Summary: The following is an annotated transcription of Lady Grace Mildmay’s autobiographical papers, written between 1617 and 1620. These “Memoirs” reveal the preoccupations and moral teachings of an Englishwoman brought up in the reformed faith. They also contain a wealth of information on monetary transactions and fiscal practices involving Lady Mildmay and her husband Sir Anthony.

Lady Grace Mildmay’s autobiographical papers are among the most personally revealing writings we possess by a Renaissance Englishwoman. Until recently, however, the only available printed version has been brief excerpts in an article published by Rachel Weigall in 1911. We have Weigall to thank for introducing us to Lady Mildmay with an engaging outline of her life, but regrettably the excerpts themselves have been silently altered and emended. And although an anthology of Renaissance women writers published in 1981 also contains short passages by Lady Mildmay, because these are taken from Weigall, they too are unreliable. Nonetheless the original MS is extant and consists of two distinct parts now bound in a dark-blue half-leather volume. The large second part, which Lady Mildmay began in her youth and continued writing intermittently throughout her life, she calls her “Book of Meditations.” It opens with what is evidently a late addition, a twelve-page dedication to her daughter Mary, to whom she wills her bible, her copies of Musculus’s Commonplaces and Commentaries, Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, Thomas à Kempis’s Imitation of Christ, and the meditations that follow, “which...hath bene to mee, as Iacobs ladder, & as Iacobs pillar, euen a booke of testimonyes...”
betweene God and my soule". The latter begin on page 13 and are a loose compendium of: "Principall poyntes to be obserued in reading the Holy S[c]riptures", brief summaries of saints’ lives and virtues based on accounts in Foxe, prayers and biblical excerpts for various occasions, moral precepts and sententiae (some passed on by Lady Mildmay’s mother and grandmother), accounts of spiritual mercies, and transcriptions and/or paraphrases of scriptural passages. The last of these in fact make up the bulk of this part of the MS. Typically Lady Mildmay will open with a biblical text, perhaps one she has heard recently in church, and then meditate upon it by cross-referencing scriptural passages which she sometimes comments upon; her approach is typological and copious. Yet despite its considerable length, this “Book of Meditations” supplies virtually no information about the writer’s life, times, or opinions besides that which is moral or theological. During most of the years she was writing these pages, it seems Mildmay did not think of herself as an “author.” She neither refers to topical events nor adopts presentational strategies which might be used to carry along an imagined audience. There is an absence, in other words, of the kind of reader-postulated detail that one sees in other manuscripts by Renaissance women such as Elizabeth Delaval’s “Memoirs and Meditations.” In character, therefore, this part of the volume represents a private devotional exercise, as Lady Mildmay considers her ability to interrelate points of scripture a mark of divine grace.

Despite this prevailing conception of her meditations as a personal aid to spiritual growth, at some stage she began to conceive of them as counsel to be passed on to her daughter and grandchildren; and after the death of her husband in 1617, and before her own death in 1620, she decided to gather them together and preface them with an autobiographical account, “as familiar talke & communicacion with [my family], I being dead, as yf I were alie.” By this point she also held open the possibility of her meditations being seen by general readers, who she hoped might “make good use of them.” Thus, in a strategy distantly reminiscent of saint Augustine introducing The City of God with his Confessions, and subsequently common to many protestant writers, Mildmay’s presentation piece acts as a profession of personal faith and integrity prior to the main “prophetical” exercise. This first part of the MS (85 pages) recalls significant events and people in the author’s life — social, intellectual, and spiritual — interspersed with moral advice supported by scriptural proofs. It begins with a comparatively full list of recommended books and areas of secular and religious knowledge, reaching considerably beyond the common
minimum (at least for women) of the bible alone. Some of this section may have been lost, as “Cap: 8” in Lady Mildmay’s hand appears on the first page at the top of the margin.9 At the end of the main autobiography marked “Finis” on p. 61, a subsection follows entitled “The Authors Meditation vpon her Corps.” This was written immediately after the death of her husband and before his burial. It is this first part of the MS relating key episodes in Lady Mildmay’s life that is of most interest to modern readers.

Grace was the second daughter of Sir Henry Sharrington and Ann Paggett of Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire. After the death of her elder sister Ursula she became co-heir of her father’s estates, but had great difficulty securing her inheritance because of a dispute with her younger sister Olivia. The “conspiracye” in which this sister and other members of her family persuaded the dying Sir Henry into altering his will to reduce Grace’s share of the estate, as well as their later efforts to defraud her of her mother’s bequest, are dramatically portrayed in this section of the volume. Here as at other points one receives a strong impression of Lady Mildmay wishing to make known her side of the story to engage her readers’ sympathies, and deliberately shaping it to reveal God’s presence in the just resolution of her difficulties. She seeks to defend her innocency, and at the same time ventilate emotions long suppressed but still potentially disturbing to her own standards of moral conduct.

Prior to the dispute over her inheritance she had married Anthony Mildmay in 1567 at the age of 15. He was the eldest son and heir of Sir Walter Mildmay, Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1566 until his death in 1598, and founder of Emmanuel College Cambridge. Grace seems to have become a favourite of his, for reasons going beyond the simple wish of seeing dynastic arrangements with the Sharringtons concluded amicably. She tells how Sir Walter not only overcame Anthony’s tepid enthusiasm towards marrying her with a combination of threats and pecuniary inducements, but also how he intervened successfully on her behalf in the legal dispute with her sister. She also echoes contemporary praise of him as one of Elizabeth’s most capable and upright ministers,10 while commending his personal godliness and benevolence at home, qualities she had ample opportunity to observe since she and Anthony lived for nearly twenty years at Apethorpe, Sir Walter’s seat in Northamptonshire.

On the other hand while recalling him with respect and genuine affection, Lady Mildmay does not hide her disappointment with her father-in-law’s failure to make over the jointure he had promised upon marriage. It is also clear that Grace believes she and her husband were stunted of the full support Sir
Walter had pledged them. Like other country gentlewomen of her time,\(^{11}\) the burden of managing and running the household fell mainly on her, but in this case on the inadequate annual allowance of “but 130\(^{2}\) by yeare bare pention.” This led to “many afflictions & contrary occasions wch fell out betwixt me & my husband & betwixt vs & [her parents-in-law].” Since she possessed no substantial property of her own, she experienced further anxiety in the event that her husband should die before inheriting, which at several points seemed likely when he was either ill or in danger. During this time Anthony was regularly in attendance at court (a further source of worry when he “had a splinter of a launce rann farre into the middest of his forehead” while running at tilt), and between 1596-1597 he served as ambassador to France, having been knighted prior to the posting. These and other activities, such as aiding Sir Edward Montague in putting down rebels at Newton Field, and maintaining men and horses against the Spanish in the Netherlands,\(^{12}\) caused him to go deeply into debt, thereby heightening his wife’s sense of vulnerability. Sir Anthony planned to pay off his debts upon inheriting, since he hoped to see his father’s original vow fulfilled of giving him “all that I haue, & whatsoever els I can procure.” Yet after Sir Walter’s death the Mildmays were again disappointed of their expectations. Grace still received no jointure, while her husband inherited only a little over half the total estate.\(^{13}\) She claims that her brother-in-law Humphrey was bequeathed the remainder, but in fact he received less than one quarter, the rest going to charity and other relations.\(^{14}\) That she and her husband were still short of money is attested by her account of making over “all my present possession of myne owne inheritance being the flower & best parte of my whole portion” to provide her daughter Mary with a dowry. The family’s continuing financial problems led Sir Antony first to seek Parliamentary redress to claim a portion of the lands entailed to his brother, and then, when his brother contested this, to sue him, this time successfully. It was only after this that the Mildmays were well off, and (to judge from Grace’s comments made after her husband’s death) that what had often been a strained marriage became genuinely companionable. Her story not only confirms the conventional impression of a litigious age, but also speaks movingly of the distress faced by women who, after marriage, risked isolation and penury in the absence of strictly negotiated settlements, or indeed of any independent legal rights.

Of her childhood Grace recalls a rigorous but happy up-bringing by her governess, Mrs Hamblyn,\(^{15}\) whose values and advice, reinforced by the example of Lady Sharrington’s deep piety, she commends to her children. The
importance of a simple reformed faith, and accountable behaviour, were impressed upon her from an early age, and these habits seem to have become stronger over the years, partly under the influence of her father-in-law. Her own father seems not to have been quite so strict, since all the family visitors and guests she recalls from childhood are characterised by moral faults or "impudent behauiour" (e.g. a common-law couple). In this particular section of the autobiography, as Mary Ellen Lamb has observed, we also receive one of the most detailed "representations of the actual teaching offered to a young woman of the Renaissance." Grace learned skills conventional to her sex, class, and religion: music, arithmetic, letterwriting, needle-work, basic surgery and physic, and daily scripture reading — a curriculum intended to produce pious and useful domestic companions for men. While being taught to avoid such works of the devil as "bookes of idle playes," she was also encouraged to write poetry on moral themes. In the case of the "impudent" couple mentioned above, both she and her governess composed stanzas "very wittily & sharpe against such licentious behauiour . . . to take heed of the lyke, & to abhorre & despise the same." Later as a young wife during her husband's long absences from home, Lady Mildmay proudly resisted invitations from friends to attend weddings and feasts, claiming that she was happier pursuing improving tasks at home than leading a more out-going, glamorous life. That she forcefully articulates the moral beliefs underpinning these decisions and deftly justifies them with scriptural evidence, while at the same time disabling her personal authority by drawing attention to her lack of scholarly training, makes her typical of many Renaissance women torn between confidence in the value of their convictions and fear of intruding on male-dominated areas of knowledge. By invoking the supervailing presence of divine grace in her "Book of Meditations," however, Lady Mildmay, like other female authors of her time, overcomes traditional objections to women as moral teachers. Overall, then, this autobiographical part of the MS authenticates her late-conceived desire to circulate her meditations as a spiritual resource for public readers as well as her family. It likewise guarantees the autonomous transmission of a personal heritage, which previously in the legal and financial realms she had seen secured only with a much more painful and assisted struggle.

The MS and transcription

I have selected those passages from the autobiography which should be of any historical or literary interest to general readers; in all this represents about
65 per cent of the first part of the MS. The omitted sections are those in which
Lady Mildmay amplifies or cites biblical authority for moral advice that
intersperses her temporal recollections. My transcription preserves original
spellings, pagination, and paragraphing, but does not reproduce the bold
lettering that occasionally begins a paragraph, the long form of s, blotted
letters, or overwritten corrections/false starts. Also omitted are the numerous
marginal references to biblical texts (some of which appear to be in hands other
than Lady Mildmay’s), as well as braces and other non-lexical markings.
Contractions indicated by tildes have been expanded, and the swash terminal
s (§) is rendered es. All interpolated material appears in square brackets. The
notes are editorial.

Two distinct hands appear in this first part of the volume. Lady Mildmay
wrote the main text in a neat italic script. After this revisions and corrections,
usually interlined by way of carets or strike-outs, were made in secretary script.
This turns out to be her hand as well — an informal one — since she sometimes
also makes changes in italic which follow initial secretary revisions. On p. 3
of the MS, for example, paragraph 3, the penultimate line, she first writes
“vsed” (italic), strikes this out and replaces it with “exercised” (italic, above
the line), then strikes out this and returns to “vsed” (secretary, below the line),
before again striking this out and writing “vsed” (italic, above the line). Moreover,
isolated secretary letters often “creep in” to her formal hand — letters identical in form to those of the script making revisions; e.g. p. 4 of the
MS, paragraph 1, final line, the ‘r’ of ‘introduction.’ Since both hands are Lady
Mildmay’s, I have not distinguished between them in print, though the reader
can assume that MS revisions generally appear in secretary.

Other than the marginal notes, the only other section of the first part of
the MS not in Lady Mildmay’s writing is an elementary family tree which
appears on the verso of the cover-leaf (not reproduced here — recto blank).
This begins with Sir Thomas Mildmay (father of Sir Walter) and ends with
Grace’s grandchild Mildmay Fane, son of her daughter Mary and Francis
Fane, first Earl of Northumberland. The tree may have been added by Lady
Fane.¹⁷
Lady Grace Mildmay

Autobiography (c.1617), from Meditations (?-1617?)

[p.] 1

experience I comend vnso my children as approoued,
I haue found by observation
this to be the best course to set our selues in from
the beginning vnso the end of our lyues./

That is to say
First To beginn wth the Sripures [sic] to read them
& humility as a disciple
with all diligence, continually evry daye in some
measure vnso we haue gone thorough the whole
booke of God from the first of Genesis vnso
the last of the reuelation, & then beginn agayne
& so ouer & ouer wthout wearynesse:/

To the end that; our, hart, soule, spirits, and
whole inner man, maye first be seasoned, & receiue
the true stampe & lyuely impression thereof./

Judge
Whereby we maye the better, of all Learning
Whatsoever, & be able to make true vse, and
application application
good, distribution of all mens judgements and
& be conferred in
educations: with this constant resolution, neuer
to receiue any doctrine from men wth procedeth
not from God, according to the truth of his
ie
Worde in all sanctitude & true holynesse./
As The holy sacraments baptisme & the Lords
Supper maye witnesse with vs & confirme y'
same within vs & seale it vp for euer, betwixt
God & our consciences neuer to be altred that
we are the selected people of God, to doe his
will, to blesse his holy name, & to publish his
separated & opposed
prayse, truely, distinguished from sathan y's flesh,
separated & opposed
& ye world,

[p.] 2

& the world & from all theyr wicked actions
& conspiracies./

Also to make our selues expert in the knowledge
of the histories contayned in the booke of Acts
& Monuments of the church, Whereby our faith-
full zeale
, may be increased & strengthened & our hartes
encouraged manfully to suffer death & to giue
truth
our lyues for the testimony of the death of
in
God Whereto we are thus confirmed and
sealed by the death & bloud of Christ.

Also to make our selues expert in the vnderstan-
ing & knowledge of the cronicles of the land,
What matters of moment haue passed
from the beginning, vnder the gouvemment of
our Royall & Annoynted Princes, Whereby
to imitiate &
we may be instructed, to follow the good exam-
ples of true & faithfull subiects, and to haue
theyr worthy actes & exploytes in memory
which are registred for the same end, and also
whereby wee maye avoyde & shame all treasons
& trecherous attempts, & all vnfaithfull
combynations w'th plotters & deuisers of euill./

For, the danger of theyr societie is great;
many honourable houses of antiquitie & renowne
& auncient names haue beene utterly subuerted
thereby, & rooted out as yf they had neuer
been

[p.] 3

been; & the innocent, & ignorant persons not
made acquainted with theyr purposes & intentes
haue been brought in question being seene but
to frequente theyr companyes supposing at ye
least that they could not but see or heare
somewhat thereof. /

Also to be well instructed in the statutes and
Lawes of this Land is very profitable and
necessary, Whereby they may keepe themselfes
within the compass thereof without controlment or
running into danger. /

Also the wyse & wittie sentences of the philosophers
being heathen men without the knowledge of
God are worthie bookes to be used sometymes
for recreation

For they exhort unto vertue & dehorte from
vice, whereby the excellent giftes of God may be
magnified in them

These said exercises will establish substance of
good matter in the mynde, & prepare noble
men, & gentlemen of good worth for worthy
& great imployments, & make them wyse &
able to undergo whatsoever great busynesse
they shall take in hand, to the aduancement
of the

[p.] 4

of the Gospell & comfort of ye whole common wealth. /
A mynde thus furnished will thinke all tymes
ill bestowed in bookes & of playes, & of all such
fruitless & vnprofitable matter which will
peruert & carry the mynde from all goodnesse
& is an introduction unto all euill. /

It is the vertue of the mynde which maketh the
man, or the woman, without the they appeare
as blocks, have eyes & see nott, lyke ymages
sett vp, in whome is no counsell nor fore casting
of perills: such cannot but stumble vpon euery
inconueniencie, & be buffeted on euery syde
for want of Wisdome.

Which wisdome is gotten by continuall exercise
& well spending the tyme (as is aboue sayed) ych; should bee ye laboure of a mans whole lyfe, for evey daye bringeth forth newe experience. All these things comming into my mynde, I thought good to set them downe vnto my daughter, & her children, as familiar talke & communicacion with them, I being dead, as yf I were alieue./

And I doe therewithall hartily praye them to accepte thereof, & of the whole booke of my meditations

[p.] 5

my meditations, ych hath beene the exersise of ye mynde from my youth vntill this daye, euen with the zeale of my hart by the sweete conference with God, & his holy spirit, & faith in Jesus Christ who brought them all into my mynde & gaue them vnto me from tyme to tyme./

Being all vnto me as Iacobs pillar, euen true testimonyes vnto my soule & conscience of the loue & gratious presence of God ych neuer forsooke me in all my dayes. Whereby I am encouraged stedfastly to belieue that he will same be the, god vnto me for euer./

And though I think measure of ,None can take that, comfort in these meditations, which yet as I my selfe maye doe, but Whosoeuer readeth seeing them may make good vse of them, especially when they shall fynde evey poyn of doctrine confirmed and approoued by the Scriptures./

Which yf it please them to pervse, they shall fynde which that profitt & consolation therin as they could not haue Imagined.

Which effect & blessing of God I beseech him to giue vnto this booke, that the spirit of God maye
joyne with euery one that readeth the same with diligence

[p.] 6
diligence & a zealous hart; w^ch maye make this booke vnto them as it is vnto me, euen lyke Jacobs piller a testimony of the loue & presence of God, Who be with them for euer, & increase, & multiplye the giftes of his holy spirit in them, to the perfection of a good lyfe in this worlde, & everlasting blessednesse in the kingdom of heauen./

He that will take profitt by this exercise must turne awaye his eyes from beholding of vanitie and consider well what he heareth.

Shall the porter keepe out the thiefe Who often tymes commeth not onely to steale, but most cruelly to murther also?/

And is there no spirituall power within vs to resist the spirituall thiefe & Cruell murtherer, who seeketh to destroye vs both soule & body? yes, Take heede, watch, & praye agaynst the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, & the pryde of lyfe, & retayne not a thought of them in your hart./

For When lust hath conceiued it bringeth forth sinne, & sinne when it is finished, it bringeth forth death./

Therefore let the word of God (aboue all) dwell in your hartes plenteously with the feare of God, & est faith in Christ Jesus, Who is that strong, man, and hee will preserue vs from the spoyler that he shall neuer come neere vs to hurt vs./

As Idolatry

[p.] 7

swearing

As Idolatry, Witchcrafte, Murder, adultery lying, & forswearing, pryde, ambition, couetousnesse slander & backbyting, rancour & reuenge, & such lyke./
Woe to that man in whome is found all these euills!
a man may saye that a Legion of deuills possesseth
his hart; the least of these sinnes is able to ouerthrow
kingdomes & thrones of the mightie.

These are the seedes sown by the enuius man, wch:
can neuer bring forth good fruitt, yet must they
grow vp togethuer with the wheat vntill the generall
Haruest; mans hart being more apte, & capable by
nature to retayne this wicked seede, then the seede
of righteousnesse.

fore
Whereby all men must take heed how they trust
too much in theyr owne strength, to thinck they
maye keepe company with the wicked, & fashion
themselves vnto all vanities with the worlde, & thinck
that they maye giue free libertie to theyr eyes to behold
& gaze vpon all euill objects, & to theyr eares
to he,rken & inclyne vnto all euill inducemementes
& prouocations; forgett, that the hart of man is
deceiptfull aboue all things, & that they maye be
snared thereby.

and

Rejecting that holy doctrine in the first psalme
which teacheth vs not to walke in the counsell
of the vngodly nor stand in the waye of sinners
& nor sitt in the seate of the scornefull.

But to

[p.] 8

But to delignt in the lawe of the Lorde, and
ourselues
in his Lawe to exercyse himselfe daye & night

That man is in a woefull state who knoweth
these things, & yet runneth wittingly & willingly
therevnto; he can expect no good suuccesse nor happy
end; but mischiefe followeth him whither soeuer
he goeth, & will not leaue him vntill his vtter
destruction be effecte:/
It is certayne that there is a foundation & ground
many great
of much ensuing euills, That is to saye, When
the nobilitie & great personages from the highest
to the lowest haue noe regard nor forecast what
gouernours they sett ouer theyr children, nor
what seruants they appoynte to attend vpon them./

Whereby it commeth to passe too often & too
vniuersally, that the myndes of chidren [sic] are taynted
& Corrupted, corrupted even from theyr infancie
& made capable of euery lewde & euill conuersation,
& are made impudent & bould, without all shame,
& so stiffe-necked & peruerse therein, that no
example or reproof
counsell, can restrayne them./

Many Gentlemen, & theyr wyues are desirous to
place theyr sonnes & daughters in Honorable seruices,
but they

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but they take no care to furnishe theyr myndes
with true religion & vertue, & other good partes
fitt for such preferrement

But yf they were put off & not receiued into seruice
for want of better education; euery one would
endeavour to amend that fault least theyr
children should lye vpon theyr hands vnpreferred:
Whereas otherwyse they would be sought for and
enquired after, & whosoeuer should retayne them
would thincke themselues happy./

I had experience of a Gentlewoman21 (Neece vnto
my Father, &) brought vp by my mother from
her childhood, whom after-ward she trusted to
be gouernour ouer her owne children./

&
She proued very religious, wyse,, chaste, & all good
vertues that might be in a woman were constantly
settled in her, (for, from her youth she made good
vse of all things that euer she did read, see, or
heare; & obserued all companyes that euer she
came in, good or badd: so that shee could giue a
most
right censure & true judgment of any things, &
giue wyse counsell vpon any occasion/
And she could apprehend, & contrive any matter
whatsoever
,propounded vnto her, most judiciously, & sett her mynd
indited
downe in wryting either by letters,, or otherwyse as well as most any well
as most
men could haue done
She had

[p.] 10
She had (also) good knowledge in phisick & surgerie./
She was of an excellent quicke spirit, & pleaasantly
conceited, so that shee wonn my eldest Sister & mee
to be in loue with her, and to delight in all her speaches
& actions/ for her mirth was very saury & full
of witt, & in her sadnesse shee vuttered forth nothing
but wisdome & grauitie/
She scoffed at all dalliance, ydle talke, & wanton
behaviour, appertayning therevnto, with a touch of a
caveat to take heed thereof.
She counselled vs when we were alone, so to behaue
our selues as yf all the world did looke vpon vs, &
to doe nothing in secret whereof our conscience might
accuse vs, & by any meanes to avoyde the company
of Seruingmen, or any other of lyke disposition,
    gestures
whose ribald talke & ydle, dispositions and euill
suggestions, were dangerous for our Chaste cares and
eyes, to heare & behold, least the innocencie, and
virginitie of our tender hearts should be stayned
thereby./
And further shee advised vs to deale truely and
faithfully in all things both in worde & deede, in
small matters & in great; & to beware of all lyes,
& of Oathes, & of reporting of newes, To heare much & speake little, seeming to be ignorant in some things rather then to boast of the knowledge which we

[p.] 11

Which we haue not, & thereby, discouer our folly, & giue occasion to be laughed att./

I delighted so much in her company that I would sitt with her all the daye in her chamber, & by my good will, would neuer goe from her, embraceing always her rebukes & reproofes./

And when shee did see me idly disposed, shee would sett me to cipher with my penn, & to cast vp and prooue great summes & accomptes, & somtymes set a me to wryte, some supposed letter to this or that body concerning such & such things, & other tymes set me to reade in D’ Turners Herball, & in Bartholomew Vigoe, & other tymes set me to sing psalmes & somtymes set me to some curious worke (for she was an excellent workewoman in all kynds of needle worke, & most curously shee would performe it./

And when I was not w th her she would be sure to be with mee at my Heeles to see where & w th whome I was, & what I did or spake, such was her honest & faithfull care to performe the trust w th my Mother reposed in her./

She gaue me warning of a gentlewoman who fre= quented my fathers house, to take heed of her, for that she was of a subtill spirit, full of wordes and questions, & of an vndermynning disposition, a busy body

[p.] 12

busy body, & a medler in matters w th concerned her not, Neither regarding what hurt or trouble
might redound
to many thereby, nor how my reputation might
be brought in question by conversing with her, for
she sought much into my company
(And surely this counsell others which she gaue
me was very sweete, & good to be observed, for in
myne own experience I have found the danger very
great. For such a busy body as this of whom
his godly gentlewoman hath spoken, hath not lett
of things by them committed worthy of blame
to speake to me of things concerning other men, where=
by the speaker might come to much trouble & blame,
& then at her pleasure report (or rather accuse
me) to the partie of whom she spake (yf not to
others also) that it was I that spake them to her./)
Also there was a gentleman of great accompt sitting
at my fathers table, who spent all the dinner tyme in
arguments & much talke, wandring in his discourses./
So when dinner was done she asked me yf I did not
obserue the same, & how he gloryed in his owne witt, &
to heare himselfe speake, & how his wordes were many
but little
then true substance of the matter, so that yf he were
so wyse (as he tooke himselfe to be) she would judge him
to be the wysest man in the kingdome.
Also there was a man & a woman both maried, but
not man & wyfe, of impudent behauior one towards
another

[p.] 13
another; which when she behelde, she asked me yf I
did not thincke it a monstrous spectacle to behold:
& wished me to make one stafteshe would
make an other, vntill there were foure or fyue verses
made therevpon, which she performed all herselwe,
very wittily & sharpe against such licentious behauiour, And this shee did for myne instruction to take
heed of the lyke, & to abhorre & despise the same./
Also she aduised me to avoyde such company by
all meanes possible, & to take heede of whome I receiued any giftes, as a booke wherein might be written some wordes whereby I might betraye my selfe vnaawares, or gloues, Apples or such lyke: for that wicked companions would euer presente tre= cherous attempts/, which afterwards I found true in some sorte, & remembred her counsell./

Also that I should euer cary with mee, a modest eye, & a chast eare, a silent tongue, & a considerate heart, wary & heedfull of my selfe in all my wordes & actions./

And in this & such lyke manner shee wrought all these her counsells vpon me from tyme to tyme./ in, all other, things & many, more then I can here recite, w^{th} she thought profitable for me to remember & be instruc= ted in, whereby she sent me furnished into the worlde./

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This book of my Meditations is the consolation of my soule, the joye of my hart & the stabilitie of my mynde./

As they are approued by the word of God, & as I doe approoue them in myne owne con- science by the same word:

And I haue not sett them downe for austen- tation or vanitie, as God himselfe is witnesse but with the zeale of my hart./

Knowing

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Knowing that there is nothing hath happen= ed vnto me in the course of my lyfe, either in prosperitie or aduersitie in any kynde, what= some

soeuer, but the lyke maye fall out to any other, wherein my comforts & remedies may be approued
vnto them as they haue been vnto mee./

Hartily praying euery faithfull reader thereof
to accept my good meaning therein*, and giue a

*And my self will say wth the prophet Dauid.
psalm 119: Accept, I beseech thee etc:

& mild patient, censure wth meekenes, not looking for exact
Eloquence, Method, or learning, wth could not proceed from me who have not been trained vp in vniuersitie Learning, & have had most experience of myne owne weaknesses ignorance, & worthinesse [sic], euer humbled vnder the hand of God who hath been my greatest Comfort./

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Myne owne obseruation of
Sir Walter Mildmay, hauing
been with him almost twenty yeares
vprysing and downelying in his house, who was wyse eloquent & methodicall in all his speaches which proceeded from a cleere judgem' & true grounded discerning of whatsoever he spake of, wth the applause of all men that heard him /

First touching matters of comon wealth,
wherin he (being chosen by his country) had a place & voyce to speake betwixt the Queene of England his Mistresse & her subiects in divers Parliamentes:26 & by his place of chancellour of the exchequer to speake betwixt one man and another, yea concerning y' Queene & her subiects touching. Reuenues./

these
In all which he shewed himselfe most faithfull equall & just, & carried all matters wth the contentm' of all parties./

without encroaching to himselfe vayne musten-
tation & glory of the world, & wthout enriching
rents
of his owne estate by the Queenes her Lands or treasure

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in
or treasure, whereof he might with a safe con=
science washe his hands in innocencie.27

Though he did see many abuses wherein the
Queen & state was wronged by greater men
then himselfe put in trust, which example he
might haue followed as well as they.

But that he did detest & abhorre from his
hart such false & wicked dealings, w^h could
expect from God no blessing in the end./

He euer perswaded the Queen his soueraigne,
in such a gratious manner to demaund all her
duetyes seruices & obedience from her subiects
as they might yeeld all, & more then they were
well able vnto her Ma^e rather in loue & faith=
full harts towards her then by constraint or
Law violence
violence to be vrged from them./

And also hee would say, he euer found it the
best meanes to perswade her subiects w^th argum^es
of reason, & loue, whereby they might rest assured
of her Mat^es loue & tender affection towards them
as a Nurse & Mother of her Common wealth
rather then by harsh & distastefull speaches to
stryke theyr harts with a doubtfullnesse of her loue
& care of theyr estates./ . . .

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In his owne priuate house, his houshold & family
& all sorts of people that resorted vnto him, did
admire his innocent & vnspotted caryage of him
selfe amongst them in all his words & actions
ready to doe euery man good, & hurt to no man./

He was a very pleasant conceipted man at his
good occasions, & give
table: & continually would minister, wyse and pro-
fitable speeches to the great content of his seruantes
& those that satt with him/

He would neuer suffer any man to be euill spoken
off at his table by any man whatsoeuer, but he
would cutt him off in his speech, & reprooue him
in a gentle & good manner./

Neither would he suffer any of what calling
soeuer he were, to talke at his table of high mat-
ters of state, of the Queene, her counsell, nor
of the nobilitie, vnreuerently; nor prophane of
God, but he would cut off theyr speach in such
a wyse & louing manner, that they euer
tooke it in good parte, & reuerenced him

He was to his power a great fauourer of all
good learning & of the true profession of y*e Gospell,
as appears faithfully to the world by y' flourishing religious
learned Emmanuel Colledge
he gaue

founded, builded, laid in good measure endowed by him at his owne
great charges/

He gaue exhibition to diuers strangers who were men
of learning, & truely religious, he charged his
owne land w" yearly stipends to two Colledges in
Cambrige, & builded Emmanuel Colledge of
his owne charge. /28

The worst man that euer repayred vnto him would
speake well of him, & confesse that they had cause
to loue him./

Certaynly Whosoeuer he be that
maketh himselfe an instrument to diuide the King
& his subiects, deserueth, of them both, to be cast out
& to be accurssé both of God & mann.

It is a dangerous thing for a man to put his
hand betwixt the barke & the tree, according to
the old prouerbe. /29
But yf God in his wrath & sore displeasure, towards a sinfull kingdome or a wicked family, doe deter mine theyr subversion for theyr sinne, there can want no instrument or meanes to worke the same vntill theyr vtter confusion be effecte
d

us
Yet let not the lorde deale w\textsuperscript{th}, according to our deserts from the highest to the lowest, but spare vs./ & preserue vs in his mercy, neither let him take his word & sincere ministration thereof from vs./

Whereby he

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whereby he dwelleth amongst vs, whatsoeuer punish\ment it please him to inflict vpon vs for our sinnes let him convert vs as our father in christ & abyde with vs for euer./

And the Lorde make it Good vnto our king & his posteritie for euer vnto the worlds end, that they may fynde themselves happy princes, & make theyr religious,/just people happy subiects by theyr, gratious & louing gouvernment by the direction of the Gospell of peace: & the God of peace worke it euer in theyr myndes to make the same theyr joye & triumph did, to as dauid, daunced before the Arke w\textsuperscript{th} instrumentes of musick bycause the presence of God was figured therein\textsuperscript{20}

And further I haue thought good to call
to mynde the extraordinary loue & fauour of this said worthy person towards my selfe in my tender youth./
Which loue was such that he desired me of my father, to Marry w\textsuperscript{th} his eldest Sonne./
His Sonne being then more willing to trauaile to get experience of the worlde then to marry so soone, was vnwilling to giue eare thereunto./

But his Father
But his father told him, yf he did not Marry wth me, he should neuer bring any other woman into his house.

Vpon wch importunatie of his Father, he was consent, & entred into communication wth him what Joynter he would make me, & what allowance he would giue for our maintainance in his owne tyme.

His Father answered him agayne by earnest protestations & vowe in the presence of the Lady his Good mother, saying

Doest thou distrust me Anthony? here I speak it before God, yf thou marry with this woman I will giue thee all that I haue, & whatsoeuer els I can procure, shall be thynne./

And further If I doe it not, thy mother shall be a witnesse against me in heauen, expressing the same with teares: wch moued the harts of him= selfe & his mother to weepe also./

Wherevpon he yeelded vnto his father, & y^ marryage was concluded betwixt him & mee vpon the trust of his fidelitie & good hope that he would neuer alter his mynde nor breake his said oath & vowe, the consummation of that marryage being the seale of that bond./

My father in lawe gaue me this posie in my

Maneat inviolata fides, y^ is to say

Wedding Ring, Let thy fayth remaine inviolate, which in the very instant of my

Maryage I receiued most religiously, wth a full resolution (by the grace of God) to performe the same vnto the end of my lyfe,

Wherein he bound me vnto his sonne as he had before bound himselfe vnto him vpon that condicion
of our maryage.

After which, we liued with him almost twenty yeares, receiuing no more maintainance from him but about one 130th by yeare bare pention to paye our servuantes wages, & to apparell our selues & to defraye all other charges whatsoeuer, which could not by any meanes possible performe y® to least parte of our necessities

For my husband followed our Queene Elizabeth her Court, & was appoynted by her ma® to goe forth with every embassadours that went about any speciall busynes, & was imployed diuers tymes therein for his owne experience./ 31

Whereby he might be the better enabled to serue his prince & Country at all opportunities & occasions which he did & all, vpon his owne charge without crauing any allowance

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allowance from the Queene or from any body els, keeping men & horses answerable to such a course of lyfe as well at home as abroad

this Which was a strange thing how he could doe y® same without running himselfe so farre in debt or a very great part of that all, his Fathers land whole estate could not haue beene able to have discharge the same. But God who can make a little goe ffarre, put into his mynde to remember, a tyme to spare & a tyme to spend, which he did obserue in all his expences, wherein God reserued a blessing for y® future tymes; yet could he not but bee in debt, w® he was./

And when his Father dyed, not long before his
death, he diuided his land almost equally betwixt him & his second brother & lykewyse his Plate & houshold stuffe, & left him no money or that not much. And therewithall bound his portion of land by a perpetuitie, & made me no joynter, but left me to the thirds which might be troublesome & vnceertayne, Neither did he leaue any sufficient portion for the perferrement of his onely chylde & daughter.

My husband fynding himselfe so straytned that he could make me no joynter, nor giue his daughter any portion

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any portion nor make any states good vnto his but onely for his owne life,
Tennanntes, for fynes receiued, nor paye his debts, nor ransome himselfe yf he should be taken prisoner by some extraordinary occasion,

He sought to enlarge himselfe by the Parliam' & propounded all these said poynts to that Honourable Court. where they were receiued as things most reasonable & fitting to be yeelded vnto, both in nature & conscience.

But his Brother would not by any meanes be perswaded to giue his consent that the least tittle thereof should be graunted vn to him, though lesse then one halfe of my Husbandes Land would haue satisfied all his demaunds, & his Brother might haue confirmed the residue of his Land to himselfe & his posteritie by the Parliament.

By which obstinacie & euill nature of his Brother, the Parliament was dismissed of the left off to take consideracion of it, leaving it to the lawe. Cause, & he constrayned to remayne still in his wants

Then he being thus provoked, adventured to
sett himselfe at liberty by Cutting off the intaile
&
of his perpetuitie; which thing he did
performe by the Law of the Land,
provide
for mee and for my
Daughter, and
discharged all his
debts, to the good
contentment of us
and many other/
and according to in that thereby he was inabled and did
lawfully by the lawe of God, the lawe of nature
& ye law

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& the lawe of the Land, to the contentmen'
of all partes but his Brother & his children./
All wch the right hand of God hath brought
& mercy
to passe in his vnspeakable loue, towards vs and
our posteritie (& shall not wee remember? or shall
we be ashamed to acknowledge & confesse the
same from generation to generation for euer?
God forbid. For, our thanckfulnesse for one benefitt
is the crauing of another & God alwayes
accepteth a thanckfull mynd . . .

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Wherefore I leaue it vnto my whole posteritie
for theyr meditiation & consideration, that what
falleth to one the lyke maye fall to another, and
be
that there can, no euill nor troubles so great,
but they maye turne to our good & receiue a
blessed end to them that keepe innocencie, &
take heede vnto the thing that is right; for that
will bring a man peace at the last./

I thought my selfe in the house of God all ye
tyme of myne aboad wth my father in Lawe:
for that, no euill company was permitted to resort
to his house nor to appeare in his presence,
whereby I was preserued from the sight, or
hearing of euill/

And nothing but good examples, & good counsells,
& continuall exercyse in the word of God was
prefered vnto me

Wherefore

Werfore [sic] I esteemed my selfe more happy to
liue w^h him (yf it had been but) w^h bread and
water then w^h any other with a continuall
feast./

The Lady his wyfe was also a vertuous woman
& dutifull to her husband, in all chastitie, obe=
dience, loue, & feare towards him as euer I
did knowe any, and she instructed me lyke=
wyse to become a faithfull wyfe vnto her sonne

Whereof there was great proofe made in all
theyr tyme by many afflictions & contrary
occasions w^h fell out betwixt me & my husband
& betwixt vs & them./

My husband was much from me in all that
tyme, & I spent the best part of my youth
in solitarinesse, shunning all opportunities to
run into company least I might be inticed &
drawn awaye by some euill suggestions to
stayne myne vnspotted garment, & so be robbed
of myne innocencie, for I durst put no confi=
dence in my selfe for myne owne defence./
And some great personages, Ladies of myne
acquaintance would perswade me to goe with
them to the Court, to feasts Mariages & playes
saying, y'

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saying, that it was pittie, my youth should be
swallowed vp w^hout all pleasure or delight in
the world/
Myne answere was that God had placed me in this house, & yf I found no comfort here, I would neuer seeke it out of this house, and this was my certayne resolution./

And as I gaue my selfe wholly vnto God, in the sinceritie of my hart so he receiued me gratiously, & preserved me in safetie, & directed & prospered me in all my wayes, & left me not comfortlesse but put into my mynde many good all-
delights wherein I spent my tyme most continually./

First in diuinitie euery daye as my leisure would giue me leaue, & the grace of God, permitt & drawe me. I did read a chapter in the bookes of Moses, another in one of the prophètes one chapter in the Gospells, & another in the Epistles to the end of the reuelation, & the whole psalmes appoynted for the daye, ending & beginning agayne & so proceeded in that
g course

Wherein I found that as the water pierceth often the hard stone by, dropping therevpon; So the continuall exercyse in the word of God, made a deepe

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a deepe impression in my hart stony hart, wth an aptenes to inclyne vnto the will of God, & to delight in the meditiation therof vpon euery occasion of thoughtes arysing in my mynde, or vpon whatsoeuer myne eye did bohold [sic] or myne eare did heare, applying the same as I was directed by the spirit of God./

Which sayed s::: course was the onely stabilitie of my mynde, & my staye & Comfort in all the troubles & calamities of my whole lyfe/

Also euery daye I spent some tyme in playing
on my lute, & setting songs of 5 partes therevnto & practised my voyce in singing of psalmes/, & in making my prayers to God, And confessing any sinnes w'ch were euer ready to meete me in euery thought & to turne me awaye from God & from all goodnesse./

For the more a man inclineth himselfe to vertue & to depart from euill, the greater will be his temptations; & ydlenesse is y' deuills opportunitie./

Also euery daye I spent some tyme in the Herball & bookes of phisick, & in ministring to one or other by the directions of the best phisitions of myne acquaintance & euer god gaue a blessing therevnto./

Also euery daye I spent some tyme in workes of myne owne inuention without sample of drawing or patterne before me for carpett or Cushion worke & to drawe flowers & fruities to theyr lyfe w'th my plummett vpon paper./

All which varietie of exercises did greatly recre: ate my mynde; for I thought of nothing else but that I was a doing in euery perticuler one of these said exercises./

And though I was but meanly furnished to be excellent in any one of these exercises, yet they did me good, in as much as I found in my selfe that God wroght w'th me in all./

And further, betwixt the tyme of my father in law his death, & the cutting off of the said perpetuitie, our Daughter was to be giuen in Maryage, & her father had no portion to giue her, wherevpon I gaue her all my present possession of myne owne whole inheritance being the flower & best parte of my portion, My husband hauing his lyfe in it also./
Then was there nothing left, for my securitie but the other part of my portion of inheritance contayned in my Mothers joynter wch, was questionable & to be recouered wth much suites in Lawe after her death

So that

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So that yf my husband had dyed at that tyme, I should haue had no Land but the bare rent of about some 300^1 by yeare, not suffitient to keepe any house to maintayne the calling of my fathers daughter nor for my husbands wyfe.

Neither could I haue been able to contend by lawe with my husbands brother for my thirds,^38 nor wth my Sister for the right of myne inheritance where= vnto she layed claime. In all wch, my state in myne age stood vpon Hazards.

My husband in a due consideration thereof, and in his good nature & thankefull mynde vnto me for my extraordinary loue to his daughter, thus to of dispossesse my selfe for her sake (& his owne, so great a portion) whereby I might haue put my selfe into great want & disgrace in myne age) made great hast to breake & cut off his perpetuitie, fearing he should not liue to performe the same.

At which tyme when he went vp to London about this busines & finished it, I knewe nothing thereof, but at that very instant I made meanes vnto him, that he would be pleased to repayre the Parsonage at Oundell wherein I had my lyfe that I might haue an house to goe vnto & to convoy my stuffe, vpon any sodayne occasion that might befall me

(for my

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(for my Husband was then very sicklye) with
this resolution, to spend my whole lyfe in that place in the most priuate manner possible, & neuer to haue lived with my daughter or to be beholden vnto her or to any other friend whoso= euer; with great contention of mynde, and mortification to the world without repentance of whatsoeuer I had giuen, wishing it much more with the abundance of and to her worthy & honorable Husband, who deserved the same, Gods blessing therewith to my daughter, and their Children./

Often tymes I haue prayed to God that yf it were his pleasure that I should be cast out of this house in myne age by my Husbands brother, yet that he would be pleased to goe out with me as he came into this house with me, & brought me hether, & hath guided me & directed me in all my wayes all the tyme of my being here./

And then let his will be done; so be it vnto me with a cheerefull & good hart let me goe out willingly & his faithfullnesse & truth be my shield & Buckler for euer./

Nothing can be sodaine or strange vnto vs, neither can we sustayne want though we haue nothing, when God is with vs: our hartes being established with faith in him, & in loue patience meekenes & temperancee, euer wayting vpon the will of God, to w eepe

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w eepe or rejoyce, to haue or not to haue, as it best pleaseth him./

I haue often tymes sayde vnto my soule in the secret of my hart; God forbid that I should so much wishe or desyre to dwell in this house during my lyfe or to possesse the Lands & provisions belong

as

ing the re, but onely that God would be pleased much rather to hold me in myne inte
gritie & faithfulnes towards God & my husband./

Then God looked vpon me & gaue me those earthly blessings w'th I asked not nor deserued neither could expect; the preseration of my husbands lyfe being a princippal meanes thereof, which God alone perforned for me When he deliuered him in many dangers & perrills of his lyfe./

Wherein I haue found & proued that it is good to depend wholly vpon God with a good conscience & the true testimony of the spirit of God to wittes with vs & for vs.

And further I must not let slippe out of my mynde What God hath done for me in myne owne perticuler inheritance wherevnto I was lawfully borne

S't Henry Sharington of Laycot in Wiltshire Knight,
My father, then living
  Had onely three daughters, and

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vpon our Maryages he diuided his land into three partes, & intailled the same vnto vs w'th a perpetuitie

It happened that our Eldest Sister dyed that lived
w'thout children, & her part was to be diuided betwixt me & my younger sister according to the words in the converyance & according to of our marryage the Articles of the Convenantes, so intended

Yet not-w'ithstanding when my father dyed he was perswaded to alter his mynde, & to breake his covenant towards me, & to forget that my sister & I proceeded both from one father & from one mother, & that I had euer beene his obedient & lousing daughtter, & that I had neuer prouoked him to toward him displeasure by any misdeemeasure, any waye.
But God did behold myne innocencie, and my
naturall & faithfull hart to my father, and
forgat it not according vnto the scriptures

Though my father & my mother forsake me,
yet the Lord will gather me vp, And how the
Lord hath made good his word vnto me, He
knoweth & I haue approued./
For My Father lying on his deathbed called

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by name, Judge Meade:
did before a judge, before whom he revoked his said for=
mer conveyance, & established another, wherein
sister
he gaue my, two third parts of his best Land
& gaue me but one third parte of his worst land./

And, Comming to visit my father not thinking to
fynde him so neere his end (for his great danger
in his sicknesse was kept from me) I was brought
into his chamber vpon a sodayne at the very instant
when the judge was there, & those abou accompa=
ning him wch were plotters, & workers of this vniust
alteration, & vpon the sight of mee they scattered
one from another & put away the bookes and
parchmentes:/

As soone as I had done my duety to my Father
I was Caryed out of his presence into another
Roome where there came to me my Mother, my
one after another
Sister, & myne vnclle my mothers Brother, to per=
swade Mee & to comfort me in my sorrowe for my
Father, that he was my good father & loued
me & that all his care was for mee more then
for my sister: wherein I was innocent & suspected
no injury towards me, my conscience bearing me
witnessse that I neuer deserued the same./

At wch tyme I desyred to watch with my Father
& to lye in the House: but I could not be permitted therevnto vntill they had effected all that

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all that busynesse in Hand & after that, I laye in the house & was entertain'd in all kindenesse as though there had beene no such matter & all well with mee /

And I intreating them to put my father in mynde to be good vnto his old Servants, & to ye neerest of his bloud & kindred who stood in neede thereof, & also to remember some friends of his vnto whome he was beholden for many kynd=nesses, which friends also combyned themselues against mee in this Conspiracye

Wherein they requited me euill for good, and hatred for my good will: whereof God was witnesse, & turned his louing countenance towards me./

And when my father drewe nearer & neerer towards his end, the pangues of death appearing in his face, & I kneeling downe by his bed syde weeping at the viewe therof: he looked sternely vpon me & shooke me hard by the hand saying Oh Grace, Grace, Grace. I praye God blesse thee, thou shalt haue much trouble with thy land I tell thee, but I praye God thou mayest well overcome it./

These were

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These were his last wordes vnto me, wherein assuredly, the blessing of God was included.

And sometyme in his fitt of the stone, he was heard to saye; oh that it were to doe agayne./

After my father was dead; my sister came to mee, & said, my Father hath set out our portions
& the bookes are drawen that each of vs may take our part, wch is, you haue onely that third which was myne, & I haue that parte wch was giuen vnto you, wth that other part also wch was allotted vnto our eldest sister, & I would my brother Mildmay would come & take his part.41

And I answered her, that I thought he would not loose his parte for want of taking it when he did see his tyme./

Then further I asked her, And is it so indeede that my father hath dealt thus with me who neuer offended him willingly, but euer sought to please him in all things with as much duety and loue as any chyld he had?/

Yf God moued him therevnto without any indyrect dealings by your Husband, your selfe, or any other friends for you; then, the will of God be

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God be done, I beseech him to giue his blessing there=all; & my small portion shall content me as well as your great portion shall contente you./

But yf you haue laboured my father by all meanes to worke, & bring to passe this vnnaturall wrong towards me, I commit my whole cause into the hand of God, & doe most earnestly desyre him to be judge betwixt you & mee, & to right & defend my Cause./

Then went I into a place by my selfe alone, & powred out my hart vnto God with abundance of teares, confessing myne vnworthynesse of y' least part, & after I had committed my care vnto God, my mynde was satisfied & neuer troubled after./

And after the funerall was ended, my father in Sr Walter Mildmay Lawe, caused diligent search to be made whether that
said last conveyance were lawfully entred into the
court of recorde, & it was found that my father
y' his
did not liue out the tyme to make out, the last deed.
good in Lawe: wherevpon there was exceptions taken
thereunto, & the matter was so effectually followed, that
very next after
within the same terme, wherein that last convayance
was made, it received an absolute overthrowe
by Lawe, & the first conveyance stood good in his
former force.

Then when they did see this parte of theyr hope
frustrate, they gaue it out that they had another

string to

string to theyr bowe, wth was, that my father had
made a Lease of that land contayned in that last
conveyance, vnto my said sister for a thowsand
yeares.

Wherevpon my father in Lawe instantly called
those wordes in question.

Sisters first
And some reasonable tyme after my fathers death
or

Husband dyed she assured her selfe & was
married to her second Husband, by whose meanes
she was fallen into great trouble: where vpon she
was constrayned to make sute to my father in law
as to her onely friend on whome she did wholly rely,
and he performed all things to doe her good, &
helped her out of her troubles, & was vnto his
dying daye her most faithfull friend.

Notwthstanding he had heard of the speeches be-
twixt her & her first Husband a little before his
death, for he perswaded her to be content, & to
giue me leaue to enioye me portion equally with her,
for as much as there was ynough for vs both saying
it was pittie I should be wronged, for that I had not deserued it, or words to this effect./

Wherevnto she answered, doeth thy hart faile thee now? I willbe drawen in pieces wth wylde horsses before euer I will yeeld vnto her./

:in this her trouble
But howsoeuer her mynde was then^; she gaue con=

sent that this said Lease for a thousand yeares come/ a should be put to, tryall in Lawe, & so the sute proceeded, &

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proceeded, & the said lease receiued a judge= ment, & was canselled by order of Lawe/

Yet when my father in lawe was dead, they gaue it out that they hoped to bring the matter aboute to another tryall, & to ouerthrowe that judgem' after my mothers death./
And when my mother was dead, my sister fortifi= ed the house to keepe me out by force, & kept her possession of all the lands, but onely that part of myne conteyned in my mothers joynter wth my Husband held by force against her./

also
My Husband, told her that it were good for vs both to end this chargeable course in the beginning wherevnto she answered that she would be torne in pieces wth wylde horsses before she would giue ouer./

But after a whole yeares expences & charges in this busynes, God did put it into my sisters mynde equall
to yeeld vnto an engagd partition & diuiding of our portion betwixt vs: wth was performed accor=
dingly to both our great Contentes, all strife end= ed, natural loue reuiued & Confirmed, wth all well wishing to each other, & our posterities as to our selues euen from our harts: all wth was ye^ worke of God expressly. For who could haue reconciled vs in loue and peace but God? euen the
same God which worketh all things for the best
for his children./

This hath

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a great part of
This hath beene, the pilgrimage
of my whole lyfe: wherein God hath been euer
with mee, in all companyes at all tymes & places
opportunities & necessities, setting himselfe as it
were in person, against all myne opposites in theyr
strong & strange oppositions; for they were fathers
my Sister and her Husband and their frends for them, working my
& thought they might doe w^th theyr owne what they
father and mother therunto against mee:
would right or wrong to theyr children being
theyr subiects

But God the lord of lyfe & father of our fathers
preuented & frustrated theyr purposes when
24 hours of tyme when he purposed to haue confirmed [?] my wrong
he cut off my father, & suffred him not to liue to doe
me hurt; & when he preserued the lyfe of my
Husband in many extraordinary & great dangers
to doe me good, & when my sisters hart was humbled by the great troubles w^th God layed vpon
her after her first Husbands death, & in the
mean tyme the Lorde so ledd & carryed me in
all my wayes & preserued myne innocency so vnspotted
in theyr sight, y' they could not accuse me in the
least cryme: yet I am not thereby justyfied
before God./

For yf I had been vnduetyfull to my Husband, or
& vnduetyfull
disobedient, to my parents, & giuen to a wicked
course of lyfe & conversation, God himselfe would
haue forsaken me, & taken all his graces from
me, & haue deliuered me vp vnto the will of
myne ad=

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myne aduersaryes, & all good friends and meanes
would haue turned against me./
But all men seeing God to take my parte, pittied me & wished me all good successe, & gaue me theyr best furtherance, & specially those men in place best able to doe me good. for I was euer beloued of aH good men, & conuersed most wth them, & that was the gratious gifte of God who also kept all wicked company from mee./
And I haue euer approved it the best waye to keepe innocency to avoyde & shunn all euill Company, & to hate, abhorre & detest all wicked=nesse, & all the shewes & appearances thereof./
And how should wee chuse the good & refuse the euill? but by the spirit of God wthin vs: wth is ye onely Gifte of God & the true testimony of his gratious presence./

much much
I haue euuer beene, trayned vp by God himselfe in his Schoole of adversitie, whereby I haue beene humbled before God, & in myne owne sight, so that I could not saye, this I would haue or that I would doe, but at the pleasure & will of God in all things.

Neither did I behold vnworthynesse in any other but in my selfe, nor desyre to please my selfe be=fore others, nor to preferre vanities & transitory things of this world before the dilygent exercyse in the

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in the word of God, wth endureth for euuer/

God hath (from the beginning of my lyfe) layed bitternesse vpon all my pleasures & delightes of earthly things, whereby my mynde was mortified from them, & the desyres of my hart the more inclinable to heauenly things, with the more patience to beare all crosses, knowing yt yt determination thereof was in the hand of God & that he afflicteth not for euuer
God doeth knowe my naturall inclination vnto euill
from my birth & myne aptnesse to runn the waye
him
of the wicked from God, & all righteousnes: where=
fore wth his rod & sheepheards crooke he hath
and kept
gathered, me vnto him selfe, blessed be his holy
name for euer.

For all these myne afflictions haue beene better
vnto me & haue done me more good then all
the treasures of the earth could haue done:
for they all perishe & come to nothing, but the
even in his corrections
loue & mercy of God, abydeth for euer./

We are debtters, not to the fleshe to liue after
the flesh. For yf wee liue after the fleshe we shall
mortifie y\(^e\) deeds of y\(^e\) flesh by
dye, but yf we live after the spirit, we shall liue
for as many as are led by the spirit of God
they are y\(^e\) sonnes of God./

Yf wee be children, we are also heires, euen y\(^e\)
heires

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heires of God, & heires annexed wth Christ, if so be
that we suffer wth him, that we may also be glorified
with him./

For I count that the afflictions of this present
tyme, are not worthy of the glory that shall be be shew=
ed vnto vs.

Also we know that all things worke togethier for the
best vnto them that love God, even vnto them that
are called of his purpose

What have I gayned by the troubles of my whole lyfe?
even that w\(^e\) I have learned (that is to say) to put no con=
fidence in man nor in any Childe of man, nor in any
earthly things w\(^e\) are all changable & vncertayne, and
there is no truth in them, according to the Scriptures, all
men are lyars, even the best of them./
All men by corrupt nature are apte to provoke and offend one another, as Parents theyr Children, & Children theyr Parents; Husbands theyr wyves & wyves their Husbands. Masters their Servannts, & Servants their Masters. Wherevpon there aryseth such strife and Contention as though they could never be reconciled

But if every one were instructed in theyr dutie one towards another, wth the feare of God in theyr harts, exercising those vertues of meekenesse, temperance, patience, Chastitie, love & obedience; the spirit of God would never leave them vntill a peace were concluded betwixt them./

Finis/

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The Authors Meditation vpon Her Corps

Let me behold my corpes wch lyeth folden in sear= clothes, Ledead & Coffined here before me yet vnburyed; & consider, he was as I am, & as he is, I shall be./

His candle is put out, his fyre is quenched, & he hath made his bed in the darke, the grasse is mowen, the seed falleth into the earth & shall ryse agayne

And therew^'^all let the eyes of my soule be lifted vp vnto our Lorde Jesus christ, sitting at the right hand of God his heauenly father who was dead & buryed & arose agayne the third daye: wth this assurance & stedfast faith that the same spirit wch raysed christ from the graue

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graue, shall rayse my Corpes, & make vs both partakers wth himselfe of a ioyfull resurrection at the last daye./

In this worlde (is to be looked for) nothing but death; wth Christ, lyfe; here nothing but weakenesse, wth him strength. here a short tyme soone ended; wth Christ tyme w^''out end./
And though Christ be exalted in his glory; yet
his eyes doe behold our corpes, dust, & dry bones:
Prouidently disposing them vnto the daye
of resurrection, as the childe after conception is
framed in the wombe vnto the daye of birth by the
duine & mightie power of God our creator./
The loue of Christ hasteneth him to come vnto the day
of resurrection, & he hath promised vs that he will
come quickly, & will not tarry./
Add. How should not he so, before they rise againe./
Omitting y*e rest/

This my Corpes was a man w*th whome I liued al=
most fifty yeares, his faithfull wyfe, in all w*th tyme
I haue obserued an extraordinary favour of God to
wards him divers wayes, wherein appeared the
loue Mercy & protection of God ouer him./
and
He hath passed thorough, amongst an army of men, very many of
whom dyed of the plague, & he escaped; he was
twyce in danger to haue been drowned vpon the
seaes.

In running at tilt he had a splinter of a launce
rann into

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farre
rann, into the middest of his forehead; another
tyme he was stricken on the head w*th a bullett,
both being very dangerous escapes/

By the sickenesse of his body he was often in danger
& escaped.

one
Yf he should haue dyed in any, of these hazards; my
selfe & myne had been vterly vndone touching my
and my Childe much prejudiced
worldly estate,; wherin God preserued him to be a
blessed helper vnto me./

He suffered some prejudice by Gods permission
touching the disposing of his inheritance, wherin
by order of Law he prevayled against his aduersaries, w^t
recovery was effected by Gods owne hand in his great 
love & mercy/, neither did euer any great sute or matter of gr^a importance goe 
against him./

No man was euer able to execute his malice, euer 
thing beyond expectation or deseerte fell out accor-
ding to his owne desire, & his causes were euer 
just both before God & man./

He neuer carrieth malice in his hart towards any: he was charitable & of a compassionate mynd; he would soone forgett a wrong, & seeke to be reconciled I haue known had for, when he hath spoken bitter words in his anger to the great ofence of them to whome he spake, at the same instant he hath called for them, and intreated them to take it in the best part, and 

beare w^th

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beare w^th him, & that euer rashe word w^th he spake in his anger was not from his harte, nor of euill meaninge^43

He was not couetous nor worldly, he loued hospitalitie & bounty, he was of a free hart & good nature, he was not trecherous but faithfull in all things, nor
he neuer deceiued any trust:/

He was very well instructed from his tender youth in the grounds of his fayth in Jesus Christ, & in his truth, & he was more sincere in his owne harte before God then he made shewe of to the world./

Neither did he justifie himselfe: for he would often confesse his owne errors & defects, w^th he found in himselfe betwixte him & God, & desyred earnestly often tymes that the thoughts of his harte might be tur-
ed awaye from them, & that he might neuer apprehend them more, w^th was an assured token
of his election, & that he was a blessed man, vnto whom the Lorde imputed not his sinne.

I carried alwayes that reuerent respect towards him, in regard of my good conceipt, wch I euuer had of the good partes wch I knew to be in him, that I could not fynde in my harte to challenge him for the worst worde or deed wch euuer he offred me in all his lyfe; as to say, why spake you this? or why did you that? but in silence passed over all such matters betwixt vs: so that we are parted in all loue, & christian charitie, vntill our happy meeting in heauen./

So long as

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this
So long as, my corpes is aboue the earth, I can not but thinck vpon him in this manner, and beseech the Lord to enable me to performe the tyme re in trust, wch in his lyfe, he imposed vpon me, to the honour of God, & the comfort of my neigbour,

good
And so rest at the Lords, pleasure to follow him in my happy end, & blessed departure out of changable this momentary worlde to eternall blisse in the euerlasting kingdome of heauen./

And so I take my leave of my corpes for euer to his earthly habitation committing him into the hands of his buryers, and ye performers of his honorable buryall Funerall./

Wherein is solemnized the original coniunction original
of our first, beginning, from earth, to earth; yet not to rest there, but as a free passage vnto the free= dome of eternitie.

And
For as at the instant of our birth we are assured of nothing more then of death, so at our death
we are of nothing more assured then that we shall
liue agayne after death./

God will ever uphold it in her being,
For the soule cannot be extinguisshed, bycause,
& besides in ye good, the lyfe thereof is layed vp in Christ.
of his divine nature, and his humane
And as Christ consisteth, both of soule and body,

God & man

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God & man, so we being vnited vnnto him as members
of his fleshe blessed body, cannot but be preserued
both in soule & body thorough him who liueth for
euer./

And now my soule returne vnnto thy rest, for ye
Lorde hath beene euuer good vnnto thee, he hath ever
preserued myne integritie & faithfulness vnnto
this man in all my lyfe I lived wth him; & let the
same Lorde preserue & blesse me to be a faithfull
mother vnnto his children, & a faithfull member of ye
church of God, as a blessed instrument therein, euens
vnnto my most happie end./

And Being aged I haue but a small tyme to liue
after my deare husband deceassed, who gaueme all
that he had both Lands & goods during my lyfe,
according to his last will,
to be disposed by me, wholly put in trust as his
executrixe.

landes
Which, hetherto I doe peaceably enioye, wthout any
resistance whatsoever, wherein I doe admire the
goodnesse of God vnnto me, who hath euuer taken my
parte, & righted my wrongs, as appeareth in my
discourse of the peregrination of my whole lyfe to
this daye wth I haue set downe in this my booke
of meditations./

Oh, what shall I giue vnnto the Lorde for all
the benefitts that he hath done vnnto me?

even
I will, receiue the cup of saluation: & call vpon
the name of the Lorde.

And humbly

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And humbly beseech the Lorde to blesse my off-spring with the graces of his holy spirit from generation to generation even vnto the very daye of the generall stel: so much resurrection, *if it be his holy will*, not, *to enioye this transitory worlde, nor the glory & vanities thereof,* as much rather *But much rather,* that they may be endued with patience & grace, to humble themselues vnder y® mighty hand of God that he maye exalt them in due tyme./ to be thankefull to him for all things, &

And to wayte his good pleasure in all things, & *neuer* to forgett his benefitts, & to declare the same vnto theyr children for euer.

Yf I could liue tenn thousand generations, I were not able to expresse the least parte of the admirable blessings & benefitts which God hath shewed vnto me & my sayde husband in our whole lyfe vnto this daye./ And assuredly yf I could possesse the blessings Lands & goods of all men in myne owne tyme & being I do esteeme them as nothing in comapryson of the gifte of godds grace, to remember his benefitts with perpetuall thankes giuing for the same, w® ought to be performed by my selfe & my posterytie vnto the end of the world from one generation to another./ For all earthly things of this worlde, as honours & whatsoeuer

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& whatsoeuer, passeth awaye as nothing & vanisheth lyke a shadow, in the very vsing; neither can they giue any assurance thereof vnto theyr successors./

But, perpetuall thankes to God for his benefitts receiued is registred w® God as a thing w® euer putteth him
in mynde to continue his blessings & to multiplye &
renue them from tyme to tyme w/out end

Without which thankefullness to God, all good
blessings & benefittes departe awaye, as yf they had
never been receiued.

As the places of holy scriptures are gathered & sett vpon
cuer poyn of my meditations; so let the Lorde ingrave
the same in our hartes

University of New Brunswick

Notes

whole volume Lady Mildmay’s “journal”, but this is misleading since the second part of the
volume — the “Meditations” — is not keyed to chronological events in the writer’s life.


3. Northampton Central Library. Weigall did not identify the location of the MS. Its pages
measure 19.4 X 14.2 cm, and on the inside cover there is a binder’s ticket: “Bretherton
ligavit, 1848”. I should like to thank Miss M.E. Arnold and the staff of the Northampton
Library for their kindness and help during my visit.

4. Paginated 1-912 with interleavings, revised sentences, and passages pasted in, but missing
pp. 275-92, and incomplete at the end. The original order of composition of the “Book of
Meditations” does not appear to be the sequence of the MS as it is now bound.

5. P. 4. These are among the most popular religious works of the age. Wolfgang Musculus,
Common places of christian religion, trans. J. Man (London, 1566), Comontarye or
exposition ... vppon the li. psalme (London, 1566); John Foxe, Actes and Monuments
(London, 1563 and many reprintings); De Imitatione Christi, various translations by W.
Atkinson (1504), R. Whitford (1531), E. Hake (1567), and T. Rogers (1581), all reprinted.
Lady Mildmay mentions later in her Book of Meditations (p. 30) that these were the only
works, besides the bible, her own mother allowed her to read. Herbert St John Mildmay
notes the existence, however, of a private copy (owned by W. V. R. Fane of Fulbeck, Lincoln)
of Théodore de Bèze’s A briefe and pithie [sic] summe of the christian faith (first printed
1563, with six further editions up to 1589) which bears the initials G.M. on the cover and
signed verses at the end:

Seek not to crave
that you would have
Then shall you finde
untoe your minde
That you like best
To give you rest

Grace Mildemay
St John Mildmay also mentions portraits of Grace, Anthony, and their daughter Mary in the possession of the same owner. The portrait of Grace bears the inscription:

The minde continualli employed
in good thinges avoideth evill,
pleaseth God, and promiseth
an happie end.


6. An exception is “agaynst all papists”, four pages interleaved between pp. 482-3. Lady Mildmay makes conventional protestant attacks on Catholics, but praises many of the Jesuits as “men of great Learning, & very expert in the scriptures.” She argues that they should be given the benefit of the doubt for not knowing all the errors of the papacy, and prays for their conversion.


8. “. . . when I beganne sometimes to sett downe any parte [of my writings], I found my selfe empty, & voyde at that very instant of any one thought or disposition to praye or meditate, or to apprehend heauenly things. Yet notwithstanding before I went from that place, the Lorde did minister such plenty of diuine matter vnto my mynde, as I was not able to comprehend & express; so that I was constrayned to leaue off for that tyme, being afrayde to proceeude or presume too farre” (p. 4).

9. This sequence is apparently superseded with another series marking longer divisions beginning “Cap. 2.” at p. 32; neither series, however, runs more than halfway through this part of the MS.


12. St John Mildmay, 75; Roberts, A4““.


15. Weigall (119) supplies this name, but does not identify a source.

16. *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press,
17. I am very grateful to A.S.G. Edwards for reading this article and suggesting valuable improvements.


19. This suggests knowledge of commonplace books of *sententiae* rather than of original works by classical writers. There is no evidence that Lady Mildmay knew Latin or Greek.


21. A Mrs. Hamblyn, according to Weigall.


24. The remainder of this paragraph is crossed out.

25. i.e. stanza.

26. Sir Walter served as M.P. first for Lostwithiel in 1545, and later for Northamptonshire from 1557 until his death (*DNB*).

27. Perhaps a glance at Sir Walter’s fellow councillor and friend Lord Burghley, or at others in Elizabeth’s government, who made vast fortunes from their public offices. Sir Walter’s gains, by contrast, were modest (cf. Lehmberg, 257, 307).

28. Exhibition = university scholarship for undergraduates. Besides founding and endowing Emmanuel College, Sir Walter made a generous benefaction in 1568 to his old Cambridge college, Christ’s, of books, and a £20 annuity for a lecturer in Greek, a preacher, and six undergraduates (*The Statutes of Sir Walter Mildmay Kt*, trans. Frank Stubbings [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983]). He also left £20 to Christ’s in his will (Lehmberg, 306).


31. Anthony Mildmay first drew himself to Elizabeth’s attention in 1564 “at Peter House [Cambridge, where] she much commended the son of Sir Walter Mildmay; which, being a child, made a very neat and trimm Oration, and pronounced it very aptly and distinctly” (John Nichols, *The Progresses … of Queen Elizabeth* [London: John Nichols, 1823], i, 173).

32. Besides the bulk of his father’s property, Anthony received £200 in money, £400 in plate; his brother Humphrey received the same amount of money but £300 in plate (Lehmberg, 304-5).

33. i.e. land that was legally inalienable.

34. See below, note 38.

35. Presumably referring to Sir Walter’s granddaughter Mary. The meaning here hinges on the
word "sufficient," for she in fact received "£667, a gold chain, and a diamond ring worth £30" (Lehmberg, 305); but most of this may have gone towards paying off her father's debts.

36. See n. 22 above.

37. Plummett = lead pen or pencil (OED, first citation 1634).

38. "Thirds" refers to the portion of a deceased husband's personal property, and the third of his landed income, which might be claimed by his widow for use during her lifetime. Thirds were often contested.

39. i. e. without any intention of remarrying, which would otherwise have been a normal expectation.

40. Altered from "indented."

41. i. e. on behalf of Grace.

42. John Talbot, fourth son of John, second Earl of Shrewsbury (Annals and Antiquities of Lacock Abbey, ed. W. L. Bowles and J. G. Nichols [London, 1835], 297-8). According to Sir Walter, he "alleadged that Sir Henrie Sharington by will made the daie before he died had graunted in revertion after his wiffe, the most parte of all his landes to the said John Talbot and his wiffe, and to hir heires, for one thousand yeares, without any rent; by that meanes leaving nothing to my sonnes wiffe but one mannour, and that not altogeather without controversie" (quoted in Lehmberg, 78).

43. This paragraph has been crossed out.