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## MARGARET FELL

The Swarthmoor household. *Margaret Fell (1614-1702) was the wife of Judge Thomas Fell of Swarthmoor Hall, near Ulverston, Lancashire. After the meeting with George Fox in June 1652, described in her own words below, she made her house (with her husband's permission) the centre for the Quaker 'Publishers of Truth' and became the nursing-mother of the new movement. Among the members of her household who became Quaker leaders were Thomas Salthouse (1630-1690/1) who labored chiefly in the south-west of England, and Anne Clayton, who traveled to Barbados and America. The influence of Margaret Fell and her household is described here by Anthony Pearson (1628-1666) who was a frequent visitor at the time, and William Caton (1636-1665) who was then companion to young George Fell, and later became one of the apostles of Quakerism in Holland*

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All my religion was but the hearing of the ear, the believing and talking of a God and Christ in heaven or a place at a distance, I knew not where. Oh, how gracious was the Lord to me in carrying me to Judge Fell's to see the wonders of his power and wisdom, *a family walking in the fear of the Lord*, conversing daily with Him, crucified to the world and living only to God. I was so confounded, all my knowledge and wisdom became folly; my mouth was stopped, my conscience convinced and the secrets of my heart were made manifest, and that Lord was discovered to be near, whom I ignorantly worshipped.

*Anthony Pearson, 1653*

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Truly willing we were to sympathize and bear one with another, to be helpful one unto another, and in true and tender love to watch over one another. And, oh the love, mercy and power of God, which abounded to us, through us and among us; who shall declare it? And hence came that worthy family to be so renowned in the nation, the fame of which spread much among Friends. And the power and presence of the Lord being so much there with us, it was as a means to induce many, even from far, to come thither, so that at one time there would have been Friends out of five or six counties .. I was cherished and encouraged in the way of life by my entirely beloved friend Margaret Fell, who as a tender-hearted nursing-mother cared for me and was tender of me as if I had been one of her own children; oh, the kindness, the respect and friendship which she showed me ought never to be forgotten by me.

*William Caton, 1652*

*In 1669, eleven years after Judge Fell's death, Margaret Fell married George Fox, though their incessant labors, travels and imprisonments prevented them from living much together at Swarthmoor. Her account of her conviction follows:*

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I was one that sought after the best things, being desirous to serve God, so as I might be accepted of him, and was enquiring after the way of the Lord, and went often to hear the best ministers that came into our parts, whom we frequently entertained at our house ... This I hoped I did well in, but

often I feared was short of the right way. And after this manner I was enquiring and seeking about twenty years.

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In the year 1652 it pleased the Lord to draw him <George Fox> toward us .... My then husband, Thomas Fell, was not at home at that time, but gone the Welsh circuit, being one of the Judges of Assize, and our house, Swarthmoor Hall, being a place open to entertain ministers and religious people at, one of George Fox his friends brought him hither, where he stayed all night. And the next day, being a lecture or a fast-day, he went to Ulverston steeplehouse, but came not in till people were gathered; I and my children had been a long time there before. And when they were singing before the sermon, he came in; and when they had done singing, he stood up upon a seat or form and desired that he might have liberty to speak. And he that was in the pulpit said he might. And the first words that he spoke were as followeth: 'He is not a Jew that is one outward, neither is that circumcision which is outward; but he is a Jew that is one inward, and that is circumcision which is of the heart'. And so he went on and said, How that Christ was the Light of the world and lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that by this Light they might be gathered to God, etc. And I stood up in my pew, and I wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such before. And then he went on, and opened the Scriptures, and said, "The Scriptures were the prophets' words and Christ's and the apostles' words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed and had it from the Lord'. And said, 'Then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is it inwardly from God?'

This opened me so that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again, and cried bitterly. And I cried in my spirit to the Lord, 'We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves'. So that served me, that I cannot well tell what he spake afterwards; but he went on in declaring against the false prophets and priests and deceivers of the people.

And there was one John Sawrey, a Justice of Peace and a professor, that bid the churchwarden 'Take him away', and he laid his hands on him several times, and took them off again and let him alone; and then after a while he <George Fox> gave over and came to our house again that night. And he spoke in the family amongst the servants; and they were all generally convinced, as William Caton, Thomas Salthouse, Mary Askew, Anne Clayton and several other servants. And I was stricken into such a sadness I knew not what to do, my husband being from home. I saw it was the truth, and I could not deny it; and I did as the apostle saith, I 'received the truth in the love of it'. And it was opened to me so clear that I had never a tittle in my heart against it; but I desired the Lord that I might be kept in it, and then I desired no greater portion.

*Margaret Fox (1694)*

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*Of her second trial in 1664 she wrote:* So they passed sentence of Praemunire upon me which was that I should be out of the King's protection and forfeit all my estate, real and personal, to the King and imprisonment during life. But the great God of heaven and earth supported my- spirit under this severe sentence, that I was not terrified but gave this answer to Judge Turner, who gave the sentence, 'Although I am out of the King's protection, I am not out of the protection of the Almighty God'. *(She was subsequently released and her estate was given back to her family.)*

From: Hugh Barbour and Arthur Roberts, eds., *Early Quaker Writings*. Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973 (Republished Wallingford PA: Pendle Hill Publications 2003).

THE DEATH OF MARY DYER [from  
Edward Burrough, 15/1/1660/61]:67

A DECLARATION OF THE SAD AND GREAT PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM

*Of the People of God, called Quakers in  
New-England, for the Worshipping Of  
God, Whereof*

22 have been Banished upon pain of Death.  
03 have been *Martyred*  
03 have had their Right Ears cut  
01 hath been burned in the Hand with the letter H.  
31 Persons have received 650 stripes  
01 was beat while his Body was like a jelly.  
Several were beat with Pitched Ropes  
Five Appeals made to England were denied by the Rulers of Boston

One thousand forty four pounds of goods hath been taken from them (being poor men) for meeting together in the fear of the Lord, and for keeping the Commands of Christ.  
One now lyeth in Iron-fetters, condemned to dye.

ALSO

*Some Considerations presented to the King, which is in Answer to a Petition and Address which was presented unto Him by the General Court at Boston: Subscribed by J. Endicott, the Chief Persecutor there; thinking thereby to cover themselves from the Blood of the Innocents.*

Gal.4.29

London, Printed for Robert Wilson, in Martins Le Grand.

[The first section answers the claims of the Boston General Court's Petition, justifying their persecution of the troublers of their peace – it is fourteen pages. The second section, signed by John Rous and John Copeland (who had lost their ears), Samuel Shattuck, Josiah Southwick, Nicholas Phelps, Joseph Nicholson, and Jane Nicholson - these latter all Boston residents, banished from their homes and families – expands the summary of sufferings on the title page. The third section – on the sentencing of Robinson, Stephenson, and Mary Dyer, and execution of the first two – is taken almost verbatim from *A Call from Death to Life*. The final section, written by Burrough, seems to be taken from the account of the Nicholsons, and is the first printed report on Mary Dyer's death.]

[27] Mary Dyer, being freed as aforesaid, returned to Rhode Island, and afterwards to Long Island, and there was [28] most part of the winter, over the Island, where she had good service for the Lord~ and then came to Shelter Island, whence she thought she might pass to

Rhode Island. And being there, sometime she had movings from the Lord to go to Boston, and there she came the 21st of the 3rd Month, 1660. And the 30th day was their Governor chosen, and the 31st of the 3rd Month, in the former part of the day, she was sent for to the General Court.

The Governor said, "Are ye the same Mary Dyer that was here before?" ...

Mary Dyer: "I am the same Mary Dyer that was here the last General Court. "

The Governor said, "You will own yourself a Quaker, will you not."

M.D.: "I own my self to be so reproachfully called." The bloody minded Jailer, having now opportunity to have his bloodthirsty will fulfilled, said "she is a vagabond."

The Governor said, "The sentence was passed upon her the Last General Court, and now likewise: 'you must return to the prison from whence you came, and there remain until tomorrow at nine of the clock, then from thence you must go to the gallows, and there be hanged till you are dead.'"

Mary Dyer said, "this is no more than that thou saidst before. "

"Aye, aye," the Governor said, "and now it is to be executed. Therefore prepare yourself tomorrow at nine of the clock," (being the first day of the 4th Month, 1660).

Mary Dyer answered and said, "I came in obedience to the will of God, the last General Court, desiring you to repeal your unrighteous laws of banishment upon pain of death; and that same is my work now, and earnest request, because ye refused before to grant my request, although I told you that if ye refused to repeal them the Lord will send others of his servants to witness against them."

John Endicott asked her whether she was a prophet.

She said she spake the words that the Lord spake in her; "and now the thing is come to pass." She beginning to speak of her Call, 1. Endicott said, "away with her, away with her."

So she was brought to the prison-house, where she was before, close shut up until the next day. About the time prefixed, the marshal Michaelson came and called hastily for her. When he [29] came into the room, she desired him to stay a little, and speaking mildly to him she said she should be ready presently, even like a sheep prepared for the slaughter. But he in the wolvish nature said he could not wait upon her, but she should now wait upon him. Margaret Smith, her companion, hearing him speak these words with others from the Cain-like spirit, was moved to testify against their unjust laws and proceedings, being grieved to see both him and many others in such gross darkness and hardheartedness. Then he said, "you shall have your share of the same," with other violent words.

Then they brought her forth, and drums were beat before and behind her, with a band of soldiers, through the town, and so to the place of execution, which is about a mile, the drums being that none might hear her speak all the way.

Some said unto her, that if she would return she might come down and save her life (Bonner- and Gardner-like).<sup>68</sup> She answered and said, "Nay, I cannot. For in obedience to the will of the Lord God I came, and in his will I abide faithful to the death. "

Their Captain, John Webb said, She had been here before, and had the sentence of banishment upon pain of death; and had broken this law in coming again now, as well as formerly; - and therefore she was guilty of her own blood. To which M. Dyer said, "Nay, I came to keep blood-guiltiness from you, desiring you to repeal the unrighteous and unjust law of banishment upon pain of death, made against the innocent servants of the Lord. Therefore my blood will be required at your hands, who wilfully do it; but for those that do it in the simplicity of their hearts, I do desire the Lord to forgive them. I came to do the will of my Father, and in obedience to his will I stand even to the death."

John Wilson, their priest of Boston, said, "M. Dyer, O repent; O repent, and be not so deluded and carried away by the deceit of the Devil." M. Dyer answered and said, "Nay, man, I am not now to repent."

[30] Some asked her whether she would have the Elders to pray for her. She said, "I know never an Elder here." They asked whether she would have any of the people to pray for her. She said she desired the prayers of all the People of God. Some scoffingly said, "It may be she thinks there is none here; this is a mock." M. Dyer looked about and said, "I know but few here."

Then they spake to her again, that one of the Elders might pray for her. She replied and said, "Nay, first a child, then a young man, then a strong man, before an Elder of Christ Jesus." Some charged her with something that was not understood what it was. But her answer was, "It's false; it's false; I never spoke the words."

Then one said she should say she had been in Paradise. And she answered, "Yea, I have been in Paradise several days." And more she spake of her eternal happiness, that's out of mind. And so sweetly and cheerfully in the Lord she finished her testimony and died a faithful martyr of Jesus Christ.

And still they are going on in acting their cruel laws: for the same day, in the former part of it, they sent for Joseph Nicholson and his wife Jane Nicholson, and banished them on pain of death. Then sent for three more, and whilst they were examining them, there came one to the Court spake to this purpose, and one scoffingly said "she did hang as a flag for them to take example by." (But precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints). These are the people that say their churches are the purest churches in the world, and that their magistrates are godly magistrates, and godly ministers. A fair show to the world! Even "another Beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns, like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon; and he exerciseth the power of the first Beast before him." [Rev. 13: 11-12]

And their General Court being ended, they left nine of us still remaining in prison, it seems looking for encouragement from England that more may follow their Ensign. And we have a further account also, that one of our Friends, named William Leddra, being banished upon pain of death, he not departing the colony but being moved to return again to Boston, was apprehended and cast into prison, and there lieth chained to a log with a horse-lock, condemned to die.

[Burrough's appeal to the king, presented by this tract and in a personal interview, was not in time to save the life of Leddra, but induced the king to order the transfer of all accusations against Quakers in Massachusetts to courts in England. Thereby the lives of Wenlock Christison and others were saved; but the struggle continued nevertheless for five years more.]

[67] Burrough's tract is the earliest to describe Mary Dyer's death; it was soon overshadowed by Bishop's, but Burrough himself, by taking Samuel Shattuck to see Charles II, procured "the King's Missive" (see Whittier's poem) that saved Wenlock Christison and later Quaker prisoners from death in Boston.

[68] Stephen Gardner and Edmund Bonner were bishops through whom Mary Tudor tried to bring back the Church of England to Catholicism by burning the Protestant leaders.