assets to “empowered” women as the very instruments least likely (and most likely) to display “God’s power.” As the

¹⁹⁹ Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue*, 86. See also Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 3.

²⁰⁰ Lindenauer, *Piety and Power*, xi-xxi.

²⁰¹ Passivity was negatively associated with women’s physical weakness (compared to men) and their “susceptibility” to Satan, and positively with their “natural” spiritual receptivity. See Reis, *Damned Women*, 94.

scriptures promised that the weak would become strong and the last would become first, some female revivalists likely internalized their newfound empowerment on the basis of their gendered spiritual identities.²⁰²

To the extent that female revivalists associated their speaking experiences with their feminine traits, they identified with their female contemporaries within the Quaker faith. To the extent that female revivalists justified their public speech on the basis of their spiritual equality and their ability to transcend their gendered identities, they identified more with Quaker women of an earlier era.²⁰³ Regardless of how “awakened” women represented their actions, it is the congruence of Quaker strategies with those of vocal female revivalists that offers the most insight into the limits and possibilities for female spiritual leadership in colonial America.

As the public behavior of female revivalists challenged social ideals about feminine modesty and threatened dominant assumptions about female spirituality, like their Quaker female counterparts, female revivalists encountered intense criticism. Critics of the revivals found ample evidence of the “disreputability” of revival leaders and the revivals, themselves, and they questioned the spiritual movements from various perspectives. Their criticism involved biblical arguments, as well as more negative

²⁰² Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 52.

²⁰³ In her study of Methodist, Baptist, and Separatist women, Brekus suggests that this approach characterized the majority of evangelical female revivalists who exhorted or preached during the revival period. Like many early Quaker women, some evangelical women blurred gender boundaries, claiming authority for their public actions or messages primarily on the basis of their ability to act as “empty” conduits of “God’s word.” Like many Quaker visionaries in the early movement, their experiences took place “in the Spirit” and often involved “out of body” experiences or the loss of control over their bodies and tongues. In embracing physical responses to the overwhelming “movement” of the Spirit, their worship experiences were very different from those of their 18th-century Quaker contemporaries. See Brekus’s discussion of evangelical women in *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 36-67; Mack’s discussion of 17th and 18th century Quaker female preachers in *Visionary Women*, 305-402; and Tolles, *Quakers in the Atlantic Culture*, 91-113.

cultural assessments of feminine attributes like passivity and passion.²⁰⁴ The enthusiastic responses of women who lost control of their senses and their tongues in revival meetings and the role of itinerants in creating this “chaos” contributed to charges of female irrationality and delusion.

Many of the same biblical arguments used to counter female Public Friends were also modified to challenge the vocal leadership of evangelical women. For many critics of the revivals, the vocal participation of women in churches and outdoor meetings symbolized the failure of spiritual revivalism and the outrage involved in the radical rejection of scriptural authority by female participants and revival leaders. One Old Light critic reflected the general sentiments of those strongly opposed to the expansion of female participation, when he reproached male leaders for the “encouraging [of] WOMEN, yea GIRLS to speak in assemblies for religious worship.” To him, female preaching was outside the bounds of biblical sanction or in “plain breach of that commandment of the LORD, where it is said, Let your WOMEN keep silence in the churches.”²⁰⁵ The age of the females purporting to hold spiritual authority was almost as offensive as their gender. The larger issue at stake—the usurpation of male authority (conveyed in his use of the possessive pronoun “your” before “WOMEN”) also suggests the emotional outrage aimed at revival leaders for allowing and/or promoting the vocal participation of female adherents.

Other critics of female public speech were even more explicit in emphasizing the connection between women exhorting and their “government” over men—and for good

²⁰⁴ Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 53-59.

²⁰⁵ Quoted in Conforti *Saints and Strangers*, 190.

reason.²⁰⁶ As some emboldened women (like the radical exhorter Bathesheba Kingsley of Westfield, Massachusetts) garnered added criticism by pushing the limits of their newfound spiritual authority, traveling to bear witness about their conversions, leaving behind home and family, and even publicly criticizing ministers, they epitomized the threat posed by female leaders as they assumed spiritual leadership roles and challenged the social structures that governed colonial society.²⁰⁷

As critics of the revivals emphasized the scriptural reasons for women's limited roles in worship, they undoubtedly discouraged some women from exhorting and preaching publicly. As growing criticism of the revivals contributed to the waning of ministerial support for female exhorters and preachers, the few women who chose to continue as spiritual leaders found only limited recourse *outside* their respective denominations. By the mid 1750s in the North and by the 1770s in the South, revival fervor had largely subsided, and disillusionment had set in, removing community support for most female exhorters and preachers, according to historian Catherine Brekus.²⁰⁸

The reorganization and consolidation of churches following the revivals also contributed to waning support for female leaders. By the late 18th century, denominational recognition and reputation became increasingly important as Separates joined Baptists and Baptists and Methodists gained greater influence in colonial society. Historians have generally viewed the removal of women in many denominations from

²⁰⁶ Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 57-59.

²⁰⁷ Conforti, *Saints and Strangers*, 190.

²⁰⁸ Brekus found that only a few continued to exhort or preach, and most of these established new religious communities. See Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 66-68.

positions of authority as part of a process of gaining “respectability.”²⁰⁹ The controversial nature of female exhorting and preaching likely undermined denominational claims to spiritual “Truth” in the competitive framework of colonial American religion. Moreover, the resilience of interpretative arguments based on Paul’s injunction against female public speech also represented heartfelt concerns about the scriptural basis for female leadership. These sentiments likely represented the crux of the matter at the level of lay membership.

In the controversy surrounding female exhorters and self-proclaimed preachers, the visible presence of a large number of Quaker female ministers also likely added to the urgency of resolving issues related to female participation and leadership in worship. As spiritual exemplars and vocal participants within the larger American religious culture, Quaker female ministers framed part of the controversy and conversation over the nature of spiritual authority and female leadership during the revival period.

As recognized preachers, female Public Friends both epitomized the fears of revival critics and offered an alternative version of female spirituality and leadership. Because the behavior of “awakened” evangelical women was reminiscent of the behavior of Quaker women only decades before, many colonial commentators on the revivals did not miss the connection, nor did Quakers. The association of the behavior of female revivalists with eccentric behaviors of early Quaker female prophets reinforced the radical nature of expanded female spiritual roles for evangelical women—and likely

²⁰⁹ See Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) for a discussion of the loss of female authority within Baptist churches as they moved from a peripheral status to a central position within the political and religious life of New England in the Revolutionary period.

intensified criticism.²¹⁰ Although negative depictions of early Quakers contributed to criticism of female revivalists, the carriage and restrained mode of worship practiced by female Public Friends during the revival period also provided a new model of vocal female leadership. By modeling their version of female piety in public forums on a regular basis and by validating the potential of female claims to individual spiritual legitimacy, Quaker women ministers likely influenced the self-perceptions of some female revivalists. The confidence and competence of some Quaker female ministers may have encouraged many female revivalists to publicly proclaim their faith in revival meetings. The formal recognition of female ministerial authority among Quakers also likely gave “awakened” women an awareness of the possibilities of establishing leadership roles within their own respective denominations.²¹¹

For many women who called on others to repent and be saved, for the few who delivered formal sermons, and for the few who traveled to exhort or preach on a more permanent basis, the opportunities for spiritual leadership during the revival period were undoubtedly life-changing.²¹² That the revivals encouraged them to establish their own claims to spiritual authority suggests the potential for religious individualism within 18th-century revivalism, but also the temporary nature of their gains, compared to those of Quaker women.

²¹⁰ See Brekus’s discussion of Jemima Wilkinson and Mother Ann Lee in *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 68-113 and their Quaker connection, page 101.

²¹¹ See the discussion Quaker interactions with Puritans and what they demonstrated in Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 29-33.

²¹² See the discussion of long-term exhorters like Bathsheba Kingsley and Separate preacher, Sarah Townshend. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 24-67.

While the revivals encouraged religious individualism to some extent, the Society of Friends took religious individualism farther than most of their contemporaries.²¹³ It was not only the place of divine revelation in Quaker worship that compounded the role and responsibility of the minister and their listeners, but also the theoretical basis for participation in the Society of Friends (the indwelling Light) that provided new and more important roles for women and uneducated men within American colonial society. Quakers believed sin created social hierarchies and gender distinctions, and they also believed that Christ's return erased all such barriers, paving the way for a more complete egalitarianism. While other denominations tended to offer women an informal or secondary role based on the Apostle Paul's biblical admonition that women keep silent in the churches, Quakers applied Paul's words only to unconverted women.²¹⁴ As a result, the opportunities and experiences of many Quaker women in the American colonies may have contrasted sharply with those of most colonial women.

Although most scholars concede that religion, generally, offered women a social outlet in 18th-century American society, they also acknowledge that church participation offered women only a limited forum for demonstrating their talents.²¹⁵ While most scholars agree that the fervor of the revivals contributed to the expansion of women's

²¹³ Although Quakers theoretically spoke with one voice (that of Christ's) in meetings, the appointment and certification of ministers in the late 17th and 18th century allowed Quakers to judge messages and ministers individually. As ministers began to be regarded for their personal spiritual merits, they developed authority based on their own capacities for delivering the Word. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 358 and 407.

²¹⁴ See Paul's discussion of female deference in 1 Timothy 2:12, 1 Corinthians 11:3, and 1 Corinthians 14: 35. See also Rosemary Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis: Fortress University Press, 1998), 140.

²¹⁵ See for example, Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 107-111.

religious activities in the 18th century,²¹⁶ they also agree that this expansion was short-lived. Historians also agree that denominations involved in the revivals failed to protect the vocal participation of religious women as their churches became more well-established in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.²¹⁷

In contrast to these findings, historians that study Quakers agree that the Society of Friends continued to sanction female leadership even during the group's quest for tolerance and its transition to an established church.²¹⁸ Historians also agree that by continuing to define the Quaker church outside the larger culture and by making important accommodations to existent colonial norms, Quakers were able to withstand pressure to marginalize women.²¹⁹ The importance of female leaders from the beginning of the movement and their ongoing influence in the development of Quaker theology, the exercise of church discipline, and the process of enacting marriage also reinforced their leadership within the Quaker body.²²⁰

Because the basis of the Quaker faith and the support of the Quaker community gave female Friends the right to accept the "divine call" to the ministry and embark on

²¹⁶ See Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 34, 48-50 and 59-63 and 11. Brekus points out that the most radical aspects 18th century revivalism occurred in the 1740s in New England and the Middle Colonies. She also suggests that the most vocally liberated female revivalists were affiliated with the Separatist movement in the North and especially the Separate Baptists in the South (who appointed elders and deaconesses, as well). Like other historians, she emphasizes the short-lived gains enjoyed by "revived" women during the Great Awakening period.

²¹⁷ See Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 65-66 and Juster, *Disorderly Women*, 108-144.

²¹⁸ See for example, Mack, *Visionary Women*; Dunn, "Saints and Sisters;" Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*.

²¹⁹ See for example Dunn, "Women of Light," 125 and Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 127-128.

²²⁰ See for example, Dunn, "Saints and Sisters," 594-601.

long-term ministerial careers; to engage in the social, political, and economic life of the church; and to oversee the flock,²²¹ historians also concede that Quaker women enjoyed opportunities that differed markedly from the majority of colonial women. As Quaker women ministers challenged dominant social norms by preaching in the ministry, the lifestyle modeled by female Public Friends also represented an alternative version of womanhood.²²²

Colonial Women and the Quaker “Difference”

While the disparaging term, “gadder,” was used to identify and discourage Puritan/Congregationalist women who left their households and their domestic duties for extended periods,²²³ Quaker women ministers sometimes traveled for years at the time in the “service of Truth.” Because the basis of their travel and their work in the ministry was perceived to be God-inspired, their absence from their families was not viewed by the Quaker community as inconsistent with their social roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. The “natural affections” and familial responsibilities that kept other colonial women at home were sometimes obstacles but not usually deterrents for Quaker female ministers.²²⁴

Although the requests of female Friends to travel were sometimes denied by their meetings, based on their family situations, by validating many of their “leadings” to travel, the Quaker community sanctioned a new model of womanhood that radically

²²¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 156.

²²² Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 303.

²²³ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 10.

²²⁴ See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 134 and 158-171.

challenged prevalent norms. By supporting the families of itinerant ministers, the group consistently prioritized women's spiritual lives over their familial roles.²²⁵ By relying on husbands (who were often aided by grandmothers) and the larger Quaker community to support their families in their absence, Quaker female ministers were free to pursue their religious mission. The Quaker conception of family as a spiritual community also reinforced the "calling" of female ministers whose obligations to "follow God" included the nurturance of other Quaker members.²²⁶ As discussed previously, the role of the spiritual mother was particularly important.

While their willingness to follow God was the basis for their value as Quakers and as women, their position within their families was modified to a great extent by the demands of their ministerial calling. By valuing women's individual religious "leadings," sometimes over the objections of their spouses, the Quaker community challenged the patriarchal conceptions of womanhood that dominated gender relations within the American colonies.²²⁷

While 18th-century American Quakerism reinforced the family as the stalwart foundation of spiritual growth,²²⁸ Quakers also conceived of family life and marriage in terms that undermined colonial conceptions of gendered family roles. As female ministers left their husbands to travel within the American colonies or abroad, they

²²⁵ For the Quakers discussed here, traveling in the ministry was not a choice over family but a way to model Quaker beliefs and lifestyle to children, as discussed in Chapter 6 of this study. See the discussion of Quaker attitudes on mothering in Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 164-165.

²²⁶ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 161 and 182.

²²⁷ See Levenduski, "Remarkable Experiences," 276.

²²⁸ See the discussion in Marietta, *Reformation of Quakerism*, 70.

denied their husbands the value of their labor, as well as, the physical and intimate benefits of marriage. Because colonial laws in the 18th-century allowed husbands control over their wives' bodies and their labor, Quaker women were careful in their selection of mates, and in their decision to marry in the first place.²²⁹ Although failure to marry did not carry the same stigma for Quaker women that it did for other colonial women, most Quaker women in the 18th century chose to marry.²³⁰ All of the American female journal writers discussed in this study (except Rebecca Jones) were married either before, after, or during their ministerial careers; and, all of those who married (with the exception of Jane Fenn Hoskens) were also parents.

Because the Quaker faith redefined the normative social roles of Quaker women, it also modified existing conceptions of female authority. Because Friends recognized obedience to God before obedience to fathers or husbands, Quakers challenged colonial conceptions of female subordination and reconstituted female authority within the home in *spiritual* terms. By preaching, traveling in the ministry, and serving at the highest levels of church government, some Quaker women accepted identities that contrasted with those of most colonial women.²³¹

Although not all Quaker women felt compelled to take advantage of the opportunities Quakerism offered, the expectations for Quaker women exceeded those for most colonial women. Quaker girls grew up expecting that some of their number would

²²⁹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 143-149 and 135. The majority of those women who traveled overseas in the ministry as young adults waited on average ten years later than other Quaker women to marry.

²³⁰ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 155.

²³¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 10. See also Larson's discussion of Quaker minister Elizabeth Webb on pages 296-304. See also the discussion in Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 63.

be “divinely called” to serve as ministers, elders, or women’s business meeting leaders.²³² Neither education nor family background limited the opportunities open to them on a theoretical level or a practical one.²³³ As a result, the implications of becoming a member of the Quaker community were particularly far-reaching for colonial women.²³⁴

As Quaker women modeled their version of spirituality, they provided a new model of female behavior to all women.²³⁵ Whether they were recognized as ministers or not, all Quaker women (in good standing) enjoyed authority that rested on their ability to receive “divine messages.” For the non-ministers who felt “led” to travel as companions to female ministers, the opportunity to expand their influence and share their spiritual wisdom with the broader world conveyed an important recognition of their spiritual worth.²³⁶ Even for non-ministers (like Quaker Clements Willets who was homebound by

²³² Larson found that the majority of the transatlantic ministers that traveled within the 18th-century American colonies were from Quaker families. Quaker women, such as minister Elizabeth Hudson for example, were likely conditioned from a young age to accept the spiritual responsibilities and opportunities open to them as Quaker leaders. See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 65 and 76-77.

²³³ Larson points out that most Quaker ministers were likely literate to some degree. See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 82-85.

²³⁴ Quakerism, clearly, did not offer the same opportunities to enslaved, free black, or native women. Despite the enlightened attitudes of Friends toward both blacks and Native Americans, Bonomi notes that the number of either embraced by meetings was very small. See Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 122. While reform-minded Quakers wanted to end the oppression of blacks, for example, they also ultimately did not see them as social equals, as Soderlund points out in *Quakers and Slavery*, 12 and 177-186. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting refused to accept blacks as members until the 1790s, for example.

²³⁵ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 303.

²³⁶ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 303.

chronic illness for most of her life) the opportunity to serve as a spiritual mentor and guide was still open.²³⁷

As highly valued members within their religious community, many Quaker women were entrusted with their own physical and financial welfare as they traveled in the ministry, often with only one other woman. Others were left with the management of their home and family as their husbands traveled in the ministry for extended periods. Because participation in the ministry involved some travel, Quakers expected women to be capable managers of the family business or farm, as well. Some sought additional responsibilities and opportunities based on their own capabilities and their own sense of God's direction—to manage farms or printing businesses, to act as doctors, and even to function as intermediaries with Native Americans, for example.²³⁸ Expectations for female Friends were reinforced by education in many Quaker families.²³⁹ A higher level of literacy among Quaker women, compared to the general female population, may have also encouraged their "calling" as ministers or their appointment as elders or business meeting leaders within the Society of Friends.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ See Clements Willets, *Memoirs of Clements Willets*, eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 5, *Friends' Miscellany* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1834). Hereafter *Friends' Miscellany* will be cited as *FM*.

²³⁸ Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 63-66. Pennsylvania Quaker Susanna Wright managed plantations, was a friend to the local natives, and gave herbal remedies to frontierspeople. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 391-392. Frances Danson of Virginia, for example, negotiated land purchases between Quakers and Native Americans. See also Trevett, *Women and Quakerism*, 69. English Quaker Tace Sowle was a well-known printer of Quaker works in England.

²³⁹ Some educational biases in school curriculums and the limited availability of permanent Quaker schools also affected the opportunities of female Friends. See the discussion in Bacon, *Mothers of Feminism*, 59-66, for example.

²⁴⁰ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 82-86.

Although Quaker women had broader opportunities than many colonial women, they also shared many of the same disabilities created by their dependant status as women in colonial society. The literacy level for colonial Quaker women was likely lower than that of Quaker men, not unlike the gender disparities that existed in the larger colonial culture.²⁴¹ The lives of female Friends, like those of other colonial women, were also circumscribed by laws that were written to protect the interests of their communities, often over their own.²⁴² Like other colonial women, as married women or *femes coverts*, Quaker women had no legal identity, little or no control over the property they brought to their marriages, no ownership over the fruits of their own labor, no legal right to their children, limited or little control over their childbearing, and virtually no control over their wealth or status in colonial society. If they were unmarried or widowed, as *femes soles*, they (like other colonial women) might exercise their right to make contracts, run their own businesses, hire out their skills, and hold property, although they still depended on male representatives to handle some legal aspects of their business affairs.²⁴³

Most female Friends also had to deal on a regular basis with the difficulties inherent in their domestic lives. Even as Quaker female preachers skirted responsibilities as they traveled in the ministry, they, too, returned from the mission field to resume household chores and their domestic roles as mothers, wives, daughters, or even servants. While spiritual service allowed some women to temporarily escape the limits of their everyday domestic roles, their family responsibilities and social roles played a central

²⁴¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 82-86.

²⁴² Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 74.

²⁴³ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 2-6.

role in their conceptions of personal identity, their spiritual welfare, and their psychological well-being. Many female ministers spent many years balancing their spiritual lives with the demands of their domestic responsibilities. The mother in Israel represented the model of a Quaker woman who successfully balanced the demands of domestic life with the everyday mystical experiences of the inward Light.²⁴⁴

Quaker women were also subject to the same negative cultural assumptions as other colonial women. But like colonial women of the highest social status, many were also able to overcome many of the stereotypes that associated women with mental and spiritual inferiority, ignorance, and vulnerability.²⁴⁵ Although female Public Friends were well aware of the gender restrictions that encouraged their public silence and their subordination on religious matters, they were also driven by the belief that their gender could not inhibit their ministerial “calling.” Social constraints were obstacles to overcome but not deterrents (at least over the long term) for the female ministers in this study. Although Quakerism did not keep them from experiencing many of the social limitations that other colonial women experienced, what Quakerism did give them was a spiritual identity that allowed them to transcend many of the gendered constraints that inhibited other colonial women—as discussed in the following chapter.

As Quaker female preachers brought their message to the world, they were visible symbols of a radically different lifestyle created by their alternative theology and their identification with a transatlantic Quaker community. By placing emphasis on the value of individual religious “callings,” the Society of Friends enabled women to traverse the

²⁴⁴ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 246.

²⁴⁵ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 303-304.

cultural constraints that publicly silenced many 18th century women. By convincing them of their direct connection to God, Quakerism also helped many women to overcome the geographical and ideological boundaries of their world.²⁴⁶ This was particularly true for the female ministers and authors discussed here. Their ability to explicate scriptures, deliver public prayers and sermons, and publish their writings separated them from most colonial women. It was likely in their sermons, their prayers, and their written words that they wielded the greatest influence and reflected their own sense of religious empowerment.

The following chapters will explore how the Quaker faith gave women a voice—how doctrine translated into experience. By focusing on the journals of Quaker women ministers, this study will discuss the limits and extent of female authority in 18th-century America and trace the practical implications of the “inward Light” in the lives of female leaders. Though the quietist trend in 18th-century Quakerism tended to stress the abeyance of all individual desires, and complete self-negation, particularly in worship, the words of Quaker women reveal that they saw themselves as more than merely passive instruments of God.²⁴⁷ Though theoretically, self-awareness and social consciousness were to remain outside the realm of Quaker experience, the nature of ministerial participation in worship meetings challenged the suppression of personal will.²⁴⁸ As

²⁴⁶ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 303.

²⁴⁷ Though spiritual identity and group consciousness were central to the early Quaker experience, as Phyllis Mack, among others has argued, my focus here is on the formation of individual identity—how identity was created through religion and how individuals related to the challenge of preaching. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 232.

²⁴⁸ See Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ for a discussion of the importance of speaking in 17th-century Quakerism and the nature of self-reflection following the act of speaking, 5 and 142. See also Scheick, *Authority and Female Authorship*, 103. I use the term, “public,” literally--to mean “in front of

suggested in the following chapter, consciousness of self occurred through the public nature of self-reflection—the act of gaining legitimacy through speaking. For Quaker authors, the act of writing was also an extension of the act of speaking, and an important means of self-reflection and self-construction.²⁴⁹

While Quakerism resolved most of the theological issues that undermined their ministerial roles, female Public Friends were not immune from the ongoing challenge of integrating spiritual equality into conceptions of divine authorization. As members of the larger colonial American society, they were also influenced by a changing religious, social, and political climate. The public presence and leadership of women within the Society of Friends must then be understood as part of an ongoing controversy or conversation concerning the nature of “true” spirituality and the role of women within American churches during the 18th century. How Quaker female ministers incorporated their spiritual values and the gendered values of the larger colonial culture into the practice of their faith is the subject of the following chapters.

others.” As preachers spoke before others, they received immediate feedback during and after their sermons from their listeners. The phrase “social consciousness” is used to describe the minister’s awareness of their public image, including the elements of personal identity, such as social status, which influenced their perception of their ministry and their reception.

²⁴⁹ See Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency*, especially xiv-xvi. Imbarrato finds that self-examination particularly benefits women in that it allows a legitimate opportunity for self-reflection. Imbarrato’s study focuses on how the “spiritual act of self-examination” becomes “the secular art of self-construction.” See also Daniel Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America*, 12. Note that Quakers conflated speaking and writing. Quakers believed that the Holy Spirit was the Word of God (rather than the Bible, itself, as other Protestants claimed.) Because the Holy Spirit which moved them to speak was the same as the Holy Spirit that inspired the apostles, they believed their own writings were as inspired as the Bible. They also believed that their writings had the power to awaken their readers to the inward Light, according to Peters. See the discussion in Peters, *Print Culture*, 15-42.

Chapter 3: Convincement, Conflict, and Empowerment

For Quaker women and men the process of developing faith, accepting the ministerial calling, and finding spiritual victory was part of a lonely and often painful personal quest. As discussed throughout this study, many of the internal struggles that ministers faced as “convinced” Quakers grew out of the same theoretical principles that made them Christians and leaders, in the first place. Spiritual authority was vested in individual Society members based on their beliefs in the inward Light or the presence of the Holy Spirit within them. The privileging of individual believers both freed and bound new converts, as they negotiated their new religious identities. As the calling to the ministry compounded this spiritual transition for some Quakers, the social implications of public adherence to the Quaker faith were many.

For female or male converts who lacked education, wealth, and/or a political voice, membership in the Society often freed them from many of the social strictures that placed them in subordinate roles within colonial society. Because any Society member could potentially act as a conduit of “divine” messages based on the Quaker belief in the inward Christ, women and men of any social standing could (and often did) find social acceptance within the group. While women’s limited access to formal education made them unlikely candidates for leadership in other religious groups, female participation in the Society of Friends did not require formal education.²⁵⁰ As female ministers preached, their newfound awareness of their public roles shaped their experiences, empowering

²⁵⁰ Tolles, ““Of the Best Sort but Plain,””484. The Quaker experience relied on an emotional intuitiveness and internal focus on God rather than on external “trappings” and book learning. See also Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 144. Though literacy was practical for participation as a minister, it was unnecessary on a theoretical level, according to Larson.

them to pursue what historian Rebecca Larson has aptly called “vocations” in the ministry.²⁵¹

Because leadership in the Society of Friends was open to women, regardless of wealth, marital status, or education,²⁵² the practical egalitarianism of the Quaker faith likely encouraged female converts. Historian Rebecca Larson even suggests that Quakerism may have actually drawn women into its fold.²⁵³ Quaker beliefs included the premise that gender subordination was absent in God’s original design, but resulted from Adam and Eve’s fall in the Garden of Eden. Because Quakers reasoned that women were restored as spiritual equals by the second coming of Jesus, they believed that women should be recognized as leaders within the Society of Friends.²⁵⁴ As models of spiritual equality for the rest of the world, Quakers saw themselves as the very embodiment of Christ’s second coming—Christ quite literally lived and spoke through them.

Because the head of each individual was ultimately God, the very nature of the inward Light experience empowered women as well as men to heed “divine direction.” The inward Light also encouraged Quakers to reject existing colonial norms to pursue “divine guidance.” Corporate aspects of the Quaker faith (including the belief that Christ’s word was the same in all members) also validated personal “leadings” and

²⁵¹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 156.

²⁵² Soderlund, “Women’s Authority,” 722-749; Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 141-142; Susan Lindley, *‘You Have Stept Out of Your Place’: A History of Women and Religion in America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 9-10.

²⁵³ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 144, 155, and 164.

²⁵⁴ Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 140.

offered community support to Quaker ministers. For women, in particular, the inward Light also mediated the controversial cultural implications of their leadership.

While the doctrine of the inward Christ and the institutionalization of women's meetings affirmed the Quaker commitment to spiritual equality, spiritual authority was only extended to women and men who converted to Quakerism and experienced direct contact with the indwelling Christ. The believer could be empowered only after she "lost" herself—and embraced a new spiritual identity.

Creating Identity: The Process of Self-Emptying

To claim their place in the Society of Friends, believers had to undergo a process of conversion. Quaker historian Howard Brinton explained that Quaker conversions began when the individual could hear God's voice in his or her mind. A process of surrendering to that voice and living in obedience followed; and, in many cases, spanned years.²⁵⁵ On a theoretical level, this process involved a loss of self-will and personal identity. According to historian Phyllis Mack, before Quakerism could transform the lives of believers, individuals had to surrender their own will to God.²⁵⁶ That is, they had to lose one identity to possess another. Quaker Susanna Morris (1682-1755), in her journal, explains the internal process.

Self with its willings and burnings must be mortified, otherwise the vessel will not be enough cleansed and if not, how can the work please of the great minister of the sanctuary [Jesus], whose life is our light and to do his will is our delight and greatest joy.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Brinton, "Stages in the Spiritual Development," 394.

²⁵⁶ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 137.

²⁵⁷ *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 138.

William Scheick describes this process of “self-emptying” as a separation of actions and emotions. Empowerment for Quakers was based on “external license (God);” and disempowerment was based on “internal license (sentiment).”²⁵⁸

For some of the women in this study, emotional separations occurred as the individual moved from the unconverted to the converted state. For Quaker Elizabeth Ashbridge (1713-1755), her greatest personal loss was the love of her second husband, Sullivan, who punished her by public humiliations, withdrawal of his affections, and physical and verbal assault when she began attending Quaker meetings.²⁵⁹ For Jane Hoskens (1693-1769), her loss included her betrayal of good parents when she ran away from her London home to follow “God’s will” in Pennsylvania.²⁶⁰ For new Quaker converts, particularly women, hostility and emotional turmoil were a potential reality.

For Quaker men, the repercussions of personal faith were, perhaps, less costly. For convert Robert Willis (1713-1791), conviction involved a personal decision, which was soon followed by his Presbyterian wife Jane Carpenter’s acceptance of the

²⁵⁸ Scheick, *Authority and Female Authorship*, 102. By aligning themselves with the Quaker faith, writers like Quaker Elizabeth Ashbridge, disqualified their personal feelings and credited their new beliefs with authorization, as Scheick discusses. Scheick finds, however, in Ashbridge’s journal that while all appears well on the surface of her narrative (she expresses orthodox renderings of the value of past experiences and resolution of those experiences through religious faith), in the undercurrents of her language, he detects a “polyphony of competing inner provocations” that belie the problems associated with antinomian attempts to follow an inward voice and the limits of the inward Light in creating resolution and escape from the patriarchal captivities she has endured. In the end, he finds that her journal reflects an “anxious, conflicted, and unresolved negotiation of authorization” and “to some extent” an indentured voice and identity. See also pages 93-106.

²⁵⁹ See Daniel Shea’s introduction to Elizabeth Ashbridge, *Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*, 161-169. Hereafter, this text will be cited as *Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*.

²⁶⁰ Jane Fenn Hoskens, *The Life and Spiritual Sufferings of That Faithful Servant of Christ, Jane Hoskens, A Public Minister Among the People Called Quakers* (Philadelphia: William Evitt, 1771), 6-8. Hereafter, this text will be cited as *Life of Jane Hoskens*.

Quaker faith.²⁶¹ In his journal, he presents his transition into the converted state as a painless one, made easier by the preaching of a Quaker woman whose words led to his wife's conversion, and implicitly united the couple in the Quaker religion. Emotional separation, in Willis' case, may have involved his parents, his early Quaker background as a young child, and his gradual return to that faith after years of experimentation—the inverse of the “separation” faced by Jane Hoskens—and, perhaps the reason behind his transition. Willis's gender also played a role.²⁶² Clearly, his faith did not place his life in jeopardy, as did Elizabeth Ashbridge's conversion, nor was emotional strife an acceptable or even relevant subject for his journal. As a man, he made a personal decision without any “apparent” complications.

Although Presbyterian Jane Carpenter willingly accepted the Quaker faith after hearing and being moved by a female minister (according to her husband's account), Jane Hoskens and Elizabeth Ashbridge's separations from their religious traditions contributed to their feelings of personal loss. As Anglicans, both Hoskens and Ashbridge had to come to terms with Quaker liberties that were antithetical to societal and religious norms—especially female preaching. In her journal, Hoskens records that she was “shocked” by the “divine command” to speak, and her “soul and all within...trembled” and her “outward tabernacle shook.” She felt unable, as a woman, to preach and claimed that she was “weak, and altogether incapable of such talk.” She also had religious beliefs that conflicted with Quaker practice. In the same journal passage, she argues against the

²⁶¹ Robert Willis, *Some Account of the Life and Travels of Robert Willis*, eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 9, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1837). Willis' journal will hereafter be cited as *Life of Robert Willis*.

²⁶² *Life of Robert Willis*, 291-292.

spiritual impulse to speak by stating that “I have spoken much against women’s appearing in that manner.”²⁶³ Elizabeth Ashbridge, after attending a Quaker meeting and hearing a woman speak, “looked on her [the woman] with Pity for her Ignorance...& Contempt of her Practise, saying to my self, ‘I am sure you are a fool...’”²⁶⁴

For Anglican women like Jane Hoskens and Elizabeth Ashbridge, the act of speaking itself created inner turmoil. Hosken’s denial of God’s command to speak was regarded by her as the “sin of omission”—or a barrier between herself and God.²⁶⁵ Acceptance of female preaching varied for both women. For Hoskens, her first speaking appearance was followed by months of sleepless nights and suicidal despair—a process that still required further personal surrender before her final acceptance of Quaker values and the ministerial “call.” Less open to the Quaker religion than Hoskens, Ashbridge waited years before she was able to speak at a Quaker meeting.

Submission to the inward Christ through the act of public speaking was a major step in Hoskens and Ashbridge’s acceptance of the Quaker faith. The “act of speaking,” according to Richard Bauman, or the channeling of the word of God through the individual, was both a “public and a private act”—it involved self-suppression and divine dominance.²⁶⁶ Although conversion was not always validated by the first act of speaking

²⁶³ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 9 and 17.

²⁶⁴ *Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*, 155.

²⁶⁵ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 11.

²⁶⁶ Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 141.

for converts like Hoskens and Ashbridge, it would eventually confirm their complete surrender to God and their “calling” as ministers.²⁶⁷

Other women and men, raised in the Quaker faith, had fewer qualms about female participation in the Society. Their losses included sin and guilt, and often the companions of their youth. To women and men who chose to become ministers, time away from families and physical hardship on mission journeys took their toll as well. Susanna Morris left behind a husband and nine children to embark on speaking tours abroad—one from 1744 to 1746 and another from 1752-1755. Jane Hoskens and Elizabeth Ashbridge left behind their husbands, as well, for extended periods. Hoskens traveled abroad between 1747-1750 and Ashbridge traveled between 1753 and 1755.²⁶⁸

Though Quaker men in their journals expressed concern for their families and wrote about their own extended trips, female Friends were the ones who defied their traditional roles as wives and mothers by leaving their families. While personal feelings of loss and separation depended on individual circumstances, Quaker women and men experienced some degree of isolation and criticism as female leaders spoke publicly and as both sexes participated in a non-traditional church.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Speaking through “divine inspiration” or literally uttering the words of God was the ultimate validation of one’s conversion. See Bauman’s discussion of 17th-century conversions in ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 83.

²⁶⁸ Bacon, ‘*Wilt Though Go*,’ 36-39.

²⁶⁹ Not all female Quaker ministers discussed in this study were married when they traveled in the ministry. Quaker minister Elizabeth Hudson was not married during the period of time covered by her journal. Jane Hoskens married late in life and was a minister long before her marriage. Minister Rebecca Jones remained unmarried throughout her life. See the discussion about single Quaker ministers in Wulf, *Not All Wives*, especially 67-75.

Gaining Legitimacy and Authority

The most disadvantaged women and men probably had the least to lose by their conversion to Quakerism. Elizabeth Ashbridge was an abandoned daughter, a young widow, an indentured servant, (in her second marriage) a drunken abuser's wife, a non-devout Anglican, and again, a widow. After her conversion, she married a faithful Quaker, became a preacher, and died on a mission trip, shortly after her convincement. As she describes her experiences in her journal, the little peace she had in her life resulted from her faith in God, her third marriage, and her mission as God's spokeswoman. Jane Hoskens also benefited from her conversion. Though Hoskens lost her family and her Anglican faith when she ran away to Philadelphia to answer "God's call," she became an indentured servant, a preacher, and a Quaker minister's wife. She went from being an Anglican to a Quaker, an indentured servant to a preacher, a runaway to an "adoptee" (by a wealthy Quaker couple), from preacher to wife, and from wife to preacher. Though she endured emotional separations from her family and religion, she was empowered as a minister and "raised" to a higher social status. Rebecca Larson suggests that like a modern career woman, she may have put off marriage to pursue her vocation. Fourteen years after her preaching career began, she married a wealthy Quaker man—and still went on extended preaching tours.²⁷⁰

For Quaker men, the conversion experience also created new opportunities, though life as a religious leader was potentially open to men outside their religious participation in the Society of Friends—as were a host of other professional careers in the business and political realm. For Robert Willis, who was marginalized by a hard

²⁷⁰ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 47-49; *Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge*, 172-173; Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 139-140.

childhood and extreme poverty; Quakerism offered financial and moral support. After the death of his wife, he was forced to sell off many of his belongings and to apprentice his children. He, presumably, received financial support to travel in the ministry from his local meeting and from the meetings he visited, as he could barely afford a horse. He made fishing nets that many Quakers bought, and he won social acclaim within the Society of Friends as a preacher. His lack of formal education may have made ministerial work in another religious group unlikely, although the opportunity to work as a carpenter and later as a net-maker had little to do with his religious conversion.²⁷¹

While Quaker men stood to benefit from their conversions, colonial society offered them many alternatives. Colonial men were expected to provide financially for their dependents—their wives, children, servants, and slaves—but they also enjoyed greater economic opportunities, and the potential for political and legal rights that grew out of their independence as free men. Though male Friends were sometimes forced to give up the honor of public offices to maintain their “peculiar” faith, they also had more control over their lives.²⁷²

As a married woman, Elizabeth Ashbridge’s legal identity became their husband’s. She had little legal recourse as a “feme covert” and no right to her own financial earnings (if she was able to find a means of self-support). Though colonial women could gain some sense of self-ownership by remaining unmarried, as “femes soles” they also faced many challenges. Unmarried women remained more vulnerable to

²⁷¹ *Life of Robert Willis*, 295-296 and 335-336.

²⁷² Levenduski discusses how gender, material wealth, and social connections affected the opportunities of Quaker ministers John Woolman and Elizabeth Ashbridge in *Peculiar Power*, 107-108.

poverty and faced restrictions on their work (such as limited job opportunities, wage discrimination, and complications in acquiring apprenticeships and master status in specialized trades). While widowhood offered some added benefits, pressure to remarry and other impediments (like the cost of caring for dependent children) hindered women who sought to act as independents.²⁷³

Membership in an unconventional religious community, like the Society of Friends, offered more alternatives to colonial women, whether married or single.²⁷⁴ Because the Quaker faith made married female adherents directly responsible to “God’s calling,” they were sometimes forced through their belief in God’s direction to act independently of their husbands and even to put God’s work (as they saw it) ahead of their families—often with their meeting’s emotional and even financial support. If female adherents chose not to marry, they still enjoyed access to leadership positions within the Society of Friends and even enhanced business or vocational opportunities as part of the Quaker community.²⁷⁵ For Quaker female ministers (whatever their marital status), their faith and their ministry gave them a sense of self-ownership, status, and even a “career”—alternatives that colonial society largely failed to provide.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 135-151.

²⁷⁴ Wulf points out that “Quaker women in the Delaware Valley could find ample articulation of the significance of unmarried women and of an alternative interpretation of the role of marriage in a woman’s life.” Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 70. Wulf emphasizes the opportunities available to single women within the Quaker, Moravian, and Ephratan spiritual communities. All allowed women to prioritize their spiritual lives over their family relationships. See the discussion in Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 75-83.

²⁷⁵ Female shopkeepers (such as Ruth Webb and Mary Taggart in Philadelphia) enjoyed success, in part, due to their Quaker connections. Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 146.

²⁷⁶ Wulf suggests that single Quaker female ministers who retained more legal rights and control over their own labor and property probably achieved the extent of the benefits available to them as women within the Society of Friends. See Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 56-62 and 83. From a psychological standpoint,

Although becoming a Quaker did separate men and women from greater colonial society as factors like dress, language, and gender attitudes made them “peculiar,” benefits for some female and male friends were abundant on both a secular and a spiritual level. If women or men gave up their personal will, theoretically, in exchange for God’s, they could transcend “social class, gender difference, all the external babble of social gestures and the inner babble of thoughts and feelings,” according to scholar Rosemary Ruether.²⁷⁷ Accepting Quakerism and their roles as instruments of God enabled both men and women to receive forgiveness for their sins, and to move past the guilt associated with past actions.

In Jane Hoskens’ journal, questionable decisions and events become evidence of God’s favor, rather than painful memories. Her devotion to God, exemplified through her work as a preacher, answers attacks on her spiritual status (real or imagined). Her rebellion against her biological parents is justified by her fulfillment of daughterly duties to her surrogate parents, the Lloyds. She tells the reader that when David Lloyd was on his deathbed, she attended him until his death. She adds that she “lost a father and a sure friend.” Her rebellion as a young woman is legitimated by her resolve to follow “God’s will” before that of her parents—thus, vindicating her actions. She emphasizes to the reader that she “never left their [the Lloyds’] service to serve myself in any shape.”²⁷⁸ In each loss, Hoskens receives compensation from God. The outcomes of her decisions and struggles validate her actions and experiences.

single female ministers seem to have had fewer personal conflicts with traveling in the ministry, unlike married ministers who left behind their husbands and often dependent children.

²⁷⁷ Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 142.

²⁷⁸ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 50.

Like Jane Hoskens, Robert Willis' personal losses were also replaced by compensatory gains. Willis overcame the guilt associated with giving up his children by ministering to families in his travels and by focusing on the needs of young people. In his journal, he resolves the losses and separations from his family by reiterating the importance of his ministry to families, and particularly to youth. The extent of his ministry and essentially the level at which God uses him justifies his past actions and supports his present state. He ministered to hundreds of families on each mission trip, and provides numbers in his journal to substantiate his vast ministry. His defense also includes his assertion that he sought the counsel of Friends before apprenticing his children, settling his debts, and embarking on continual religious missions. By leading a sacrificial itinerant life (consistently calculating the numbers of miles he traveled) and by becoming a self-sufficient craftsman (a net-maker), he confirms his identity as an exemplary Friend—and an honest man.²⁷⁹

Like Jane Hoskens, Robert Willis overcame the hardships he faced in his life to find a sense of fulfillment—and a release from guilt. Though concern for public image was a common theme expressed in male Quaker journals, a public persona was largely unviable for Quaker women outside their faith. Upholding their beliefs in the inward Light, Quakers, like Robert Willis and Jane Hoskens reconciled their old identities with their new. Their greatest distinction (and validation as converts) was their ability to channel God's word.

²⁷⁹ *Life of Robert Willis*, 306, 313, 321, 325, 333, 314, 319, 321, 327, and 329.

The Public Nature of Self-Reflection: The “Act of Speaking”

By validating their calling through the public act of speaking, Public Friends reinforced their own sense of themselves as ministers and followers of Christ. If the “act of speaking” was the foundation of Quaker legitimacy, bringing finality to conversion for some Quakers,²⁸⁰ it was also one the largest gains for Quaker female ministers. Though self-denial (a theoretical surrender to God) was built into the conversion experience and the act of speaking, self-awareness was also implicitly a part of assuming the Quaker identity.²⁸¹ Because authority for Quakers and Quaker ministers was based on the validity of the speaker’s voice or the source of their “inspiration,” the emotional response of the audience largely determined whether the voice of the speaker was their own or God’s.²⁸² If the speaker’s words did not resonate with those in the audience who were “spiritually self-assured,”²⁸³ the speaker was likely to be judged as being outside the Truth. If an individual’s speaking proved unsatisfactory, the speaker would often be approached after the meeting (usually by elders) and discouraged from making uninspired outbursts.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Speaking in meeting confirmed Jane Hosken’s acceptance of Quakerism, for example, as discussed in the previous section.

²⁸¹ See the discussion in Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency*, xvi.

²⁸² This is a slight modification of Bauman’s discussion in ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 42. In the 1660s and 1670s, the opinions of some audience members became more important than others. The general approval of elders and other Quaker leaders was necessary for continuation in the ministry.

²⁸³ The most respected members of a congregation were usually ministers, elders, and overseers. Note that overseers were appointed to monitor the behavior of Quaker members within congregations. Committees which were assigned by business meetings to handle disciplinary infractions usually included overseers, ministers, and elders. See Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 190.

²⁸⁴ See Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 130, 135-140, and 145.

Legitimacy as a speaker was based on audience reception, on both a private and public level. If self-consciousness during the sermon stunted the movement of the Holy Spirit through the individual, then self-reflection and audience critiques reminded the individual of their spiritual and social status.²⁸⁵ In other words, what was lost in the passivity of speaking was gained by self-reflection. The legitimacy of the speaker's message validated the speaker before their peers.²⁸⁶ Quaker Elizabeth Hudson (1722-1783) found confirmation in her calling, as she reflected on a meeting in which she "appeared" (i.e. spoke). According to her journal account, she had "a lively good meeting which was satisfactory evidence to my being right in the undertaking."²⁸⁷ Each successful meeting reinforced the speaker's belief in their faith and in their voice (or God's through them).

Quaker men and women became keenly aware of their own role and importance; and, at the same time gave God credit. Patience Brayton (1733-1794) reflects that her inspired prayer is "striking" to her landlady. In another, she prays that she may "never

²⁸⁵ Shea points out that "the habit of self-scrutiny" grew out of the Quaker form of worship. A Quaker who felt compelled to speak did not do so "as an individual subject to praise or blame" but as a passive conduit of the Spirit. If the audience responded well, however, it was often hard for the speaker not to credit themselves on some level for clearly articulating the message. See Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography*, 12. If the audience responded poorly, the speaker was bound to internalize the negative experience, as well, though such accounts often became positive experience in Quaker journals. Quaker writers reflected upon these experiences or applied them as object lessons for their own instruction and that of others. They also sometimes blamed an unreceptive or hostile audience for marring the message—if the receptivity of the audience influenced whether the message was perceived as authentic, the lack of receptivity by wayward Quakers or unenlightened non-Quakers did not negate the power of the preacher's message. In other words, the "right" people had to agree that the speaker was "inspired."

²⁸⁶ Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography*, 12.

²⁸⁷ Elizabeth Hudson, *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, in 'Wilt Thou Go On My Errand': *Journals of Three Eighteenth Century Quaker Women Ministers*, ed. Margaret Hope Bacon (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Productions, 1994), 138.

lack humility” so that she can “keep down” her “aspiring mind.”²⁸⁸ Jane Hoskens was also very conscious of her gift and public presence. While in her “infant state in religion,” she notes that while visiting several towns she rarely appears “in public” (i.e. speaks). She reports, as well, on when people have “taken notice of her.” In one meeting she recalls, “I did not appear in testimony, yet I was not hid.”²⁸⁹ Elizabeth Hudson was also conscious of her public role. She describes how she and her companion, for fear “of interrupting” a meeting, “crept in unobserved and got behind the door out of sight.” “Not expecting any to fall to...[her] share” in one dramatic moment she “stood up to the great surprise of the people...none of whom had ever seen or heard about her being in those parts.”²⁹⁰

Positive feedback could have an enormous impact on the ego of the speaker, as Quaker John Churchman (1705-1775) explains in his journal. He relates his individual experiences with speaking, public affirmation, and pride. He warns his readers that “flattery or unguarded commendation...is poison to young ministers, and sometimes makes them swell beyond their proper size.” After learning to speak with more humility, in a later passage, he recalls that “before [I] was ready to think I knew something about preaching, but now knew nothing.” Later in his ministry, however, he continues to be

²⁸⁸ Patience Brayton, *A Short Account of the Life and Religious Labours of Patience Brayton, Late of Swansea, In the State of Massachusetts* (New York: William Phillips, 1802), 83-84 and 101. Hereafter, cited as the *Life of Patience Brayton*. Due to the condition of the book, I could not photocopy the 1801 edition of Patience Brayton’s journal. I opted for the 1802 edition, which appeared to be identical or very similar to the earlier version.

²⁸⁹ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 28, 30-31, 35.

²⁹⁰ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 246-247.

“enlarged” to his “own admiration,”²⁹¹ although God is implicitly admired as the source of his empowerment.

Experience as a speaker, however, did not necessarily guarantee positive feedback from the audience. Irish Quaker, James Gough, openly admits what many American Quakers revealed more implicitly—his concerns about his public reception. He fears public ridicule—that he will be “exposed to much speculation, and become the immediate subject of conversation among such as love to catch and propagate [a] matter of amusement.” According to his account, he witnessed the attempts of other speakers, who proved unsuccessful and had “dropped it [their “gift” of speech] or “fallen away” because they “incurred a public and general dislike or disgrace.”²⁹² Though his fear of audience response may have created an extreme scenario, it is not surprising (based on accounts by other Quaker ministers) that he spoke with his hat in front of his face in one of his first public appearances.²⁹³

To step into the role of speaker was to identify visibly with the Friends and to establish oneself as a spiritual exemplar, if confirmed by male and female elders as a certified minister. It was no light undertaking. While Quaker Elizabeth Collins (1755-1831) described speaking as “a considerable trial,” Quaker Joshua Evans (1705-1775)

²⁹¹ John Churchman, *An Account of the Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of a Faithful Minister of Christ, John Churchman, Late of Nottingham in Pennsylvania, Deceased* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1779), 29 and 31 and 48-49.

²⁹² James Gough, *Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experiences, and Gospel Labours of James Gough, Late of Dublin, Deceased*. (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1783), 37-38. Hereafter, this text will be cited as *Memoirs of James Gough*.

²⁹³ *Memoirs of James Gough*, 39.

recalled that it was like “death to give up in obedience” and speak.²⁹⁴ Gender-related anxieties were also a reality for some female ministers. Following the reforms of the late 17th century, deference to Quaker men in meetings where non-Quakers were present was also somewhat expected.²⁹⁵ Patience Brayton confides that she felt “almost faint at times” because she feared that “great men...know more than I do.” In another account, she reveals that she received her “opening” only after the men left the meeting. In other passages, it was only after her female companion bore testimony that she felt encouraged to speak.²⁹⁶

Other women suffered less anxiety than ministers like Patience Brayton. The most successful speakers were, perhaps, those who found public acclamation on occasion—and overcame negative responses with positive thinking. Quaker Ann Moore (1710-1783) writes confidently in her journal about how God used her. Even her failures become her victories as she recalls how the Spirit worked through her. In one account, she attempts to halt an army of 250 men in Albany, New York, in order to speak God’s word. When the captain refused, she went “cheerfully on, feeling...clear of both them and the city.” Even when describing how she debated religion with a Presbyterian minister and a Roman Catholic priest who challenged her, she conveys a bold sense of

²⁹⁴ Elizabeth Collins, *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, eds. William and Thomas Evans, vol. 11, *Friends’ Library* (Philadelphia: Joseph Rakestraw, 1846), 451 and Joshua Evans, *Joshua Evan’s Journal*, eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 10, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1832), 14. *Friends’ Library* will hereafter be cited as *FL*.

²⁹⁵ Mack, *Visionary Women*, 265-402.

²⁹⁶ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 58, 26, and 43.

power—combined with humility as a servant of God. In her words, she is “poor and empty” ready to be disposed of as he [God] sees fit.”²⁹⁷

Moore’s humility as a minister is also matched by her boldness and her resolve to follow God’s will in the subconscious realm of her dreams. As she interprets one of her visions, she presents herself in dramatic language as one “called to rise three times” (presumably by God) to face a “dark spirit.” She then describes mounting her “creature,” and this act as “signifying my strength.” Her “strength,” whatever its foundation, was vocal, public, and loud. Her speaking, like that of other Quaker preachers, was validated by her local meeting, conveyed by her certificates to preach at distant meetings, confirmed by local funding, and sanctioned by the positive responses of audiences. She placed the blame for what others might call failure, on the shoulders of the negators of her faith and on God, himself.

Though social acceptance among outsiders was not the primary concern of Quaker ministers like Ann Moore, social acceptance within the Society was an integral part of the Quaker experience. Patience Brayton discusses the need to speak for the “honour of the Lord, and the satisfaction of my friends.”²⁹⁸ If peer support authenticated the experiences of Quaker preachers and grounded their authority, it also heightened their sense of social consciousness. Particularly aware of her servant status and her talents as a preacher, Jane Hoskens notes the appearance of “persons of distinction,” who, to her surprise wish to associate with her. In her journal, she explains how God comforted her

²⁹⁷ Ann Moore, *The Journal of Ann Moore*, in ‘Wilt Thou Go on My Errand?’: *The Journals of Three Eighteenth-Century Quaker Women Ministers*, ed. Margaret Bacon (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Productions, 1994), 305-307 and 354-357.

²⁹⁸ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 91-92.

misgivings about her position—through divine intervention. He tells her, “I will make way for thee in their hearts; they shall seek to thee.” Her future adoptive parents, the wealthy Lloyds are given “a near sympathy to her” and are told by God that she is “set apart as a preacher.” After becoming a servant of the Lloyds, she frequently speaks in meetings and (in a moment of pride) admits that she has “become a city set on a hill, which could not be hid.” She recalls that “valuable Friends” frequented the Lloyds’ house, and that although she was allowed to sit in the room with them, she did not allow this privilege to “elevate my mind.”²⁹⁹

Perhaps, more conscious of status due to her position as a wealthy Quaker, Elizabeth Hudson was also sometimes aware of the makeup of her audience. In one account, she notes the presence of “weighty Friends.”³⁰⁰ The meetings she attended while in London are described as “large and attended by divers in high stations of life.” She also enjoyed their approval—they “expressed great satisfaction which was evident by their frequent and solid attendance.”³⁰¹ While social status sometimes played into the self-reflections of some female preachers, public recognition as ministers created a sense of identity and self-awareness.

Status consciousness also influenced the writings of Robert Willis. In his journal accounts, Willis makes excessive references to “weighty,” “valuable,” and “worthy”

²⁹⁹ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 29 and 39.

³⁰⁰ “Weighty Friends” was a spiritual designation usually given to elders, ministers, and overseers. See Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 190. Although wealth was not required and could even become an obstacle to spiritual strength for Quakers, as many Quaker scholars have noted, spiritual and financial clout often did go hand in hand. Chapter 6 of Levy’s *Quakers and the American Family* explores this link between wealth and the Quaker leadership. See also Soderlund’s discussion of female leaders and status in “Women’s Authority,” especially 727-736.

³⁰¹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 245.

Friends. He also describes his associations with prominent ministers, his visits to “foremost families,” and yet he reiterates his fears about materialism within the Society—a topic mentioned in every sermon he references. For Willis, the distinction between non-ministers and ministers also seems particularly important. He seems to remind the reader that he is one of the chosen few. The importance of his family ministries and his self-sacrificial lifestyle clearly give him a sense of self-awareness, despite his humble beginnings and his modest circumstances. His occupation as a carpenter and as a net-maker also carry religious significance—Jesus was a carpenter, several of his apostles were fishermen, and all Christians are “fishers of men,” based on biblical references.³⁰²

The impact of widespread revivals may have also raised the social consciousness of Quaker ministers in the American colonies. At least two Quaker women benefited from public enthusiasm associated with the religious revivals in their travels. In one journal, the male writer reflects that in America, the “service” of English Quaker, Rachel Wilson (1720-1775), was “extraordinary, especially among other people [of different faiths], who flocked much to hear her.”³⁰³ In her journal, Jane Hoskens also describes the “openness of the people among various faiths” and conveys her own sense of local celebrity. She recalls that the people “followed us from meeting to meeting, treating us with respect, and the marks of real love and affection; but, knowing we had nothing valuable of ourselves, I attributed all to divine goodness.”³⁰⁴ Clearly, adherence to the

³⁰² *Life of Robert Willis*, 306, 321, 325, 333, 303, and 335-336.

³⁰³ *Life of Robert Willis*, 310.

Quaker faith created an identity for Quaker women and men and speaking empowered them in a way that reinforced that faith—even as it undermined personal humility and spiritual confidence. As Elizabeth Hudson argues in her journal, preachers were not to become proud, “tuning the voice to make others believe it higher tide with us than it really is.”³⁰⁵ To “play the harlot...with the “Lord’s jewels” (as one Quaker put it) was one of the greatest fears of Quaker ministers.³⁰⁶

Whether the voice was God’s or one’s own led Quakers to constantly reassess the validity of the message they delivered. While speaking created legitimacy, it also contributed to self-doubt and internal conflict. As scholar Richard Bauman explains, the suppression of the self included the willingness to “wait on God in silence.”³⁰⁷ Silence, too, was an important measure of spiritual validity. When to speak and when to remain silent became an internal struggle for Quaker preachers, though they dealt with it in varying ways. While worship meetings in the 18th century rarely carried on in silence for long periods,³⁰⁸ preachers were well aware of the “need to watch and pray” so that they would not “go too fast nor be too backward in doing the...Master’s will in all things,” as Quaker Susanna Morris maintains in her journal.³⁰⁹

God’s timing was always emphasized over man or woman’s, sometimes to the detriment of the audience. Historian Jack Marietta makes this point when he discusses

³⁰⁴ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 51.

³⁰⁵ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 158.

³⁰⁶ *Memoirs of James Gough*, 47.

³⁰⁷ Bauman, ‘*Let Your Words Be Few*,’ 21.

³⁰⁸ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 37.

³⁰⁹ *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 82.

reformer John Churchman and Churchman's extreme emphasis on silence. Churchman would travel overseas thousands of miles to sit silently in a meeting (that he organized) rather than risk "speaking of himself" instead of through the Spirit.³¹⁰ People who traveled far and wide to hear him were, needless to say, displeased and disappointed with such meetings. Had he remembered his earlier warfare against "lukewarmness, sleepiness, and a roving mind," he might have better served his audience—though perhaps, not his "divine" purpose.³¹¹ Waiting in silence could also create a comic situation, as it did for Elizabeth Ashbridge (still unconverted), who waited for so long to hear someone speak that she fell asleep in boredom.³¹²

Though extended periods when God did not move ministers to speak were rare, failure to speak was often seen as a negative experience, and may have even been downplayed in journal accounts. In one account, Susanna Morris found that God had figuratively put her "in a prison a long year" because she was unable to speak. Preacher Ann Moore regarded silence as a sign of God's punishing her for not completely following his direction. In one case, she "had bent too soon towards home" in her mission journey when "a great weight of trouble and silence fell" upon her.³¹³

Fears over the legitimacy of one's voice were commonly alluded to in 18th-century journals. Men and women, alike, endured an internal struggle before they began to speak. Historians Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost described the 18th-century

³¹⁰ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 37.

³¹¹ *Journal of John Churchman*, 17.

³¹² *Journal of Elizabeth Ashbridge*, 159.

³¹³ *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 47.

preacher's decision to speak as "traumatic."³¹⁴ In some journal accounts, men and women faced the shame of speaking, later to realize their error. Minister Elizabeth Hudson recalls in her journal that after feeling "pressure of the word to stand up, having a good matter opened to me," she found that all was "hid from me in awful silence." In another account, she describes her attempt to speak—"it came off badly," she laments; adding, she "could make nothing out to any good purpose."³¹⁵

Self-doubt was an inherent part of the speaking experience and is discussed frequently by journal writers. Elizabeth Hudson (like other ministers) initially questioned her calling to the ministry. In one passage, she expresses her fear about speaking without divine inspiration and the humility involved in becoming a minister. She explains that "what bore principle weight with me was my unfitness for such an awful undertaking and fear of my being mistaken respecting my being called."³¹⁶ One central theme in her journal concerns her struggle against being "too forward" or speaking without God's urging. In one passage, she maintains, "if I erred it was not owing to wickedness of my heart, but too great readiness to grasp at vision."³¹⁷ Backwardness or reluctance to speak was also a problem for some Quakers, including Susanna Morris and Elizabeth Hudson. Morris had to "watch and pray"—that she "might neither go too fast nor be too backward."³¹⁸ Elizabeth Hudson explains her own "backwardness" as a consequence of

³¹⁴ Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 97-105.

³¹⁵ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 140 and 163.

³¹⁶ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 129.

³¹⁷ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 198.

³¹⁸ *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 82.

her being under the “burden of the world so long that the proper time slipped in.” Her failure to speak in a timely manner was a “hurt to both my self and the meeting,” according to Hudson—a testament to her importance as a minister and her weakness as an imperfect conduit of the “inspired” word.³¹⁹

The inability of Friends to separate the intellectual from the spiritual, to reconcile human reason and divine guidance was at the heart of the internal conflict experienced by Elizabeth Hudson and others. For many Quakers, the separation of divine will and self-will was not always clear. In the journals of Edward Andrews and Jane Hoskens, internal struggles reach epic proportions—Satan and God seem to literally vie for their allegiance.³²⁰ In Hosken’s account, for instance, she experienced an internal battle over whether, as a preacher, she is speaking with God’s voice or her own. She recalls that “the old accuser began again, telling me I had blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, in that I deceived people, in pretending to preach as by divine influence.”³²¹ Other journalists also expressed the same idea more explicitly. Susanna Morris confessed that she, “the

³¹⁹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 157.

³²⁰ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, especially 11-14, 16, and 24. See also the conversion experience and spiritual struggles of Edward Andrews, *A Journal of the Life and Travels of Edward Andrews*, copied by Caleb Raper, 1730 (?), TMs (photocopy), p. 2-4 and 6, Special Collections, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Edward Andrews (1677-1716), like Hoskens, has a vivid battle with the “dragon” or Satan. Satan is even more active than in Hosken’s account. In one passage, according to Andrews, he “stood up with his reasoning.” In another passage, he is “taken captive by the old serpent,” for example. A slightly shorter version (minus some visionary experiences at the end) with some editorial changes to the language throughout is printed in *Friends’ Miscellany*. See Edward Andrews, “Edward Andrews’ Account of His Convincement,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 8, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1836), 200-209. A testimony concerning his ministry and death gives details about his ministry and life. See also the “Account of Edward Andrews of Little Egg-Harbour, New Jersey,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 8, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1836), 199-200. In John Churchman’s journal and in Patience Brayton’s journal, Satan plays a less active role than in Hoskens’ and Andrews’ accounts, but is referenced. See the *Journal of John Churchman*, 8-17 and the *Journal of Patience Brayton*, 54-58.

³²¹ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 24.

creature,” bended to the will of the creator to be of herself nothing” and was then able to “perform the will of God and to speak as he pleaseth.”³²²

The spontaneity of the Holy Spirit and the passive channeling of the Spirit created a loss of personal control, an emotional and not a reasoned response from God’s instrument. Though the act of submission to God was reasoned and not a matter of emotion, reason quickly became unnecessary as speaking became not an act of intellect but a response to the inward Christ. Still, there was order to God’s revelations, at least in theory. Individual passions were to be “subdued and made subject to the divine will,” as Elizabeth Hudson explained.³²³ Because God spoke with one voice through many, meetings were to be somewhat orderly. Paradoxically, worship was also not to be contrived but free flowing and dependent on the supernatural—elements potentially subversive of order. As a result, the preaching of 18th-century Quaker preachers reflected both the theoretical experience of inward Light and the somewhat stifling realities of a more practical application of Quaker beliefs.

On some level, consciousness of one’s message was influenced by the knowledge of Scripture and by the speaking norms of the Society—a reality represented by journal writers who did not find an easy balance between their own role and that of God’s when they spoke. Critiques of speakers by other preachers were indicative of the inner turmoil associated with the importance of speaking in meeting. Susanna Morris, in her journal, recalls that her “companion...was so divinely opened to testimony that her service was

³²² *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 82.

³²³ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 172.

preferable to mine.”³²⁴ In another meeting, Ann Moore recalls that “God arose, which takes away the fear of man, and brings down every high look, which set my poor afflicted sister above them all.”³²⁵ Some evaluations were not as kind. Moore’s description of one speaker as “an unskilled blow struck by an instrument; which marred the work, and brought a cloud over the meeting,” perhaps, lacked charity.³²⁶

Though the Quaker faith offered a deep sense of acceptance through affiliation with the saved, the unity of the voice created by the oneness of “revelations” by Christ was sometimes challenged by the individual. Just as the distinction between self and divine will created personal conflicts for 18th-century Quakers, disagreements over divine guidance could create a disjuncture within the Society, as in the schismatic controversies discussed previously.³²⁷

Unity, Individualism, and the Nature of Quaker Worship

The belief that God revealed himself to ministers directly contributed to the spontaneity of Quaker worship and potentially undermined the unity of the worship meeting. Because inspiration was subjective, guidelines for speaking were not always effective--or even desirable. In one meeting, Elizabeth Hudson recalls how a young man perceived that she was “out of unity” with the Society. He was unaware of any travel

³²⁴ *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 112.

³²⁵ *Journal of Ann Moore*, 341.

³²⁶ *Journal of Ann Moore*, 291.

³²⁷ See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 212-304 for a discussion of the controversies that inspired more self-scrutiny and group scrutiny of individuals within the Society of Friends in the late 17th century. Individual authority and independent inspiration were also more closely scrutinized following the Nayler and Perrot schisms. See my previous discussion of the scandals and my overview of internal reforms in Chapter 1 of this study.

certificate and was not expecting a visiting minister in the meeting. After offering her his hand to help her down from the raised ministers' platform, he found himself unable to remove her as he had not the "power." After hearing her words and realizing his error, he was convinced of her divine sanction and later acknowledged it to her.³²⁸ While unity within a particular worship meeting meant that only "inspired" speakers preached or prayed, "divine authorization" was sometimes difficult to determine.

The spontaneous nature of Quaker worship largely determined "inspiration." As Elizabeth Hudson explained in her journal, divinely inspired words just came to her in a train of consciousness, without preparation. While ministers from other groups prepared sermons for organized worship services, Hudson maintains that God and not her memory brought "scriptures to [her] remembrance." Her awareness of her role within the meeting was also unclear. According to Hudson, she knew not "what she should say" or even that she should preach until "some time after" she sat down in the meeting. Her words were also unplanned. When she "delivered one sentence," she explains to her readers, she "knew not the next." Faith was also required for God's word to be revealed--nothing was "shown" her until she stood to her feet. "Inspired" thoughts that came to her before she spoke publicly were also not necessarily the same ideas that the audience would hear. As she details in her journal, once she stood to speak, the "openings" she had while she sat in silence were "removed" and other "matter" [Bible knowledge] was "brought to [her] remembrance."³²⁹

³²⁸ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 247.

³²⁹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 228-229.

Some problems grew out of the unstructured nature of Quaker worship meetings. Sitting in silence until the Holy Spirit moved someone to speak allowed “uninspired” Friends as well as outsiders to disrupt the worship meeting. As mentioned previously, minister Ann Moore perceived that an “unskilled blow” by one speaker “marred the work” of the Spirit.³³⁰ When non-Friends were present, unruly worship meetings were a frequent part of the 18th-century Quaker worship experience. The absence of male Friends may have made it more likely that a crowd would get out of hand. In one meeting where no male Friends were present, Elizabeth Hudson relates how the crowd broke windows so that they could hear.³³¹ In another worship assembly, Elizabeth Ashbridge and Elizabeth Hudson were challenged by Presbyterian men, who “understanding we were women, judged it no difficult task to confute us.”³³²

By the mid-18th century, delivering the message may also have become more difficult for Quaker ministers. A certain style of preaching may have become the acceptable form in 18th-century Quaker meetings; and this style may actually have contributed to the perceived validity of the preacher’s message. Peter Kalm, a Swedish traveler and non-member attended a Philadelphia worship meeting in 1750 and described what he heard and saw:

In their preaching the Quakers have a peculiar mode of expression, which is half singing, with a strange cadence and accent, and ending each cadence, as it were, with a half or...full sob.³³³

³³⁰ *Journal of Ann Moore*, 291.

³³¹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 249.

³³² *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 136.

³³³ Quoted in Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 100.

Although each cadence consisted of two, three, or four syllables, according to Kalm, the cadences sometimes moved “according to the demand of the words...my friends/put in your mind/we/ do nothing/ good of ourselves/ without God’s help and assistance/etc.”³³⁴

According to scholar Algie Newlin, the “sing song” tone of sermons was the “hallmark of good preaching” to 18th-century Quakers,³³⁵ but failure to recreate the popular style may have worked to the detriment of some speakers.

The content of sermons also played an increasingly important role in legitimating ministers and their messages. Subjects of sermons included explications of scripture, instruction on preparing for death, educating young people, the need for a vigilant prayer life, desires for unity and love among Friends, warnings about business practices, the need to go beyond the routine to reach a genuine spiritual experience, as well as, defenses of Quaker beliefs.³³⁶ Content also increasingly reflected a more rationalized faith. After 1700, “individual ecstasies” were viewed with increased suspicion, although prior to 1700, the “rapturous, enthusiastic element had been essential.”³³⁷ Downplaying blatant supernaturalism, Quaker preachers began to ground their visions and dreams with biblical references.³³⁸ By continuing to incorporate visionary insights into their messages,

³³⁴ Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 100.

³³⁵ Algie Newlin, *Charity Cook: A Liberated Woman* (Friends United Press, 1981), 124.

³³⁶ Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 100.

³³⁷ See Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 101 and 133. Moore mentions a letter sent to her by a Friend in the *Journal of Ann Moore*, 297. When another Friend is allowed to read the letter, he warns her that the contents of the letter are reminiscent of James Nayler—an upsetting comparison for Moore. Nayler was brought into town on a donkey in Bristol, a re-creation of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Due to the implication that Nayler was equal to Jesus, he was charged with blasphemy, whipped, branded, and imprisoned, which hurt the Quaker cause. See *The Quakers*, 27-35 for more on Nayler.

³³⁸ Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 101 and 133.

Quaker ministers also retained an element of freedom. Through dreams and visions they introduced many 18th-century reforms, promoted “novel” ideas (like abolitionism) and reconciled their beliefs in simple and moral living with their existence in an increasingly complex world.³³⁹

In the context of initiating internal reforms in the mid-18th century, Quaker ministers also had to increasingly determine the legitimacy of their messages based on their own beliefs and those of other reform-minded Friends. Though Quaker ministers could not determine the overall validity of their ministry solely on the basis of their personal convictions, they were forced to ignore some opposition to their messages. Dependence on travel companions and other sympathetic Friends bolstered their confidence in their messages, even as their “unity” with some Quaker leaders waned. As ministers exercised their influence in worship meetings, they depended on the recognition of their Quaker audience for authority; but they also ultimately determined the legitimacy of specific messages based on their own individual access to God.³⁴⁰

As extensions of the spoken, “inspired” words of Quaker ministers, their journals substantiated their spiritual experiences and their ministries. Because Quakers believed that their writing was divinely inspired, writing (like speaking) was a part of the process of self-authorization. For Quaker ministers, negotiations between God and self took place publicly—first, through the act of speaking and later, through the act of writing.

³³⁹ Gerona, *Night Journeys*, 127-129.

³⁴⁰ For ministers to instigate reform and model true spirituality, they were sometimes forced to ignore the resistance of local leaders in the meetings they visited. Some local leaders, for example, were firmly committed to slavery, while most of the ministers discussed in this study spoke openly against the practice.

Both acts led to self-scrutiny. Speaking was followed by self and peer reflection. For 18th-century Quakers, writing was an act of self-reflection and a means of speaking.³⁴¹

³⁴¹ Imbarrato states that autobiography is “an inherently self-reflective act in which the author makes certain choices in the retelling of his or her life.” According to Imbarrato, by “piecing together separate events, the autobiographer weaves them into a coherent narrative to construct a unified textual self.” See Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency*, 1. See also Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography*, 12. Shea defines journal writing as a new site of conflict for Quaker writers, as the language used in journals and the retelling of personal experiences contributed to self-exaltation. Shea finds that Quaker John Woolman, more than other Quaker journal writers, recognized that his autobiographical writing was an extension of the conflict between self and selflessness that he experienced as a Quaker and a minister. According to Shea, Woolman, better than the other Quaker journal writers he studied, combated this tension by establishing criteria for choosing what to record in his journal based on whether writing about certain events or feelings inclined him toward Truth or vanity in the recording process. Then, Woolman repeatedly edited the language of his journal to “weed out” wording that inclined him to pride. See especially pages 48-49. Note that, like Shea, I view journal writing as an extension of the internal conflict that played out in the silence before speaking and in the self-reflection that followed the act. I argue, in a later chapter, that other Quakers, especially women, made similar efforts to combat the appearance of pride as they discussed their spiritual victories, and that they did so in the structure of their journals and in the language they chose. On a conscious or on a subconscious level, I suggest that these writers attempted to resolve the internal tensions that were a central part of their gendered spiritual experiences.

Chapter 4: Spiritual Legitimacy and the Framework for Self-Authorization

While Quakers used their journals to record and evaluate the conflicts, anxieties, and triumphs that arose in their personal application of the Quaker faith, the recording of these experiences was also about reaching others. As potential public documents, their journals were also a conscious act of self-construction. For Quaker journal writers, the process of retelling experiences to glorify God rather than themselves mirrored the personal struggles of Christians and spiritual autobiographers in general. As scholar Susan Imbarrato looks at the transfer of experience from the individual to the text, she points out that during the 18th century the “religious act of self-examination” increasingly becomes the “secular art of self-construction.”³⁴² While the recording of personal experiences in religious journals was an extension of the individuals and a particular set of religious beliefs, it is also worth considering what personal details or “secular” decisions figured into the writing of these texts.

Jane Hoskens’ *Life and Spiritual Sufferings*, published posthumously in 1771, and Elizabeth Hudson’s unpublished *Journal* are similar in their discussion of their life experiences. Throughout their journals, Hoskens and Hudson emphasize the experiences that reveal God’s work in their lives—their personal commitment, divine guidance, and their perseverance in the midst of trials. The unedited or less edited journal of Hudson³⁴³

³⁴² Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency*, xiv. Imbarrato suggests that the personal experiences of Quaker ministers increasingly take a more central role in their journals. Whereas God receives more of the focus in the journals of 17th-century Quakers, the self comes through more in 18th-century journals. However, self-promotion was not the goal of 18th-century Quaker journal writers. See my discussion in the previous footnote.

³⁴³ Hudson’s journal remained unpublished until Bacon published it in 1994. See Bacon, ‘*Wilt Thou Go On My Errand?*’ 20. Quaker publishing and editing practices are discussed in Wright, *The Literary Life* (1932; 1966) and Willauer, “Editorial Practices,” 217-234.

and the edited journal of Hoskens differ in structure. In the first half of her edited journal, Hoskens deals with the major events in her life that culminated in her conversion, from her childhood sins to her redemption in young adulthood. The last half of her journal focuses on her transition from an inexperienced convert to a renowned preacher, including her travels as a minister. The unpublished *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson* also deals with religious experiences, but lacks the balance and organizational structure of Hoskens' journal. Hudson's early experiences are compressed into a few pages and she does not start at the beginning of her life as Hoskens does. Her family background is not included in her journal and the majority of her journal deals with her experiences as a young minister and her travels in the ministry before her marriage at the age of 30 (though her ministry continued).

The journals of Jane Hoskens and Elizabeth Hudson include the content generally found in Quaker autobiography.³⁴⁴ Two forms of autobiography, as defined by scholar James Goodwin, also apply to the journals of Jane Hoskens and Elizabeth Hudson, as well as the other Quaker journals discussed in this study. In some ways, the journals are examples of both the "confession" and the "apology."³⁴⁵ Goodwin defines the confession as a form that "emphasizes moral, intellectual, and spiritual matters." The confession has a "religious purpose [which] governs decisions" and selects "events that would best

³⁴⁴ Howard Brinton, "Stages in the Spiritual Development," 386. Scholar Howard Brinton outlines ten stages of the Quaker experience. The nine stages that can be found in their life accounts are "divine revelations in childhood, compunction over youthful frivolity, a period of search and conflict, conviction, conversion, seasons of discouragement, entrance upon the ministry, advocacy of social reform, and adoption of plain dress, plain speech, and simple living." Neither journal discusses the "curtailment of business," Brinton's last characteristic (which is more likely to apply to Quaker men).

³⁴⁵ James Goodwin, *Autobiography: The Self-Made Text* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 4-5.

represent the experience.”³⁴⁶ By sharing personal experiences, admitting guilt, and sharing the need for forgiveness, the confession is, according to Goodwin, “typically meant to induce the reader into the process of soul-searching.”³⁴⁷ Hoskens and Hudson certainly wrote for religious reasons, and their experiences as they recorded them in their journals are not unlike those of other Quaker ministers.

The Confession and Spiritual Validity

In the beginning of her journal, Hoskens openly expresses to the reader her position as a sinner, one who in her youth nonchalantly ignores God’s will to find enjoyment in “musick and singing” and in “unprofitable company.”³⁴⁸ She also recalls the physical suffering she endured at the age of 16 and the direct revelation given to her by God that eventually resulted in her conversion years later. Throughout her journal, she reflects on spiritual and physical sufferings that she overcame through God’s power. Her journal has an emotional tone and gives the reader a vivid description of the internal conflicts and experiences surrounding her personal spiritual journey.

In many passages, the reader is given the exact dialogue, as Hoskens’ remembers it, between God and herself. In one passage, she explains how she received the call to minister. While she sat under a tree at an outdoor meeting, the voice of God spoke to her saying,

I have chosen thee as a vessel from thy youth to serve me, and to preach the gospel of salvation to many people; and if thou wilt be faithful, I will

³⁴⁶ Goodwin, *Autobiography*, 4.

³⁴⁷ Goodwin, *Autobiography*, 4.

³⁴⁸ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 3.

be with thee unto the end of time.³⁴⁹

In another passage, she has a vision in which God speaks through “one not of our society,” telling her to “Fear not, God will always provide for you.”³⁵⁰ When the “grand enemy” [Satan] was destroying her peace, “in the hour” of her “deepest probation,” God tells her to “be obedient, and [you] shall be forgiven, and thy soul shall be filled with joy and peace unspeakable.”³⁵¹ Such revelations comforted her and are offered to the reader as examples of God’s providence in her life.

By sharing her personal experiences, Hoskens hoped that her words would one day encourage others in their spiritual journeys. In the closing words of her journal, she tells her readers that, “By sore afflictions we learn experience; and if we make proper use thereof, all will in due time be sanctified to us.”³⁵² To faithful Quakers, to struggling converts, her words offer encouragement as she overcame spiritual and physical trials along life’s journey. Implicitly, she advocates friendships as a means of strength for Christians. In one passage, she talks about the blessings of “companions in this solemn service” and the encouragement that “christian fellowship” brings. By working together in God’s service, Quakers would “confirm the authority of their message,” and at the same time, “comfort, strengthen, and support each other.”³⁵³ She also spoke to Friends who had fallen away from the fellowship. She rebuked those who had “gone out of the

³⁴⁹ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 17.

³⁵⁰ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 32.

³⁵¹ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 18.

³⁵² *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 58.

³⁵³ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 56.

right path, which by virtue of his light [God] hath graciously led them into.” She also prayed that God would “restore them into his favor” and showed concern for Quaker youth, noting how the “youth” reacted in several meetings as she traveled through Europe.³⁵⁴

Hoskens also relates accounts of those members of the Society who were “used” by God or who came to Quaker meetings led by her and other Quaker itinerants. In her travels within the American colonies in the 1740s during the Great Awakening revivals, she notes the presence of those “not of our community” who “accompanied us.”³⁵⁵ In a vision, an unconverted man brings her God’s word. In Hoskens’ text, God reveals his word through other individuals to her, which implies her importance to God and the authenticity of her faith. In one passage, a man “fixed his eyes” on Hoskens and told her that “the Lord was at work” in her “for good.” He also told her that she “will meet with sore trials, but if she is faithful, the Lord will fit her for his service.” In another passage, she reveals that God told the Lloyds to take her as their “adopted child” and “give her liberty to go wherever the truth leads.”³⁵⁶ Each of these experiences moved Hoskens to a reevaluation of her spiritual walk and, in the latter case, to tears and repentance. Her account shows not only how God used others to carry out his work but also how he used them to bring about spiritual awakening in Hoskens’ own life.

³⁵⁴ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 56. See also Sievers, “Awakening the Inner Light,” 240. To reform-minded Quakers, the secularization of youth was one of the greatest threats to the Society of Friends. If Jane Hoskens had children, she would have likely addressed certain comments directly to them, as other Quaker women did in their journals. Notably, Hoskens does take on a maternal role in her journal when discussing her relationship with the Quaker students she tutors. See page 7 of her journal.

³⁵⁵ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 29-30 and 15.

³⁵⁶ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 24, 17 and 20-21.

Elizabeth Hudson in her *Journal* also expresses the religious purpose of the confession and selects events that best represent her religious experiences as a Quaker and a minister. She emphasizes her position as a sinner. She openly expresses her youthful sins, her “indulging...in childish folly,” her waste of time with companions, and her indulgence in books.³⁵⁷ Like Hoskens, she reveals her own emotional suffering that led to her conviction and conversion and reflects on the how God brought her through those trials. Her spiritual ups and downs, like those of Hoskens, are revealed in her writing.

Hudson also records God’s direct dealings with her. When she is called to be a preacher, God asks her, “wilt thou go on my errand”? He promises to help her “through all the trials” and he affirms that he will protect and empower her. “I will stretch out my arms, [and] be mouth and wisdom to thee.”³⁵⁸ As in Hoskens’ journal, examples of God’s providence are also offered. In one instance, she “witnessed a fresh supply of that Divine Strength which qualifies for service. In another, she found that when her “mouth was opened,” God was “love and that universally toward his creation.”³⁵⁹

God’s direct intervention also offers further evidence of Hudson’s valid spiritual experience. In one account, God miraculously sends a “fog like smoke” between her ship and a French or Spanish vessel to save the crew from capture.³⁶⁰ In another, a “dark cloud” came over her and she is given discernment over whether to accept the help of a

³⁵⁷ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 127-129.

³⁵⁸ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 141.

³⁵⁹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 149 and 167.

³⁶⁰ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 143-144.

particular landlady.³⁶¹ God also reveals himself to others on her behalf. In one incident, Quaker Mary Smith is given knowledge of the difficulties Hudson will face in the near future.³⁶² In another her calling as an inspired preacher is reaffirmed when the sermon of another minister, Jane Hoskens, is almost identical to the one delivered by Hudson--the same day in different towns. These simultaneously “inspired” messages reaffirmed God’s sanction, and her divine calling, allowing her to reflect on God’s providence in her life.³⁶³

Editing and Writing the Faith

Like Hoskens, Hudson records her religious experiences and by doing so establishes herself as a spiritual exemplar in text. Hudson’s journal however was not published in the 18th century. A comparative analysis of the well-edited journal of Jane Hoskens offers some insight into the way Quaker female ministers constructed their identities in text.

Though Hudson clearly writes with a religious purpose, she does not directly address the reader or servants, as Hoskens did. Hudson’s message to potential readers is more indirect, but like Hoskens’ is relevant to Quakers, in general. The lessons Hudson has learned throughout her spiritual journey are common in other Quaker journals, as well. She sermonizes on issues related to pride, worldliness, reliance on God over human agency, and voices popular concerns regarding the lack of spirituality in Quaker youth, among other issues. Her unedited or less-edited journal is also far more introspective than

³⁶¹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 182.

³⁶² *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 264.

³⁶³ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 188.

most journals; and her attitudes associated with the ministry are explicit. Her emphasis on following “God’s will” in speaking or silence is clearly directed to other ministers or potential ministers and their Quaker or non-Quaker audiences.³⁶⁴ Like other Quaker journal writers, she relives the lessons she has learned by reviewing her failures and reevaluates her value as a champion and as a servant of God.

By emphasizing their experiences to strengthen others or convert the unconverted, Quaker journal writers focused on certain events and omitted others. Hoskens, for example, does not mention the name of her husband, but only the fact that she married, and she does that in part of a sentence.³⁶⁵ In keeping with the quietist trend, which emphasized self-denial, she strips her narrative of content not directly related to her spiritual journey. Though marriage was important to Friends, “God’s will” was clearly more important. According to historian Rebecca Larson, if marriage got in the way of service, the Society responded with a reprimand to the husband or wife who stood in the way of “God’s plan.”³⁶⁶ By curtly mentioning her married state, Hoskens reinforces the idea that God and not men come before “divine” work. Evidence of the centrality of God in her life is also indicated by her inclusion of the number of years she spends overseas in the ministry (and away from her husband). The content of her journal reveals important aspects of her religious faith. As a servant of God, she is equal to men. As a wife, she is first and foremost a servant of God.

³⁶⁴ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 150-151, 183, 249 and 235.

³⁶⁵ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 27.

³⁶⁶ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 135.

When compared to the edited journal of Hoskens, several minor factors are indicative of a lack of editing in Hudson's own. Though not overly personal, Hudson deals more openly with her family life in the last pages of her journal--details that would have likely been truncated in the editing process. Some formalities common to Quaker autobiography are also missing in Hudson's journal. If (like Hoskens) her journal was published, she would likely have been introduced to her reader by her editor or another respected male as a reputable woman and one of sound faith. Her journal would have also begun at the beginning of her life and ended with an epilogue, likely including letters from those who knew her or editorial comments on the virtues of her service until her death. Instead, Hudson's journal receives an impromptu ending involving a reference to an incident involving her oldest son and the discharge of a firearm—and it was never finished.

It is more than tight organization that separates the journals and experiences of Jane Hoskens and Elizabeth Hudson, however. As one of only two Quaker women's journals published by the colonial presses in the 18th century, the reader may surmise that Jane Hoskens' life was a Quaker success story. Published a year after her death, it marks her autobiography as relating an authentic Quaker experience. What is less evident is what aspects of her life made her (or her text) acceptable as a model for posterity? The Quaker editing process outlined the experiences most pertinent to the purpose of Quaker autobiography.³⁶⁷ Hoskens' journal certainly stresses the factors supportive of the assumption that indeed, she was within the "will of God."

³⁶⁷ See also Wright, *The Literary Life*, 193-194. Wright argues that the Quaker journal grew out of the "home environment, religious crises, psychopathic states, adoption of Quaker tenets, imprisonment, domestic affairs, and travels in the ministry" before 1689. She explains that the Quakers had an early

Though Hudson sets herself up as a spiritual exemplar and a sound minister, her ministry was more “controversial” than that of Hoskens and other published journal writers. While Quaker editing would have removed the controversial elements from her journal, the emotional problems she had after her marriage, and the relational conflicts that she had prior to it, would have likely limited her influence among those who knew her. A comparison with Hoskens’ journal reveals several elements indicative of controversy within her ministry and personal life.

Hudson’s preference for her own “divine leadings” over the “inspirations” of others is evident in her journal. She does not advocate the idea that working together with travel companions confirms ministerial authority, as Hoskens did. Legitimacy, for Hudson, is based solely on the idea that God and not companions dictate truth,³⁶⁸ thus undermining the unity of the “voice” or God’s voice through the messenger.

Hudson’s journal also suggests personal conflicts with other traveling ministers. Hudson may have let the “spirit” lead her too far off the approved path, both figuratively and literally. Historian Rebecca Larson notes that Hudson had a conflict with Jane Hoskens over what she said in some meetings in England when the women were traveling together.³⁶⁹ Hudson may have also gone too far outside the area where she had permission to travel, according to her certificate. According to Margaret Bacon, she may have been “too independent while traveling in England which led to a confrontation when

“necessity for self-expression” partly due to their “psychological” need and partly as a “defensive measure.” She claims that due to the nature of the Inner Light, they had to defend their personal revelations to others. It was this tradition that shaped the writings of the eighteenth-century Quakers discussed here.

³⁶⁸ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 56 and *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 185. Although on a theoretical level, God was the only authority for ministers, companions (especially other ministers) had a great deal to do with the authorizing of “divine messages” or the denial of their authenticity.

³⁶⁹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 122.

she returned to her home meeting.³⁷⁰ Her social status may have also led to problems when she spoke too forwardly in meetings. Hudson may not have given all Quaker men the deferential treatment that they expected. Due to her status and her education, it may have been difficult to believe that God was inspiring some men when her own words were likely more eloquent.³⁷¹ Hudson may have also been more “confident” than some other Quaker women about speaking publicly, as Margaret Bacon points out.³⁷² Other members may have regarded her as too proud.³⁷³

In one passage, Elizabeth Hudson admits that pride has been a problem with her in the past. She describes her temptation to credit herself—to “exalt the creaturely part...as though it had done something extraordinary.” She also suggests implicitly that she has previously viewed her own abilities more highly than those of others. In the same passage, she counsels other ministers not to “draw comparisons between our gifts and the gifts of others...” because the “natural partiality with which we view ourselves and what we do, may place our performances in a fairer light than they will bear,

³⁷⁰ Bacon, ‘*Wilt Thou Go*,’ 124.

³⁷¹ See Mortimer’s discussion in “Quaker Women in the 18th Century,” 235.

³⁷² Bacon, ‘*Wilt Thou Go*,’ 124.

³⁷³ The story of May Drummond closely parallels Hudson’s experience in the ministry. English Quaker May Drummond (1710-1772) was criticized by one of her travel companions, William Cookworthy, for her manner of speech, which he described as “a little theatrical.” Cookworthy also implied that her education affected her style of preaching, which would have suggested to many Quakers that it was more contrived than inspired (especially considering Cookworthy’s other remarks). A verse written in 1736 about her also suggests that her speech may have been designed for emotional effect. See Mortimer, “Quaker Women in the Eighteenth Century,” 235. According to Mortimer, Drummond was discouraged from preaching by her meeting and faded into obscurity. Notably, among non-Quakers, she drew newspaper attention and public renown. See Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 239, 243, 246, and 254-255. Whether or not Hudson drew similar admiration from non-Quakers is unknown.

and...may cast...a shade over others that it will be no hard matter for us to give self the preference.”³⁷⁴

As discussed in the previous chapter, Hudson focuses extensively on the issues of speaking and silence in her journal. She is far more candid than Hoskens about her own failures concerning speaking and silence; and, she writes confidently about the lessons she has learned, presumably for potential readers and (as I will argue shortly) as a defense of her own actions. She clearly had conflicts with two of her travel companions and with members of her home meeting, which she discusses in her journal. Her personal feelings of “estrangement” and her reference to those that “hate her” among other statements would likely not have been included in an edited or published version of her journal.³⁷⁵

Although Hudson includes and omits certain events that other edited journals do not, her autobiography includes the basic tenets associated with Quaker autobiography. By emphasizing the religious purpose that governs her decisions and by revealing events in her life that best represent those experiences, she (like Hoskens) establishes her Quaker identity in writing and fulfills the autobiographical form of the “confession.” The autobiographies of Hoskens and Hudson also follow the secular form of the “apology,” a form of autobiography used when “the guiding intention is to vindicate one’s own beliefs and actions, often in the face of public censure or public controversy.” In this form,

³⁷⁴ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 226.

³⁷⁵ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 268-269 and 263. Why her journal went unfinished, despite her continuation in the ministry, remains a mystery. It is reasonable to assume that it was because she was responsible for the large family of her widower husband, Anthony Morris, following her marriage in 1752. Her travel in the ministry ended with the birth of her first son in 1758; and, though she continued to be active in the Philadelphia area, little is known about her involvement in the ministry beyond the local level.

scholar James Goodwin states that unlike the confession, the apology “implies no admission of guilt.”³⁷⁶

The Apology and Vindication

We have already seen how the conversion process allowed the believer to separate actions from emotions and attribute an otherwise incriminating action (like running away from home as a teenager in the case of Jane Hoskens) as a divinely sanctioned act of obedience. In her text, Hoskens repeatedly contends that divine will rather than self-will governs her actions. Her admissions of guilt in the early part of her narrative concerning her childhood do not cover all her questionable actions, however. What she chooses to include in her writing seems to counter criticism before it comes.

Hoskens was thrown in jail by the man who paid her initial sea passage from England to the American colonies because she did not sign an indenture, which she perceived as unfair. Her discussion of her imprisonment for not signing the indenture is implicitly a defense. She points out that she was “willing to comply” with the initial agreement—one with no set time for Robert Davis’s payment, which was to her benefit. She describes “his mercenary will,” while describing herself as “a poor young creature among strangers.” When she is offered her freedom by (presumably) non-Quaker friends, she chooses to remain in jail. She explains her decisions by showing how God continued to direct her actions. When she does decide to accept help, she chooses to serve Quakers. Indentured to several Quaker families as a tutor, she tells the reader that she worked beyond her indenture to repay their kindness—demonstrating that she is an honorable person. She even advises servants, in a later passage, to be “careful to

³⁷⁶ Goodwin, *Autobiography*, 5.

discharge their trust faithfully, to their masters and mistresses.”³⁷⁷ Not only does she dispel her questionable actions, she actually becomes a “model” servant and reinforces the idea that she is a woman dependent on faith.

Hoskens and those who supervised the editing of her journal were careful of appearances that might undermine her testimony. Unlike the Puritan/Congregationalist journal, the primary goal of the Quaker journal was not to prove the legitimacy of the writer’s experience to determine salvation. Rather, the published journal was more about sending the right message or the right example to others.³⁷⁸ In this sense, Quakers were concerned with spiritual validation. More important than her individual experience, Hoskens’ journal was to convey the beliefs and examples that would promote the Quaker faith among members and their children and among non-members.

The editing process also authenticated her experience by emphasizing direct revelation in her writing (just as in the act of speaking). In Hoskens’ journal, the “revealed” words are placed in parentheses. Place names are italicized and her journey to specific places is viewed as part of her divine leadings. The names of people she encountered are also italicized—they offer evidence of peer support and are indicative of God’s direction of others (Quaker and non-Quaker) in her life. Both the place names and the use of surnames in her account associate her with the international network—traveling partners, hosts and hostesses, and even sea captains—who all facilitated travel and worship, and insured a degree of safety for herself and other Quaker missionaries. The words of direct revelation spoken by God and the prophecies brought by others are

³⁷⁷ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 6-7 and 15.

³⁷⁸ See Grimes, “Saving Grace” (1982) and Edkins, “Quest for Community” (1980) for comparisons of Puritan and Quaker spiritual journals.

also in quotations. The flood of small details, the names of every ship captain she encountered in route, for instance, substantiate the reality of her experiences.³⁷⁹

Not only her language, but the function and form of her text support her claim to legitimacy, as well. She believed that every word spoken (or even written) either legitimated or cast doubt on her divine authority.³⁸⁰ Her autobiography is then a reevaluation of her relationship to God (creating legitimacy for the writer) and a display of “God’s will” over her own (creating legitimacy for the reader). Though her journal functioned as an expression of self, the purpose behind Quaker autobiography was to demonstrate the selflessness of a faithful Christian servant.³⁸¹

To demonstrate self-suppression, legitimacy, for the instrument of God, was encapsulated in the language of humility. Perhaps, a reaction to societal critiques from outside the Quaker fold, or to male criticism within, she is careful to use language that plays down such individual characteristics as pride and ambition. Each time she relates the complements and encouragement of others, she reminds the reader that she takes no personal credit. Incidents that sometimes implicitly suggest moments of pride are overwrought with humble admissions of God’s providence. In one account, after Friend Thomas Willson sees the “Lord...at work” in Hoskens and encourages her by taking notice of her, she describes the event as a time which “will never be forgotten,”

³⁷⁹ Such information also served a practical purpose, as well. It helped other itinerant Quaker ministers determine which ship captains would permit or even encourage their meetings with other willing passengers and crew.

³⁸⁰ Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 42. See also the discussion in Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography*, 12.

³⁸¹ Wright, *The Literary Life*, 154-157. According to Wright, the beliefs and aims of the group superseded self-expression. The Society carefully edited the life stories of its members to conform to those experienced by the group.

(indicating its importance) but she maintains that his words are not repeated “in ostentation” but rather to incite humility—leading her to “bow in awful reference, as with my mouth in the dust, rendering to the great author of all our mercies, adoration, and praise.”³⁸² In another account she recalls that God “pleased to crown her labors in the ministry with success,” and that “Friends every where were exceeding kind to me, yet I was not exalted, being sensible that of myself I could do nothing that tended to good.”³⁸³ Throughout the journal, she periodically refers to herself in self-debasing terms as a “poor unworthy creature” and a “poor weak instrument.”³⁸⁴

Literary scholar Susan Imbarrato has found parallels between the spiritual journal of Quaker Elizabeth Ashbridge and the captivity genre.³⁸⁵ Hoskens, like Ashbridge, places her experiences within the spiritual context and avoids self-aggrandizement. The focus on the individual spiritual journey unites the focus of the text, according to Imbarrato. Biblical allusions defer credit to God and move the focus away from the journal writer. They also attach the psychologically “loaded” concept of divine revelation to a more accepted medium of divine representation, the Scriptures.³⁸⁶

³⁸² *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 24.

³⁸³ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 23.

³⁸⁴ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 20 and 28. Hoskens’ use of such terms pales in comparison to Puritan/Congregationalist journals, like that of Sarah Osborn. See Sarah Osborn, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sarah Osborn*, 2d ed. (Catskill, RI: N. Elliot, 1814) and Samuel Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973). See also the discussion about evangelical women’s writings in Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 40.

³⁸⁵ Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency*, 21.

³⁸⁶ Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency*, 21.

By crediting God, Hoskens downplays her travels as a preacher and the greatest evidence of her prestige within her community and abroad. She attempts to mask her public presence in an effort to emphasize her spiritual role as God's servant. As in the act of conversion and in the process of "self-emptying" (or finding peace in the comfort of one's faith), the act of recording events in the journal, creating identity in text, is constantly in flux.

The psychological negotiation between self and servant, a common trope in religious writing becomes more heightened in Hoskens' text than in some other Quaker journals. In Hoskens' journal, Satan vies for her allegiance and attempts to undermine her humility and passivity. Perhaps, this is due to the level of personal pride, experienced by Hoskens and other Quaker ministers, and by the self-reflective nature of the spoken word (which according to scholar Richard Bauman is central to the understanding of the Quaker faith). The personal experiences of Jane Hoskens as a woman, a servant, a wife, and a preacher create self-awareness and identity in her text. Her text mirrors her internal struggle, her constant renegotiation of identity. Her journal, like those of other Quakers, recreates her experiences and validates her life through her religion and the act of writing.

While the *Life of Jane Hoskens* seems to counter criticism before it comes, the *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson* seems to anticipate it. The controversy surrounding certain periods in Hudson's ministry offers an interesting contrast to the ministry of Jane Hoskens. An analysis of how Hudson represents herself in text offers some insight into the failures of her ministry at certain times and sheds light on her struggle to establish her spiritual legitimacy within the Society.

Throughout her journal, Hudson attempts to convince her readers that she has learned when to speak, how to speak, and when to maintain her silence. She also provides examples of her experiences as a conduit of God's word to instruct her potential readers about the struggles involved in preaching. She uses her own failures to demonstrate how she has come to a "right" understanding of speaking and silence. She speaks with confidence about the lessons she has learned and presents herself as an authority on the issues related to speaking and silence. By establishing her authority on these issues, she attempts to reaffirm God's work through her ministry and her soundness as a minister.

In Hudson's journal, each failure becomes evidence of God's favor in her text. In one passage, she stands to speak but finds that "all was hid from me...in an awful silence." In the same sentence, she dismisses what could have been regarded as personal failure. Although God did not convey a message to the audience, he momentarily revealed a personal message to her—he "laid" an "incumbent duty" on her to spread his word in England.³⁸⁷ That she was unable to receive a supernatural transmission was also not indicative of her own lack of focus. Rather, God "hid" all from her "in an awful silence." In another passage, when she "could make nothing out" to "any good purpose," she implicitly puts part of the responsibility on God, as well. What would otherwise be deemed failures become learning experiences as God implicitly reveals Himself according to His own plan and for her own good. What follows for her is a period of

³⁸⁷ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 140.

learning to submit to “his mighty hand.” Her struggles represent a testing and seasoning time for her. Rather than internalizing errors she tends to find “his glory in it.”³⁸⁸

In her journal, the audience also plays an important role in legitimating Hudson as an exemplary minister and in shaping her messages or her lack of them. In one account, her failure to speak at the “proper and right season” is dismissed as a consequence of travel fatigue and the “watchfulness” of the audience.³⁸⁹ She presents a circular argument to defend her position--her failure as a “backward” speaker was a result of the audience desire that she be a “forward” one. In other instances, when others are critical of her speaking or silence, she intercedes in the text to instruct the reader and to substantiate the validity of her position. She describes her “concern” that the “anxious desires of the people should have that influence upon me to draw me forth in words without qualification.” She provides examples of how she withstood the urge to speak in order to please the “itching ears” of audience members. In this particular instance, she did not speak forwardly but sat in silence until “a right stream opened” for her to speak.³⁹⁰ In another meeting, she also found that the “people’s expectations were too much outward” and so the Lord “shut up the Gospel treasures” to them.³⁹¹

Hudson thus establishes herself as an authority on silence. She “found by experience” that God was not “always honoured by words” or “in willful silence which

³⁸⁸ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 163.

³⁸⁹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 235.

³⁹⁰ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 178.

³⁹¹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 175. Such concerns suggest that she was influenced by mid-18th century internal reforms, which encouraged ministers to be watchful about these matters.

ought to be guarded against as well.” In her journal she builds the case that she is indeed within the “will of God.” In the midst of criticism and audience misunderstanding, Hudson defends her actions as divinely ordained and presents herself as one who understands the importance of silence. She explains that she does not always “find it my duty to minister [i.e. speak].” She recalls in her travels instructing non-Quakers on the issue of silence. In one meeting, she felt led to instruct the people “who were chiefly of other societies” on the “nature of our ministry.” She reiterates what she said to her audience and reestablishes her authority in text—presumably for ministers, Quakers, and non-Quakers, alike. In “turning the eye inward they [the audience] would find a teacher near that teaches as man never taught.” She also reminds other ministers “that it was the end and design of all our ministry to bring people to that.”³⁹²

Hudson also encourages other ministers by sharing her own understanding of the trials they face in the ministry. According to her, God “proves and tries his ministers” so that they can withstand audience pressure and “sit in poverty with the expectation of the people fixed upon us.” Although she counsels that it is the “creaturely part” that is likely to draw a minister into forward speech, she seems to conclude (for the benefit of ministers or audience members) that it is more often the eagerness of the audience rather than the vanity (or self-will) of ministers that mars the work.³⁹³

Hudson implicitly contends that she has learned how to handle audience pressure to avoid the problems associated with speaking. She can also offer instruction to other

³⁹² *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 209 and 211.

³⁹³ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 215 and 234. The idea that the audience determines the message God sends is also conveyed in a letter from Mary Smith to Elizabeth Hudson, which reinforces her earlier discussion of the same subject.

ministers. She moves past the basic problem (self-will) discussed by other Quaker ministers, to an assessment of the primary problem—audience expectation—and overcomes that as well. One way to overcome the constant negotiation between self and divine will that was central in eighteenth-century Quakerism was to place the conflict within the realm of audience response. She removes blame from herself and other ministers by explaining the pressure associated with public speaking and by placing the onus on the audience for ministerial forwardness.³⁹⁴ Her past failures become part of the suffering associated with the ministry and evidence of God’s work in her life.

Hudson also substantiates her claims to ministerial legitimacy throughout her journal by association with Quaker notables. Her problems with two traveling companions, discussed in her journal, can be read (in a negative light) as examples of her own failure to follow “divine will” over personal preference. To avert controversy she establishes strong connections with older Quaker leaders of broad experience and sound reputation as proof of her “unity.”³⁹⁵ In one account, she reflects on the ministry of Abigail Bowles, one of “our first rank female warriors.” Hudson uses her relationship with Bowles (specifically, Bowles’ letters) as evidence or “living testimonies of her sincere regard” and states that Bowles offered “good will to the cause” she was “engaged in.”³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ Quaker ministers sometimes maintained that the audience’s eagerness for words created the context for their forwardness in the ministry. See my discussion of Hudson’s journal earlier in this chapter.

³⁹⁵ Abigail Bowles (1684-1752) was a much older minister, as was Mary Smith (whose letter was discussed previously). In her journal, these relationships serve as counterweights to the later fall-out she has with Jane Hoskens, who is also much older and more experienced in the ministry than Hudson. See Larson’s discussion of Bowles (also spelled Boles) in *Daughters of Light*, 57 and 317.

³⁹⁶ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 156.

In many other passages Hudson speaks of the “unity” which exists between her and other preachers.³⁹⁷ In one passage, John Wilson is represented as a “nursing father” to her.³⁹⁸ She also tells the reader that she has good “unity” with Samuel Spavold; and, in a later passages, discusses the spiritual trials she goes through with the support of William Longmire and her female traveling companion.³⁹⁹ In one account, even her deportment, her “retired manner of sitting” reflects her unity with God and the Society of Friends. Along with “some of the most solid” Friends, she tells the reader that she “kept still,” despite the “light and airy tempers” of the family to whom they were ministering.⁴⁰⁰

Hudson also implicitly argues that her ministry was never controversial. In one passage, she tells the reader that on her trip to England—in “that time of infancy in which I visited that nation,” no “ill-natured remark” was uttered “in all the time” she was there.⁴⁰¹ To avert criticism, she establishes herself as the Christ figure in her emotional saga, as well. Like Christ, she receives knowledge from God about the suffering to come upon her return home. She tells the reader that she received a prophetic warning from Quaker Mary Smith and a direct vision from God, concerning the conflicts she would

³⁹⁷ If ministers were in “unity,” they agreed that the messages delivered by the speaker were the same as the ones they had personally received from God. Christ theoretically gave the same message to all Quakers simultaneously, whether someone spoke or all sat in silence.

³⁹⁸ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 169.

³⁹⁹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 204-205.

⁴⁰⁰ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 201.

⁴⁰¹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 145.

shortly face.⁴⁰² Hudson also shows the reader how friendship turned to betrayal as one particular minister added “fuel to kindle the fire.” She reflects on how she was given a false sense of security, as a traveling companion (Jane Hoskens) reassured her that her “conduct” had “been such that malice itself” could not “blast thy reputation.” She is even betrayed by a kiss. After telling her to “stand” and that “all will be well,” the Judas-like companion, she writes, “kissed me hastily.”⁴⁰³ Hudson’s inclusion of letters written between Jane Hoskens and herself, which demonstrate the close nature of their friendship, offer further circumstantial evidence that she was somehow betrayed by one who acted like her friend.⁴⁰⁴ In any case, the details revealed in her journal suggest that she countered accusations against her with declarations of innocence and images of martyrdom.

The details Hudson chooses to reveal create a defense for the real controversies she faced in her life. Hudson, like Hoskens, is careful of appearances that might undermine her testimony. She substantiates her travels in the ministry by listing the places and people who were part of her travels in the ministry. In her autobiography, Hudson, like Hoskens, also presents a reevaluation of her relationship to God and a display of “God’s will” over her own. In the context of her struggles with speaking and silence in the ministry, Hudson demonstrates her selfless faith as God’s servant.

As in the journal of Hoskens, Hudson uses the language of humility to establish her validity as an instrument of God. In one account, Hudson tells the reader that she was

⁴⁰² In another account God’s intervention is even more mystical--a “dark cloud” appeared before Hudson to warn that “spirits [would be] raised up” against her once she returned home. *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 262.

⁴⁰³ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 262-263.

⁴⁰⁴ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 174-177.

never more “favoured with the gift of utterance,” but that she spoke “in his name...for it was not mine own.” She instructs ministers “to keep a constant guard over [their] hearts lest after...times of reigning with the seed a spirit that would exalt the creaturely part in us should lift up its head, and boast itself as though it had done something extraordinary.” She also refers to ministers as “poor creatures” who are “singularly endowed...above others of our fellow helpers in the work;” yet, “poor and weak, destitute of every comfort and consequence” and “incapable of administering any to them” without God.⁴⁰⁵

Moments of pride become occasions for thankfulness and humility in Hudson’s journal. When God provides safe sea passage, she is “humbled under the renewed sense of the mercies of God” and “not worthy of the least of them.”⁴⁰⁶ When “great crowds came,” her “soul bowed in awful reverence to the almighty helper of his poor dependent servants.” As the “power” of the ministers “soon overshadowed the assembly and truth spread itself greatly,” her “poor soul” rejoiced and “vented itself in tears.”⁴⁰⁷ By using language that tempers individual attributes like pride and ambition, Hudson in her journal recreates the process of “self-emptying” involved in the act of conversion. As in the act of speaking, her spiritual authority and legitimacy are repeatedly negotiated in text. The psychological negotiations between self and servant are indicative of personal pride, as well as the self-reflective nature of the spoken and the written word.

The personal experiences of Elizabeth Hudson and Jane Hoskens mirror their internal struggles as they use their autobiographies to recreate and validate their

⁴⁰⁵ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 225-226.

⁴⁰⁶ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 180.

⁴⁰⁷ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 197.

experiences and their lives in text. Their journals (and those of other Quaker ministers) also demonstrate how Quakers utilized the autobiographical form to reconcile the psychological issues that resulted from their integration in the larger colonial culture, as discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 5: Humility and the Politics of Self-Representation

Although in theory, authority for Quaker ministers was founded on the individual's direct connection with the "inward Guide," in practice, legitimacy for Friends was based on a commingling of religious and cultural values. For Quaker female ministers in the 18th century, self-transcendence continued to be part of their ministerial experience. As gendered attributes increasingly defined their religious identities, cultural constraints also continued to challenge and even inhibit their preaching. In moving closer to the gender norms of the larger colonial society, Quaker ministers incorporated societal mores into their own conceptions of spirituality.

An analysis of the subtle gendered differences in men's and women's journals offers insight into how Quakerism interacted with the greater colonial culture. It also details how conflicting values were internalized and written into the lives of Quaker women and men. As this chapter examines how autobiography was constructed to support the gender-specific needs of Quaker women, it also suggests how Quaker male and female ministers may have established authority in writing and speaking differently and how these differences may have allowed Quakerism to function in women's lives on a practical level.

As discussed previously, the context for claiming spiritual authority shifted within the American colonies during the 18th century. As the revivals encouraged new conceptions of female religious authority, the positive religious environment also influenced the public ministries and personal lives of female Public Friends. Around mid century, the influence and authority of Quaker female ministers may have even reached its apogee, according to historian Rebecca Larson. Female Public Friends may have

become more popular than their male counterparts among non-Quakers.⁴⁰⁸ The spectacle of women preaching may also have drawn curious people and particularly women to Quaker meetings and (as in the case of Jane Carpenter, mentioned earlier) even to membership.⁴⁰⁹

While the expansion of women's public speaking during the revivals likely encouraged Quaker female ministers as they embraced their controversial roles, the positive religious climate may have also operated to the detriment of their spiritual lives. As quietism demanded complete self-negation and total surrender to God, the atmosphere created by the revivals may have worked against that tendency. The exaltation of preaching talents may have contributed to internal conflicts between self and divine leading.⁴¹⁰ These conflicts may have been more intense for female Friends, whose public identities were solely based on their authority as divinely inspired ministers.

Suppressing the Self: Women and the Public Act of Speaking

As discussed in a previous chapter, even experienced ministers continued to have internal conflicts over whether particular messages were divinely inspired or not. Problems associated with self-suppression may have been more commonly associated with Quaker women. Quaker John Churchman suggests as much. In his journal, Churchman refers to the "creaturely will" or self-will, as the "womanly part, which is not permitted to speak in the church." He further elaborates on his own spiritual state by reasoning that if Eve had "been in subjection [to God] instead of reasoning with the

⁴⁰⁸ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 285.

⁴⁰⁹ Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 285.

⁴¹⁰ *Journal of John Churchman*, 26-32 and 48-49. See also *Memoirs of James Gough*, 37-39 and *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 29 and 39.

serpent that tempted, she might have been preserved from being the tempter.”⁴¹¹

Though the curse of Eve and Paul’s injunction (that women not speak in the church but learn in their own homes) is referenced here, Churchman, like other Quakers adhered to the belief that Jesus’ coming and the conversion of Quaker women cancelled Paul’s injunction against female public speech. What he deems womanly weakness here is, in fact, a revised version (in effect, a reverse) of a more patriarchal rendering of Eve’s curse and the presumed “weakness” of the female sex.⁴¹² For Churchman, it is woman’s reasoning power, not her inability to reason, which threatens her spiritual state—and those of others. It is therefore, his own reasoning that is inhibiting his emotional response to the “inward Christ” and his delivery of a truly “inspired” message.

For Churchman, mastery of self-will was on some level a masculine accomplishment. In another passage, Churchman makes the same gendered assumptions when he attempts to harness his self-will and speak in a meeting. He recalls that when he stood up to speak “with a large opening” as he thought, “after a short introduction, it closed up,” and he “sat down again, which was some mortification” to him “*as a man*” [italics added].⁴¹³

The language John Churchman uses to discuss his own problems with self-suppression suggests the gender-specific difficulties associated with women speaking in

⁴¹¹ *Journal of John Churchman*, 24.

⁴¹² Mack, *Visionary Women*, 137. Mack notes that the reversal of masculine and feminine attributes was a common rhetorical device used in seventeenth-century Quaker journals. Though less common, such imagery was also used in the 18th. See also a letter written to Patience Brayton included in the *Life of Patience Brayton*, 137-141.

⁴¹³ *Journal of John Churchman*, 41.

public, more generally. Churchman's journal suggests that Quaker men may have internalized contemporary understandings of white masculinity and incorporated it into their own conceptions of "inspired" speaking.⁴¹⁴ English Quaker Elizabeth Stirredge (1634-1706) offers evidence that women did, as well. Obviously fed up with the problems associated with women preaching, she told God that "If women are supposed to be so unworthy, then don't use me!"⁴¹⁵

The experiences of Quaker Elizabeth Hudson, standing without words (mentioned in a previous chapter), and the experience of female ministers like Patience Brayton, in similar circumstances, also associate lack of confidence (inherent in the act of public speaking) with women, in particular. In her journal, Brayton recalls how she felt intimidated by "great men," who were "great in the knowledge of divine things." In one passage, she admits that she received her "opening" only after the men left the meeting. In other meetings, it was only after her female companion spoke that she was able to speak. As in Brayton's case, a "timid disposition" was also cited as the reason for Quaker Elizabeth Collin's reluctance to speak.⁴¹⁶

As I have argued previously, public speaking created anxiety for women but also empowered them. While Quaker women tended to embrace their positions as humble women and exploit their "weaknesses" to express God's glory aloud, they also had some

⁴¹⁴ Churchman may have drawn from the writings of earlier Quaker writers, like Richard Farnworth, who associated "woman" with the "wisdom of the flesh" and man with the "Spirit." Wilcox, *Handmaids of the Lord: Theology and Women's Ministry*, 178-179. Wilcox explains that "the early Quakers would have claimed that human nature (both male and female) has no part in the life of the Spirit; but the idea that maleness is somehow better, or more spiritual, is present in early Quaker thought." See also Peters, *Print Culture*, 134-135.

⁴¹⁵ Quoted in Boulding, "Mapping the Inner Journey," 98.

⁴¹⁶ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 50 and *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 459.

issues with pride. “Forwardness” (being overly eager or speaking of oneself rather than God) and “backwardness” (reluctance or failure to speak) were both associated with a lack of humility. Pride could lead to “grand standing.” It could also lead to reluctance or failure to speak, for fear of inadequacy or embarrassment. As Patience Brayton points out in her journal, to remain in a “humble watchful state” is “where true safety lies”... “lest I should go too fast or tarry too long behind...”⁴¹⁷ She also counseled her readers about the “need for continued watchfulness” and maintained that “seasons of proving, keep the mind low and in a situation to receive divine impressions.”⁴¹⁸

Inspired speaking clearly elevated the minister and placed the speaker in a precarious state. Patience Brayton tells her readers that “if we have been favoured, we must be immediately humbled again, for that is our safety.”⁴¹⁹ Quaker William Matthews (1732-1792) reiterated the same sentiment when he wrote that “any time” he was “favoured to be as on a mount,” his experience was necessarily followed by a “great poverty of spirit.”⁴²⁰ The balance between expressing spiritual triumphs and avoiding prideful statements was clearly a delicate one for Quaker writers. As one Quaker minister incisively put it, God would not “own...high flying Quakers.”⁴²¹

⁴¹⁷ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 82.

⁴¹⁸ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 84.

⁴¹⁹ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 104.

⁴²⁰ William Matthews, *Journal of William Matthew*, eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 7, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1832), 252.

⁴²¹ The quote is by Susanna Lightfoot (1719/1720-1781). See Thomas Lightfoot, “A Brief Memoir of the Life of Susanna Lightfoot,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 9, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1836), 64. Hereafter cited as *Brief Memoir of Susanna Lightfoot*.

Negotiating Legitimacy in the Context of Spiritual Struggle

Detailing such spiritual ups and downs was also an essential part of describing an “inspired” ministry in Quaker journals. William Matthews wrote that “deep baptisms of spirit are necessary, in order to become *qualified* for the ministry of the gospel.”⁴²² [italics added] Quaker Sarah Harrison (1736-1812) wrote that being “shut up” and going through “deep baptisms, “was essential for her “refinement.”⁴²³ What Quaker journal writers often referred to as “trials,” “trying seasons,” “proving seasons,” or “baptisms” validated their experiences by articulating the internal conflict or process of “self-emptying” involved in the act of inspired speaking.

Through their use of a language which conveyed their personal humility and their passive resignation as God’s conduits, Quaker journal writers were able to negotiate and renegotiate their ministerial authority in text. Humility, expressed in the writings of Quaker men and women, then became a strategic way for ministers to counter implications that they were praying or preaching without inspiration. In their journals, Quakers wrote to authenticate their experiences and to come to terms with their own spiritual realities. Writing was then an important means of self-examination, self-presentation, and self-construction.⁴²⁴

⁴²² *Journal of William Matthews*, 280.

⁴²³ Sarah Harrison, *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 11, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1838), 111. Quaker Samuel Smith (1737-1817) also expressed a similar sentiment, when he wrote to another minister, “I have no doubt that thou wilt be helped to visit the seed in many minds” and “though it may cost many humiliations and deep baptisms to get at them...thou wilt be a comforter.” See Phebe Speakman, *Some Account of the Life and Travels of Phebe Speakman*, eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 6, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1835), 259.

⁴²⁴ See Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency*, xix. See also Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography*, 5.

Expressions of fear and reluctance were both means for Quaker writers to convey their “unworthiness” and thus, legitimate their “openings” to speak. “Fear” was a word Quakers associated with both personal humility and divine authorization. Quaker Elizabeth Collins wrote that to be “preserved upon the right foundation” one must dwell in “humility and fear.”⁴²⁵ In his journal, John Churchman also insists that he speaks in “great fear”—and thus, humble submission.⁴²⁶ When a writer expressed reluctance to speak, they emphasized their awareness of the power of speaking in worship meetings and a certain “unwillingness” to accept so great a responsibility.

Remaining silent and waiting on the Lord to send inspiration was also an essential component in reaching an “authentic” experience and expressing it.⁴²⁷ John Churchman’s tendency to sit in silence as an example to others was theoretically based on his mortification of self-will, for example.⁴²⁸ Discussion of the importance of silence along with his personal example signified his legitimacy as a truly “inspired” minister and as a spiritual exemplar for his readers.

⁴²⁵ *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 463.

⁴²⁶ *Journal of John Churchman*, 11.

⁴²⁷ Silence was an essential spiritual experience. See the discussion about silence in Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, 100. Although silence may not have been viewed as “preparation” for speaking (because speaking was not “a given”), as Barbour and Frost point out, waiting on God (in a very literal sense to do anything) did involve silence. Bauman explains that the goal of the minister was to help receptive listeners to achieve silence (a state of self-suppression). Spiritual silence (or “giving up the earthly nature) was required for the minister to deliver “inspired” messages. Speaking was “fundamentally a faculty of the earthly man.” See Bauman, “Speaking in the Light,” 145, 149, and 155. Silence was the ideal, but the failure of people to wait in silence sometimes necessitated speaking.

⁴²⁸ *Journal of John Churchman*, 24-25. Ironically, in establishing his authority on the subject of speaking and silence, Churchman has difficulty in his journal conveying the humility he prizes as a minister. His instructive (and sometimes contentious) tone tends to overshadow his text.

Direct expressions of personal humility were also a necessary part of explaining a legitimate ministerial experience. William Matthews, in one passage, describes “the many baptisms” he “went through” and how as “a poor creature” he found help in the Lord and “abundant cause to bow in reverence of soul.”⁴²⁹ John Churchman also expresses humility when he implicitly references himself as one of God’s “humble depending servants.”⁴³⁰ Such examples of humility also appear in women’s journals and serve as markers of divine calling and inspiration.

Self-negation in women’s journals, however, was usually more frequent and for the most part more self-deprecating.⁴³¹ Quaker Elizabeth Collins, for example, repeatedly refers to herself as one of God’s “humble dependent children,” “a poor worm,” and “a poor unworthy creature.”⁴³² Quaker Sarah Harrison (1736-1812) depicts herself as “a poor pilgrim,” “a poor unworthy creature,” and describes her “own nothingness.”⁴³³ By directly lamenting her female sex and her insufficiencies as a

⁴²⁹ *Journal of William Matthews*, 280.

⁴³⁰ *Journal of John Churchman*, 221.

⁴³¹ In a very brief (8-page) account of her ministry, the importance of humility is conveyed by the narrator. In one quote, Sarah Ballinger Wilkins (1757-1812) describes herself as “one of the least” and “not worthy,” and referred to herself as “a poor creature.” See “A Brief Account of the Life and Religious Labours of Sarah Wilkins,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 11, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1838), 353. Hereafter cited as “Brief Account of Sarah Wilkins.” Note that Sarah Wilkins was the sister of Elizabeth Collins. Her ministry and death are discussed in the *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 462-463.

⁴³² *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 453, 460, and 463.

⁴³³ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 143-144 and 123. Although Harrison’s journal provides good examples of self-deprecating language, her primary strategy for conveying humility is her discussion of her physical suffering. Her journal is discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

minister, Quaker Patience Brayton took self-negation a step further when she wrote, “I am indeed a worm and no man.”⁴³⁴

While Quaker men used humble language on occasion following accounts of successful speaking,⁴³⁵ Quaker women more frequently prefaced or ended discussions of their spiritual triumphs with declarations of humility.⁴³⁶ In her journal, Quaker Patience Brayton uses such self-negation in every other breath in certain passages. On one page of her journal, she refers to herself as “wretched,” “a poor drooping and unworthy child,” and one of God’s “poor depending children.”⁴³⁷ In each of these cases, her declarations of humility come right before or right after accounts of her “divine openings” to speak. In many other passages, she recreates the cyclical process of self-negation, followed by spiritual triumph, and humiliation. When Brayton was “humbled under the consideration” of God’s “enabling” her “to become as a sounding trumpet” in God’s “hand,” she explains that God “trieth the heart and reins of his children,” when he “suffers them to be cast down,” he also “raises them up again.”⁴³⁸

Success associated with specific public “appearances” seemed to warrant immediate self-negation in other women’s journals, also. When Sarah Harrison

⁴³⁴ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 40-41. She may have also meant that she is lower than a “mortal” or human being here.

⁴³⁵ See for example, *Journal of William Matthews*, 266 and *Journal of John Churchman*, 193, 227, and 31. In one example, William Matthews wrote that “By keeping to the opening of my gift, I was, through holy help enabled to get along greatly to my humbling admiration.” Churchman also wrote, for example, “I was much humbled in a sense of the great condescension and mercy of the Lord.” In another he stated, “I marvelled, for I was greatly reduced, and thought myself one of the poorest and most unqualified that ever travelled in that great service.”

⁴³⁶ Boulding, “Mapping the Inner Journey,” 97.

⁴³⁷ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 46.

⁴³⁸ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 28.

compares her inability as a preacher to that of others by stating that she is “not a polished shaft,” her comments both before and after this statement suggest that she had spoken at a “large” yearly meeting with many “wise people” present.⁴³⁹ When Elizabeth Hudson recalls a particular time when she was never “more favoured with the gift of utterance,” she spends half a page praising God, stating that she has no cause to boast, maintaining her poverty and weakness, and protesting that she has not “done something extraordinary.”⁴⁴⁰

The pattern and frequency of women’s admissions of personal humility may indicate that they had to guard their “openings” to speak more carefully than male ministers. For women, the ups and downs of their spiritual struggles (their battles between divine inspiration and self-creation) conveyed the sacrificial nature of their ministerial service, as well as their ability to suppress the self in order to reach an “authentic” ministerial experience. Although the suppression of self involved a considerable amount of self-reflection for all ministers, for female journal writers, the process of “self-emptying” was often *explained* in detail. Patience Brayton suggested that even when her “mouth was opened in a few words,” she was “soon dipped into deep baptisms” which led her to “look well” to her “ways.” She also confirmed for the reader that she had “strong desires that the Lord would keep my body under subjection,” and

⁴³⁹ Apparently, the reference here is to a spear or arrow. The phallic nature of the reference may suggest an unconscious comparison with a male minister or ministers at the meeting or a male standard of oratorical eloquence. See *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 123-124.

⁴⁴⁰ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 225-226.

understood that self-evaluation was mandatory, “lest while I was speaking to others, I myself should become a castaway.”⁴⁴¹

By focusing on their spiritual trials, women like Patience Brayton demonstrated their preparation for ministerial service and the “divine” basis for their authority. In her journal, Brayton described her spiritual state, as well as the process that prepared her for spiritual victory. In one passage, she laments her “own unfitness and great poverty” and her lack of strength “to open” her “mouth any more.” She then asks God “to make her more passive than ever” so that “victory” could be “gained over my own stubborn will.” Following this “precious time” in the ministry (implicitly meaning she spoke), she gave “the praise to the Lord,” and desired “ever to esteem myself poor and empty.”⁴⁴²

While other accounts of spiritual struggles in the ministry are often less candid and more general, they also reveal how the process of self-suppression enabled preachers to remain humble and obedient to God. Like Brayton, Elizabeth Collins discusses her spiritual struggles consistently in her journal. On one page of her journal, for example, she begins by discussing a “trying time” with “little relief.” Following this, she reflects on how her “mind was much humbled” and how in her next meeting, “Truth reigned” (implying that she spoke). Following this triumph, “the ability is [again] given” at a Friends’ house; and she is enabled to “labour amongst them” (or speak). Her prayer of subjection to God (recited in her journal) is followed by a “close searching season;” and, then in a nearby town she is again “favoured” to speak.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 76-77.

⁴⁴² *Life of Patience Brayton*, 54-58.

⁴⁴³ *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 457.

In women's journals, the language of humility functions as a sign of the spiritual struggle involved in reaching "true" divine knowledge.⁴⁴⁴ As evidence of their willingness to suffer for the cause, their spiritual struggles conveyed both the purity of their motivations and the legitimacy of their calling.⁴⁴⁵ For Quaker women, establishing credibility on the basis of their humility seems to have been a central part of their ministerial experiences. In Elizabeth Hudson's journal, for example, she expresses her spiritual struggles with speaking and silence almost exclusively. Unlike most female journal writers, she attempts to establish her authority on the matter of speaking and silence. Although she is not completely successful (as some criticism of her ministry indicates), she spends a great deal of space in her journal substantiating her "openings" to speak.⁴⁴⁶ As discussed previously, Hudson's journal also functions as a defense of her actions, an attempt to separate her from controversies associated with her role as a minister.

While Quaker women emphasized their personal struggles (the spiritual highs and lows that authenticated the "truths" that they spoke) and defended their ministerial roles, Quaker men tended to emphasize their authority as God's spokesmen and their specific gifts in the ministry. William Matthews, for example, discusses the importance of

⁴⁴⁴ See the discussion in Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency," 158.

⁴⁴⁵ See Bauman's discussion of the importance of the tension between the "natural and spiritual faculties" (or the spiritual struggle, itself) as a central component of the Quaker experience. Bauman, "Speaking in the Light," 159.

⁴⁴⁶ Hudson's experiences in the ministry at this particular time in her life may also reflect the difficulties young ministers faced as they embarked on their first journeys in the ministry. It may also suggest the variability of peer support for Quaker ministers at particular times during their often lengthy careers.

humility in his journal, but rarely uses humble language to describe his own spiritual state. When he does on one occasion, it occurs within a passage where he discusses the importance of deep baptisms in fitting the minister for service—a theme he reiterates in his journal.⁴⁴⁷ Like other male ministers, he tends to set himself up as an authority on overcoming self-will so that he can speak the Truth. When he speaks about the “deep sufferings” he “had passed through” in his journal, he is often referencing the anguish he suffers over ministers who, he believes, are “not keeping down to the spring of true gospel ministry.”⁴⁴⁸ He presents himself as one who can “sense” or judge the “state of things” among others.⁴⁴⁹ He attributes this to his willingness to wait on the Lord’s inspiration “to keep in the patience,” thus articulating his own mastery of delivering “inspired” messages.⁴⁵⁰

Like Matthews, John Churchman also rarely uses humble language to express his experiences as a minister. Despite referencing on occasion his “frequent humble baptisms,” he also rarely discusses his own personal state. In one passage, for example, his “baptisms” are about the “present state of the church.”⁴⁵¹ Like Matthews, he also establishes himself as an authority—in his case, on just about everything. His concern is

⁴⁴⁷ *Journal of William Matthews*, 268-269. Matthews dwells at length on how ministers should behave. He suggests that true reformation will not come to the Society of Friends until ministers reach the spiritual rather than the creaturely part of people. He then refers to himself among the “poor servants who are honestly concerned to under a feeling sense of Truth” and are “often deeply baptized into sufferings.”

⁴⁴⁸ *Journal of William Matthews*, 284.

⁴⁴⁹ Note that male and female ministers believed that they had this ability. It is the authoritative tone and the suggestion that he patiently waits on God (when others do not) that I am getting at here. He becomes the example or the authority in his journal.

⁴⁵⁰ *Journal of William Matthews*, 280.

⁴⁵¹ *Journal of John Churchman*, 75.

primarily “declension,” which covers just about any problem he perceives within the Society of Friends. As one of the earliest American proponents of Quaker reformism in England,⁴⁵² he frequently intercedes in the text to give the reader direct counsel on such subjects as introspection before bedtime (in the third page of his journal) and entering the marriage state.⁴⁵³ He also has what he calls hard words for those who fail to attend meetings, those ministers who speak of their own will and not God’s, and those who do not honor Truth.⁴⁵⁴ He establishes his authority as what he calls a “seer” or one who knows the spiritual states of other people.⁴⁵⁵ He points out that he has been described as a “warrior,” and he defends his boldness as God’s messenger throughout his journal as necessary for the cause of Truth.⁴⁵⁶ He also establishes himself as an exemplar of sitting in silence, and he even admits that he believes that “sometimes” his “silent sitting was so ordered [by God] for an example to others.”⁴⁵⁷ He cautions the reader that “there are many indulgent nurses, many forward instructors, and too few fathers in the church”—and it is clear that he places himself in the latter category, as an esteemed “father in Israel.”⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵² Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 32-39.

⁴⁵³ *Journal of John Churchman*, 3 and 14-15.

⁴⁵⁴ *Journal of John Churchman*, 17-18 and 93-94.

⁴⁵⁵ *Journal of John Churchman*, 29.

⁴⁵⁶ *Journal of John Churchman*, 43.

⁴⁵⁷ *Journal of John Churchman*, 83.

⁴⁵⁸ *Journal of John Churchman*, 28. See also Mack, *Visionary Women*, 224 for a discussion of the “father in Israel.”

While some men spoke as authorities on the act of preaching, all the female ministers discussed here, attempted to moderate their personal authority as ministers with their claims to legitimacy, more explicitly. They use humble language or discuss their personal spiritual trials to counteract moments of personal pride associated with successful public “appearances.” Although Quaker men and women were well aware of the dangers of speaking without humble resignation, male ministers were less likely to reflect on such dangers and, more importantly, to discuss those issues on a personal level. Instead, Quaker men like William Matthews and John Churchman established themselves as authorities on “inspired” speaking and reflected on times when *they spoke* on the subject or when audiences were *humbled* by their delivery of “divine” messages.

Though to some extent pride was usually balanced by humility in all Quaker journals, I would like to suggest that the emphasis on humility preceding or following the act of public speaking in women’s journals functions as a rhetorical device, which downplays the roles of women as instruments of God while revealing the gravity of their “inspired” messages. Women’s use of humble language and their emphasis on their own spiritual trials suggests that self-negating language was central to their own resolution of the internal conflicts associated with “inspired” preaching, as well. Their use of such language and their deliberate expression of their trials may also indicate their strategic use of the autobiographical form. By expressing the ups and downs of their spiritual journeys, their speaking successes followed by their complete self-negation, they countered charges of pride and the gender-specific problems associated with speaking in public. They also attempted to reconcile the problems associated with their authority as women and as Quaker ministers.

Doubting the “Source”—the Gendered Implications of “Inspired” Speaking

The gendered differences in the journals discussed here suggest that Quaker men used humble language less frequently and were less likely to use their personal spiritual struggles to defend their “openings” to preach. Quaker attitudes about determining the source of their authority as ministers may explain why. As suggested earlier, problems associated with “inspired speaking” may have had feminine connotations. Negative cultural values (even in modified Quaker form) continued to influence how Quaker ministers, male and female, perceived and established their authority.

As mentioned in an earlier passage, John Churchman described his failure to preach in one meeting as “some mortification” to him “as a man.” If it was his “creaturely will” or the “womanly part” that led him to “reasoning” with “the serpent,” it was also his pride and desire for power (like Eve’s) that presumably led to his downfall. The inferences drawn from his discussion of Eve’s fall, regardless of his intentions, reinforced the negative cultural stereotypes associated with Eve’s weakness as a woman and her failure to suppress self-will. For Churchman, the dilemma (or reasoning) created by his figurative battle between Satan and self confused his “opening” and thus, the basis for his authority.⁴⁵⁹

Churchman’s discussion of his failure to preach suggests that he internalized negative cultural assumptions and integrated them into his own spiritual experience. By focusing here on some key terms in his analysis, his account also suggests how others did as well. For many Quakers, “reasoning” often led to doubts about the source of their inspiration. In a letter, elder James Mott, for example, counseled an unknown female

⁴⁵⁹ *Journal of John Churchman*, 24 and 41.

recipient,⁴⁶⁰ to “beware of reasoning...and of doubting.” In another letter, he warned that “reasoning” makes “our path more difficult and intricate” and tends to destroy happiness.⁴⁶¹

For all ministers, overcoming doubts about the source of their authority was part of a process of gaining greater spiritual maturity. The esteemed English minister, Rachel Wilson exhorted the “young in the ministry” not to allow the “reasoner” to lead them into backwardness, but rather “strike while the iron is hot.”⁴⁶² Often discussed in the context of initial calls to the ministry, overcoming self-doubt about one’s calling and the source of one’s authority was part of the process of learning to listen to the “inward Guide.” Overcoming doubt was also about discerning whether perceived “leadings” were from Satan (and self) or God.

For many Quakers and especially new ministers, the struggle to determine one’s “opening” was a struggle between Satan or the “Reasoner”⁴⁶³ and God, himself. In women’s journals, this battle was often more lengthy and often more intense.⁴⁶⁴ For Jane

⁴⁶⁰ Because Mott addresses the recipient of the letter with the phrase “my dear” and references his own family in the first part of the letter, it is plausible that he was writing to his daughter.

⁴⁶¹ *Memoirs of James Mott*, 351 and 359.

⁴⁶² “Anecdotes of Rachel Wilson,” 219. See for example the *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 142.

⁴⁶³ Bacon points out that Satan was the Reasoner who introduced rationalizations to counter God’s direction. See her editorial note in Bacon, ‘*Wilt Thou Go*,’ 115.

⁴⁶⁴ See the discussion about men’s and women’s “calls” to the ministry in Plant, ““Subjective Testimonies,”” 301. Note that Plant’s study of 18th-century English Quaker ministers tends to focus on “self-aggrandizing ambitions” as a male issue. Although extreme trepidation and psychological suffering were part of the process of realizing the ministerial call for women, as Plant points out, at least for American women ministers of the same period, I would add that women had a sense of self-awareness that could also lead to pride. Accepting the ministerial calling for women made them exceptional in a time when there were too few women recognized as having extraordinary abilities in a religious or a secular context. The thematic overemphasis on humility in American women’s journals suggests that they were battling the opposite tendency, pride, to a great extent. Mortimer’s study of English Quaker ministers also suggests that pride was increasingly an issue for 18th-century women. She does not see a lot of humility in

Hoskens, the reasoning part of her mind insisted that she had not been “called” to the ministry in the first place. As discussed in a previous chapter, she spends a great deal of space describing how she battles with Satan to determine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of her calling as a minister. Elizabeth Hudson also dealt with the “Reasoner” early in her ministry when she attempted to deny “God’s call” to embark on her first mission trip abroad.⁴⁶⁵ The Reasoner also tried to convince Susanna Morris not to travel. She “was so full of the Reasoner” that she “was as one shut up” [or unable to speak in the ministry] until she promised God that she would follow his instruction.⁴⁶⁶

For all Quaker ministers, reason remained the primary deterrent to real “inspiration.”⁴⁶⁷ Ongoing doubts about the origin of their messages could lead to backwardness or forwardness in the ministry.⁴⁶⁸ While backwardness was associated with a lack of confidence, as in John Churchman’s case, forwardness (or being overeager

the actions of some of the English women she discusses. See Mortimer, “Quaker Women in the Eighteenth Century,” 233, 240-243, and 250.

⁴⁶⁵ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 142.

⁴⁶⁶ *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 47.

⁴⁶⁷ See the earlier discussion of the quietist trend as a conflict between reason and emotion, divine will and self will. Passion (or emotion gone awry) was viewed as an illusory form of self-expression that defied rather than defined “true” revelation. English minister Samuel Follergill in a letter (dated 1760) warned that passion and “gospel authority” are not the same and instructed minister Susannah Hatton to take her leadings from God. He also suggests that her preaching was not dignified. See “Samuel Fothergill’s Letter to Susannah Hatton” *FM: Volume 9* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1837), 167. Notably, though his tone is condescending throughout, he addresses her as a “younger brother” in the ministry. He is credited with leading the mid-18th century reformation in the American colonies. See Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 39-45.

⁴⁶⁸ This difficulty was sometimes blamed on “imagination.” Fear that “imagination” (or self-delusion) rather than inspiration was the true source of their “leadings” intensified self-scrutiny. “Imagination—Prejudice,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 11, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1838), 403. See also “Extract of a Letter from an Experienced Elder Member of the Society of Friends, to a Young Minister,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 8, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1836), 228. See also the discussion in Boulding, “Mapping the Inner Journey,” 112.

to present the message) was a problem associated with greater confidence. Elizabeth Hudson, for example, candidly explained that she was forward due to her “readiness to grasp at vision.”⁴⁶⁹

For all Quaker ministers, personal insecurities created by gendered assumptions about the act of “inspired” speaking complicated the process of self-suppression in worship meetings. If problems with public speaking were more associated with women, “reasoning” (which created doubts about the origins of divine messages) was the primary culprit. For Elizabeth Collins, it was her “diffident reasoning disposition” that caused her to run ahead of her divine guide.⁴⁷⁰ If the “womanly part” of her was to blame, as in Churchman’s analysis of himself, then it was also the part more susceptible to Satan.

If the association between the feminine, “reasoning” part and the “Reasoner” can be made, women’s preaching (at least in the early period of their ministry) may have been viewed as more suspect than that of Quaker men.⁴⁷¹ That many female ministers tended

⁴⁶⁹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 198. A testimony about English Quaker Elizabeth Stirredge (1634-1706) suggests that in England in the 17th century, backwardness may have been viewed as more positive than forwardness for women. She is admirably mentioned as one who was “backward to appear” in one account and “not forward” in another. See Elizabeth Stirredge, *Strength in Weakness Manifest: In the Life, Various Trials, and Christian Testimony of that Faithful Servant and Handmaid of the Lord, Elizabeth Stirredge* (London: J. Sowle, 1711), 19 and 16. Hereafter cited as *Strength in Weakness*. Backwardness was likely not viewed as the primary problem for 18th-century Quaker female ministers. Jean Mortimer’s study of British Quaker ministers suggests that some 18th-century female ministers were viewed as too confident or too bold in their ministries. See Mortimer, “Quaker Women in the 18th Century,” 236, 240-242, 248, and 250. Mortimer also notes that bolder women preached outside their own meetings.

⁴⁷⁰ *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 459.

⁴⁷¹ See also the “Anecdotes of Rachel Wilson, A Ministering Friend From Great Britain,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 8, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1838), 219, quoted above. Doubts about whether her testimony would be received also led English Quaker Elizabeth Stirredge to lament that although others knew what great exercises she went through, her “opening” was hindered by her rationalizations—“But still I reasoned.” In another passage, when Stirredge is told to interrupt John Story, she “reasoned” against the interruption but seized by God’s power spoke anyway. See *Strength in Weakness*, 79-80 and 92. A verbal dispute followed between Story and Stirredge. Boulding also points out

to use their journals to discuss the process by which they came to an understanding of their ministerial calling may suggest the added conflict involved with speaking publicly for some Quaker women. It may also imply an added burden on young female ministers to substantiate their claims to ministerial authority because of their inexperience.⁴⁷²

For Quaker women like Jane Hoskens (who converted from Anglicanism) overcoming prejudices against female preaching added a new dynamic to answering the ministerial call. For Quaker women, in general, personal insecurities created by cultural inhibitions against their preaching, likely compounded the normal psychological conflicts inherent in 18th-century Quakerism. As historian Phyllis Mack suggests, determining agency or authority was probably more difficult for Quaker female ministers, as they attempted to integrate their identities as “visionaries” and as “rational” women. Because their preaching was more dependent on their self-negation as the sole basis of their ministerial authority, it is also likely that when they discerned the basis for their authority that it involved a more complicated process.⁴⁷³

that women were continually attempting to subdue their intellectual capacities and “the reasoner.” See Boulding, “Mapping the Inner Journey,” 98-99.

⁴⁷² According to a group of female leaders in London, a lack of humility, and the desire for “popularity,” to be “seen or heard of men,” jeopardized the ministry of “young” women, in particular. The undated letter suggests that young female ministers were particularly susceptible to pride, and it also implies that they are too inexperienced to handle large meetings, where “carping contrary spirits” might discourage them. The patronizing message suggests the obstacles that confronted young ministers on a spiritual level (associated with their “natural” tendency toward pride). It also suggests that the additional opposition that they would likely confront as female novices, in particular, was likely to impede their ministry in the future. See a quote from the letter referenced here in Mack, *Visionary Women*, 366-367.

⁴⁷³ Mack, “Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency,” 165. The problem of agency (or authority), as Phyllis Mack points out, was central to 18th-century female ministerial experience. According to Mack, the charisma of female ministers increasingly depended on a “combination of feminine dignity, intuitive wisdom, and divine revelation.” Michaelson’s analysis of the growing tendency of British Quaker women to conflate their personal wisdom with God’s wisdom also suggests that determining the “source” of their “divine messages” was increasingly more difficult. See Michaelson, “Religious Bases of Eighteenth-Century Feminism,” 289-290.

To avoid problems associated with preaching or praying aloud in worship meetings, female Public Friends had to guard against speaking without “divine sanction” as ministers and to guard against usurping male authority by speaking as women.⁴⁷⁴ In this context, it may have been more difficult to establish their legitimate “openings” in their own spiritual lives and thus, more necessary to do so in their journals. Although they likely had some conscious awareness of a “general dishonor” associated with their sex,⁴⁷⁵ they also may have reflected more on some aspects of their spiritual experience without recognizing why they felt “led” to do so.

Although all Quakers continued to have some internal conflicts about their “divine openings,”⁴⁷⁶ the need to describe them may have been less necessary for Quaker men. Some evidence suggests that male Public Friends may have had to undergo fewer spiritual trials to become “qualified” for the service. Minister Samuel Smith (1737-1817), for example, suggested that obedience to God’s “leadings” kept him from many of the trials faced by others and even allowed him to avoid many of the embarrassments that other ministers faced.⁴⁷⁷ Some evidence also suggests that wrangling about the source of one’s inspiration (particularly from a male perspective) may have also been perceived as

⁴⁷⁴ See the discussion in Mack, “Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency,” 163 and 165.

⁴⁷⁵ The phrase is Levenduski’s. She observes that “a colonial woman’s sense of authorized selfhood apparently included a self-conscious awareness of some general dishonor attributed to their gender.” See Levenduski, *Peculiar Power*, 9.

⁴⁷⁶ John Churchman implied that it was an integral part of the ministerial experience when he reiterated his concern that God would enable him to “watch against every appearance of self in the great and pure work of declaring the gospel.” *Journal of John Churchman*, 230. Although the natural inclination to indulge “the creature” or the self remained strong for Quaker ministers, their willingness to suppress the self and follow “God’s will” in their lives grew stronger. The movement toward spiritual triumph in their journals suggests their ability to conquer most aspects of the “creaturely will” in order to become effective preachers. Death was the end of the struggle. See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 393.

⁴⁷⁷ Samuel Smith, *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 9, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1836), 99.

counterproductive. For elder James Mott (1742-1823), who counseled young ministers, it was “safest to attend to the first clear opening to duty; for with it strength is always afforded sufficient...but by reasoning, that strength declines, and is finally lost.”⁴⁷⁸

Conveying evidence of the correctness of one’s “leadings” may have also created spiritual problems, as well as “faulty” reception. For John Churchman (who was ever-conscious of his potential readership) focusing too much on the evidence of a successful ministry or the “value of that peace” received by following God was indicative of pride. According to Churchman, “peace” was “by the humble...better felt than expressed.”⁴⁷⁹

While women legitimated their authority as ministers when they utilized their spiritual trials to signify the extent of their self-negation and their complete receptivity to God, men’s obsessive discussion and equivocation about their own spiritual states and the source of their “inspired” speech would have likely been counterintuitive to establishing their authority and leadership *as men*. Male Public Friends, after all, had less need to defend their leadership, in the first place. As Phyllis Mack points out women’s authority was “grounded” in their “total rejection of self,” while male authority was “at least analogous to, if not derived from [their] gendered individuality.” As Helen Plant points

⁴⁷⁸ *Memoirs of James Mott*, eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 9, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1837), 359-360 and 347-348. He is also quoted as saying that over-thinking or “perplexing themselves with speculative opinions” was one of the primary reasons that ministers “neglect clearly manifested duty.” Note that Mott’s *Memoirs* is biographical with long quotes by him inserted.

⁴⁷⁹ *Journal of John Churchman*, 191. By explaining his purposes for relating certain experiences, he also may have attempted to model how to suppress the self in writing.

out, Mack's insights into women's experiences in the 17th century also apply to the 18th century.⁴⁸⁰

Because men's representations of their authority were more consistent with their authority *as men* within the larger colonial culture, such an approach in their journals would have been inimical to demonstrating their "greater" mastery over self. For male ministers, overuse of humble language and frequent discussions of their spiritual trials on a deeply personal level, at least in the context of public speaking, might have suggested both feminine weakness (including a propensity for pride) and even spiritual immaturity.⁴⁸¹ As Phyllis Mack points out, questions about how to recognize "divine messages" apart from their own voices and how to express those messages in a way that created authenticity and accommodated changing social norms was a central problem for both men and women in the 18th century.⁴⁸²

Women and the Cultural Obstacles to Self-Suppression

As the resilience of negative cultural attitudes continued to influence their spiritual lives, Quaker female preachers still had to overcome their femininity to preach in many ways.⁴⁸³ While male ministers held authority as men, regardless of their ability to deliver "divine messages," as mentioned previously, female ministers held no public

⁴⁸⁰ Phyllis Mack, "Gender and Spirituality in Early English Quakerism, 1650-1665" in *Witnesses for Change: Quaker Women Over Three Centuries* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1998), 31-32. See Plant, "'Subjective Testimonies,'" 304.

⁴⁸¹ Whether male or female Quakers were aware of any ambiguities that existed in their gendered conceptions of their religious authority is not the point.

⁴⁸² Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency," 169-170. Examining the complexities and ambiguities involved in 18th-century Quaker discourses on gender and religious authority, as Helen Plant's work suggests is, perhaps, equally difficult. See Plant, "'Subjective Testimonies,'" 296.

⁴⁸³ See Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency," 165.

authority outside their roles as Quaker ministers. As a result, women ministers may have relied more fully on evidence of their “insufficiencies” (often presented in the form of humble and even self-deprecating language) to substantiate the “divine” basis of their empowerment. Their strategic use of personal humility and their spiritual struggles to legitimate their “openings” to speak suggests both an awareness of male authority (less dependent on ministerial status) and the inefficacy of establishing public female authority outside “divine sanction” during the colonial period.⁴⁸⁴

Although recognition of personal insufficiencies as a minister was an essential indicator of motives for Quaker men and women, recognition of those insufficiencies in speaking and writing may have remained more important for Quaker women, regardless of age and experience. By recounting their spiritual struggles as evidence of their legitimate “openings” to speak, female Public Friends reminded themselves and their readers of the presumed source of their authority. As the next chapter will show, for Quaker women, willingness to discuss their spiritual trials within the context of their self-proclaimed “weaknesses” was an important sign of spiritual legitimacy. As an essential indicator of their motives, the language of weakness reinforced their claims to humility and indicated the “source” of their authority, while it also paradoxically reassured listeners that they were not trying to assume the roles of men. By demonstrating their ability to overcome various forms of weakness (and particularly physical weakness associated with the female body), female Public Friends bolstered their claims to spiritual equality and “divine” empowerment.

⁴⁸⁴ This point is made in Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, Chapter 1-2.

Chapter 6: Weakness and the Dynamics of Strength

Resilient negative cultural attitudes about women informed the self-conceptions of Quaker women (and men) and shaped their representations of their preaching experiences. Because the “natural” obstacles to women’s ministries were perceived as greater than men’s, demonstrating their ability to overcome spiritual trials reaffirmed their spiritual status and conveyed their legitimacy to others. Because women’s conceptions of their femininity were largely framed by their social roles and domestic responsibilities, feminine traits like emotionalism, dependence, and weakness were regarded as barriers to female ministerial service.⁴⁸⁵ If these “natural” obstacles to spiritual obedience undermined the spiritual welfare of Quaker female ministers, they also undermined their claims to ministerial authority.

This chapter will focus on how Quaker female ministers dealt with the problems associated with self-suppression in their spiritual lives and how they demonstrated the signs of spiritual legitimacy to others. It will also suggest that male and female ministers used gender-specific strategies to frame their experiences in the ministry. The purpose here is to examine how women overcame problems with self-censorship to establish authority and deliver “inspired” messages. Because their female gender represented the dominant obstacle in their spiritual lives,⁴⁸⁶ women’s ability to overcome their “natural

⁴⁸⁵ Plant, ““Subjective Testimonies,”” 299 and 315. According to Plant, men’s “natural” desires for public acclaim and economic gain were barriers to their spiritual welfare. Their masculinity was “rooted in rational individuality,” and most obviously expressed in “independent public action” and the pursuit of wealth and status. Plant’s study focuses on 18th-century English Quaker women, but provides useful insight into the experiences of female Public Friends in the American colonies, as well.

⁴⁸⁶ See the discussion in Plant, ““Subjective Testimonies,”” 299. See Brekus’s discussion about the female body in *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 40-41. Most 18th-century people viewed women’s and men’s bodies as more alike than different. It was widely held that women had the same sexual organs as men’s and that were just internal and inverted. Men and women were not viewed as physical or intellectual

tendencies” suggests the extent of their empowerment as “divine messengers”—and the tentative nature of their authority as women.

Because the gendered aspects of their spiritual battles created additional barriers to effective ministry, by discussing their trials in their journals female Public Friends demonstrated the process of “self-emptying” involved in achieving personal humility and “divine sanction.” The level of suffering they endured in the process of accessing the inward Light signified the level of self-suppression that they had attained in their spiritual lives and in their ministries. Discussion of the internal conflicts associated with the public ministry also conveyed the authenticity of their broader spiritual leadings.⁴⁸⁷ The recording of their personal sacrifices (their willingness to forego emotional and physical comforts) not only reinforced their own sense of God’s leadership, but also conveyed spiritual maturity. A discussion of women’s strategic use of the autobiographical form suggests that by “owning” their weaknesses, they could best demonstrate their strengths.

Avoiding Self-indulgence—The Strategic Cooption of Feminine “Defects”

Quaker female ministers embraced feminine attributes as a means of expressing humility and establishing authority based on their gender differences. As female ministers attached meaning to their experiences in the ministry, they negotiated within the

equals. Deceitful, passionate, and erratic behavior were often associated with women. These attitudes were persistent into the 18th century, even though more positive attitudes attempted to challenge these conceptions.

⁴⁸⁷ See the discussion in Bauman, “Speaking in the Light,” 159. According to Bauman, the centrality of the Quaker belief in the doctrine of salvation through suffering required some ongoing recognition of “an earthly component in one’s life, in order to maintain an element of spiritual struggle.” Bauman maintains that the “tension between the natural and spiritual faculties—between speaking and silence—was a necessary component of the Quaker experience.” His comments on the 17th century seem relevant to the 18th century, as well.

framework of well-defined conceptions of femininity.⁴⁸⁸ By acknowledging their perceived “flaws” and by overcoming the “natural” obstacles to self-suppression, female Public Friends demonstrated self-control and dependence on God.

For Elizabeth Collins, representing her flaws and overcoming them was an important function of her journal and her role as a Quaker minister. Her discussion of her preaching experiences suggests the strategies available for coping with self-indulgence in her spiritual life, as well as her gendered use of the autobiographical form. By explaining her problems with ministerial speaking in the context of her feminine weakness, Collins approached her perceived inadequacies with humility and defended her authority as a minister. In one passage, for example, when she is remiss in speaking or “given to a diffident reasoning disposition” and fears “getting or going before the true Guide” and had “too much lingered behind,” she places blame for her reluctance on a notably feminine trait, her “timid disposition,” rather than on her “wilful disobedience” to God.⁴⁸⁹ By emphasizing her natural defects as a woman (her inclination to reason and her “natural” timidity), she also avoided “owning” the greatest threat to ministerial legitimacy—pride.

Because Collins affirmed that her problem with backward or forward speech was not about “disobedience” or an inability to control her will, she also rejected the idea that she had been self-indulgent. By admitting that her “reasoning disposition” contributed to her problem with forward and backward speaking, she reinforced the assumption that she

⁴⁸⁸ Plant, ““Subjective Testimonies,”” 299, 304-305, 309. Plant argues that “women framed their religious experiences in ways that both powerfully affirmed their own fitness to minister and hinted at distinctive female capacities for spiritual perceptiveness and divine expression.” She does not discuss the specific rhetorical strategies used by women to overcome the obstacles she discusses.

⁴⁸⁹ *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 459.

was willing and able to follow God. By focusing on her timidity⁴⁹⁰ to explain her reluctance to speak, she also isolated the problem. In admitting her issues with “inspired” public speaking, she expressed her defects as natural ones (which implicitly, God understood). By blaming her feminine inadequacies for causing her “delivery issues,” she maintained some level of self-control—and notably, allowed God (her creator) to share part of the blame.

By addressing her perceived problems, Collins also implicitly exerted control over her reception. By confronting her issues with preaching in her journal, she reinforced her identity as a humble servant and a sound minister. Paradoxically, she also claimed legitimacy based on her inadequacies as a woman—it is because she recognized her personal failures and was empowered to overcome them that she was enabled and even “chosen” to preach. Like other Christians, Quakers believed that through a believer’s personal weakness, God was most able to demonstrate his strength. If through humility, women were raised to preach, then their ministries represented a demonstration of “divine” power.

By personalizing or even feminizing the process of “self-emptying,” female Public Friends demonstrated the requisite self-suppression necessary for conveying their empowerment as ministers and as women. The tendency to conflate various forms of feminine weakness in detailing their preaching experiences suggests the necessity of representing their authority through the language of weakness or humility. Their use of physical weakness in the context of their public speaking, in particular, also suggests how

⁴⁹⁰ See Plant, ““Subjective Testimonies,””304. According to Plant, when women emphasized their timidity, they were representing the anxiety and fear associated with the public ministry. As they “stressed the depth of their own weakness and suffering they embraced a view of femininity based on assumptions of meekness, privacy, and dependence.”

they were able to overcome the “internal and external inhibitions” to public ministry.⁴⁹¹

The meaning of physical weakness for Quakers and the implications of women’s expressions of those “weaknesses” are particularly pertinent here.

Physical Weakness as a Sign of Spiritual Strength and “Divine Sanction”

For 18th-century Quaker ministers, expressions of physical and spiritual weakness were a common means of conveying humility. Because physical weakness made acceptance of “God’s will” largely involuntary for Quakers, their self-resignation and their recognition of their “inadequacies” was expected, as were their “weighty” expressions.⁴⁹² In deathbed accounts, Quakers carefully recorded the process by which family members and friends achieved spiritual triumph or complete spiritual union with God, in death.⁴⁹³ Personal confirmation of self-resignation, patience, and humility played a central role in assessing spiritual status in deathbed accounts and in Quaker journals.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹¹ Mack, “Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency,” 169.

⁴⁹² The expectation of “inspired messages” may have been anticipated as a result of physical weakness. For example, after being confined by physical illness for 4 weeks, Susanna Lightfoot, assumed that because she did not have anything to say at the last meeting she attended, she would “probably have something to say” at the next. Because Quakers were not supposed to know when and if they would speak, this admission is interesting. She may have believed that she had more “divine” insight into her future due to her weakened and humble state. See “A Brief Memoir of Susanna Lightfoot,” 59.

⁴⁹³ Quakers carefully recorded the “weighty expressions” of Quaker adults and children on their deathbeds both as affirmation of their spiritual states for the peace of mind of friends and family, and because the gravity of the words, themselves, were often inspiring “revelations.” These accounts instructed other Quakers on how to prepare for their own deaths and also provided a record of the lives of respected members for the Society of Friends.

⁴⁹⁴ Rebekah Sharpless (1749-1780) was said to have born her final illness with “wonderful patience and resignation of mind,” for example. See Benjamin Sharpless, “Memoir of the Last Illness and Death of Rebekah Sharpless,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 12, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1839), 230. Hereafter cited as “Memoir of Rebekah Sharpless.” Rebekah Sharpless was not a minister but may have been showing the early signs of that calling. See Eli Yarnall, “A Tribute to the Memory of My Beloved Friend and Sister in the Truth, Rebekah Sharpless,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 8, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1836), 213. Hereafter cited as “A Tribute to Rebekah Sharpless.”

Insights drawn from both suggest the meaning of the physical in the spiritual lives of Quaker ministers, and, provide a point of departure for assessing their journals.⁴⁹⁵

For male and female Public Friends, resigning themselves to physical or spiritual frailty offered evidence of divine working in their lives and added meaning to their claims of humble service and self-sacrifice. For women, in particular, such expressions of weakness also became signs of “sanctified” speech in their journals, giving authenticity to their messages. As journal accounts validated the minister’s ability to reach and convey the “knowledge” of God in the most weakened (and the most spiritually empowered) state, they also bolstered the minister’s authority.

For both Quaker men and women, the discussion of spiritual and physical struggles was common in their journals. Reoccurrences of illness often began a sort of transition from an earthly reality to a spiritual one, and were often integrated into their discussions of their spiritual ups and downs. For Quakers, humility established through suffering provided preparation for the ministry, as well as, preparation for death and ultimately salvation. Quaker Deborah Stewart told those who visited her on her deathbed that illness had taught her “the necessity of deep humility.”⁴⁹⁶ Quaker Norris Jones described his physical illness as a “trying dispensation” for the “furtherance of my faith,

⁴⁹⁵ Quakers on their deathbed took on the role of ministers as they spoke to visitors about their own mortality. See Mack’s discussion of this in the 17th-century English context. Mack, *Visionary Women*, 400.

⁴⁹⁶ “Some of the Last Expressions of Deborah Stewart,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 5, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1833), 47. The link between humility and physical suffering is closely drawn in this account.

love, and patience.” Because it was only the “humble that God teacheth his ways,” physical suffering often facilitated spiritual renewal.⁴⁹⁷

For many ministers, male and female, physical weakness was an essential part of their inward process of spiritual growth. For Quakers, physical preservation was viewed as a reward for obedience and evidence of God’s ongoing favor.⁴⁹⁸ For Sarah Ballinger Wilkins (1757-1812), illness prepared her for acceptance of “God’s will” in her life. As she traveled in the ministry, she viewed her good health as compensatory for her sacrifice. She believed that God would preserve her and her family during her absence. For Samuel Smith, healing during travel also confirmed that he was “in the way of his duty.”⁴⁹⁹

Expressions of physical weakness also suggest the importance of self-examination. Because in the colonial period any bout with pain could signal the end of life, physical trials were often viewed as signs of God’s enduring love—or a last opportunity to make life changes.⁵⁰⁰ For ministers, like Margaret Cook (1734-1822), who believed she was dealing with a life-threatening injury, her fall from a horse signaled the possibility of God’s judgment and her need to deal with a potential spiritual

⁴⁹⁷ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 108.

⁴⁹⁸ “A Brief Account of Sarah Wilkins,” 348-355.

⁴⁹⁹ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 145.

⁵⁰⁰ Quakers like Jane Hoskens and John Churchman saw God’s hand in the illnesses that almost took their lives. These experiences brought them to repentance. See for example, the *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 3 and 9 and the *Journal of John Churchman*, 2-12. For Churchman, it took many bouts with illness to bring about his conversion over many years. Churchman even prayed for “sickness” or “pain” in one account so that God would restore him spiritually. See page 8. See also the discussion about physical decline and spiritual struggle in Boulding, “Mapping the Inner Journey,” 141-143. Rebekah Sharpless’s illness and final decline involved “fiery spirits” and the realization that she needed to get rid of some items that were not plain enough in her house. See “Memoir of Rebekah Sharpless,” 231-233.

problem.⁵⁰¹ For minister Susanna Lightfoot who faced intense physical suffering in the last months of her life, her illness resulted in a “searching” time, which allowed her to ponder the meaning of her decline, to develop patience, and to accept “God’s will.”⁵⁰²

Self-resignation in the midst of physical suffering usually led to a reaffirmation of faith and spiritual strength. As a sign of her spiritual growth, Susanna Lightfoot’s physical decline allowed greater clarity in her spiritual conviction as she progressed toward a complete and final victory over the self, in death.⁵⁰³ For Jane Hoskens, physical weakness led to divine affirmation and spiritual empowerment. After she recovered from an illness that created memory loss and confusion, she recalled that the “mighty power of God” was never “more conspicuously manifested” in “any other journey.” As affirmation of God’s healing and her empowerment, she tells the reader that she was “favoured” to speak and “clear” in her “understanding.”⁵⁰⁴

Because physical weakness implied the suppression of the body along with the carnal aspects of one’s existence, it often signified greater spiritual awareness or freedom—as one English minister put it, “as naturals abate, spirituals increase.”⁵⁰⁵ In Quaker journals, physical weakness usually signified a deeper connection to God, a sign

⁵⁰¹ Margaret Cook, *Margaret Cook Journals, 1734-1806*, TMs (photocopy), p. 147-149, Special Collections, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania. Hereafter cited as *Margaret Cook Journals*. Cook’s fall from a horse led her to fear that she was being too forward in her travel or wrong about God’s leading. For her travel companion Dinah Lamburn, the fall was likely reason enough to override Cook’s subsequent “concern,” which involved fording a river in her injured condition. Cook conceded to Lamburn; and they did not cross the river.

⁵⁰² “Brief Memoir of Susanna Lightfoot,” 66.

⁵⁰³ “Brief Memoir of Susanna Lightfoot,” 66.

⁵⁰⁴ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 29.

⁵⁰⁵ Jane Pearson is quoted in Boulding, “Mapping the Inner Journey,” 142.

of passivity, allowing for ease of communication. For John Churchman (who was nearing the end of his life), his “Divine consolation” for being “very weak in body,” was seeing “such prospects of heavenly things,” “never before” revealed to him.⁵⁰⁶ For Elizabeth Collins, her declining years brought the enjoyment of a “quiet calm,” “beyond what was usual” for her and “a larger portion of divine love and life,” than had “often been” her “experience.”⁵⁰⁷

While greater physical weakness brought Elizabeth Collins a “foretaste of that happy eternity” in her older years, physical weakness also signaled greater levity in presenting “inspired” messages to others. For John Churchman, who was still traveling in the ministry while in ailing health, his physical suffering implied greater freedom in presenting his messages because they were “as from a dying man.”⁵⁰⁸ For ministers like Susanna Lightfoot, physical weakness also functioned as a means of validating her spiritual counsel. Lightfoot’s ability to minister to others in her severely weakened condition provided evidence of the “true source” of her words. In her husband’s account of her last illness, he maintained that her visitors recognized supernatural aid as the only possible means of her spiritual or physical strength to convey “God’s message.”⁵⁰⁹ For Lightfoot, who was so weak that she could hardly speak, this meant being “raised in a language” that her husband could scarcely “do justice to.”⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁶ *Journal of John Churchman*, 212-213.

⁵⁰⁷ *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 463.

⁵⁰⁸ *Journal of John Churchman*, 213.

⁵⁰⁹ “Brief Memoir of Susanna Lightfoot,” 64.

⁵¹⁰ “Brief Memoir of Susanna Lightfoot,” 64. The gravity of revelations given in the context of physical weakness was sometimes viewed as beyond comprehension. In her last years of life, English

While the physical aspects of the Quaker spiritual experience conveyed connection to God, they also involved a largely involuntary response on the part of the minister. As an expression of passivity, the Quaker rhetoric of physical weakness reassigned negative cultural values (often associated with women in colonial culture) to the broader Quaker experience of mortality. By associating receptivity to God with physical weakness, Quakers also reinstated cultural connections between femininity and passivity, but did so within the theoretical framework of a gender neutral spiritual experience.

As physical weakness offered Quakers the opportunity to display divine empowerment, it also offered members of the “weaker sort” the chance to display the extent of “God’s strength.”⁵¹¹ Although for many colonial religious women, their bodies represented an ongoing barrier to formal leadership within their respective denominations, for Quaker women who were “called” to the ministry their service was *required*, regardless of their physical ability.

While the physical strains of the ministry sometimes challenged the stamina of female Public Friends, their willingness to suffer for the Truth was not inhibited when they embraced the identity of the “weaker sex.” Like other Christian women in the colonial period, female Public Friends believed that could be empowered by God to “do things they never thought possible.”⁵¹² As spiritually “enlightened” women, neither their

minister Mary Dudley believed her physical incapacity brought her “very great openings into divine things, pertaining to another life; things so sacred as not to be meddled with.” Quoted in Boulding, “Mapping the Inner Journey,” 141.

⁵¹¹ *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 46.

⁵¹² Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 53.

status as women nor their physical capacity impeded “God’s favor.” In their journals, how they expressed their humility was closely tied to how they defined their strength.

Overcoming Feminine “Weakness” to Preach

Because their physical bodies did represent specific challenges to their religious lives in the larger cultural context, Quaker women’s expressions of physical weakness were gendered. As their physical struggles were integrated in their spiritual trials, their expressions of weakness played an important role in demonstrating female religious authority and in conveying an “authentic” ministerial experience. For Quaker women, the use of feminine weakness as a measure of their empowerment became an important means of conveying their spiritual victory and their “divine” favor.

Patience Brayton’s discussion of her physical and spiritual struggles in her journal suggests the primary function of such language in women’s journals, more generally. As the language of weakness combined common cultural assumptions with Quaker religious beliefs to justify their “openings” to speak, women’s expressions of divine empowerment had significant rhetorical value. In one passage, Brayton recalls how she “was favoured with divine openings, though exceedingly weak in...spirit.”⁵¹³ In another, she tells her reader that she was “favoured in testimony,” though she was “so weak” that she thought she “should have fainted.”⁵¹⁴

By distancing Brayton from selfish motives, her use of the language of physical and spiritual weakness conveyed “divine” authority and self-suppression. Her claim to spiritual weakness in her journal also suggests God’s use of her an “inspired” conduit,

⁵¹³ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 13.

⁵¹⁴ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 17.

regardless of her mental state. By implying a reluctance to speak, she indicates a pure motive, and the requisite self-negation (or passivity) necessary for delivering an “inspired” message. Her candid discussion of her spiritual weakness also suggests the spontaneity of her experience (even in its recollection), and the importance of conveying humility as a mark of “authenticity” in her speech.

Brayton’s discussion of her physical weakness during the act of preaching also implies an absence of self-will (evidence of “divine inspiration”). It also adds to her expression of weakness “in spirit” an overt claim of complete bodily exhaustion (or self-sacrifice), involved in carrying out the vocal act. As she substantiates her “opening” to preach in her journal by presenting her personal frailty as evidence of God’s power, she appears powerless and passive, as God takes over. Because she almost “faints” when delivering the message, she implies that spiritual and physical empowerment is necessary to produce her “authentic” revelation.

Because her “inspired” speech required complete self-negation, Brayton’s use of her physical weakness also reinforced her claim to humility. Her expression of her preaching experience in the context of physical weakness also addressed issues related to self-suppression and the female body. If her “natural” tendency (her physical weakness) precluded her ability to suppress the self, her spiritual and physical empowerment demonstrated that she has overcome her feminine “defect.”

By addressing her potential problem with self-suppression as a woman, Brayton avoids criticism and substantiates her authority as a minister. By appealing to her spiritual and particularly her physical “weakness,” she (like other Quaker women) utilized a negative cultural attribute associated with her femininity to create authority in

her journal. By emphasizing her receptivity to “divine” messages within the context of her physical deficiency, she appeals to a more positive cultural assessment of feminine weakness. Her description of the physical aspects of her experience implies that she is uniquely positioned as a capable conduit of God’s word, precisely because she is “weaker” than men and presumably more passive or receptive to God.

While humility was not feminized in Quakerism, Brayton asserts her humility within a feminine context by referencing her physical body. Her claims to physical weakness suggest the legitimacy of her ministry by reemphasizing the spiritual and particularly the physical nature of her empowerment. Her claims to authenticity also suggest that she overcame problems associated with self-suppression, thus, conveying evidence of spiritual maturity.

Brayton also draws on the broader meanings of physical weakness, as suggested in the previous section. As a Quaker minister, by discussing the physical aspects of her speaking experience in her journal, she assumed a position of special knowledge and empowerment. Through a temporary separation of the carnal and the spiritual, she achieved a figurative release from her carnal will or complete self-suppression.

By utilizing her identity as a member of the “weaker sort” to convey her self-negation within the realm of her preaching experience, Brayton reinforced her spiritual and physical triumph over self. Based on her journal accounts, the reader can conclude that her ability to speak is based on her suppression of feminine weakness and her assumption of spiritual power. Like other female Public Friends she utilizes her physical experience to reinforce her spiritual one. Although she clearly reinstated negative

cultural associations by appealing to her physical weakness, she also imbued her speech with positive meaning as a Quaker and a woman.

Conceptualizing Feminine “Weakness” in the Context of Spiritual Revival

Within the context of mid-18th century Quaker reformism and the colonial “awakenings,” the discussion of the physical and spiritual in the context of “inspired speech” suggests not only how female Public Friends internalized their experiences and coped with the internal conflicts associated with preaching, but how they did so within a changing social and religious climate. The desire to create a more authentic spiritual experience may have involved a continuation or a renewal of some physical aspects of the experience associated with early Quakerism.

For early Quakers, quaking facilitated the experience of “inspired” speaking by liberating “the Spirit from the control of the flesh.”⁵¹⁵ Although God did not typically seize the outer body of Quakers,⁵¹⁶ physical reactions were still sometimes the result of what they believed to be his “inward” movement. Jane Hoskens, for example, expressed her spiritual experience in very physical terms. In her journal, she reflects on how her “soul” was “shocked” and how it “trembled” at God’s inward command to speak in a meeting. When she explains that “all within me trembled at the hearing of it; yea my

⁵¹⁵ Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 83 and 79-80. Note that Bauman’s discussion focuses on conversion and the role of speaking in affirming that a conversion or separation from a previous life of sin and worldliness has taken place. According to Bauman, in the 17th century, quaking was an extreme display of the release from the carnal nature in “threshing meetings” where non-Quakers were separated from their previous affiliations and made instant Quakers. Some conversions were also private and gradual, according to Bauman.

⁵¹⁶ The idea of the spirit coming into the person was not completely consistent with the Quaker belief in a spirit that already dwelled within all people, as Bauman notes. See Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 82.

outward tabernacle shook,” she also suggests a notable outward change or expression, as “many present observed the deep exercise I was under.”⁵¹⁷

While the “enlightened” bourgeois values of 18th-century American Quakers contained the physical aspects of their religious experience to some extent, more visionary (or supernatural) aspects of their faith also continued to be important. Dreams and visions, for example, were often used by 18th-century Friends to resolve many of the conflicts that grew out of the changes they were facing as colonials and as Quakers.⁵¹⁸ As in the case of Jane Hoskens, contact with the “divine” still sometimes resulted in a bodily reaction. In the wake of colonial excitement over the religious “awakenings,” the use of physical expressions by other religious groups may have also reminded 18th-century Quakers of the potential power of a more corporeal religious experience.

Due to the added necessity of defending their “openings,” women may have been particularly inclined to integrate the physical into their representations of inspired speaking. The discussion of mental and physical responses to the “inward light” in women’s journals suggests that female Public Friends attempted to reconcile the rational aspects of the mind with colonial assumptions about the female body, in order to recreate or perpetuate an “authentic” and culturally recognizable version of “inspired” speech. As evidence of their humility, women’s accounts suggest some internalization of negative cultural values, but more significantly, their ability to overcome the obstacles to their leadership.

⁵¹⁷ *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 10. The context here is her gradual acceptance of the “call” to the ministry.

⁵¹⁸ Geron, “Mapping Ann Moore’s Secrets,” especially 124-172.

As in Brayton's journal, Elizabeth Hudson's representation of her physical weakness plays an important role in validating her "inspired" speech. Her personal modification of the process of reaching a legitimate connection to God utilizes the strategies available to female Public Friends and demonstrates the extreme difficulties inherent in separating the rational from the visionary aspects of the internal experience in 18th-century Quakerism. It also suggests the opportunities for countering negative cultural assumptions and for redefining the boundaries of female spiritual experience in a changing socio-religious context.

In her journal, Hudson recalls how her spiritual trials led to her physical decline. On one occasion, when she fasts before a meeting, she admits that she had taken abstinence too far and had become too weak to attend.⁵¹⁹ Prior to this event, however, she suggests that her "weakness in body" literally prepared her for ministerial service. She tells the reader that she commonly fasted before meetings "for the work's sake." As evidence of her self-abnegation (and humility), she also suggests that she "had lived very low." Her ability to suppress the self was apparently effective. In meetings past, she reflects that fasting had kept her "spirits free and lively."⁵²⁰ Another passage in her journal also reinforces the meaning she assigns to her physical deprivation. As she travels on horseback in silence, she enjoys the benefit of "Heavenly Treasure." It is in

⁵¹⁹ Founder George Fox sometimes fasted, as did 18th-century Irish Quaker John Ruddy, for example. Note that Ruddy had difficulty reconciling scientific thinking with spiritual seeking. See Gerona, *Night Journeys*, 55 and 137-138.

⁵²⁰ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 218.

physical suffering, in hunger, (this time not by her choice) that she again dwells “low,” enjoying spiritual closeness to God.⁵²¹

In other passages, Hudson goes to great lengths to demonstrate the total resignation of her mind and body to God; and, thus, the authenticity of her preaching. In one passage, she finds the meeting “hard to an extreme degree” and is “brought...into deep affliction,” which was “for a time so heavy” that she “could take no refreshment of any kind.”⁵²² Because she faces such intense suffering, she recalls that she “sought a release” from the physical burden of her “opening” to speak, if it “were the will of God.”⁵²³

The similarity between her “affliction” in the meeting and the language used by Quakers on their deathbeds suggests the seriousness of her situation and her mental state. The passage implies her reluctance to speak despite the spiritual burden that compels her to do so. It also conveys her desire to remain silent, if her silence reflects “God’s will.” Her willingness to sacrifice her body for a healthier spiritual state represents the extent of her humility and self-resignation. Her ability to relinquish her physical body to speak suggests both her preparation to meet God in a metaphorical and in a literal sense.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 254.

⁵²² *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 245.

⁵²³ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 245.

⁵²⁴ In contrast, Jane Hoskens promises God her “natural life” as “a sacrifice” to be “excused from service, but it was not excepted; nothing would do but perfect obedience” (i.e. speaking in meeting). *Life of Jane Hoskens*, 11. Physical anguish was a common consequence of spiritual disobedience in Quaker conversion experiences and in some women’s discussions of accepting the ministerial “call.” The context for this discussion in Hoskens’ journal is different from the context of Hudson’s. Hoskens was an Anglican convert and was having a hard time answering her “call” to become a minister. Hudson was from a Quaker family and though relatively young when traveling abroad was already a seasoned minister in that she had gone on prior mission trips within the American colonies. See the chart on age and ministerial travel in Appendix 1 on page 236.

Like other Quakers, the purpose of suffering in the ministry was clearly to humble “the creature” (or suppress the self). What separates her experience from others is the intensity of her self-negation, which often borders on the loss of life itself.⁵²⁵ In one meeting, her commitment to passively serve as “God’s messenger” ends in what she believed to be a near-fatal event. Her account moves from spiritual alienation (God’s withdrawal from her prior to a meeting), to spiritual renewal (a renewed “covenant” to “give herself up more to God’s will”), to an “agonizing of mind” (which “seized” her). This is followed by a confused state (a “senselessness”) that ends in “dead pain” (perceived as life-threatening), and a terrible nosebleed, followed by instant relief when her female companion rises to speak; and then, by her “lively demonstration of the spirit of truth,” as she is given ability.⁵²⁶

By expressing this extreme physical scenario as a means of substantiating her “opening” to preach, Hudson attempts to demonstrate her innocent motivation and her spiritual preparation to receive a “divine message.” By discussing her spiritual and physical trials in the context of her speaking experiences, she may have also attempted to counter potential criticism. As she is physically enabled by God to speak, she demonstrates the embodiment of God’s power—both in body and in spirit. Because she is one of the “weaker sex,” she also implies that her display of God’s power is particularly evident. Not only does she achieve this spiritual “conquest” as a minister—

⁵²⁵ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 244.

⁵²⁶ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 249-250.

by including the physical aspects of her experience she also implies that she is victorious as a woman.

The extent of Hudson's perceived success as a minister and her desire to convey her legitimacy is also conveyed in an account she gives of a physical injury preceding a meeting. In her journal, she implies that by allowing or causing her to fall from her horse, God prepares her to speak at a meeting in lieu of a much esteemed, much older male minister. Although she is "wet, weary, and bruised," she describes how she "crept in unobserved...not expecting any to fall" to her "share." She then describes how God used her to deliver his message in place of Samuel Bownas who had apparently fallen ill.⁵²⁷

With no minister to speak in his stead and no prior knowledge that Bownas was ill, Hudson found both validation for her message and meaning for her injury.⁵²⁸ Because she clearly views these occurrences as providential, she implies that her physical injury contributed to her spiritual triumph. As a young female minister (or even a spiritual prodigy), Hudson's extraordinary physical trials offer evidence of her "special" calling. Her injury preceding her "inspired message" suggests her preparation (or humiliation) followed by self-resignation (her response to the "draught" despite her pain) and her ensuing victory over self—as a "divine" conduit and a capable minister whom "God" is willing and able to use.

Hudson's use of physical weakness in describing her spiritual experience also suggests that physical illness or injury could speed up the process toward spiritual

⁵²⁷ Samuel Bownas (1676-1753) was an English Quaker minister who traveled with Jane Hoskens and Elizabeth Hudson, though he was apparently not in Hudson's company or in correspondence with her around the time of the meeting discussed above. See Samuel Bownas, *An Account of the Life, Travels, and Christian Experiences in the Work of the Ministry of Samuel Bownas* (London: James Phillips, 1795), 192.

⁵²⁸ *Journal of Elizabeth Hudson*, 246.

maturity—or the progression toward final self-annihilation (or a complete separation of body and spirit). Hudson’s journal suggests that it is experience that prepares her for spiritual greatness, regardless of her age. By exploring in her journal the physical aspects of her struggle to deliver “inspired messages,” Hudson, like other female Public Friends, appealed to a broader conception of spiritual progress that conveyed the deepest level of humiliation—and the requisite physical decline (or experience) needed to achieve it. Because she believes that she is on the brink of death on numerous occasions, she implies that God empowers her even beyond the norm.

By relying on her physical weakness to substantiate her overt claims to humility in her journal, Hudson (like other female Public Friends) implies that she needs a greater level of humility to accomplish her ministerial tasks. The extent of Hudson’s self-mortification suggests the significance of physical experiences for legitimating female ministerial experience. Like other female ministers, the integration of Hudson’s struggles over mind and body suggest the need to demonstrate control over the self and her ability to deliver “inspired messages.” If overt claims to humility were not enough, depictions of feminine weakness in her journal reinforce her claims to self-suppression by describing her “natural” physical incapacity. That Hudson relies so heavily on the physical aspects of her speaking experience suggests the problems associated with any novice ministry, but especially the public ministry of a young educated woman, at mid century.

For Hudson, her high level of education and high social status represented specific internal and external challenges to her ministry. Her personal modification of the preparatory process for reaching a legitimate connection to God suggests the extreme difficulties inherent in separating her educated “rational” mind from the passive,

visionary experience that conveyed her legitimacy. Her education and social status also suggest external barriers to her ministry, as well. If her sermons sounded too polished due to the level of her education, her humility and the “source” of her inspiration were more questionable than those of less polished speakers. In the midst of Quaker reformism and the growing antagonism against wealth and worldliness among Quakers, her social status also potentially undermined her spiritual legitimacy, as well.⁵²⁹

By affirming the “authenticity” of her speech and her humility, Hudson became part of the solution rather than part of the problem. As she modeled her ability to follow the inward Guide, she demonstrated the process of reaching a “true connection” for others. By doing so within the context of her preaching experiences, she attempted to clarify issues related to the source of her authority as a minister and her perceived inadequacies as a woman. The integration of mental and physical responses to the “inward Light” in women’s journals was particularly important as Quaker reformism in the mid 18th century encouraged watchfulness and humility in their ministerial speaking.⁵³⁰ As one Quaker wrote, if the “reformation” was about anything it was about “humiliation.”⁵³¹

⁵²⁹ See Bacon’s discussion of Hudson’s education and social status in ‘*Wilt Thou Go,*’ 10, 17-18, 20, and 123-125.

⁵³⁰ See for example, John Townsend, “Observations on Ministry,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 2, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1832), 379-380. Townsend (1723/24-1800) was an elder. “Observations on Ministry” is undated. See Ezra Townsend, “Testimony Concerning His Father, John Townsend, late of Bensalem Township, Bucks County, Deceased,” vol. 2, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1832), 373.

⁵³¹ Susanna Morris implied that the “work of humiliation and of reformation” was one and the same. See the *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 73.

The journals of female Public Friends suggest how the physical aspects of the Quaker experience may have been integrated into conceptions of “authentic” speech to bolster their authority as ministers and reformers. As evidence of their humility, these accounts suggest some internalization of negative cultural values, but more significantly, their ability to overcome the internal and external barriers to their leadership. Their journals also suggest the opportunities available for countering negative cultural assumptions and for redefining the boundaries of female spiritual experience.

A comparison of the relative importance of physical weakness in men’s and women’s journals suggests the rhetorical power of female representations of their “insufficiencies” and the gendered nature of their authority. Some parallels and contrasts in the journals of Sarah Harrison and Samuel Smith convey the broader problems associated with female self-suppression and the gendered obstacles that complicated women’s “openings” to speak and their “leadings” to travel.⁵³² They also suggest how women coped with the cultural challenges to their authority and incorporated rhetorical strategies that advanced their position and leadership within the Society of Friends.

Physical Weakness and the Gendered Trials of Service

A discussion of Sarah Harrison’s problems with physical weakness and emotional dependence suggests the gendered nature of her ministerial challenges, as well as the implications of her spiritual victory. The analysis of Samuel Smith’s journal provides a counterpoint to Harrison’s use of physical weakness and her difficulties with distinguishing between self and divine will. His journal focuses on how his perceptions

⁵³² Note that Sarah Harrison (1736-1812) and Samuel Smith (1737-1817) were friends. Smith sent her a letter while he was in Ireland on a mission trip in 1789; and, she sent him one in reply, discussing the recent death of her son. See *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 117-120.

of self-mastery affected his own gendered conceptions of ministerial authority, and his own sense of divine leadership in the context of his public speaking and his travels.

For Quaker female ministers, fear or reluctance to travel, constitutional weakness, and emotional dependence could play a central role in obscuring their spiritual leadings and in defining their ministerial challenges.⁵³³ Mastery over these issues represented the extent of their spiritual successes and the basis of their authority. By discussing their spiritual and physical trials, Harrison and other female Public Friends offered evidence of “divine sanction” and sound ministry in their journals. Because female Public Friends believed that their constitutional weakness made travel more difficult and dangerous, their preservation in the midst of extreme conditions often signified the extent of God’s strength.⁵³⁴ Other health issues complicated the risks and they also attested to God’s powerful oversight of their lives.⁵³⁵

Awed by God’s use of her despite her ongoing health problems, Harrison suggests that periods of good health compensate for the physical, emotional, and spiritual demands of the ministry.⁵³⁶ Because of her physical trials, her ability to take lengthy trips in the ministry represents the primary evidence of providential favor in her journal. Because she enjoyed relatively good health while traveling, her health problems may even created

⁵³³ See the discussion in Plant, ““Subjective Testimonies,”” 299.

⁵³⁴ See for example, the *Journal of Susanna Morris*, 46-50.

⁵³⁵ See for example, the *Life of Patience Brayton*, 14-21.

⁵³⁶ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 144.

an added incentive for her ongoing obedience to God in travel.⁵³⁷ As a sign of God's favor, her victory over physical weakness implies the validity of her ministry.⁵³⁸

As with other ministers, being "called" to travel in the ministry provided Harrison with the greatest affirmation of God's favor and also the greatest burden. Because women's social roles and domestic responsibilities were the primary focus of their daily lives, leaving home to travel in the ministry was particularly difficult.⁵³⁹ Harrison's account implies that the obstacle that impeded her spiritual clarity and her equivocation about God's "leading" was her desire to return home.⁵⁴⁰

As a possible point of contention in her ministry and her marriage, Harrison's decision to continue abroad presented some question about the validity of her "leadings" (or the source of her authority). Because she had already received three returning certificates from the London Yearly Meeting and had been away from home almost 6 years, her continued requests for extended travel were extraordinary.⁵⁴¹ Her detailed explanations about the decision to remain abroad (in her letters home) suggest some equivocation about her ministerial "leadings" and the need to defend her decision to her husband and children.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁷ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 129, and 143-144.

⁵³⁸ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 144.

⁵³⁹ Plant, "'Subjective Testimonies,'" 306.

⁵⁴⁰ Her desire to return home is reflected in letters home. See for example, *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 146-147.

⁵⁴¹ The editor of her journal even steps in to defend her. See the *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 149.

⁵⁴² Harrison also alludes to the fact that she opens herself to criticism when she requested the third certificate to return home from the yearly meeting. She also defends how she spent her time abroad.

Harrison's defense of her actions in her letters suggests not only the need to explain her spiritual conflict, but also the need to address the domestic concerns implied in her decision to continue traveling. For the benefit of her husband and her potential reader, the nature of her defense suggests not only the validity of her ministry but also the signs of feminine value that influenced her personal identity and her cultural value as a woman.⁵⁴³ For Harrison, overcoming self-will and modeling spiritual strength was intricately tied to her ministry and her domestic life.⁵⁴⁴ Her purpose for writing letters to her husband and children implies her need to *explain* in great detail the controversy surrounding her contradictory "leadings" and the need to justify her decision—or to reassert her authority as a wife, mother, and minister.

Because her future success as a wife and mother depended on her obedience to God's "leadings" in her spiritual life and sacrificing her natural affections in order to travel, Harrison (like other ministers) believed that she could avoid the loss of peace once she returned home and even avoid further suffering. By conveying her *desire* to return home in several letters along with her willingness to remain abroad, Harrison simultaneously reaffirmed the "natural" affections that were highly valued in colonial

She "did not see where" she could mend it, either with respect to time or any thing else, if [she] had it all to do over again." *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 151.

⁵⁴³ Plant, "'Subjective Testimonies,'" 306. Plant suggests that when "Quaker writers wished to delineate the characters of exemplary women Friends, they often did so by comparing evidence of their strong domestic affections with proof of their willingness to leave all when religious duty called."

⁵⁴⁴ See also "A Brief Account of Sarah Wilkins," 352. Sarah Ballinger Wilkins suggests that her "affliction" was given to her so that she could be an example to her family. Evidently, her family needed to suffer to grow spiritually. Perhaps, she blamed herself for her family's weak spiritual state. Regarding her recovery and her illness, she wrote that God's "mercies are still extended, though sometimes mixed with judgment."

wives and mothers, and demonstrated evidence of self-suppression.⁵⁴⁵ Despite her obvious equivocation about remaining abroad, by controlling her desire to return prematurely or before God's "leading," she not only represented a victory over self-will but also a victory over her feminine nature.⁵⁴⁶ By denying her natural impulse to return home, like other ministers, she anticipated spiritual victory, both for herself and her family. Her spiritual example represented the basis for her authority as a minister, a wife, and a mother. Her family's support of her ministry conveyed their own spiritual health—and by extension, reinforced the validity of her leadership as a "spiritual mother" within the broader Quaker community.⁵⁴⁷ By detailing her decision to remain abroad in her letters home, she reaffirmed her own ability to determine God's "leading" and used the conflicts (or trials) surrounding the "leading" to legitimate her decision and, thus, her "connection" to God. She also instructs her reader that it is "unsafe" and "unseemly" for ministers to "stay longer than is really necessary." She also states that she thinks she has avoided this.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ Letters which deal with the issue of Harrison's separation from family are inserted throughout her journal. See, for example, *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 139, 144, and 149. It was clearly important for her to convey her desire to be with her family. She depicts herself as an "affectionate wife and tender mother toward her dear family." See page 125.

⁵⁴⁶ In *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 148, Harrison maintains that she has given up her self-will.

⁵⁴⁷ Harrison also demonstrated what it meant to be a godly Quaker wife and mother in her journal. In one letter, for example, she lectures her husband about the children and keeping them from worldliness and then lectures the children about their own spiritual lives. Like other Quaker female ministers, her concerns as a mother also focus primarily on the spiritual welfare of her children. When she discusses losing 7 of her children to death (one during her trip abroad), she expresses that she had rather lose them all on earth rather than part with one of them for eternity. Thus, her depiction of her spiritual life conveys her resignation to "divine will" and her own self-suppression as a model of spiritual success. See *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 113-114 and 117.

⁵⁴⁸ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 147-148.

Although Harrison's equivocation about her ministerial "leadings" led to questions about her spiritual strength, she used dreams to explain the nature of God's extraordinary direction, though like other 18th century Quakers, she did not solely rely on her dreams to substantiate her "leadings."⁵⁴⁹ By offering validation, based on the support of other Quaker leaders (i.e. their approval of her ongoing travel), she maintains the clarity (or legitimacy) of her "leading" and the ongoing necessity of her travel.⁵⁵⁰ By dealing with her decision on a visionary level and gaining the affirmation of others, she also implicitly reaffirmed her own sense of "divine" direction, even as she communicated it to others.

Like Sarah Harrison, Samuel Smith established his authority in his journal based on his ability to follow "God's leadings." Unlike Harrison, his use of illness as a potential deterrent to ministry suggests a masculine approach to the subject of physical health and a male appropriation (or dismissal) of an issue that was likely very relevant to him. Although he is described in the editorial introduction of his journal as a man with a "naturally delicate constitution" to justify his move to the city and his career choice, his

⁵⁴⁹ Apparently, Harrison learned from her past mistakes. The editor of her journal notes that early in her ministry she was criticized for relying too heavily on dreams. She does not believe that the criticism was valid. She calls the letter that criticized her of overdependence on dreams "a messenger of satan." In the later passage, she reveals her dreams to her husband, but may not have revealed them to others. *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 100-101 and 145-146.

⁵⁵⁰ Minister Samuel Emlen spoke to her spiritual state and confirmed her dreams. Other select Friends also sympathized with her and approved her trip to Scotland. Notably, she shares this with her husband "not boastingly, but with a thankful heart." *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 146-147 and 150. Samuel Emlen's letter to Harrison appears on page 195. In light of prior criticism about her over-attention to dreams, this approval (from numerous sources) reaffirmed her ability to interpret her dreams and confirmed her soundness as a minister.

physical weakness does not play a central role in his spiritual journal.⁵⁵¹ A brief discussion of the role of his physical health in his journal suggests the typical use of physical weakness in men's journals, more generally.

Although Smith often reflects on God's preservation and his health in brief statements at the end of each journey, like other male ministers, his physical well-being plays only a very minor role in his journal and no substantial role in his ability or inability to speak publicly. He sometimes mentions that he was given "strength to labour" or uses similar wording to suggest that his "openings" to speak in meetings are given to him by God.⁵⁵² While the suggestion of physical problems is implicit in his use of the phrase, he often uses such wording to suggest his need for spiritual rather than physical strength or even his need for both. His use of weakness in the context of his public speech suggests a reference to the *source* of his authority rather than his literal need for physical empowerment. Although he vaguely references his spiritual struggles more than, or as much as, he "alludes" to his physical ones, the reader is given little description or detail about his specific trials in the ministry.⁵⁵³

Unlike Sarah Harrison, Smith's physical body has less rhetorical significance, either as a means of explaining his "openings" or his failures as a minister, in his journal. Other passages which reference his health also seem to indicate only minor thematic relevance. In one passage, for example, when he reflects on his spiritual well-being and his physical welfare in his travels, he states that his "bodily health has been but

⁵⁵¹ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 100. The editor explains his reason for moving to Philadelphia (i.e. an urban area with more worldly distractions) and his pursuit of a mercantile career.

⁵⁵² *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 121 and 149-153.

⁵⁵³ See for example, *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 163.

indifferent,” although his “mind [has been] closely tried with poverty and weakness.”⁵⁵⁴

In other passages when his health is mentioned, it is usually to thank God and only mentioned in passing—“sustained with bodily health and strength far beyond expectation to travel.”⁵⁵⁵ The reader is not made aware of Smith’s physical struggles because (unlike Harrison and the other female ministers discussed in this study) he is, for the most part, unwilling to “own” them.

When physical weakness plays a minor thematic role, Smith’s discussion of his physical condition requires extensive discussion and explanation. In one, three-page account of a journey, he feels compelled to describe the evidence of God’s “leading” him to travel while unwell. This point of contention in his spiritual life becomes a point of instruction for other ministers in his journal, as it bolsters his authority as a minister and a man. He cites evidence that his leading to travel is legitimate by giving examples of unexpected meetings with fellow ministers (presumably sent by God as encouragement to him). He is also “released” early from the burden of the trip by another Friend who steps in to take his place with his traveling companion.⁵⁵⁶

In contrast to Harrison’s apparent willingness to discuss how she suffers for the cause and overcomes her “natural tendencies,” Smith focuses on his particular “gift” as a minister—his ability to discern “God’s will” and travel expediently. In contrast to Harrison’s years abroad, Smith notes that his “spirits felt easy, having been favoured to complete my travels through the nation in about three months, without any interruption

⁵⁵⁴ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 158.

⁵⁵⁵ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 101.

⁵⁵⁶ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 145-147.

through indisposition.”⁵⁵⁷ While Harrison seems to suffer from anxieties about the necessity of her ongoing travel, Smith’s relatively short trips abroad represent a standard that he seems to suggest others should follow. He uses care not to exceed the limits of his “concerns” and not to burden others as he travels. By conveying this to his reader, he offers evidence not only of his economic self-sufficiency, but his mastery of self-will and his ability to minister to others.⁵⁵⁸

Like other male ministers (as discussed in the previous chapter), Smith’s central purpose is not to *justify* his ministry but rather to *convey* his authority. As he suggests in his memorandum, if he had “been favoured to pass through seventy years of life with less difficulties and embarrassments than many others,” it was due to “that degree of attention” he “paid to this inward monitor.”⁵⁵⁹ While Harrison feels she should explain her “leadings,” Smith’s ability to follow his inward Guide seems to require little explanation. Because fewer “biological” or “natural” obstacles deter his “openings” to speak or his “leadings” to travel as a man, his ability to control the self (and determine divine direction) is presumably understood.⁵⁶⁰

Smith’s ability to overcome his natural affections, for example, offers evidence of his independence as a man and his spiritual dependence as a follower of God. Neither his love for his family nor his bonds with traveling companions impede his sense of “divine” direction. His willingness to follow God’s “lead,” regardless of God’s will for his

⁵⁵⁷ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 116.

⁵⁵⁸ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 98.

⁵⁵⁹ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 99. This quote is referenced in the previous chapter, as well.

⁵⁶⁰ See my discussion on how gender influenced the practice and representation of ministerial authority in the previous chapter, particularly pages 167-176.

traveling companions, is also offered as evidence of his self-control. In his journal, Smith points out that God's direction for him in his travels often differs from those who accompany him in the ministry. Though he always mentions that he parts with his companions in unity, he also relates these partings frequently in his journal. His frequent partings suggest not only his victory over natural affections, but also his willingness to depend on God alone.

Like other ministers, Smith is also careful not to carry his independence too far—by confirming his unity with other Quakers he also reaffirms his individual “leadings.” Notably, in one instance, Smith's confidence is balanced with an explanation (or defense) of his decision to part with a particular companion. In this case, he was apparently compelled to justify his motives, as he explains that it was “God's will” and “not by my own choosing or contrivance.”⁵⁶¹ Only in his need to justify his position does he suggest authority on the basis of his humility—a tactic more typically used by female ministers. It is in “weakness” (implicitly, physical here) that he attends meetings and feels “as much evidence of [my] being right as I ever did.”⁵⁶² By delivering an “inspired” message that he can feel good about, he confirms God's favor in his journal and his ministerial authority.

The need to overcome emotional attachment and discouragement are also less relevant in Smith's journal, as in other men's journals.⁵⁶³ Although he clearly misses his

⁵⁶¹ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 147.

⁵⁶² *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 147. He indicates that he “got safe and *well* back” [emphasis added] to Jacob Mott's house following the quote discussed above.

⁵⁶³ See Plant's discussion of English male ministers and the issue of natural affections in “Subjective Testimonies,” 308-309.

family, particularly his “dear wife,” he does not acknowledge his emotional dependence as a major obstacle to his ministry. On one occasion, he does suggest that his silence in meeting is due to his concern for his family back home. In another passage, he also admits that “strong ties of natural affections” and the “weight and importance of the work” (with his “great inability to perform it”) sometimes “break in upon the innocent quiet;” but, “for the most part,” he claimed to be “favoured” with peace.⁵⁶⁴

Smith’s attention to his “inward monitor” rather than his representation of his humility plays the dominant role in validating his ministry. His mastery over self-will is understood. In the introduction to his journal, the narrator reinforces Smith’s central theme by discussing Smith’s counsel to two young friends (apparently, male ministers). Smith’s words imply confidence created by experience, when he suggests that “those who are sincerely desirous in all things to do right...will seldom be permitted to do much wrong.”⁵⁶⁵ He also suggests with some degree of confidence that reputation would be gained through humility and attention to the inward Guide. He advises that “a man’s gift maketh room for him,” meaning (according to the narrator) that “by abiding low and humble, and waiting in the gift” or “being careful to move only in the renewings of life” that people would acknowledge the “gift of gospel ministry.”⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 109 and 108. On the previous page, he notes (obviously with some amusement) that when a minister traveling with him, Elizabeth Robinson, failed to get news about her husband in a letter, she “let in discouragements to such a degree, that she near fainted on the road.” His response to the “natural” impulse to remain with his family presents an obvious contrast with Robinson’s failure to control her “discouragements.” Robinson’s husband was traveling on a religious visit to England at the time.

⁵⁶⁵ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 99.

⁵⁶⁶ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 100.

As discussed in the previous chapter, like other ministers, Smith is concerned with evidence of sound ministry. In the context of mid-century reformism, by expressing his concern with sound ministry he identifies with the reform effort. Although he does sometimes note the “source” of his ministry, his use of humble language is infrequent and apparently unnecessary to justify his “openings” to preach or his “leadings” to travel. He implicitly suggests that he was not a forward minister when he conveys that he waited on God for his “openings.” His tendency to speak in the latter half of meetings offers evidence of his self-restraint. He also mentions being “nearly silent” in two very large meetings, which suggests his motivation was not about public acclaim.⁵⁶⁷

While Smith apparently did face physical trials, as indicated by the passage discussed above, the language of weakness was less necessary to validate his “openings” or to establish his ministry.⁵⁶⁸ His brief battle with physical illness is treated not as a means of displaying God’s strength through him but as a potential deterrent to his ministry—or even a sign of God’s abandonment.⁵⁶⁹ In contrast to Smith, the extent of Harrison’s empowerment as a minister is conveyed in the level of physical suffering she undergoes in the ministry and in her representation of her physical weakness to others.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁷ It may also suggest that he was able to contain any tendency toward forward speech (or overconfidence in his ministry); however, if this was the case, he never “owns” these problems. See *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 125 and 137. Like other ministers, he does talk about his initial failures as a minister. See for example, pages 103-104.

⁵⁶⁸ *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 163.

⁵⁶⁹ Although Smith may have had an issue with overcoming his natural affections, as the illness was present when he left his family to travel, he does not “own” the problem.

⁵⁷⁰ See also the “Memorial of Rachel Rowland,” eds. John and Isaac Comly, vol. 9, *FM* (Philadelphia: John Richards, 1837), 85. The account of her life (written by her monthly meeting) suggests that Rowland’s suffering deepened her religious experience and her ministry. She was a Philadelphia Public Friend who lived between 1766 and 1830.

The letters attached to the end of her journal confirm her physical plight and suggest how her bodily weakness affected her ministry—and her reputation.

Harrison's physical weakness is the dominant theme in the letters received from fellow ministers. The basis of their encouragement focuses on her understanding of her physical plight in spiritual terms. In his letter to Harrison, fellow minister William Savery describes her "portion in the ministry" as "large and precious" and reminds her that God's "invincible Arm" is the source of her "stay and staff, through weakness of body and many inward and outward conflicts."⁵⁷¹ Margaret Allen reminds her that in weakness she was chosen, as a measure of God's strength to bring glory to Him.⁵⁷² In language similar to that of William Matthews in the previous chapter, John Pemberton writes that it is "safety to be stripped after seasons of favour."⁵⁷³ Jane Snowden reminds her that God's purpose for her trials is to empower or to "raise" you for his own glory so that "you do not credit yourself."⁵⁷⁴ If the language of weakness signified her humility, the reciprocal result, as conveyed in letters to Harrison, was clearly empowerment.

The thematic unity of the collection of letters suggests Harrison's consistent expression of her physical plight as evidence of her humility. They also suggest that her trials in the ministry were a prerequisite for divine favor and spiritual health. The letters or comments that obviously precipitated their responses to Harrison suggest that she utilized physical weakness as an effective tool to convey her humility to others. The

⁵⁷¹ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 187.

⁵⁷² *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 198.

⁵⁷³ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 181.

⁵⁷⁴ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 176.

inclusion of these letters by the editor of her journal also suggests the importance of physical weakness for expressing humility and establishing ministerial authority for women ministers. In her journal, which details fewer *spiritual* struggles associated with the act of “inspired speaking” than some women’s journals, it is her physical weakness that conveys her humility and establishes the source of her ministerial authority. It is in her “leadings” to travel rather than her “openings” to speak that she equivocates about God’s leadership and potentially undermines her authority as a minister. It is in defending herself against potential criticism and in overcoming her physical weakness and her natural affections that she displays the source of her authority and her victory over self.

By conflating her spiritual and physical suffering in her journal, Harrison offered evidence of the spiritual ups and downs that made her ministry sound—or the suffering that substantiated her claims to valid ministry.⁵⁷⁵ Like other Quakers, she discusses the necessity of spiritual trials for her conditioning as a minister. She associates suffering with God’s wisdom.⁵⁷⁶ She also equates good health with diligent service. By recognizing her personal insufficiencies, she shows her reader how God “condescended to use her” to reveal his power through her ministry.⁵⁷⁷

As members of the “weaker sex,” Quaker ministers like Jane Snowden also expressed their encouragement to Harrison in notably, feminine terms. Snowden wrote

⁵⁷⁵ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 143-144.

⁵⁷⁶ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 125.

⁵⁷⁷ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 144.

that as God's servants "unto us belongs nothing but blushing and confusion of face."⁵⁷⁸

Quaker Sarah Newlin also reflected her own humility when she explained that, like Harrison, she is "tried" so that "I may know how frail I am."⁵⁷⁹ By associating their personal experiences, female ministers like Snowden and Newlin sympathized with each other. Expressing their own trials in physical language and feminine terms was not just about joining in a "fellowship of suffering" with other women, it was also specifically about the level of self-suppression they had to maintain to follow their "inspired openings" to preach or their "divine leadings" to minister.

If mastery of self-will was the primary goal for effective ministry and contact with the inward Light, overcoming pride was the central obstacle for both male and female Public Friends. Because women were "raised" beyond their "natural" tendencies to achieve spiritual triumph as ministers, their humility was also likely more important. Harrison's success as a minister suggests why her physical weakness and her humility were so relevant and also why this collection of letters was a necessary editorial addition to her travel narrative. Because Harrison's journal is more biographical than most, and includes lengthy quotes and letters from her traveling companions, her journal offers insight into first-hand accounts of her ministry and her reception.

The apparent disjuncture between Harrison's evaluation of her ministerial ability and the evaluations by others in her journal suggests the extent of her empowerment—and the importance of establishing her authority on the basis of her humility. When she reflects on her lack of ability in the ministry as "the most stammering speech of any that

⁵⁷⁸ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 177.

⁵⁷⁹ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 184.

ever was sent forth on such an errand,” her male traveling companion depicts her testimony as “most singular,” in a “close, searching manner to the foremost rank.”⁵⁸⁰ Because she is preaching against slavery in the southern colonies between 1787 and 1788, her successes are also calculated in measurable quantities—slaves manumitted.⁵⁸¹ In one passage, her traveling companion describes her appearance in “awful supplication” [i. e. prayer] before a slaveholder, and conveys her effectiveness as a minister—the “devil” was “cast out,” the slaveholder “was broken,” tears were shed, and slaves were manumitted.⁵⁸²

If female Public Friends felt “compelled” to discuss their spiritual trials more fully and employ the language of humility and weakness to convey their empowerment and strength, their journals suggest both the nature of their empowerment as ministers and the limits of their authority as women. Because men could preach or pray *as men* even without “divine” sanction in the larger colonial culture, as Helen Plant points out, male Public Friends tended to need more dependence on God in their spiritual lives and less dependence on their “natural” ability to effectively minister.⁵⁸³ I think it is important to point out that evidence of confidence in women’s journals suggests that women did, as well. The thematic importance of humility and weakness in women’s journals suggests they felt a greater need to substantiate their “openings” to speak and even their “leadings” to travel, but not a diminished capacity for reaching greater levels of spiritual maturity

⁵⁸⁰ *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 106.

⁵⁸¹ See the editorial note in *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 100 for the dating of this journey and Harrison’s discussion of her visit to the southern colonies on pages 104-111.

⁵⁸² *Memoirs of Sarah Harrison*, 109.

⁵⁸³ Plant, ““Subjective Testimonies,”” 308.

and legitimate ministerial service. As the following conclusion will show, female Public Friends not only embraced their personal failures to demonstrate the source of their strength, they also found subtle strategies for establishing their authority and for critiquing colonial conceptions of masculinity.

The Problems with Feminine “Weakness” and Masculine “Strength”

Perceptions of feminine nature and the female body were closely bound in the process of realizing “openings” to speak and in following “God’s leadings,” more generally. The relationship between Rebecca Jones (1739-1817) and Warner Mifflin suggests how the cultural dynamics of gender influenced conceptions of ministerial authority and interactions between male and female ministers.

In a letter to minister Warner Mifflin, Rebecca Jones clarified how her premature parting from the rest of the Quaker party on a mission trip impacted her spiritual life and her ministry.⁵⁸⁴ Implied in her defense of her spiritual shortcomings are a reassertion of her own ministerial strengths—and an implicit condemnation of Mifflin’s actions. By making some concessions to her feminine weakness and asserting her humility, she was able to reassert her spiritual authority as a minister and a woman in a way that recognized Mifflin’s status as a man.

In the letter, Jones admits that her “enfeebled state,” both of “body and mind,” caused her to become “discouraged” and to move toward home too quickly. She also implicitly assigned blame to both her traveling companion and to Mifflin. She explains

⁵⁸⁴ The letter is dated 1779 and is included in the Rebecca Jones, *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, comp. William J. Allinson (Philadelphia: Henry Longstreth, 1849), 42-44. Apparently, Mifflin’s failure to answer Jones’ previous letter to him compelled her to give her side of the story and to refute any misgivings he entertained about the incident. Because Rebecca Chambers had given her version of events, Jones seeks to justify her own actions and to accept responsibility for her personal errors, but also to assign some blame to Mifflin.

that she failed to seek God's counsel when her companion, Rebecca Chambers, first submitted the prospect of returning home. By failing to proceed on "her own concern," Jones suggests that it was "here [that] I think we missed it."⁵⁸⁵ As "to the propriety" of Mifflin's "leaving us" in "that wilderness," she asserts—it is for God and Mifflin to decide.⁵⁸⁶

By making some concessions to Mifflin, Jones implicitly admits that she failed to suppress her "natural affections," her emotional dependence on Chambers and their "natural" desire to return home. She concedes that her failure to independently seek God's will and overcome her own desire to return home led to her spiritual problem. She implicitly accepts responsibility on the basis of her failure to suppress her feminine nature. Because she was in an "enfeebled state" which led to her spiritual misdirection, she blames Mifflin for abandoning her to a literal and spiritual wilderness. While she "owns" her failures *as a woman*, she also points out Mifflin's failures *as a man*.

Jones responds to what she perceives as ill treatment, by attacking his "natural" tendencies. As a man with presumably greater physical strength and a better grasp of personal independence and control over emotion, he failed to give her counsel. Because he is able to more easily overcome in himself the feminine tendencies that became her stumbling block, he should have acted like a man. In her physically weakened condition, he leaves her with another woman (also a member of the "weaker" sex) in a wilderness without a guide. Because she is led "off path" due to her own spiritual weakness, he also abandoned her and Chambers in a spiritual wilderness—as a Christian and a Public

⁵⁸⁵ Implicitly, she suggests that together they should have been able to determine God's leading.

⁵⁸⁶ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 43.

Friend, she implies that he failed to minister to her. Implicitly, his own failure to overcome self led to his confusion about how he should deal with her spiritual failure. Because Quakers believed that God directed every aspect of their lives, Mifflin should have presumably been able to make the right call. She does not drop her criticism of Mifflin there—by withholding his counsel, he helped to rob her of her peace (and implicitly endangered her future spiritual welfare). She suggests that if she and Chambers had stayed on the right path with the others, they would “have returned with as much, if not a greater share of peace.”⁵⁸⁷

While Jones acknowledges her personal failures in her journal, she also defends her ministry. While as a Christian she blames herself for lacking “patience” to await God’s counsel, as a woman she also claims to have been in an “enfeebled state.” By conflating her physical and spiritual weakness, she reiterates that her suffering (or the burden of travel) was part of her discouragement. She also implies that God forgave her weakness and used her, despite her feminine nature. She tells Mifflin that she and her companion had good service in the meetings they attended on the way home. She also suggests that one path is as good as another—“the field of painful labor yet remains open, and many hands may lighten the work there, as well as other places.”⁵⁸⁸ Even though she was a little off the path she would have taken, she maintains that God rewarded her ministerial service (or she quickly regained her spiritual footing).

Jones also claims legitimacy on the basis of her willingness to serve and on her “God-given” abilities rather than her “natural” deficiencies. She tells Mifflin that she is

⁵⁸⁷ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 43.

⁵⁸⁸ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 43.

“often encouraged in remembering the apostle’s declaration, ‘If there be first in you a willing mind, a man is accepted according to that which he had, and not according to which he hath not.’” In her estimation, willingness is a prelude to God’s “blessed favor and acceptance,” and in this, she claims “I am laboring according to my little measure.” She also claims God’s acceptance and divine favor, as “I sometimes think I feel pretty near it.”⁵⁸⁹ Her problem (as she defines it) is not her inability to minister but rather her feminine weakness, which, like her ministry, is “God-given.” Notably, she employs gendered language to imply that self-suppression was not a gendered issue at all.

Jones does attribute her problem to a failure of self-suppression, as it is “in the instant moment of struggling,” when “the poor unmortified creature shrinks, draws its neck from the yoke, and its shoulder from the burthen.” In her estimation, her personal failure leads to further trials—“it is all to do over again with renewed exercise and increasing labor.”⁵⁹⁰ Because God will condition her for service based on her ability or inability to mortify “the creature” or control her self-will, she will face further trials (and implicitly, some loss of peace).

Like other Quakers, Jones blames this failure on her spiritual immaturity—“I am a poor, feeble, tottering child.”⁵⁹¹ It is her relationship to God, as a dependent child, that leads her to recognize her humble status as a Christian. For her, recognition of her weakness is a spiritual benefit, as she is “thankful at times that I see myself so.”⁵⁹² It is

⁵⁸⁹ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 43-44.

⁵⁹⁰ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 43.

⁵⁹¹ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 43.

⁵⁹² *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 43.

because of her humility (implicitly, her humble status as a woman, as well) that “this sense” of her own insufficiencies leads to the “retarding” of her “steps.” As a sign of God’s favor, her natural weaknesses are bestowed “in mercy” to keep her “feet from sliding.”⁵⁹³ It is the recognition and willingness to admit her failures that defines and legitimates her spiritual experience and her ministry.

Although Jones’ lack of patience to wait on God for her spiritual leading contributed to her misdirection, her humility as a Christian and as a feeble woman helps her to guard against future spiritual failures—but she is not as sure about Mifflin’s spiritual welfare or his willingness to own his failures. Regarding her failure to suppress her “poor unmortified creature,” she suggests that it “may be...only my case.”⁵⁹⁴ She implicitly suggests that the problem of self-suppression and the contingent trials may be Mifflin’s own, as well. By returning to a position of humility, she is able to reassert her own authority as a Christian and a minister by pointing out his own spiritual inadequacies—his issue with self-suppression and his abandonment of her in the wilderness.

Jones also continues to defend her position. Her claim to sound ministry also suggests the source of her authority—“I do breathe for strength to follow on.”⁵⁹⁵ By establishing her argument within the context of personal humility, she also subtly places blame. She tells Mifflin that if she “cannot keep company with the foremost,” that she

⁵⁹³ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 43.

⁵⁹⁴ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 44.

⁵⁹⁵ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 44.

plans to “come up in the rear.”⁵⁹⁶ By suggesting that she is not one of the “foremost,” she infers that he thinks he is.

The extent to which Jones is able to “own” her femininity and implicitly assign blame to Mifflin suggests how her rhetorical strategy functions to simultaneously create humility in her spiritual life and convey her own ministerial strengths. In appealing to him on the basis of her feminine weakness, she essentially demonstrates his own spiritual errors and “masculine” insufficiencies. If she is defined by feminine weakness, she suggests that he should be defined by masculine strength. Her tactical strategy not only reveals how she overcomes “natural obstacles” associated with her own femininity, it also reveals the gendered dynamics involved in her relationship to Mifflin—and, perhaps, the divine source of her strength.

Natural obstacles to her self-suppression like physical weakness, emotional dependence, and timidity help to explain the gendered dynamics of her relationship with Warner Mifflin; but they also suggest a broader pattern of deference based on gender difference and a subtle reassertion of spiritual equality. Her utilization of physical and spiritual weakness as assertions of humility in her written accounts provided the rhetorical tools for representing her ministerial success. They also provided a means of handling self-aggrandizement in text and in her spiritual life.⁵⁹⁷

The disjuncture between women’s declarations of humility and their expressions of personal pride suggest that (like other Christian autobiographers) Quaker ministers walked a fine line between self-aggrandizement and self-suppression in their journals.

⁵⁹⁶ *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 44.

⁵⁹⁷ See the discussion in Plant, “‘Subjective Testimonies,’ ” 299.

To convey their spiritual success, they had to convey their personal inadequacies. By demonstrating their ability to overcome various forms of weakness (and particularly physical weakness associated with the female body), female Public Friends bolstered their claims to spiritual equality and divine empowerment.

In the context of mid-18th century Quaker reformism, this was particularly essential for Quaker ministers, and especially important for female Public Friends. By modeling the process of turning inward for divine guidance, they maintained their influence as esteemed ministers and furthered spiritual revival within the Society of Friends. Because the basis of returning to the primitive faith was reliance on the “inward Guide,” the modeling of humility and complete self-negation by Quaker women, in particular, may have also represented the epitome of “divine sanction”—or strength in weakness.

Conclusion

For female Public Friends, dependence on humility as a measure of spiritual validity and ministerial strength was the essential counterweight to their representations of spiritual triumph. By writing for the benefit of their children, most female Public Friends avoided the assumption that they were seeking public acclaim. Their journals, however, suggest a much wider audience and a broader conception of their spiritual purpose in writing. Because they wrote within a tradition that encouraged the circulation and even publication of life accounts, they expected that their spiritual journals would gain at least a Quaker audience.⁵⁹⁸ Although they anticipated a wider readership (based on the “inspired” nature of their writing and their “calling” as ministers, as well), it was important that they not *desire* it.⁵⁹⁹

Like other colonial female authors, Quaker female writers represented their humility by conveying some level of “unintentionality.”⁶⁰⁰ If their writing was unintended for publication, they were able to convey pure motives and represent their texts as an “untainted” effort to illuminate others.⁶⁰¹ As an important means of claiming authorship and authenticity for religious female writers, it was also an important means of countering the negative spiritual tendencies created by the writing process, more generally. In the context of their spiritual humility, female Public Friends followed their

⁵⁹⁸ See the discussion in Bacon, ‘*Wilt Thou Go*,’ 15-16.

⁵⁹⁹ Rebecca Jones, for example, went to great lengths to convey her desire that her papers not be published, yet she collected all kinds of documents related to her ministry over many years just as other Quaker ministers did. See the *Memorials of Rebecca Jones*, 2 and 67. Men were more candid about their reasons for writing, but they also suggested that their papers might not be that valuable to others. See for example, the *Memoir of Samuel Smith*, 102.

⁶⁰⁰ Davidson, “Workings of the Spirit,” 53.

⁶⁰¹ Davidson, “Workings of the Spirit,” 53.

spiritual leadings to write, in the same way that they followed their “openings” to preach and pray.

It is within this context that Quaker minister Patience Brayton felt compelled to write. In her journal, she expressed her “dread” that the “Father of mercies [would] influence” her “mind, to write in much trembling of my secret exercise.”⁶⁰² When she writes that she is “at times afraid to write, and afraid to omit it,” but finds her “mind easy in writing what” she has “here inserted,”⁶⁰³ she is maintaining her spiritual validity on the basis of her holy fear. Reinforcing the authenticity of the words she records, she establishes the source of her authority in writing—as in speaking—on the basis of her humility. Although she does express reluctance to write about her internal struggles (as Elise Boulding points out), it is her reluctance, itself, that conveys her understanding of spiritual obedience and the importance of her ministerial role. As in the context of her ministerial “openings” or broader spiritual leadings, the importance of her “inspired” writing like the gravity of her “inspired preaching” conveyed the extraordinary nature of her calling.⁶⁰⁴

For all Christians, humility was ultimately about recognizing their personal weakness and God’s strength. By drawing on broader Christian values, Quaker female ministers articulated their own conceptions of authority by utilizing the strategies that carried the most cultural weight. They also drew on Quaker principles for the foundations of their authority. For Quakers, displaying humility was not just about

⁶⁰² *Life of Patience Brayton*, 39.

⁶⁰³ *Life of Patience Brayton*, 39.

⁶⁰⁴ Boulding, “Mapping the Inner Journey,” 105-106.

avoiding self-aggrandizement in their journals or overconfidence in public, it was about demonstrating their ability to accomplish self-negation to get at the core of the Quaker experience—the inward Light.

For female Public Friends, God’s demonstration of strength in their weakness was the greatest confirmation and validation of their ministries. Through the experience of suffering for the cause, they expressed greater levels of self-suppression in their spiritual lives and provided evidence of greater spiritual maturity. They utilized their journals to establish their authority on the basis of their conversion and their ministerial calling. By demonstrating their own ability to reach the inward Light, they also helped others to achieve more authentic spiritual experiences. By drawing on current conceptions of femininity, they also subtly challenged their subordination and asserted claims to spiritual equality within the social context of the larger colonial culture. For colonial women, they modeled how to overcome social inhibitions to accept the ministerial call or any other “inspired” call.

By conveying their spiritual successes female Public Friends also described the extraordinary tasks that female Public Friends were called to as “divine messengers.” What Quaker female ministers offered to the larger colonial society and the world was a model of religious womanhood that incorporated ministerial authority with spiritual experience and femininity, as it was then understood. By integrating their domestic and spiritual roles, they articulated new conceptions of female spirituality as they defended their right to preach and their “leadings” to travel in the ministry.

For Quaker women, the progression toward greater levels of spiritual maturity was particularly important. Because their “natural” obstacles to ministry were perceived

as greater by others, demonstrating their ability to overcome spiritual trials reaffirmed their own spiritual status and conveyed their legitimacy to others. As Quaker female ministers appealed to their contemporary understandings of femininity in order to establish new standards of female leadership within the broader Quaker community, they also promoted discipline and spiritual reform. By preaching through “divine authority” and teaching others to “centre deeper” in silence to attain more valid spiritual experiences they also modeled greater levels of spiritual maturity.⁶⁰⁵ By achieving greater levels of self-suppression in their spiritual lives, they hoped to model spiritual motherhood to others. As the pinnacle of their spiritual status on earth, the ideal of the spiritual mother conveyed both the limits of their authority and the source of their strength.⁶⁰⁶

Because female Public Friends challenged existing norms on the basis of their divine empowerment and within the context of a controversial religious group, their appeal was limited. By describing the basis of their religious experience through their spiritual sufferings in the language of humility and weakness, they conveyed the nature of the experience and their ultimate spiritual goal—final communion with God. Elder Hannah Churchman wrote that “There is, at times, something in our poor nature, too big, or too high, to submit to the meekness; but this must be reduced before we can come at true peace.” If women could preach and serve as “enlightened” conduits of divine Truth, then the Quaker mission remained a potent force for real transformation.

⁶⁰⁵ *Memoirs of Elizabeth Collins*, 457.

⁶⁰⁶ Gerona, “Mapping Ann Moore’s Secrets,” 51-52.

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Appendix 1: Quaker Women Ministers, Age, Calling, and Travel

Quaker Minister	Lifespan	Age When Called and/or Recognized as a Minister	Age When Departed on First Major Mission Trip in the American Colonies	Age When Departed on First Mission Trip to Europe
Patience Brayton	1733-1794	21 years (C)	38 years	50 years
Elizabeth Collins	1755-1831	24 years (C)	29 years	No Trip
Sarah Harrison	1736*-1812	Unknown	51 years	56 years
Jane Hoskens	1693/94*-1770	26 years (C)	29 years	34 years
Elizabeth Hudson	1722-1783	15 years (C) 20 years (R)	Unknown	25 years
Ann Moore	1710-1783	28 years (R)	38 years	50 years
Susanna Morris	1682-1755	29 years (C)	40 years	46 years
Phebe Speakman	1739-1828	36 years (R)	37 years	57 years

*The date of birth for Sarah Harrison is calculated based on the editorial note on page 169 of her journal.

*Because the exact date of birth for Jane Hoskens is unknown, I used the earlier of the two dates for calculation. This would have made Hoskens 19 years old when she settled in Pennsylvania, as she states in her journal.

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