

Lady Lucy Barry and Evangelical Reading on the First Franklin Expedition

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ABSTRACT. This article examines the relationship between Lady Lucy Barry and John Franklin. Barry has been dismissed by other writers as a fanatic who had only a passing influence on the explorer's religious beliefs. Though their friendship ended after Franklin's marriage to Eleanor Porden in August 1823, Barry's Evangelical faith, as expressed through the books she presented to the members of the first Franklin expedition, had already shaped both Franklin's own understanding of his Arctic experiences and the literary representation of them in his *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22*. In the narrative, both Franklin and his companion John Richardson affirmed the great value of religious books and practices in helping them to endure the sufferings of the journey. As a result, the public came to revere Arctic explorers as Christian heroes. Without Lady Lucy Barry and her books, Arctic exploration might never have come to hold such an important place in 19th-century British culture.

Key words: Sir John Franklin, Arctic expeditions, books and reading, religion, evangelicalism

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article porte sur la relation qui a existé entre Lady Lucy Barry et John Franklin. Barry était considérée par les autres écrivains comme une fanatique qui n'a eu qu'une influence passagère sur les croyances religieuses de l'explorateur. Bien que leur amitié ait pris fin lorsque Franklin a épousé Eleanor Porden en août 1823, la foi évangélique de Barry, telle qu'exprimée dans les livres qu'elle a présentés aux membres de la première expédition de Franklin, avait déjà façonné la façon dont Franklin vivait son expérience dans l'Arctique et sa représentation littéraire de celle-ci dans son récit intitulé *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22*. Dans ce récit, Franklin et son compagnon John Richardson affirmaient la grande valeur des pratiques et livres religieux en ce sens que ces derniers les avaient aidés à endurer les souffrances découlant de leur expédition. Par conséquent, la société en général en était venue à révéler les explorateurs de l'Arctique à titre de héros chrétiens. Sans Lady Lucy Barry et ses livres, l'exploration de l'Arctique n'aurait peut-être jamais occupé une place aussi importante dans la culture britannique du XIX^e siècle.

Mots clés : Sir John Franklin, expéditions dans l'Arctique, livres et lecture, religion, évangélicisme

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INTRODUCTION

The role played by Lady Lucy Barry in the life of Sir John Franklin was first revealed in 1930, when Edith Mary Gell published a biography of Franklin's first wife, Eleanor Porden. Gell printed a dramatic exchange of letters between Franklin and Porden that took place shortly before their marriage. Porden objected to Franklin's intensely held religious views, which she believed had been unduly influenced by Barry. So strong were her feelings on this point that the engagement was nearly broken off. In the end, however, love triumphed, and Barry was heard of no more in the book.

Rather oddly, Gell did not trouble to explain who Lady Lucy Barry was or exactly what her religious convictions were. In one of his letters to Porden, Franklin described Barry and her friends as "belong[ing] perhaps to what is termed the Calvinistic part of our own Church"—that is, as evangelical Christians who held many beliefs in common

with dissenting sects like the Methodists, but who nevertheless remained members of the Church of England (Gell, 1930:216). Methodist theology was sometimes described as "Calvinistic" because of its emphasis on human weakness and sinfulness and on the acceptance of God's grace as the only way to salvation. Possibly Gell, with an early 20th-century English audience in mind, felt that Franklin's comment provided sufficient information for readers. However, as the decades passed and religion began to play less and less of a role in English life, confusion arose. In his 2002 biography of Franklin, English author Martyn Beardsley claimed that Barry "headed a group of Calvinists." Beardsley noted, correctly, that Eleanor Porden regarded Barry as a "fanatic," and then added that this view was "probably shared by much of London society" (Beardsley, 2002:65). Beardsley's assertions were readily accepted by reviewers, who commended his treatment of the disputes between Franklin and Porden on the subject of religion as among the best parts of his book (see Potter, 2002; Barr, 2003).

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Had Lady Lucy actually been a Calvinist or Methodist, she would indeed have been regarded as eccentric and fanatical by the great majority of those in her aristocratic milieu, for whom membership in the state-sanctioned Church of England was a badge of social acceptability as much as (or in some cases even more than) it was a sign of religious faith. To be an Anglican denoted unswerving loyalty to king and country, while Dissenters were often radical in their politics. Yet Methodism—the “religion of the heart,” as it was known—held a strong appeal for many politically conservative members of the upper class. Members of the Evangelical faction within the Church of England believed that for too many Anglicans, religion had become a mere matter of outward form. The Evangelicals sought regeneration and renewal through personal piety and missionary zeal. Such changes, they believed, would transform their church into the firmest possible foundation for state authority (see Brown, 1961; Bradley, 1976). Far from being a lone fanatic, then, Barry belonged to a strong and vocal group of wealthy men and women who had a revolutionary effect on the mainstream culture of their time, becoming the parents of the Victorians in far more than the literal sense.

Eleanor Porden’s statements about Barry cannot be taken as the full, unbiased truth, since the situation evidently aroused strong emotions in Franklin’s fiancée. Franklin and Barry corresponded, perhaps extensively, but unfortunately neither side of the correspondence seems to have survived. However, it is possible to glean some very interesting information about both Barry herself and her influence on Franklin from other sources. The religious books with which she presented him before he departed on his first Arctic expedition had a profound effect on the explorer. “To her Ladyship ... I owe much and I trust shall ever acknowledge my gratitude. From the books she put in my hands I was certainly induced to read the Scriptures more attentively (in fact daily) and then I received through the blessing of God stronger grounds of hope in His divine mercy and goodness,” he told Porden (in Gell, 1930:216). Reading Lady Lucy’s books brought about a remarkable change in Franklin’s character, a change that would endure for a lifetime. The books also had their effect on his companions John Richardson and Robert Hood. In one of the most famous episodes in polar history, Hood was engaged in reading one of these volumes at the very moment of his death.

When Franklin and Richardson looked back on and wrote about their experiences, religion was essential both to their own understanding of past events and to the literary representations they offered their compatriots. The story of Lady Lucy Barry’s books can therefore reveal much about the mental world of these British explorers and their reading audience. The subject of books and reading on polar expeditions is an important one that has only begun to be explored. As David and Deirdre Stam have pointed out, reading was one of the chief activities available in winter quarters, and many explorers also carried books with them on their sledge journeys (Stam and Stam, 2002:113). Not only did the books taken on the first Franklin expedition

profoundly affect Franklin himself and his companions: they also shaped the writing of a very influential narrative, which in its turn provided reading for later expeditions.

WHO WAS LADY LUCY BARRY?

Juliana Lucy Annesley was born in October 1772. She was the fourth child and eldest daughter of an Anglo-Irish aristocrat, Arthur Annesley, Viscount Valentia (1744–1816), and his wife Lucy, the daughter of George, Lord Lyttelton. In 1793 Lord Valentia would become the Earl of Mountnorris (Collen, 1840:527). The writer Mary Martha Sherwood described Lady Valentia as “a beautiful, delicate woman” and Lord Valentia as “one of the handsomest men I ever remember” (Kelly, 1854:37). The Annesley family owned extensive estates in Kerry, Armagh, Cork, and Wexford, and another estate, inherited from the Lytteltons, at Arley in Worcestershire. Religion played an important role on both sides of the little girl’s ancestry. The Annesleys were distant cousins of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, through his mother, Susanna Annesley. Juliana Lucy’s maternal grandfather, Lord Lyttelton (a politician and minor poet), was well known for his piety and exemplary life (see Davies, 1939). Lady Valentia’s character resembled her father’s. “Kind was her heart, and Faith, a cincture bright/ Around her soul diffus’d a heavenly light,” wrote her son’s tutor after her death (Butt, 1793, 1:202).

However, there were also some famous family scandals to be lived down. Lord Valentia’s father was a self-confessed bigamist whose marriage to the beautiful Juliana Donovan may or may not have been valid. As a result, Lord Valentia’s legitimacy was called into question, and he had to contend with a rival claimant to his title. (Miss Donovan is variously described in the published accounts of the case as a respectable young girl of good family and as a tavern keeper’s daughter.) Lady Valentia’s brother Thomas Lyttelton was among the most notorious 18th-century rakes. Thomas’s misconduct was so flagrant and so widely known that he was often simply called “the bad Lord Lyttelton” as the easiest way of distinguishing him from his father, the “good” lord (see Blunt, 1936).

Lady Valentia died in 1783. Lord Valentia then married Sarah Cavendish and began a second family. In all, he fathered 11 surviving children. In July 1789, Lucy Annesley married John Maxwell, the oldest son of Henry Maxwell, Lord Bishop of Meath. The bride was only 16; her husband was six years older. John Maxwell inherited the estate of his grandmother’s family, the Barrys, at Newtown Barry (now called Bunclody) in County Wexford. He then changed his surname to Barry. For many years Barry—an uncompromising Tory in his politics—was the Member of Parliament for Cavan. He was also the colonel of the Cavan militia and so was generally known as Colonel Barry. Barry was extremely rich, and he would become still richer. In 1823 he inherited the title Baron Farnham and the large estate in County Cavan that went with it. When he died in 1838, his

income was estimated at £30,000 a year—three times the amount enjoyed by Mr. Darcy in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (Anon, 1838).

The marriage, though childless, seems to have been an exceptionally happy one. A small collection of letters from Lady Lucy to Colonel Barry (apparently the only letters by her to survive) show that even after 30 years of married life, she still addressed him as “My dearest Love” and complained of how lonely she was in “my *solitary* chamber” when he was away (Barry, 1819a, b). Several sources describe Lady Lucy as a beauty, and it seems that during her twenties and thirties she happily enjoyed the pleasures of both society and home life. She was known for her exquisite taste and her success in landscape gardening at the Newtown Barry estate (Wakefield, 1812I:49–50) and also for her careful cultivation of feminine charm: the novelist Maria Edgeworth wrote scornfully of how Lady Lucy “never mended a pen for herself ‘because the men always like to be asked to do it for one’” (Edgeworth, 1971:358). But as she approached the age of 40, her outlook became more sober. In 1811 the Evangelical writer Hannah More reported to her friend Sir William Weller Pepys that Lady Lucy, formerly “a little gay,” had “become very serious.” More also wrote approvingly that Lady Lucy was “lovely” in both “mind and person” (in Roberts, 1837, 2:183). Pepys replied that she reminded him more than anyone else he knew of lines by Milton: “When oft converse with heavenly Habitants/ Begins to cast a beam on th’ outward shape/ The unpolluted temple of the mind” (Pepys, 1904, 2:308; his quotation from Milton’s *Comus* is not quite accurate).

In early middle age, Lady Lucy was increasingly preoccupied with charitable work. In 1812 she became a patroness of the Dublin Ladies Auxiliary Bible Society; two years later, she agreed to serve as vice-president of the Ladies’ Dublin Church Missionary Association. The first of these organizations was affiliated with the British and Foreign Bible Society; the second, with the Church Missionary Society (Owen, 1817; Missionary Register, 1814). Colonel Barry was also strongly committed to evangelical work (Brown, 1961:280n3, 358), and it seems that such activities served as a bond between them.

Shortly afterwards, one of Lady Lucy’s young half-sisters was involved in a minor scandal that may have done something to tarnish the family name. Indeed, there were two scandals, but only the second of them became known to the public. The first, however, has proved far more interesting to later generations. In 1810, Lady Frances Annesley had married James Wedderburn Webster, a friend of Lord Byron. (Lady Frances’ first child, a daughter, was named Lucy; this suggests that the sisters had a close relationship despite the 21-year difference in their ages.) Like Lady Lucy, Lady Frances was very young (17) at the time of her wedding. Her brother later told Byron “that she married to get rid of her family—who are ill tempered—& had not been *out* two months so that to use a fox-hunting phrase she was ‘killed in covert’” (Byron, 1974:129). Unlike her more fortunate sister, Lady Frances soon had cause to regret her

hasty choice. Webster was a hypocritical philanderer who boasted of both his own conquests and his wife’s virtue.

When Byron paid the couple a visit in the autumn of 1813, it was not long before he began a flirtation with his friend’s pretty, if pale and quiet, blonde wife. He observed sardonically that although she was “a thorough devotee – & takes prayers morning and evening besides being measured for a new bible once a quarter,” Lady Frances seemed only too eager for his advances (Byron, 1974:137–138). Indeed, she was remarkably quick to admit her feelings for the famous poet. “[P]oor thing – she is either the most *artful* or *artless* of her age (20) I ever encountered,” he wrote in amazement (Byron, 1974:147). The affair was never physically consummated, and Byron soon tired of the long, emotionally overwrought letters in which Lady Frances both declared her all-consuming love for him and affirmed that she would rather die than “deviate from the paths of Honor & Virtue” (in Stewart, 2008:61). In January 1815, he married Anne Isabella Milbanke. Lady Frances then entered into a far more open and reckless flirtation with the Duke of Wellington, carried on mainly just before and after the battle of Waterloo. This episode was the subject of widespread gossip, and it was also reported in the press. However, Webster successfully sued one of the papers that had alleged his wife was Wellington’s mistress, and no definite proof of a physical affair has ever come to light.

Since there is no detailed description of Lady Lucy, Byron’s pen portrait of Lady Frances is of considerable interest. It certainly resembles the much briefer accounts of Lady Lucy’s appearance and manner. The two women were presumably raised and educated in much the same way, and so it may reasonably be taken as an indication of what the friend who exerted such a strong influence over young John Franklin was like. “As far as I can pretend to judge of her disposition and character,” Byron wrote to his confidante Lady Melbourne,

she is ... very handsome – & very gentle though sometimes decisive – fearfully romantic – & singularly warm in her *affections* but I should think – of a *cold* temperament – yet I have my doubts on that point ... accomplished (as all decently educated women are) & clever though her style [is] a little too *German* [i.e., pedantic] – no dashing ... talker – but never ... saying a silly thing ... good tempered ... [but] jealous as *myself* – the ne plus ultra of green-eyed Monstrosity – seldom abusing other people but listening to it with great patience – these qualifications with an unassuming and sweet voice & very soft manner constitute the *bust* (all I can yet pretend to model) of my present Idol.

(Byron, 1974:142–143)

Though there must have been some differences in the temperaments of the two sisters, Lady Frances’ beauty, her cleverness (and perhaps the touch of pedantry that went with it), and above all her sweet, gentle, “very soft” manner were qualities shared by Lady Lucy.

BARRY AND THE FIRST FRANKLIN EXPEDITION

Among the good works to which the Barrys gave their patronage was the distribution of Bibles to soldiers and sailors. They had a wide acquaintance among naval officers, which they sometimes used to gain midshipmen's berths for young relatives and friends. They also did their best to encourage piety among lieutenants and captains. "Ten thousand thanks for watching over H. & bringing him into the influence of everything rational & religious. These are precious moments now that he is on shore, & I do trust that he will lay in a large stock of Faith, Hope, & Charity, such as shall make up for every disadvantage on board poor *Favourite* both in respect to himself & to those whom God has committed to his trust," Lady Lucy wrote to her husband in 1819 (Barry, 1819b). As part of this interest in the spiritual welfare of sailors, Lady Lucy provided some religious books for use on David Buchan's 1818 Arctic expedition. Franklin was the commander of Buchan's second ship, HMS *Trent*. Some of the books were apparently sent directly to him; they were likely accompanied by a letter from Lady Lucy, but she and Franklin did not meet until the following year. It was expected that the ships might winter in the north; as it turned out, however, the explorers returned in the autumn of 1818. There had been little if any time for reading, and neither Franklin nor anyone else on board the two ships had made use of Lady Lucy's gift.

However, Franklin kept the books, and in April 1819, a few months before he set out on his first overland expedition, he was formally introduced to Lady Lucy. "She is a most amiable charming woman with a countenance of the utmost benignity and kindness bespeaking at once a heavenly regard to her Maker, and the most affectionate love for her fellow Creatures," he wrote enthusiastically to his sister Isabella. Clearly, even in her late forties Lady Lucy retained the characteristic attractiveness of the Annesley family. Franklin was eager to know her better. "I shall endeavour to cultivate her friendship," he told Isabella. Lady Lucy's motives were not purely disinterested; Franklin observed that she was "desirous to send a young Friend with me." He was not dismayed by this aspect of the situation. Indeed, he wrote that he was "anxious" to have the unnamed young officer as a member of the expedition, and he noted with pleasure that such an arrangement would "probably produce frequent communication" with Lady Lucy. Even if the plan fell through, as it evidently did, Franklin thought that Lady Lucy "would be desirous that I should occasionally visit her" (in Davis, 1997:196). How far their acquaintance developed before he left for Rupert's Land cannot be determined, but it is hardly surprising that he took her books with him and read them carefully during the Arctic winter.

There is no full list of the volumes provided by Lady Lucy, but several of them are referred to in the letters written by Franklin and other members of the expedition. The collection included both older and more recent publications. Among the older works were William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, Adapted to the State*

and Condition of All Orders of Christians (1729) and Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745). Both of these had long been regarded as standard works. Law's *A Serious Call* had profoundly affected both Samuel Johnson and John Wesley. Wesley's popular abridgement of the book was first published in 1794, and it may well have been this shorter version that was given to the explorers. Selections from the writings of the French archbishop François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon (1651–1715) had been translated into English and published under the title *Pious Reflections for Every Day in the Month* in the late 18th century; a recent edition of this little book was also included. Fénelon was among Lady Lucy's own favourite authors: in a letter to Colonel Barry, she remarked that one of Fénelon's prayers had "for the last Fortnight been almost continually on my Heart & Lips" (Barry, n.d.). Then there were William Wilberforce's *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes of this Country, Contrasted with Real Religion* (1797) and Edward Bickersteth's *A Scripture Help, Designed to Assist in Reading the Bible Profitably* (1816). Wilberforce was, of course, one of the most prominent members of the Evangelical movement and a leader in the campaign against the slave trade. Bickersteth, who may well have been a personal friend of the Barrys, was the secretary of the Church Missionary Society. Finally, the books included copies of the New Testament and the Book of Common Prayer, the editions likely being chosen for their small size and portability.

Even as a child, Franklin had shown marked religious tendencies. As a result, his father decided he should become a clergyman. However, at the age of 12, young John firmly rebelled against this plan and insisted on entering the navy. At some point during his teens or early twenties he had read the books by Law and Doddridge, but he found them of little interest. In the winter of 1820–21, his response was very different. "Then I could find neither beauty nor force in their language and reasoning; but now I think they abound in both, and, if read with a serious desire to gain information on the most important subjects of life, much fruit may be gathered from them. I would recommend them most earnestly to all my dear relations," he wrote to his sister Henrietta from the expedition's winter quarters, Fort Enterprise (in Traill, 1896:78–79). Franklin did not record his response to Wilberforce's book in this letter, but its nature can be deduced from the fact that he gave the name Wilberforce Falls to one of the most impressive geographical features discovered on his expedition.

Franklin also read the Bible more carefully and systematically than he had ever done before. "To this sacred volume I have applied for grounds of hope, comfort, and support, and never in vain ... I have been amazed at the state of ignorance under which I laboured with respect to its blessed contents," he told Henrietta, adding that "our Blessed Lord's example hath shown, and every portion of His Holy Word declareth, that the Christian's life must be a continual warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil; he must

never relax his efforts, but strive continually against his evil passions and propensities, and pray constantly that he may be strengthened by the power of grace to surmount them” (in Traill, 1896:78–79). To Henrietta’s husband, the Reverend Thomas Bailey Wright, Franklin expressed his conviction that religion should be a greater part of everyday life. He also denied that Lady Lucy’s brand of Christianity was gloomy or fanatical—a standard accusation made against Evangelicalism by more conventional Anglicans (Franklin, 1820). The disclaimer is not entirely borne out by Franklin’s own earnest and rather humourless letters from this period. However, the emotional intensity so characteristic of Evangelical religion was to serve Franklin and his comrades well in the year to come.

Among the lessons most consistently preached by these books was the necessity of enduring adversity and afflictions with patience and even cheerfulness. “The body of sin must be put to the torture – We must humble ourselves, we must bend and creep, and become little,” wrote Fénelon. “Woe unto us, while the world smiles upon us, and the ways we are in [seem] void of troubles: difficulties and perplexities are the surest marks of the way to heaven. Let us be aware, therefore, how we follow the multitudes, who walk by broad and commodious ways; let us rather seek the traces of the few; let us seek out the footsteps of the saints along the rugged path of repentance.” He implored: “O suffering and adorable Jesus! to whose sacrifice I unite myself, do thou communicate to me, together with thy cross, also thy spirit of love and resignation. Make me think less of my sufferings, than of the happiness of suffering with thee. Make me love thee, and I shall not fear the cross; and although my sufferings should be very great, yet they will not be greater than I am willing to endure” (Fénelon, 1800:5–6, 35).

When the explorers set off for the Arctic Ocean in the spring of 1821, at least some of Lady Lucy’s books went with them. In the last stages of their desperate return march across the barren lands, they still retained a few of the smaller volumes, including Fénelon’s *Pious Reflections*, Bickersteth’s *Scripture Help*, the New Testament, and the Book of Common Prayer. When Hood became too weak to continue, he remained behind with Richardson and seaman John Hepburn while the rest of the party proceeded towards the expedition’s winter quarters, Fort Enterprise. Richardson later recounted that the books had “proved of incalculable benefit to us. We read portions of them to each other as we lay in bed, in addition to the morning and evening service, and found that they inspired us on each perusal with so strong a sense of the omnipresence of a beneficent God, that our situation, even in these wilds, appeared no longer destitute; and we conversed, not only with calmness, but with cheerfulness, detailing with unrestrained confidence the past events of our lives, and dwelling with hope on our future prospects” (Richardson, 1984:148; also in Franklin, 1823:449). Hood was particularly fond of repeating a prayer that had been appended to Fénelon’s book:

What may befall me this day, O God, I know not. But I do know that nothing can happen to me which Thou hast not foreseen, ruled, willed, and ordained from all eternity, and that suffices me. I adore Thy eternal and inscrutable designs. I submit to them with all my heart through love to Thee. I accept all, I make unto Thee a sacrifice of all, and to this poor sacrifice I add that of my Divine Saviour. In His name, and for the sake of His infinite merits, I ask of Thee that I may be endowed with patience under suffering and with the perfect submission which is due to all which Thou wilt or permittest.

(in McIlraith, 1868:118–119)

The prayer was written by the pious Madame Elisabeth, the younger sister of King Louis XVI, and frequently repeated by her during her imprisonment in the Temple. It was recorded by François Hue, the king’s servant, whose recollections (published in 1806) provided the basis for numerous popular accounts of the French royal family’s sufferings, such as *Authentic Memoirs of the Revolution in France* (Anon, 1817).

Richardson’s party was soon joined by one of the expedition’s voyageurs, Michel Teroahauté. Though Richardson and Hood could not know it, Teroahauté was not the only voyageur who had turned back because he felt unable to go on. Three others—Jean-Baptiste Belanger, Ignace Perrault, and Antonio Fontano—had also done so, but none of them were ever seen again. Teroahauté had meat with him. He claimed it was wolf’s meat, a story that the starving men readily accepted. Strengthened by this food, Teroahauté wanted to follow the main party, but he did not know how to navigate, and Hood was “now so weak as to be scarcely able to sit up at the fireside, and complained that the least breeze of wind seemed to blow through his frame” (Richardson, in Franklin, 1823:454). Soon afterwards, following an argument with Teroahauté, Hood was found dead of a gunshot wound. Teroahauté claimed it was suicide, but the ball had entered at the back of the young officer’s head. “*Bickersteth’s Scripture Help* was lying open beside the body, as if it had fallen from his hand, and it is probable, that he was reading it at the instant of his death,” Richardson recorded (in Franklin, 1823:456–457). Teroahauté’s subsequent behaviour was suspicious enough to convince Richardson and Hepburn that they would be his next victims. “[A]s I was thoroughly convinced of the necessity of such a dreadful act ... I put an end to his life by shooting him through the head with a pistol,” wrote Richardson (in Franklin, 1823:458; see also Cavell, 2007). According to Harriet Martineau (1869:234), who knew Richardson in his old age, “the sufferings of that fearful time, and especially the necessary homicide, left their traces for life on [his] countenance ... The frequent remark of strangers, to the end of his life, was that his face had the expression of a man who had suffered to excess.”

Richardson and Hepburn then made their way to Fort Enterprise, where they expected to find supplies. There were none. Franklin and three of the voyageurs, all very

weak, remained at the fort; another party, led by George Back, had gone to seek help from the Yellowknife, the Native band hired by Franklin as hunters. At Richardson's urging, Franklin began to read aloud from the New Testament and the prayer book each morning and evening. This practice, as he later wrote, "serv[ed] to re-animate our hope in the mercy of the Omnipotent, who alone could save and deliver us" (Franklin, 1823:464). Though the party tried to keep their spirits up by "conversing on common and light subjects," they also "sometimes discussed with seriousness and earnestness topics connected with religion" (Franklin, 1823:466). A week later relief arrived; unfortunately, it was too late to save the lives of voyageurs Joseph Peltier and François Semandré.

Both Franklin and Richardson would always remember their first Arctic journey as a time of religious exaltation, and even joy, as well as suffering. "I never experienced Such ... happiness from the comforts of religion as in the moments of the greatest distress, when there scarcely appeared any reason to hope that my existence could be prolonged beyond a few days. It becomes us therefore to praise the Lord for his goodness and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of Men," Franklin wrote to his brother Willingham (in Davis, 1997:202). Richardson told his wife, "I bless the Almighty Protector of the universe that He was pleased to comfort me under every trial by the consolation of religion. The consciousness of being constantly under His all-seeing eye, and for ever an object of His paternal care, conjoined with His glorious declaration that 'all things work together for good to those who love Him,' supported me under every trial, and produced a calmness of mind and resignation to His will, under the prospect of approaching death, that I could not previously have hoped for." He concluded by observing: "If it were possible that any man could remain an infidel in such a situation, how dreadful would his suffering be!" (in McIlraith, 1868:112). Elsewhere, Richardson wrote that if only Hood's life had been spared, he would look back on the time of their greatest distress "with unalloyed delight" (Richardson, 1984:148; also in Franklin, 1823:449). Hood's father, the Reverend Richard Hood, had apparently feared before the expedition began that his son was falling away from his faith. Though "broken-hearted" at the loss of "[m]y dear, dear Robert, the pride of my little family," Reverend Hood thanked Richardson for having helped to revive "those principles of religion, which I trust he had never entirely forgotten." Robert was "lost to me for ever in this life. But ... I trust that he will not be lost in the next" (in McIlraith, 1868:117).

AFTER THE EXPEDITION

Amid the chorus of approval that greeted Franklin's *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, the voices of Evangelical reviewers were particularly strong. "The expedition seems to have been conducted in the spirit of that simple and sincere devotion which hallows and

dignifies the most manly, as well as the mildest graces of human character. In every circumstance ... we are presented with a palpable and triumphant proof of the superiority of that courage, which emanates from a religious dependence upon the power and promise of God, over that which is supplied by mere instinct and constitution," declared the *British Review*. After quoting Richardson's testimony about the reading of religious books, the writer commented: "Such were the resources, such the supports, to which these brave men turned in the hour of their worst earthly extremity; and from which they derived a peace, which the world can neither give, nor take away" (Anon, 1824a:24–25). The reviewer considered the story of the expedition as part of a much broader story in which Britain, awakened to its spiritual responsibilities by the threat of invasion from godless, secular France, first triumphed over the enemy forces and then carried religious truth and scientific enlightenment to every part of the globe. The explorers' survival demonstrated the workings of divine providence; therefore, religious thoughts could "cast a chastened brightness over the recollection of their common perils, miseries, friendship, support, and deliverance" (Anon, 1824a:5). The *Christian Observer* agreed that it was "truly delightful and edifying to observe the steady piety of the English party." The writer unhesitatingly attributed the explorers' fortitude to "the operation of religious hopes, feelings, and principles, kept alive by frequent acts of devotion, and displaying themselves in a spirit of profound resignation to the will of God, attended with a cheering trust in the continued protection of his good Providence." After describing the death of Hood, the reviewer took the opportunity to recommend a new book by Bickersteth, *Practical Remarks on the Prophecies* (Anon, 1824b:168; on the writing, publication, and reception of the narrative, see also Cavell, 2008:98–115).

Presumably, Lady Lucy was equally pleased with the results of her gift. She was not mentioned by name in Franklin's narrative, but the fact that she was the donor of the books was likely well known in Evangelical circles. Moreover, Franklin had named Barry's Island after her, though (perhaps feeling that a lady's name should not be brought to public notice) he discreetly claimed that Colonel Barry was the person he intended to honour (Franklin, 1823:394). Declining the opportunity to be lionized by London society, Franklin visited the Barrys frequently and appeared more and more interested in the religious ideas that prevailed among their circle of friends.

However, Lady Lucy was far from being the only, or even the most important, woman in Franklin's life at this time. Soon after his return to England, he had asked Eleanor Porden to marry him. Like Lady Lucy, Eleanor came into Franklin's life as a result of the Buchan expedition—and interestingly, in this relationship reading also played an important part. Aged only 22 in the spring of 1818, Eleanor was already the published author of a long poem, *The Veils*. After a visit to the Arctic ships at Deptford, she was inspired to write another poem, called *The Arctic Expeditions*. When Franklin read it, he immediately sought an

introduction. They became better acquainted in the interval between Buchan's expedition and Franklin's departure in 1819.

The daughter of a successful architect, Eleanor was an heiress, but her father was a self-made man, and her social standing was consequently well below Lady Lucy's. In appearance, too, she was very different. By the standards of the time, Eleanor was no beauty. She was small and graceful, rather childish in appearance, with a round face, snub nose, and dark hair. Her archly playful ways were combined with sharp intelligence and a keen sense of humour. She did not possess the "unassuming and sweet voice" and "very soft manner" of the Annesley sisters. Instead, when she could not make her points through playfulness, Eleanor was willing to confront her fiancé directly and bluntly. Her sister Henrietta, who had more conventional notions of femininity, later noted disapprovingly that Eleanor "maintained her own opinions too stoutly against him, when it would have been more graceful to have yielded" (in Woodward, 1951:148).

From the time of their engagement on, Franklin and Porden frequently sparred on the subject of religion. She had been raised as a conventional Anglican of the Regency period, and she therefore considered it no sin to read novels, write letters, or socialize with her literary friends on Sundays. Her father was from the north of England, where religious dissent was strong, but his professional life led him into very different circles. He rose to high favour with the worldly Prince of Wales (later King George IV), for whom he built the royal stable at Brighton—a huge, ornate, glass-domed building in what was described as an "Indo-Saracenic" or "Mughal" style. William Porden viewed religious enthusiasm with suspicion. He encouraged his daughter to read the Bible, but to shun books like Bickersteth's. "[H]e never admitted a comment[ary] on the Scriptures in his House," Eleanor told Franklin. "I think that having witnessed in his youth much of the evils of Sectarianism led him to carry his system too far, for I know I often felt in want of Historical notes, and am afraid you will frequently be shocked at my ignorance. But on the whole I think him right." In Eleanor's view, "The simpler our Religion is, the better. To love our God and obey his commands with cheerfulness is almost the only precept we require in our duty toward Heaven, and to do in all as we would be done by, assuredly comprizes all that can be taught of our duties to our fellow creatures. ... as for books of Moral Instruction, they are generally mere dilutions of the Sacred Text. I own I consider my time more profitably employed in drawing my own deductions" (in Gell, 1930:148).

Eleanor's arguments, clear-headed and praiseworthy though they appear to modern readers, were hardly calculated to set Franklin's mind at rest. By Evangelical standards, she was merely a "nominal" Christian. Nominal Christians were well intentioned and lived virtuous enough lives, but they lacked what the Evangelicals called vital religion—"a turning the whole mind to God," as Hannah More described it (in Bradley, 1976:20). Both More

and Wilberforce directed their eloquence to precisely such people. These writers and others like them argued that true Christians must first acknowledge their own weakness and helplessness. They would then acutely realize that only through Christ's intercession could they be saved. As Wilberforce indignantly wrote, nominal Christians seemed almost arrogant in their assumption that they would achieve salvation through their own virtues, not through Christ's sacrifice. A later writer commented on how powerfully Wilberforce had drawn a contrast "between Christianity lowered, misapprehended, obscured, falsified, by the prevailing doctrine and morals of the day, and Christianity ... as it is loved and obeyed by those in every age, who, like the primitive Christians, or our Reformers of the sixteenth century ... live unto God by the faith of a crucified Saviour" (in Wilberforce, 1833:vii).

Franklin was deeply distressed by the possibility that his fiancée "did not admit ... the intercession of our Saviour." He later explained that because "this is the ground of my Faith ... the bare apprehension of a contrary reliance being entertained by the friend with whom I had the prospect of passing the remaining portion of my life – gave me inconceivable pain" (in Gell, 1930:214–215). It seems clear that Franklin passed Eleanor's comments on to Lady Lucy, and that the latter considered it her duty to guard her new protégé against the possible effects of marriage with a woman of undesirably lax doctrinal views. Almost certainly at Lady Lucy's urging, Franklin sounded Eleanor on one point after another. Though Barry's name was not mentioned in their letters until July 1823—many months after their engagement—Eleanor had long been aware of Franklin's visits to the older woman, and she knew Lady Lucy had developed a very intimate, "almost maternal" relationship with him (in Gell, 1930:199). A certain degree of apprehension, and even jealousy, may well have contributed to the zeal with which Porden defended her own beliefs.

"I have already acquainted you with my ideas respecting the observance of the Sabbath, on this point however I fear we in some degree differ, though probably not essentially. It would afford me the greatest gratification to learn your sentiments on the conversations that have passed between us relative to these important points," Franklin wrote rather stiffly in May 1823. No doubt anticipating the accusation that he was becoming more of a Methodist than an Anglican, he was careful to assure Porden that he remained "a warm admirer of our most excellent Church Establishment and all its institutions" (in Gell, 1930:133). A week later, having received no response on the subject so dear to his heart, he asked her to "pardon my frequent introduction of religious subjects in my letters. I feel most solicitous that we should of all other things entirely agree on this important point" (in Gell, 1930:140). She replied lightly: "I believe ... that no two persons ever thought exactly the same on any subject ... This must be particularly the case in matters of religious belief, but as I trust you are neither Catholic nor Methodist I presume you are not bound to consider me as eternally condemned if it should turn out that we differ on

some point of faith equally above the comprehension of either.” Eleanor observed pointedly that if they were “both sincere disciples of our English Church,” they could disagree only on minor matters, “and such difference, should it exist, can only call on us to begin at home with something of that spirit of toleration which we profess towards all the world.” Then she warned him that he would never find her “over ready to discuss such subjects,” for she firmly believed they were “the bane of Society, in leading to the endless multiplication of sects” (in Gell, 1930:147).

In response, Franklin assumed a conciliatory tone, but he also made it clear that he would not allow the subject to drop. “I do not, my dear friend, expect a perfect conformity in our religious opinions (however desirable it would have been to me) but I should hope and trust that we do not differ on any point of faith, being as we profess both sincere admirers of the excellent Liturgy and instructions of the Church of England,” he wrote. “I am far from venturing to condemn any individual who differs from me in matters of religious faith, on the contrary I feel a high respect for every one whom I see following the dictates of his religion in meekness and humility. And in the partner whom I have selected to share the remaining days of my life I should wish and hope to find an union of sentiment with respect to the practical part of our duties. We certainly differ on these points but I hope a more full expression of each other’s opinions will produce an accordance of sentiment” (in Gell, 1930:151–152). At first glance, this passage appears hypocritical in the extreme: in one breath Franklin claimed to respect and tolerate the opinions of others, but in the next he expressed his conviction that, in the end, Eleanor would conform to his beliefs. Most likely, however, the inconsistency was the result of a conflict between Franklin’s natural inclinations and Lady Lucy’s sterner views. Franklin concluded his letter by affirming that to receive visitors on a Sunday would be “unfavourable to that course of thought and reflexion which I feel to be more congenial to my mind after having attended the worship of my God and Saviour” and by defending the religious books from which he had “received much instruction and benefit ... having been led by them to search the Scriptures with more earnestness than I should probably [otherwise] have done” (in Gell, 1930:152–153).

Matters came to a crisis on 2 July, when Franklin showed Eleanor several letters written to him by Lady Lucy. Because the letters were apparently later destroyed, the only hint of their contents comes from Eleanor’s response, which can hardly have been entirely objective. “I perceive that she is a strong Methodist and very anxious for your conversion,” Eleanor wrote. “I have no doubt her intentions are good, and she appears to have more education and common sense than usually fall to the share of religious enthusiasts, and is therefore but the more dangerous. I read many parts of her letters with unqualified pleasure and was many times beginning to hope I had falsely taken up an impression against her, when I was again shocked and startled by the reappearance of all I feared.” In particular, Eleanor objected

to what she called “the prostitution of Scripture on unnecessary occasions” and to “one passage which approaches to blasphemy” (in Gell, 1930:199–200). Lady Lucy had compared Franklin’s situation to the temptation of Christ. Eleanor assumed that, by implication, her own money, her literary fame, and her love of society placed her in the role of Satan (see Gell, 1930:206).

In response, Eleanor wrote uncompromisingly that if John expected her to follow Lady Lucy’s spiritual precepts, “it is my duty to tell you frankly that you are mistaken.” If he was set on complete conformity between them, then it would be better for the engagement to be broken off (in Gell, 1930:200). If he wished the marriage to go ahead, he must give up his friendship with Lady Lucy. “For her sake,” Eleanor wrote, “I deeply deplore the aberration of a mind which has evidently been refined and elegant – but for yours – whether I am ever anything to you or not, I conjure you to fly from her acquaintance and from those whose religious feelings resemble hers.” She went on to make a moving plea: “That you should be strongly and deeply impressed with a sense of gratitude for deliverance from sufferings almost unparalleled is but just and natural; you would not deserve the name of Christian if you were not. Do not however I beseech you turn the Mercies of Heaven into a curse, by letting the present state of your mind induce you to adopt that dark and unsocial view of human nature ... to which I feel you are somewhat inclined” (in Gell, 1930:206–207).

Franklin immediately backed down. “I can assure you my dear friend you mistake in supposing me a Methodist,” he told her. “I can by no means enter into the exclusive ideas and opinions which they entertain ... nor do I go the length which my friend Lady Lucy Barry has done in the letters I submitted to your perusal” (in Gell, 1930:209–210). A few days later, he assured her of his “sincere affection” and insisted that he had “not the least disposition” to “judge others” (in Gell, 1930:214–215). However, Franklin also cautiously affirmed that religious emotion, as opposed to controversies over religious dogma, would always be of central importance in his life. Eleanor had remarked rather dismissively that there was “no nourishment in pepper” (in Gell, 1930:207). Franklin’s response was quiet but uncompromising: “The emotions I have had [during the expedition] were indeed strong, they afforded me the greatest consolation at the time, and thanks be to God continue to do so” (in Gell, 1930:221).

John and Eleanor were married on 6 August 1823. There is no indication that Lady Lucy played any further part in Franklin’s life. On 24 July 1823, her husband had inherited his title. As a peer, he could no longer be a member of the House of Commons, and Irish peerages did not automatically convey membership in the House of Lords. Therefore, the Barrys likely spent less time in London than they had formerly done, at least for a few years. If this was the case, it would have been all the easier for Franklin to place a distance between himself and Lady Lucy. In 1825, Lord Farnham was selected as one of the representative Irish peers who sat in the House of Lords, but by that time Franklin

had departed on his second expedition. Shortly after he left, Eleanor (who had been in very poor health since the birth of a daughter in June 1824) died of tuberculosis.

As a representative peer, Lord Farnham became one of the most strenuous opponents of Catholic emancipation. In the late 1820s, his campaign to convert his Irish tenants to Protestantism became notorious. The initial success of this venture (in which several other landowners joined) was great enough for it to be dubbed the “second Reformation.” Lord Farnham’s supporters argued that he was an unusually enlightened landlord, and that the tenants were moved by his benevolent ways; his Catholic critics, on the other hand, alleged that he made use of bribery and threats (see Anon, 1827, 1833a; Hempton and Hill, 1992). During this episode, the Farnhams warmly welcomed Methodist preachers, one of whom called Lady Farnham “the soul of the religious movement” in Ireland (in Reilly, 1847:271). But despite the best efforts of the couple and their associates, the Catholic Relief Act was passed in 1829, and many of the Irish converts soon returned to their original faith. Perhaps worn out by these disappointments, Lady Farnham died on 10 October 1833 at the age of 61 (Anon, 1833b). She and Franklin may well have been in contact between his return from the Arctic in 1827 and the time of her death, but by then Franklin had come to prefer other, more moderate Evangelical associates. For example, during the 1830s he formed a close friendship with Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School. It was through Arnold that Franklin met the Reverend Philip Gell, who later married John and Eleanor’s daughter (Stanley, 1877:139–140).

Jane Griffin, who became Franklin’s second wife in 1828, was not unusually ardent in her religious beliefs, yet in this second marriage there were no such conflicts as had marked his relationship with Eleanor. Franklin’s faith was outwardly quiet and unostentatious, but inwardly it always retained the emotional intensity of his first overland journey. In February 1826, still profoundly afflicted by Eleanor’s death, he wrote to Thomas Bailey Wright from Great Bear Lake that the “kind attentions of friends” might “prevent the outward expression of grief [sic],” but he could find no inner peace until

the overflowings of the heart have been poured out before the Throne of Heavenly Mercy – and that relief has been imparted which the Almighty alone can bestow. The exercise of prayer under such circumstances is as delightful as the duty is important; and were I to search for some of the happiest moments of my life I should undoubtedly look to those in which I was thus occupied. Then it is when the mind, bowed down, pre-eminently feels its entire dependence on God, and learns duly to appreciate the inestimable value of our Blessed Saviour’s mediation which hath opened a way of access to Him. Your weakness, your instability, must then appear in all their nakedness, and you feel the necessity of our Redeemer’s merits to plead for you,

and you are convinced that to gain his intercession his Commandment must be obeyed. (Franklin, 1826)

However, Franklin was careful to add that such spiritual practices should not lead anyone to withdraw from society, thus falling into “indifference to the anxieties and concerns of others.” He recounted that he had forced himself to join the rest of the party in their winter social pastimes, rather than indulge “in sorrow to excess” (Franklin, 1826).

Lady Lucy Barry’s books, then, had left an indelible mark on Franklin, even though his initial zeal was moderated by his first wife’s more conventional views. Franklin’s published narrative, in turn, had left its own mark on the wider British culture of his day. The endurance of suffering with Christian resignation was held by almost every writer to be a defining, and highly desirable, characteristic of the polar explorer. This belief grew even stronger during the Victorian age, as Evangelicalism gained an ever more influential place in British culture. In 1860, a writer in the religious magazine *Good Words* claimed that the narratives of Arctic exploration had shown “how courage may go hand in hand with Christian faith and trust in God, and win from these its strength and power” and “how the bravest of our heroes have also been ... the most reliant on His hand, whose wonders in the mighty deep they, most of all men, had learnt to know and understand!” The writer declared that Arctic books “should have a precious value in our eyes” because “to the believer in the faith that upheld [the explorers] in their severest trials, they have bequeathed associations not soon forgotten; as with full heart he turns over the record of their wanderings; musing, it may be, on the ‘Scripture Help’ of Hood, preserved through all his weary journey to drop from his hand in death” (Anon, 1860:113). The idea that Franklin and other British Arctic explorers deliberately sought out, and perhaps even enjoyed, martyrdom is certainly false (see Cavell, 2009). However, the existence of popular religious discourses that could transform and idealize suffering was of immense significance. Without the image of the stoical Christian explorer-hero who would, if necessary, die with a prayer on his lips and a religious book in his hand, it is unlikely that the long, frustrating search for the Northwest Passage could have caught the public’s attention and held it for so many decades.

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