

# First Person Past

American Autobiographies

Volume I

EDITED BY

MARIAN J. MORTON &

RUSSELL DUNCAN

JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY

Captains and Commanders  
Acting by Commission from  
the United States of America  
with Great Britain

Gentlemen

A Ship having  
sailed out from England before the Commencement  
of this War to make Discoveries of new  
islands in unknown Seas, under the Conduct  
of that most celebrated Navigator and Discoverer  
Captain Cook, an Undertaking truly  
valuable in itself, as the Increase of Geography  
facilitates the Communications of  
different Nations, in the Exchange of  
Manufactures, and the  
Promotion of the common  
Interest and Happiness of  
Mankind.

It is expected to be found in the  
course of this Expedition, that  
some Discoveries will be made  
which will be of great Use to  
the World, and particularly  
to America; but the  
Success of the Expedition  
is not to be depended on  
with Certainty, and the  
Effects of the Discovery  
will be made known  
as soon as the  
Ship returns.

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MARIAN J. MORTON  
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7/2/305

BRANDYWINE PRESS • St. James, New York

ISBN 1-881089-22-3

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1st Printing 1994

*Telephone Orders:* 1-800-345-1776

Printed in the United States of America

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS HISTORY

The autobiographers in this volume reveal much about the private sides of American life. Anne Bradstreet wrote of childbirth; Benjamin Franklin of childhood. Franklin spoke honestly of his own premarital sexual adventures. Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs told of the sadistic lust of Southern slaveholders, while Elizabeth Ashbridge, Davy Crockett, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton interpreted marriage and family quite differently. Olaudah Equiano and Black Hawk saw Anglo-American culture from their own marginalized positions.

These autobiographers also provide their personal perspectives on public events. Their first-hand accounts dramatize and authenticate much of the American story from the colonial period through Reconstruction.

The religious intensity of Puritanism, expressed in the mid-seventeenth century by Anne Bradstreet, drove these English colonists to the New World. They established in Massachusetts Bay their "city on a hill," tightly-knit, patriarchal, and dedicated to the preservation and promulgation in the wilderness of their own faith and way of life.

In 1659 Massachusetts Bay colony hanged the bold Quaker missionary Mary Dyer; a century later, when Elizabeth Ashbridge recorded her life story, Quakers were firmly and safely established in several colonies, especially Pennsylvania and the Jerseys. The Quaker settlements reflected the growing religious and ethnic heterogeneity of the colonial population. Indentured servitude filled the crying need for workers in an economy where land was plentiful and labor in short supply. Tens of thousands of servants, like Ashbridge, came to the New World in search of opportunity; many, however, came involuntarily.

The American colonies were built upon another form of servitude, that of Africans, kidnapped—like Olaudah Equiano—from their homeland. Slavery existed in all the English colonies and flourished because it made profits for both slave owners and slave traders.

An unwilling participant himself in the slave trade, Equiano was an enthusiastic partisan in the wars between the British, French, and Spanish for control of the New World. Those bloody and continual conflicts on land and sea ended with the French defeat in 1763, leaving the British the major colonial power in North America.

Still a loyal British colonist, Benjamin Franklin aided the British in their last battle against the French. His autobiography tells of the growing friction between the colonies and the mother country, foreshadowing the American Revolution in which he also played a key role.

The American bid for independence succeeded in part because the colonies already had independent political institutions such as the colonial assembly where Franklin held his first political post. These institutions provided leadership and direction during and after the Revolution. The colonists had also developed a viable commercial economy, built upon the needs of growing cities like Franklin's home town, Boston, and his adopted city, Philadelphia.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the pace of economic change accelerated. In the 1830s the textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, harbingers of the country's full-blown industrialization, created a new work force of women and children. Harriet Robinson described the ways in which industrialization changed their lives.

The American defeat of the British had also opened up western lands. Land speculators, hunters, and farmers swarmed across the Appalachian Mountains into Tennessee, Kentucky, and the Northwest Territory. Their rugged frontier settlements expanded the geographical and the political boundaries of the new United States. As property qualifications for voting were eliminated, politicians like Andrew Jackson and Davy Crockett who styled themselves "common men" began to outpoll the older political elites.

Crockett's political success—like Jackson's—rested in good measure on his reputation as an Indian fighter, for native Americans did not willingly give up their homelands. The surrender of Black Hawk in the war that bears his name, and the slaughter of Indian women and children by federal soldiers, illustrated the deadly price that Indians would pay throughout the nineteenth century for white "progress."

Although the Northern economy had begun to industrialize, the South remained agricultural, ever more dependent on cash crops like cotton and the "peculiar institution" of slavery. Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs revealed that slavery was far more than an economic institution; it was an oppressive social system which brutalized blacks and dehumanized whites.

By the 1830s slavery had begun to offend the small but vocal group of American abolitionists who later encouraged Douglass and Jacobs to write their stories. The movement to abolish the evil of slavery was part of the larger impulse to reform many aspects of American life and behavior from diet to education. The poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson exclaimed, "What a fertility of projects for the salvation of the world!" Both Tunis Campbell and Elizabeth Cady Stanton supported temperance and abolitionism, and Stanton's chief project became the cause of women's rights.

By 1868 voters had established the tradition of celebrating American military victories by sending generals to the White House. President Ulysses S. Grant, head of the Union forces during the Civil War, followed soldier-presidents George Washington, Andrew Jackson, and William Henry Harrison. Grant's defeat of the Confederate troops at Shiloh and Vicksburg and around Richmond dramatized the huge cost in human life of this tragic war in which Americans killed Americans.

The fighting ended in 1865, but the conflict between the North and the South continued another dozen years while Congress tried to rebuild the nation and reconstruct the South. Campbell's imprisonment for trying to aid the freedmen illustrates the difficulties of that reconstruction.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS LITERATURE

Autobiography lives halfway between fact and fiction. Claiming that his or her story is a factual account of the past, the autobiographer puts that story together using some of the imaginative strategies of fiction.

The personal nature of autobiography means that many of its author's statements, unlike those of the historian, cannot be corroborated. The autobiographer's "facts" often exist only in his or her memory, a memory always selective and not always reliable. By necessity, the autobiographer has greater freedom and license to create and "make up" the past—in short, to write fiction.

The autobiographer also has greater freedom than the historian to make the story come out right. (Writing the story of your life may be the only way to live it over again without the mistakes or the boring parts.) The narrative usually takes the form of a journey: a journey through time, through space, or through spiritual travail. Bradstreet's very short story combined all three. In both religious and secular autobiography, there is often a conversion experience which moves the plot forward.

Few of us like to appear naked in public, and neither does an autobiographer, who disguises his or her nakedness by creating someone to play his or her part throughout the story. This invented self—or persona—tells us how the autobiographer wishes to be perceived. Most authors construct a persona which is acceptable to their time and place. Reflecting the different expectations of their culture, men and women often portray themselves differently: men as solitary individuals, women as family members or maternal figures.

Part of the autobiographer's disguise is the voice in which the author speaks, the language that is employed. Douglass's thundering oratory advertised his emancipation from slavery; Robinson's sentimental prose defined her as a genteel lady. Black Hawk symbolically spoke only through a white translator.

Even the most skillful writer of fiction, however, can get tripped up by reality. The "real," or historically determined, self may appear naked on the pages of the book. Even that great master of illusion, Franklin, occasionally lets his disguise drop. Sometimes an author's life contradicts his life story. Douglass insisted that slavery was always utterly destructive; his personal triumph suggested otherwise. Sometimes the author's voice does not ring true: Crockett's down-home twang was a political pose.

Autobiography's plot is often predictable. Knowing how the journey has ended in the present, the author will predetermine its direction in the past. There are no surprises, no accidents, no chance happenings in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's story.

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# ANNE BRADSTREET

1612?–1672

America's "Tenth Muse" was born to Puritan gentry, Thomas and Dorothy Dudley, and encouraged by her father, received an extraordinary education for a young woman of her time. At age 16, she married Simon Bradstreet, a Puritan and a member of the joint stock company which settled Massachusetts Bay. The Bradstreets and the Dudleys migrated to the colony in 1630 on the ship "Arabella" with its future governor, John Winthrop.

Despite her privileged status, Anne Bradstreet's life was filled with trials. The New World was a shock to any gently reared Englishwoman (one of her shipmates, Dorothy Bradford, drowned herself rather than face a life in the wilderness). The young wife was often left at home with her growing family, for Simon Bradstreet was busy with the political and economic affairs of the fledgling colony.

Writing itself was a struggle, for she had to overcome both the Puritan distrust of poetry and her own conviction that a woman probably should not write at all ("I am obnoxious to each carping tongue who says my hand a needle better fits"). Her work has survived only because her brother-in-law had her verses published in London in 1650. Bradstreet carefully crafted some verses imitating her favorite poets, Sir Walter Raleigh and Guillaume Du Bartas, but far more powerful and enduring are her poems about her own life. These expressed her deep love for her husband and children and her grief at the deaths of friends and family, including two infant grandchildren, as well as the insular domestic life of this seventeenth-century woman. "To My Dear Children," addressed to her eight offspring, was inspired by the travail of another childbirth, which might bring her own death.

This classic spiritual autobiography gives eloquent testimony to still another struggle, Bradstreet's life-long effort to resign herself—as a good woman and a good Puritan—to God's will. At the heart of Puritanism was the belief in the intimate relationship between God and worshipper. Bradstreet's autobiographical fragment reveals that the relationship was not always a happy or tranquil one, for the brief narrative recounts her troubled journey as she wrestled with Satan and heresies until convinced of the power and truth of her Puritan God.

Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning. Full of Delight. Boston: John Foster, 1678. Reprinted in *A Woman's Inner World: Selected Poetry and Prose of Anne Bradstreet*, edited by Adelaide P. Amore. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982.



## TO MY DEAR CHILDREN

This book by any yet unread,  
 I leave for you when I am dead,  
 That being gone, here you may find  
 What was your living mother's mind.  
 Make use of what I leave in love  
 And God shall bless you from above.

A. B.

My dear children,—

I, knowing by experience that the exhortations of parents take most effect when the speakers leave to speak, and being ignorant whether on my death bed I shall have opportunity to speak to any of you much less to all, thought it the best whilst I was able to compose some short matters (for what else to call them I know not) and bequeath to you, that when I am no more with you, yet I may be daily in your remembrance (although that is the least in my aim in what I now do) but that you may gain some spiritual advantage by my experience. I have not studied in this you read to show my skill, but to declare the Truth, not to set forth my self, but the Glory of God. If I had minded the former it had been perhaps better pleasing to you, but seeing the last is the best, let it be best pleasing to you.

The method I will observe shall be this—I will begin with God's dealing with me from my childhood to this day.

In my young years, about 6 or 7 as I take it, I began to make conscience of my ways, and what I knew was sinful as lying, disobedience to parents, etcetera, I avoided it. If at any time I was overtaken with the like evils, it was a great trouble. I could not be at rest 'till by prayer I had confessed it unto God.

I was also troubled at the neglect of private duties, though too often tardy that way. I also found much comfort in reading the Scriptures, especially those places I thought most concerned my condition, and as I grew to have more understanding, so the more solace I took in them.

In a long fit of sickness which I had on my bed, I often communed with my heart, and made my supplication to the most high who set me free from that affliction.

But as I grew up to be about 14 or 15 I found my heart more carnal, and sitting loose from God, vanity and the follies of youth take hold of me.

About 16, the Lord laid his hand sore upon me and smote me with the small pox. When I was in my affliction, I besought the Lord, and confessed my pride and vanity and he was entreated of me, and again restored me. But I rendered not to him according to the benefit received.

After a short time I changed my condition and was married and came into this country, where I found a new world and new manners, at which my heart rose. But after I was convinced it was the way of God, I submitted to it and joined to the church at Boston.

After some time I fell into a lingering sickness like a consumption, together with a lameness, which correction I saw the Lord sent to humble and try me and do me good: and it was not altogether ineffectual.

It pleased God to keep me a long time without a child which was a great grief to me, and cost me many prayers and tears before I obtained one, and after him gave me many more, of whom I now take the care, that as I have brought you into

the world, and with great pains, weakness, cares, and fears brought you to this, I now travail in birth again of you till Christ be formed in you.

Among all my experiences of God's gracious dealings with me I have constantly observed this, that he hath never suffered me long to sit loose from him, but by one affliction or other hath made me look home, and search what was amiss—so usually thus it hath been with me that I have no sooner felt my heart out of order, but I have expected correction for it, which most commonly hath been upon my own person, in sickness, weakness, pains, sometimes on my soul, in doubts and fears of God's displeasure, and my sincerity towards him. Sometimes he hath smote a child with sickness, sometimes chastened by losses in estate, and these times (through his great mercy) have been the times of my greatest getting and advantage, yea I have found them the times when the Lord hath manifested the most love to me. Then have I gone to searching, and have said with David, Lord search me and try me, see what ways of wickedness are in me, and lead me in the way everlasting: and seldom or never but I have found either some sin I lay under which God would have reformed, or some duty neglected which he would have performed. And by his help I have laid vows and bonds upon my soul to perform his righteous commands.

If at any time you are chastened of God, take it as thankfully and joyfully as in greatest mercies. For if ye be his, ye shall reap the greatest benefit by it. It hath been no small support to me in times of darkness, when the Almighty hath hid his face from me, that yet I have had abundance of sweetness and refreshment after affliction and more circumspection in my walking after I have been afflicted. I have been with God like an untoward child, that no longer than the rod has been on my back (or at least in sight) but I have been apt to forget him and my self too. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy statutes.

I have had great experience of God's hearing my prayers, and returning comfortable answers to me, either in granting the thing I prayed for, or else in satisfying my mind without it; and I have been confident it hath been from him, because I have found my heart through his goodness enlarged in thankfulness to him.

I have often been perplexed that I have not found that constant joy in my pilgrimage and refreshing which I supposed most of the servants of God have, although he hath not left me altogether without the witness of his Holy Spirit, who hath oft given me his word and set to his seal that it shall be well with me. I have sometimes tasted of that hidden manna that the world knows not, and have set up my Ebenezer, and have resolved with my self that against such a promise, such tastes of sweetness, the gates of Hell shall never prevail. Yet have I many sinkings and droopings, and not enjoyed that felicity that sometimes I have done. But when I have been in darkness and seen no light, yet have I desired to stay my self upon the Lord. And, when I have been in sickness and pain, I have thought if the Lord would but lift up the light of his countenance upon me, although he ground me to powder, it would be but light to me. Yea, often have I thought were it Hell itself and could there find the love of God toward me, it would be a Heaven. And, could I have been in Heaven without the love of God, it would have been a Hell to me. For, in Truth, it is the absence and presence of God that makes Heaven or Hell.

Many times hath Satan troubled me concerning the verity of the Scriptures, many times by atheism. How could I know whether there was a God if I never saw any miracles to confirm me, and those which I read of, how did I know, but they

#### 4 FIRST-PERSON PAST

were feigned. That there is a God my reason would soon tell me by the wondrous works that I see, the vast frame of the Heaven and the earth, the order of all things, night and day, summer and winter, spring and autumn, the daily providing for this great household upon the earth, the preserving and directing of all to its proper end. The consideration of these things would with amazement certainly resolve me that there is an Eternal Being.

But how should I know he is such a God as I worship in Trinity, and such a Saviour as I rely upon? Though this hath thousands of times been suggested to me, yet God hath helped me over. I have argued thus with my self. That there is a God I see. If ever this God hath revealed himself, it must be in his word, and this must be it or none. Have I not found that operation by it that no humane invention can work upon the soul? Hath not judgements befallen diverse who have scorned and contended it? Hath it not been preserved through all ages maugre all the heathen tyrants and all of the enemies who have opposed it? Is there any story but that which shows the beginnings of times, and how the world came to be as we see? Do we not know the prophecies in it fulfilled which could not have been so long foretold by any but God himself?

When I have got over this block, then have I another put in my way. That admit this be the true God whom we worship, and that be his word, yet why may not the popish religion be the right? They have the same God, the same Christ, the same word. They only interpret it one way, we another.

This hath sometimes stuck with me, and more it would, but the vain fooleries that are in their religion, together with their lying miracles, and cruel persecutions of the saints, which admit were they as they term them, yet not so to be dealt withall.

The consideration of these things and many the like would soon turn me to my own religion again.

But some new troubles I have had since the world has been filled with blasphemy, and sectaries, and some who have been accounted sincere Christians have been carried away with them, that sometimes I have said, "Is there faith upon the earth?" And I have not known what to think; but then I have remembered the words of Christ that so it must be, and that, if it were possible, the very elect should be deceived. "Behold," saith our Saviour, "I have told you before," that hath stayed my heart, and I can now say, "Return, O my soul, to thy rest, upon this rock Christ Jesus will I build my faith, and if I perish, I perish." But I know all the powers of Hell shall never prevail against it. I know whom I have trusted, and whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that I have committed to his charge.

Now to the King, immortal, eternal, and invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This was written in much sickness and weakness, and is very weakly and imperfectly done; but if you can pick any benefit out of it, it is the mark which I aimed at.

## ELIZABETH ASHBRIDGE

1713–1755

*It would be hard to imagine a woman less like Anne Bradstreet than Elizabeth Ashbridge—lower-class, estranged from family, childless, unhappily married, and a Quaker. Yet there are similarities in the stories of these two women.*

*Ashbridge was born Elizabeth Sampson in Middlewich, Cheshire County, in England. Her father was a barber, frequently away from home plying his trade on shipboard. At age fourteen, Elizabeth ran away from her family to marry her sweetheart, who died five months later. After her father disowned her, she fled to the American colonies. Like thousands of others, she became an indentured servant to pay for her trans-Atlantic passage, selling herself for four years to a master who became abusive. After purchasing her freedom, she married an itinerant schoolteacher, taken with her youthful singing and dancing. The couple wandered from New York to New England to Pennsylvania to New Jersey, one or both of them teaching in village schools. When she found herself drawn to the Quakers, her husband ridiculed her pious behavior and beat her. He died in 1740, leaving her to repay his considerable debts. In 1746 she married another Quaker, Aaron Ashbridge. She became a prominent member of her church and a public Friend (licensed preacher). She wrote this autobiography before she left on a missionary trip in 1753 to Ireland, where she died in 1755. Aaron Ashbridge edited the extant version of her autobiography, which was published in 1774.*

*Elizabeth Ashbridge's story is full of worldly adventures, many of which pitted her against men in authority. Yet like Bradstreet's, this is primarily a spiritual autobiography. At its very beginning, Ashbridge foreshadowed her later calling—wishing, she says, that she could have been born a man so that she could have become a minister. The crucial events in the narrative are her encounters with—and rejections of—various churches from Anglicans to Presbyterians to Baptists to Roman Catholics—until she found her home with the Quakers. Like Bradstreet, Ashbridge wrestled with the Devil as well as her personal demons, even contemplating suicide. In the end, she found the freedom and egalitarianism of Quakerism congenial to her restless spirit. Quakers believed that both men and women experienced the divine Inner Light, which allowed them to be saved and to preach salvation. Within Quakerism she also found an acceptable public role and a compelling voice with which to speak out in this manuscript as well as in the Quaker meetings.*

Some Account of the Fore-Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge. *Nantwich, England, 1774. Reprinted in The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Third edition, Volume 1. New York: WW Norton and Co. 1989.*

My life being attended with many uncommon occurrences, some of which I brought upon myself, which I believe were for my good, I have therefore thought proper to make some remarks on the dealings of Divine Goodness with me, having often had cause with David, to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" [Psalm 119:71]; and I most earnestly desire that whosoever reads the following lines may take warning and shun the evils that through the deceitfulness of Satan I have been drawn into.

I was born in Middlewich, in Cheshire [England], in the year 1713, of honest parents. My father's name was Thomas Sampson, he was a surgeon; my mother's name was Mary. My father was a man that bore a good character, but [not] so strictly religious as my mother, who was a pattern of virtue to me. I was the only child of my father, but my mother had a son and a daughter by a former husband. Soon after my birth my father took to the sea, and followed his profession on board a ship many long voyages, till I was twelve years old, about which time he settled at home; so that my education lay mostly on my mother, in which she discharged her duty by endeavoring to instill into me the principles of virtue during my tender age, for which I have since had cause to be thankful to the Lord, that he blessed me with such a parent tho' her good advice and counsel have been as cast upon the water, etc. In short, she was a good example to all about her, and beloved by most that knew her, tho' not of the same religious persuasion I am now of. But oh! alas, when the time came that she might reasonably have expected the benefit of her labor, and have had comfort from me, I left her, of which I shall mention in its proper place.

In my very infancy I had an awful regard for religion and a great love for religious people, particularly the ministers, and sometimes grieved at my not being a boy and therefore could not be one, as I thought they were good men, and beloved of God. I also had a great love for the poor, remembering I had read they were blessed of the Lord; this I took to mean such as were poor in this world, and often went to their poor cottages to see them, and if I had any money or other things, I used to give them some, remembering that saying, that they that give to the poor lend to the Lord, and I had when very young an earnest desire to be beloved of him. I used also to make remarks on those called gentlemen, and when I heard them swear it would grieve me much; for my mother had informed me that if I used any naughty words, God would not love me. As I grew up I took notice that there were several different religious societies, wherefore I often went alone and wept, desiring that I might be directed to the right. Thus my young years were attended with such like tender desires, tho' I was sometimes guilty of those things incident to children, but then I always found something in me that made me sorry for what I did amiss. Till I arrived at the age of fourteen years, I was as innocent as most children, about which time my sorrows began, and have continued most part of my life, through my giving way to a foolish passion, in setting my affections on a young man, who became a suitor to me, without my parents' consent, till I suffered myself (I may say with sorrow of heart) to be carried off in the night, and to be married before my parents found me; altho' as

soon as they missed me all possible search was made after me, but all in vain, till too later to recover me.

This precipitate act plunged me into a vast scene of sorrow, for I was soon smote with remorse for thus leaving my parents, who had a right to have disposed of me, or at least their approbation ought to have been consulted in the affair, for I was soon chastised for my disobedience. Divine Providence let me see my error, and in five months I was stripped of the darling of my soul, and left a young and disconsolate widow.

I had then no home to fly to. My father was so displeased that he would do nothing for me, but my dear mother had some compassion toward me, and kept me amongst the neighbors for some time, till by her advice I went to Dublin, to a relation of hers, in hopes that absence would help to regain my father's affection. But he continued inflexible and would not send for me, and I dared not to return without his permission.—This relation with whom I lived was one of the people called Quakers. His conduct was so different from the manner of my education, which was in the way of the Church of England, that it made my situation disagreeable; for tho', as I said, I had a religious education, yet I was allowed to sing and dance, which my cousins were against, and I having a great vivacity in my natural disposition could not bear to give way to the gloomy scene of sorrow, and conviction gave it the wrong effect, and made me more wild and airy than before, for which I was often reproved. But I then thought, as a great many do now, that it was the effect of singularity and therefore would not be subject to it.

I having at that time a distant relation in the west of Ireland, I left Dublin, and went there, where I was entertained, and what rendered me disagreeable in the former place was quite pleasing to the latter. Between these two relations I spent 3 years and 2 months. While I was in Ireland I contracted an intimacy with a widow and her daughter, who were Papists, with whom I used to discourse about religion, they in defense of their faith, and I of mine; and altho' I was then very wild, it made me very thoughtful. The old woman would tell me of such mighty miracles done by their priests that I began to be disturbed in my mind, and thought that if those things were so, they must be the Apostle's successors. The old woman perceiving it one day, said in rapture, that if I, under God, can be instrumental to convert you to the holy Catholic faith, all the sins that ever I committed will be forgiven me. In a while it go so far that the priests came to converse with me, and I being young and my judgment weak was ready to believe what they said. And tho' wild as I was, it cost me many a tear with desires that I might be rightly directed. For some time I frequented their place of worship, but none of my relations knew I had any intention of going with them. At length I concluded never to be led darkly into their belief, and thought to myself—if their articles of faith are good, they will not be against my knowing them. Therefore the next time I had an opportunity with the priest, I told him I had some thoughts of becoming one of his flock, but I did not like to join with them, till I knew all I was to agree to, and therefore desired to see their principles. He answered I must first confess my sins to him, and gave me till next day to consider of them. I was not much against that, having done nothing that any person could hurt me, and if, thought I, what the man says be true, it will be for my good. So when he came again, I told him all I could remember, which I thought bad enough; but he thought me, as he said, the most innocent creature that ever made confession to him. When he had done he took a book out of his pocket, and read all which I was to swear to, if I joined with them.

Tho' I was but young, I made my remarks as he went on, but I do not think it worth my writing, nor the reader's hearing. It was a great deal of ridiculous stuff. But what made me sick of my new intention was (I believe I should have swallowed the rest), I was to swear, "I believed the Pretender to be the true heir to the crown of England, and that he was King James' son, and also, that whosoever died out of the pale of the church were damned." As to the first, I did not believe it essential salvation, whether I believed it or not, and to take an oath to any such thing would be very unsafe; and the second I saw struck directly against charity, which the Apostles preferred before all other Graces. And besides, I had a religious mother who was out of that opinion. I therefore thought it would be wicked in me to believe she was damned. I therefore concluded to consider about it, but before I saw him again a sudden turn took hold of me, which put a final end to it.

My father still keeping me at so great a distance, I thought myself quite shut out of his affections, and therefore concluded, since my absence was most agreeable he should have it, and getting acquaintance with a gentlewoman lately from Pennsylvania, who was going back again, where I had an uncle, my mother's brother, I soon agreed with her for my passage, and being ignorant in the nature of an indenture consented to be bound. As soon as this was over, she invited me to go and see the vessel we was to sail in, [to] which I readily consented, not knowing what would follow. When I came on board I found a young woman, who I afterwards understood was of a good family and had been deluded away by this creature. I was extremely glad to think I should have such an agreeable companion, but while we were in discourse, our kidnapper left us, and went ashore, and when I wanted to go was not permitted. I was kept there near three weeks, in which time the young woman's friends found her and fetched her away, by which means my friends found me, and went to the water bailiff, who brought me on shore, and our gentlewoman was obliged to conceal herself, or she would have been laid fast. My friends kept me close for two weeks, but at least I found means to get away, for my thoughts being full of going to America, I was determined to proceed with my intention, and one day meeting with the captain, I inquired of him when they sailed, and entered on board the same ship that I was on board before, and I have since thought there was [a] Providential hand in it. . . .

In nine weeks from the time I left Dublin we arrived at New York, viz. on the 15 of the 7th month, 1732. Now those to whom I had been instrumental to preserve life proved treacherous to me.—I was a stranger in a strange land.

The captain got an indenture and demanded of me to sign it, at the same time threatening me if I refused it. I told him I could find means to satisfy him for my passage without being bound, but he told me I might take my choice; either to sign that or have the other in force which I signed in Ireland. By this time I had learned the character of the before-mentioned woman, by which she appeared to be a vile person, and I feared if ever I was in her power she would use me ill on her brother's account. I therefore in a fright signed the latter, and tho' there was no magistrate present it proved sufficient to make me a servant for four years. In two weeks time I was sold, and were it possible to convey in characters a scene of the sufferings of my servitude, it would affect the most stony heart with pity for a young creature who had been so tenderly brought up. For tho' my father had no great estate yet he lived well, and I had been used to little but the school, tho' it had been better for me now if I had been brought up to greater hardships.

For a while I was pretty well used, but in a little time the scale turned, which

was occasioned by a difference between my master and me, wherein I was innocent; but from that time he set himself against me, and was so inhuman that he would not suffer me to have clothes to be decent in, making me to go barefoot in the snowy weather, and to be employed in the meanest drudgery, wherein I suffered the utmost hardships that my body was able to bear. . . .

I had to one woman and no other discovered the occasion of this difference, and the nature of it, which two years before had happened betwixt my master and me, and by that means he heard of it, and tho' he knew it to be true, he sent for the town whipper to correct me for it, and upon his appearing, I was called in and ordered to strip, without asking whether I deserved it or not, at which my heart was ready to burst, for I could as freely have given up my life, as suffer such ignominy. And I then said, if there be a God, be graciously pleased to look down on one of the most unhappy creatures, and plead my cause, for thou knowest what I have said is the truth, and had it not been from a principle more noble than he was capable of, I would have told it before his wife. Then fixing my eyes on the barbarous man, in a flood of tears, I said to him, Sir, if you have no pity on me, yet for my father's sake spare me from this shame (for before this he had heard of my father several ways), and if you think I deserve such punishment do it yourself. He then took a turn about the room and bid the whipper go about his business, so I came off without a blow, which I thought something remarkable.

I know began to think my credit was gone, for they said several things of me, which (I bless God) were not true; and here I suffered so much cruelty that I knew not how to bear it, and the enemy immediately came in and put me in a way how to get rid of it all, by tempting me to end my miserable life, which I joined with, and for that purpose went into the garret in order to hang myself, at which time I was convinced there was a God, for as my feet entered the place, horror seized me to that degree that I trembled much, and while I stood in amazement, it seemed as tho' I heard a voice say, "There is a hell beyond the grave," at which I was greatly astonished and convinced of an Almighty Power, to whom I prayed, saying "God be merciful and enable me to bear whatsoever thou of thy providence shall bring or suffer to come upon me for my disobedience." I then went downstairs but let none know what I had been about.

Soon after this I had a dream, and tho' some may ridicule dreams, yet this seems very significant to me, therefore I shall mention it.—I thought somebody knocked at the door, which when I had opened there stood a grave woman, holding in her right hand an oil lamp burning, who with a solid countenance fixed her eyes on me, and said, "I am sent to tell thee, that if thou wilt return to the Lord thy God, he will have mercy on thee, and thy lamp shall not be put out in obscure darkness;" upon which the light flamed from the lamp in a very radiant manner and the vision left me. But oh! alas, I did not give up to join with the heavenly vision, as I think I may call it; for, after all this, I was near being caught in another snare, which if I had, would probably have been my ruin, from which I was also preferred.

I was accounted a fine singer and dancer, in which I took great delight, and once falling in company with some of the stage players, then at New York, they took a great fancy to me, as they said, and persuaded me to become an actress amongst them, and they would find means to get me from my servitude, and that I should live like a lady. The proposal took with me, and I used much pains to qualify myself for the stage, by reading plays, even when I should have slept, but after all this I found a stop in my mind, when I came to consider what my father



would think when he heard of it, who had not only forgiven my disobedience in marriage, but had sent for me home, tho' my proud heart would not suffer me to return in so mean a condition I was then in, but rather chose bondage.

When I had served three years I bought the remainder of my time, and got a genteel maintenance by my needle, but alas! I was not sufficiently punished by my former servitude but got into another, and that for life; for a few months after this, I married a young man, who fell in love with me for my dancing—a poor motive for a man to choose a wife, or a woman to choose a husband.

As to my part I fell in love for nothing I saw in him, and it seems unaccountable, that I, who had refused several offers, both in this country and in Ireland, should at last marry a man I had no value for.

In a week after we were married, my husband, who was a school-master, removed from New York, and took me along with him to New England, and settled at a place called Westerley, in Rhode Island government. With respect to religion, he was much like myself, without any; for when he was in drink he would use the worst of oaths. I don't mention this to expose my husband, but to show the effect it had upon me, for I now saw myself ruined, as I thought, being joined to a man I had no love for, and who was a pattern of no good to me. I therefore began to think we were like two joining hands and going to destruction, which made me conclude that if I was not forsaken of God, to alter my course of life. But to love the Divine Being, and not to love my husband, I saw was an inconcidence, and seemed impossible; therefore I requested, with tears, that my affections might increase towards my husband, and I can say in truth that my love was sincere to him. I now resolved to do my duty towards God, and expecting that I must come to the knowledge of it by reading the Scriptures, I read them with a strong resolution of following their directions, but the more I read the more uneasy I grew, especially about baptism, for altho' I had reason to believe I was sprinkled in my infancy, because at the age of fourteen I passed under the bishop's hands for confirmation, as it is called, yet I could not find any precedent for that practice, and upon reading where it is said, he that believes and is baptized, etc., I observed that belief went before baptism, which I was not capable of when I was sprinkled, at which I grew very uneasy, and living in a neighborhood that were mostly Seventh Day Baptists, I conversed with them, and at length thinking it to be really my duty, I was baptized by one of their teachers, but did not join strictly with them, tho' I began to think the seventh-day the true sabbath, and for some time kept it as such. My husband did not yet oppose me, for he saw I grew more affectionate to him, but I did not yet leave off singing and dancing so much, but I could divert him whenever he desired it. . . .

We stayed several weeks at Boston, and I remained still dissatisfied as to religion, tho' I had reformed my conduct so as to be accounted by those that knew me a sober woman. But that was not sufficient; for even then I expected to find the sweets of such a change, and though several thought me religious, I dared not to think myself so, and what to do to be so, I seemed still an utter stranger to. I used to converse with people of all societies, as opportunity offered, and, like many others, had got a deal of head knowledge, and several societies thought me of their opinion, but I joined strictly with none, resolving never to leave searching till I found the TRUTH. This was in the 22d year of my age.

While we were at Boston, I went one day to the Quakers' meeting, not expecting to find what I wanted, but from a motive of curiosity. At this meeting there was a woman spoke, at which I was a little surprised, for I had never heard one before. I looked on her with pity for her ignorance, and in contempt of her