TEACHING THE POOR: SARAH TRIMMER, GOD'S OWN HANDMAID

WILFRIED KEUTSCH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, PÄDAGOGISCHE HOCHSCHULE, LUDWIGSBURG

The little literary reputation Sarah Trimmer (1741–1810) at present enjoys as a writer of imaginative children's books is based on virtually one work, her *Fabulous histories* (1786), or, as it was called later on, *The history of the robins*. Written for a bourgeois readership, it is supposed to have taught 'the English to be kind to animals' and - according to Gillian Avery - represents 'a monument of sensibility, . . . quivering with lofty sentiments'.

Mrs Trimmer is also known for her energetic crusade against all types of children's literature which did not come up to her rigidly monarchist Anglican demands. She found pernicious liberal and Jacobin influences in *Cinderella* and *Goody Two-shoes*, Goethe's *Werther* (which she apparently thought was a publication for juveniles) and Maria Edgeworth's tales, to name but a few titles and authors, as the pages of her review of children's books written for middle-class parents, *The guardian of education* (1802–06), show. It was this aspect of her work which induced Percy Muir to call her indignantly 'a campaigner, . . . an almost complete throwback to the predestinarians of the Calvinistic period'.

In her day, however, Mrs Trimmer's reputation rested less on what she had to say for or about the education of bourgeois children than on her practical educational work and on her moral and didactic publications written for use in charity and Sunday schools. *Mrs Barbauld's Easy lessons for children* (1778) seems to have set her off as an educational author with her own *Easy introduction to the knowledge of nature* (1780), which, in its combination of factual with religious instruction, already indicates the direction which her future work was going to take. Although no complete and reliable

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4 Cf. *Some account of the life and writings of Mrs Trimmer, with original letters and meditations and prayers, selected from her journal* (London, 1814) i, 51.
bibliography of these books seems to exist,\(^5\) the entries in the British Library's *Catalogue* witness the numerous editions many of these publications have enjoyed, mainly during her lifetime. Her religious, political and educational views were severely attacked by Sidney Smith, whose scathing invective culminates in the verdict that she 'seems to be a lady of respectable opinions, and very ordinary talents; defending what is right without judgment, and believing what is holy without charity',\(^6\) while her publications in general were subject to criticism by Charles Lamb.\(^7\)

Stylistically, Sarah Trimmer's language offers little variation; it is based on the neo-classicist model, and always remains abstract and general, periphrastic and latinate. Even in her private, more hymnic *Meditations* she does not deviate much from this model. A letter written to her grandparents at the age of eleven or twelve is just as typical of her prose as any later example.

Dear Grandpapa and Grandmama,

As I now think myself capable of writing a letter, I do not know of any to whom I can address myself with more justness and propriety than yourselves; for you are my parents in a double capacity, and therefore may reasonably claim my utmost duty and gratitude. By your indulgent care and tenderness, under the gracious hand of Providence, you have blest me with the best of mothers. Let me therefore beg a continuance of your blessings and prayers; to enable me to set a right value upon all the privileges I enjoy, by havng [sic] a rational being, and to put in practice the duties I owe to God, my neighbour, and myself; and it shall be my daily prayer to the Almighty, that he will make the remainder of your lives happy, and receive you at last into everlasting felicity. My Grandpapa and Grandmama Kirby, and all my papa's family, join in suitable commendations, with Your most obedient, [etc.] (*Life*, i, 3 f.).

Even if one entertains doubts as to her actual authorship of the letter, it is worth noting that many of the words so indicative of her beliefs and values in later life are already mentioned here: justness, propriety, duty, gratitude, care, tenderness, Providence, blessings, prayers, etc.

Before looking more closely at the ideas which Mrs Trimmer developed for the education of the poor and their children, I shall present some of her rather more general didactic assumptions about children, their families and duties.

The style of the letter quoted above, detached and cool as it seems, does not say much about Mrs Trimmer's real feelings, but it corresponds well with her general attitude towards children.

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\(^{5}\) I have been unable to see Doris M. Yarde, *Sarah Trimmer of Brentford and her children: with some of her early writings 1780-1786* (Heston, Hounslow and District Historical Society, 1990).


\(^{7}\) Letter of 23 October 1802, to S.T. Coleridge, in E.V. Lucas, *The letters of Charles Lamb to which are added those of his sister Mary Lamb* (London: Methuen, 1935), i, 326.
Everywhere she is rather outspoken with regard to their inferiority, because to her childhood is but a preparatory period for adulthood. The course of education suggested by her and so many of the other improving writers of the age does not aim at attaining the child's psychological or mental independence. This is the reason why in *Fabulous histories*, for instance, unsupervised play is carefully limited. Relaxation can be earned only by lessons well learned and by applying oneself with industry to the tasks set by parents or tutors. Duty comes before affection as is shown by the strictly impersonal way children are treated; and a breach of duty invariably and inevitably calls down Nemesis on the culprit, as many examples in *Fabulous histories* and *Servant's friend* illustrate. In this respect Mrs Trimmer, however, is no match for Mrs Sherwood, the retributive horrors of whose 'Story on the sixth Commandment', in *The history of the Fairchild family* (1817–42), can hardly be surpassed. These acts of retribution originate in the notion that 'all children are by nature evil, and while they have none but the natural evil principle to guide them, pious and prudent parents must check their naughty passions in any way that they have in their power'.

Trimmer's method of making moral truths central to every single episode in *Fabulous histories* shows that the book has a certain affinity with the cautionary tale, and belongs to the genre of advisory literature written for the relatively small middle-class family which could afford to spend time and money on child-care. The literary images which society creates for, and teaches to, children, of course, hardly ever reflect society. The situations chosen for *Fabulous histories* afford ample proof of this: both the Benson children and the little robins (their lives are set parallel) are primarily brought up in isolation, that is, in a secluded household or garden, respectively. Examples of this basic situation are frequent in all educational and didactic literature:

8 Cf. *Fabulous histories: designed for the instruction of children, respecting their treatment of animals* (London: Johnson and Rivington, 1802) 103, 120, and passim; also Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton* (1783–89) for many examples.


11 Good examples are *Emile, Sandford and Merton*, or the many tales focussing on orphaned children such as *Goody Two-shoes*.

12 Kramnick, 217.
or not, uses this method and reinforces the effect by setting the story of *Fabulous histories* in a small, idyllic, rural society, which is rationally ordered and stable, and whose members live in relative harmony with each other. In line with the tenets of the Age of Reason, disturbances which occur (for didactic purposes only), are nothing but temporary errors within a perfect system. The outside world is the object of occasional excursions, which do not aim at introducing the children to social reality but at retaining their social innocence. In addition, Sarah Trimmer, who after all, lived in the period of the Enclosure Movement and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, tends to reduce the complexities of life to a series of simplified metaphorical episodes. No mention is made of the poverty, pauperism, crime, vice and misery the new industrial establishments and the country too were hiding. It is not clear whether she closed her eyes on purpose to these developments or whether the growing class segregation was too complex for her to understand. Later on, after the outbreak of the war against France, in 1793, she certainly acknowledges outside, political influences, and the dangers inherent in Jacobinism and the doctrines of the French Encyclopaedists.13

Mrs Trimmer's writings for middle-class children show the operation of 'the sentiments and affections of a good father and mother' and emphasize 'universal benevolence' as a general educational precept,14 but there can be no doubt that she considered direct moral teaching as of greater importance. For her, the defence of the old traditional order of family, household and society begins in early infancy. Dangers come from outside, as the *Guardian of education* shows, whose pages are full of sweeping accusations and references to the ruin of the old values and the established principles of government, morality, and religion. '[T]he zeal of Jacobinism never sleeps,' she says (*Guardian*, i, 197). To protect the bourgeois child from the contamination through 'liberal publications, equally adapted to the instruction of Jews, Turks, Pagans, or infidels' (*Guardian*, i, 67) is easy, given its isolated situation in a secluded, non-urban household, in which the child was under constant parental observation and protection;15 and much could be achieved by the application of methodical habits, orderly conduct and a simple life-style. As far as the teaching through books was concerned, it sufficed to repeat suitable lessons in the form of dialogues, examples, and the occasional brief cautionary tale.

14 *Fabulous histories*, vii f.
15 Linda Pollock's study lists the following parental functions, typical of the eighteenth century: protective, educative, disciplinary, providing, training, advisory and helping. *Forgotten children*, 112.
Contrary to the middle-class child, the children of the lower orders learned not so much through learning but by doing, although the catechetical method recommended itself for the religious instruction of all children.  

The fact that the principles and the example of the French Revolution have misguided 'the understandings of the weak and ignorant, . . . augmented by the weakness or wickedness of various and numerous classes of our fellow-subjects' (Guardian, i, 196), explains in part why the poor and their children are so particularly prone to 'contamination' by 'evil-minded men' and 'evil counsels'.  
The 'enemies of Christianity' make use of the weaker understanding and general ignorance, the spiritual necessities and bodily wants of the poor by leading them to a life of vice, idleness, profligacy and impiety. The publications consulted offer no indication that Sarah Trimmer based her many efforts to instruct and improve the children of the poor on detailed social analysis, but it is apparent that she was deeply disturbed not only by their needs but also about the increasing pauperization of the country. Whether she understood that society was changing from a more feudal to a more modern bourgeois structure, in which many of the stabilizing old personal ties were removed and replaced by the cash-nexus, is not clear. Apart from the frequent mention she makes of the war against France, it is only on rare occasions that she refers to contemporary problems such as the use of poor rates and the fact that parish money cannot 'alleviate the situation of the poor' (Oeconomy, 7 f., 61). She also acknowledges that the problems of the urban and agricultural poor are different as 'the latter are often unavoidably out of employment'. But on the whole she displays no interest in the social and economic causes of poverty. Instead she offers a model of improvement which rests on a rigorous division of the working people and the poor into black and white: the deserving and the undeserving poor, the godly and the ungodly, the respectable and dutiful and the rebellious and undutiful, the idle and the industrious, that is, on an alternating identification of poverty with virtue and vice. There is nothing new in this as a look at the sermons of seventeenth-century Anglican divines shows, where poverty is praised panegyrically:

\[\text{If men did but know what felicity dwells in the cottage of a virtuous poor man, how sound he sleeps, how quiet his breast, how composed his mind, how free from}\]


17 Life, i, 30.

18 Cp. Life, i, 31 and ii, 233.

19 Cp. Harvey Darton on Mrs Trimmer being 'typical of the non-political . . . English upper-middle class' (158).
care, how easy his provision, how healthful his heart, they would never admire the noises and the diseases... that fill the houses of the luxurious and the heart of the ambitious.\textsuperscript{20}

This is clearly apologetic, and in a way Mrs Trimmer’s is only another voice in the contemporary Anglican and Evangelical choir when she says ‘that the kindest office which can be performed towards people of the lower orders is, to reconcile them to their situation’ (Guardian, i, 342). Mrs Trimmer, however, differed from the quietest attitude of the old Anglican divines by her enormous zest for teaching and taking an active hand in the management of the affairs of the lower orders.\textsuperscript{21} In this respect she can be compared to Hannah More, who for similar reasons tried to educate the poor, attempts that aroused the scorn of the Tory radical and democrat, William Cobbett: ‘Society is in a queer state when the rich think they must educate the poor in order to insure their own safety...’\textsuperscript{22}

Prior to Hannah More Mrs Trimmer not only founded Sunday schools, she also edited from January 1788 to June 1789 The Family Magazine, which contained contributions, ‘some of which seem to have formed the inspiration of certain Cheap Repository Tracts’.\textsuperscript{23} The comparison between Trimmer and More can be drawn further, if one takes into account the findings of J.L. and Barbara Hammond in their examination of Hannah and Martha More’s Mendip annals, where the Mores take the existence of the rich and the poor for granted but do not even attempt an analysis of the causes of the pauperization of the country. Their occasional criticism of the employers and the gentry is rare and only aims at their want of sympathy with the efforts of the More sisters.\textsuperscript{24} This sympathy Sarah Trimmer also wishes for in Oeconomy, which is addressed to ladies of rank and fortune asking them ‘to dispense their bounty’ and to persons in the middling stations of life who are requested to spend some ‘of their time to the purposes of instructing and employing their

\textsuperscript{20} Jeremy Taylor, The whole works, ed. R. Heber (London, 1822), v, 23. Similarly Robert South, who said, ‘To be pious is the way to be poor’, Sermons preached upon several occasions (Oxford, 1842), i, 56.

\textsuperscript{21} Sarah Trimmer, The oeconomy of charity, after all, sets out the precepts of the school founded by her at Brentford and gives advice as to the running of similar schools.

\textsuperscript{22} William Cobbett, Rural rides (London, repr. 1966), i, 130.


ignorant and indigent fellow-creatures' because evil consequences will threaten the nation 'at this important crisis . . . if Sunday-schools are suffered to drop' (*Oeconomy*, 2 f.).

That many female writers should have taken up the subject of social injustice has been frequently commented upon. Mitzi Myers, for instance, states that it is a common feature of female writers to take an interest in 'animals, slaves, orphans, poor illiterate children, laborers at subsistence level, mothers and children brought to destitution because the man drinks, girls seduced and abandoned'. *Oeconomy* offers partial evidence of this, but Trimmer's advisory and improving publications view the poor, more often than not, not as victims of society but as culprits. The tracts written at the time were certainly intended to stem the flood of literature inspired by Thomas Paine's *Rights of man*, which was widely read by the lower classes and all those in favour of political and parliamentary reform, that is, the humanitarian intellectual and articulate petty bourgeoisie. By contrast, the self-appointed champions of the education of the poor came mainly from the middle classes, feeling threatened by revolutionary stirrings from down below and therefore insisting on keeping the social structure unchanged. 'Poverty was the source of wealth, for it provided the reservoir of cheap labour which was deemed an essential requisite in a country whose economics were those of mercantilism'.

Apart from those evil counsels who contaminate the poor with Jacobin and liberal philosophical ideas Trimmer's enemies are all those who do not share her ideology. She was most certainly aware of the still growing influence of the various Evangelical churches, especially of the Unitarians and of Methodism, which in the 1790s extended well into the middle classes and had over the years tried to reach all those who had been ignored by the Church of England.

What must have strengthened Mrs Trimmer in her struggles was certainly the belief that she was particularly gifted in improving the poor. In one of her private meditations she says:

I am very desirous of helping the poor as far as my ability extends. O that I may be permitted to be instrumental to their good! I will not shrink back for fear of trouble, but will do what I think best for them, without any selfish consideration. O that I may be able to give them good advice, of which they stand so much in need . . .

28 Cf. Jones, 155 f.
29 *Life*, i, 30; similarly ii, 19.
Her efforts met with success as well as failure. In early September 1786, she desires 'not to be puffed up with the applauses of weak mortals' (*Life*, i, 117), whereas an entry, on 11 January 1793, says

I have also had much vexation in the course of the last five months from the ill behaviour of the parents of the schools. No less than five of them have taken their girls away. One of them yesterday withdrew her children, and treated me with the greatest insolence imaginable (*Life*, ii, 7).

However, Sarah Trimmer never doubted that she had been called by God to rescue the poor from infidelity. On 1 January 1793 she proudly notes:

I have a happy influence over the minds of many poor people, both children and adults. This I consider not only as a blessing, but as an honour conferred upon me. It is a blessing most undoubtedly, for it is delightful in the exercise of it, and there is a great reward annexed to it. It is an honour, for it places me in the rank of a chosen servant; *I am the handmaid of the Lord!* (*Life*, ii, 4).

And this belief, conspicuously absent from the first volume of her *Life*, is reiterated again and again; in the last entry on this theme she speaks of herself rather affectedly as 'thy poor weak handmaid'. Whether this belief was inspired by Hannah More, who saw and called herself 'God's instrument', is immaterial, but points to similarities between the two ladies.

The problem the More sisters and Sarah Trimmer no doubt saw was how to get the poor to take part in religious instruction. Once this difficulty was overcome — through charity and Sunday schools — one could begin with catechizing. This old Anglican custom of weekly catechizing children in church had, apparently, fallen into disuse towards the end of the eighteenth century. The charity schools made this practice their own and taught spelling and reading in addition. Trimmer, who was deeply interested in alleviating the life of the poor, also proved the practical bend of her mind by commending spinning, carding, knitting, needlework, and basic techniques of hygiene. Jones says quite rightly that it is easy to criticize the Mores and Trimmer 'from an age which has little sympathy with their religious point of view, and detests their social philosophy', but to some of Trimmer's contemporaries she must have been already dangerously progressive and liberal. William Cobbett, in his *Cottage economy,*

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33 Jones, 159 f.
which is also full of very practical advice, saw, however, nothing to recommend in people like Sarah Trimmer. With the exception of religious instruction the syllabus Mrs Trimmer had in mind was naturally highly selective and did not entail much factual teaching.

It is not intended that the children of the poor should be instructed in languages, geography, history, and other articles that constitute a polite education, but merely in such knowledge of the English language as shall enable them to read the scriptures; in the plain duties of Christianity; and in those modes of conduct which their station requires (*Oeconomy*, 37).

Mrs Trimmer had also to say something about the daily organization of the schools, although she sees reason to discipline both teachers and pupils alike. The rules for teachers in the schools at Brentford, which she had helped to set up, require teachers to open school punctually, control the children's attendance, appearance and work, and ask them to be mild and friendly to the children and make them go to church. (*Oeconomy*, 166 ff.). A 'Morning Admonition', hung up in the schools, is to be read to the children every Sunday so that they should behave at church because 'God sees you at all times and in all places, and views even your most secret thoughts' (171) - a warning Sarah Trimmer's favourite children's author, Isaac Watts, would have wholeheartedly endorsed, if one can go by his 'The All-seeing God'. On the whole we may assume that Trimmer's Brentford schools did not differ much from the system at the Mores' Sunday-schools in their curricular emphasis.

Mrs Trimmer must have been aware of a rapidly progressing disintegration of society. Just as Benjamin Disraeli much later saw the division of the country into two nations, the rich and the poor, so Trimmer records a rift between the poor and their superiors in the field of moral and linguistic conduct.

The higher and middling ranks are so refined, and the lower so vulgar, that their language is in many respects as unintelligible to each other as if they came from different regions of the world. Totally uninstructed in their early years, and excluded from good example, poor people are unable to express themselves with propriety, fall into habits of vice and profaneness, and acquire a roughness of manner (*Oeconomy*, 11 f.).

34 'It is upon the hungry and the wretched that the fanatic works. The dejected and forlorn are his prey. As an ailing carcass engenders vermin, a pauperized community engenders teachers of fanaticism, the very foundation of whose doctrines is, that we are to care nothing about this world . . .' William Cobbett, *Cottage economy*, new edn (London, 1826), no. i, 'Introduction', 16.

35 'When the children were tired they stood up and sang. The first effort was to teach the children to read and learn Scripture by heart. A penny a chapter was paid for proficiency in reciting such sections as the ninth chapter of Isaiah, the Beatitudes, and some of the Psalms. The early chapters of Genesis were read again and again to fix in infants minds the fall of man'. Mary Alden Hopkins, *Hannah More and her circle* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947), 106.
In her teaching of the poor Mrs Trimmer finds herself faced with an almost unsolvable problem: on the one hand she realizes that – very generally speaking – the rich and the poor have drifted apart and live in separate worlds; on the other hand she must insist on a unified society, in which the existence of the poor is a prerequisite for the well-being of their betters. Hence the aims of a household employing servants were often conflicting. For one, the Christian household was supposed to include everybody in the house, that is, the family and the servants. But the master’s family also desired to have their higher social status recognized: hence the diverging tendencies of integration and separation, the enforcement of which was an educational matter. Servants’ and apprentices’ living quarters, for instance, were separated from the family’s because ‘the increasing wealth of the middle classes in the eighteenth century encouraged a new, more comfortable mode of living’. We may assume that this development was not enthusiastically welcomed by all servants, especially those in urban areas which were more easily influenced by radical democratic and republican ideas. Here was presumably the source of the frequent masters’ complaint about servants not sufficiently attached to them, acting ‘towards them from selfish and mercenary motives’ (Oeconomy, 26; also 121 f.). These are standard complaints we come across everywhere in Europe: In France Mme de Genlis examined the relationships between servants and children in her plays, treatises and tales; in Germany both Hauszuchten and Hausväterliteratur became very popular, Servant’s friend was translated into German already one year after its publication in England.

It is a frequent custom of the literature of the period to view domestic servants as misguided or childlike inferiors, thus placing the poor, domestics and children alike at one level. This is partly motivated by domestic law, according to which children and servants had equal legal status, the children being minors by their age, the servants legally and professionally; it also explains why

36 Cobbett, romanticizing a feudal past but acknowledging the tendency to separation between master and man, observes ‘This Squire Charington’s father used... to sit at the head of the oak-table along with his men, say grace to them, and cut up the meat and pudding. He might take a cup of strong beer to himself, when they had none; but that was pretty nearly all the difference in the manner of living. So that all lived well’. Rural rides, Introduction by Asa Briggs (London and New York, 1966), i, 266.


39 Cf. Mitzi Myers, ‘Servants as they are now educated: women writers and Georgian pedagogy’, Essays in Literature, 16 (1989), 64.

writers such as Trimmer wrote for, and about, these groups. It was essential to educate domestics and persuade them to accept a system that required patronage from the rich and subservience from the servants, not least because the servants played an important part in the upbringing of the children. The presence of the servants and their influence on the children was to be welcomed because it set parents free for other activities; but it was also clear that this influence could be detrimental to the morals, behaviour and social opinions of their little charges. John Locke already criticized the domestics' influence on education; and Jonathan Swift, ironically describing the public nurseries of Lilliput, said that there little boys 'are never suffered to converse with Servants, . . . whereby they would avoid those early bad impressions of Folly and Vice to which our Children are subject'. Sarah Trimmer advises that 'parents in high life who inconsiderately consign their children to the charge of footmen, grooms and nursery maids should rather keep their children under the constant supervision or care of tutors or governesses' (Guardian, i, 42 f.).

To minimize the servants' pernicious influence meant to educate both parties concerned, which could be achieved through direct interference, viz., religious practice in the household and the giving of orders, but also through indirect teaching, that is, advice books written for parents and/or servants. These means of persuasion had to be based on irrefutable authority, the Bible, because proper bourgeois literature with its themes of economic success, manly virtues and adventures, proper sentiments and a wide knowledge of the world, could not be used for the education of servants, from whom industriousness, devotion, obedience and frugality were expected.

All this finds expression in The servant's friend: an exemplary tale designed to enforce the religious instructions, given at Sunday and other charity schools, by pointing out the practical application of them in a state of service. Obviously, the subtitle describes the ideological direction Trimmer is going to follow, and to whom the little book is addressed. As far as the language and the narrative structure is

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41 This is brought out by most books written at the time for bourgeois children (e.g. Robins, Sandford and Merton, Fairchild family) and for servants (e.g. Susan Gray, the subtitle of which says 'related by a Clergyman for the Benefit of young Women going into Service').

42 Jonathan Swift, The author's works (Dublin: Faulkner, 1744), iii, 48. The nurses of girls will be 'publicly whipped thrice about the city', if they 'ever presume to entertain the Girls with frightful or foolish Stories, or the common Follies practiced by Chamber-Maids'.

43 Cf. Engelsing, 401.

44 Servant's friend; a new edn (London: Rivington, 1814), was apparently inspired by a suggestion in the Monthly Review and met with immediate success as the following quotation indicates: 'Dr. Horne, the Dean of Canterbury. . . is exceedingly pleased with your Servant's Friend and has given each of his servants one. . .'. Letter of Mrs Denward, 8 November 1786, Life, i, 168 f.
concerned, it is a very simple, loosely constructed cautionary tale, consisting of a series of moral exempla and episodes, held together only by the protagonist, Thomas Simpkin. We follow his career from the age of ten (when his god-fearing father dies), through his days at charity school (he is accepted partly because he knows some of Isaac Watts's songs by heart), his brief span of time as a farm labourer, to the years of his service at the local rectory, subsequent unemployment, until he eventually is put into a position to lease a small farm and marry his fellow servant, Kitty. At each stage he shows his extreme virtue: he is always obedient and dutiful, never lies, gambles or cheats, makes no use of any tricks, never reads forbidden literature (ballads and romances), and, above all, respects the property of his betters.

The 'Advertisement' states that learning is bestowed on the poor through the benevolence of the upper classes alone; it is essential to domestic servants because it helps them to 'resist evil, and hold fast that which is good; instead of going to Service . . . with no other view but their worldly profit and advantage' (Friend, iii). The relationship between master and mistress and servant is legally a contract, which is sanctioned by religion and society, and clearly benefits the masters more because they have more to lose.45

Early on in his life, Thomas learns to accept that Nemesis will descend immediately on any wrong-doer, as a memorable example will demonstrate. While still at school, at about the age of twelve, two of his mates, Harry Bird and Timothy Cox, are arrested for the theft of a few apples, and locked into, and exhibited in, a cage in the middle of the village. Thomas and his mother are curious to watch the spectacle:

They arrived at the cage just as the boys were taken out by the constable, who, tying their arms behind their backs, fastened a rope to each, and drove them before him, while a crowd [sic] of men, women, and children, surrounded them, hooting and reproaching them all the way (Friend, 25).

After a stiff warning by the justice, the two unrepenting boys are sent home, and - their wickedness having been proved - are at once expelled from charity school.46 Needless to say, Harry and Timothy end as they have begun; one is hanged as a highwayman, the other is sentenced to hard work in the ballast lighters, as the narrator proudly reports.

45 'Heads of families lament that they cannot confide in the fidelity and affection of their domestics; servants alledge, that they cannot look up to their masters and mistresses for examples of religious virtues; and that, instead of being considered as humble friends, they are regarded as mere mercenary slaves' (Friend, iv).

46 The teacher follows the instructions given him by declaring 'As it is publickly known that you have been guilty of theft, some persons may think ill of the institution, and withhold their benefactions, so that in effect you may be said to rob the school itself. On this account I cannot keep you here; therefore, according to the orders I have received from the trustees, I expell you, as unworthy of the charity, which was intended for good boys' (Friend, 32).
Having thus learned the lesson that property is sanctioned by society, Thomas prepares himself for service with Mr Brown, the local rector, by searching the Bible for suitable passages. He therefore reads, copies out, re-reads and learns by heart Eph 6:5-8, Col 3:22-25, 1 Tim 6:1 and Titus 2:9-11, which all have to do with the duty of servants, belonging to the group of so-called paraenetic or exhortatory texts in the New Testament. It is characteristic, though, of Mrs Trimmer's teaching that she does not make reference to the complete texts and passes over 1 Tim 6:2, Eph 6:9 and Col 4:1, which describe the duty masters have towards their slaves or servants.\(^{47}\) Reasons for this curious omission could be that Trimmer knew and accepted that servants would not themselves read the Bible and would therefore not notice the passages' absence; or that she thought that servants, being inferior human beings anyway through their legal status and understanding, would not question the choice of biblical texts.

The actual terms of contract given by Mr Brown are stiff and altogether in his own favour. He offers to give Thomas such religious instruction as he needs, allows him time to serve God, and promises to treat him kindly and justly; in return he reserves for himself the right to request Thomas to serve him with fidelity because the 'duty of the servant is to be obedient, diligent, sober, just, honest, frugal, orderly in his behaviour, submissive and respectful towards his master and mistress, and kind to his fellow servants' (Friend, 44). In exchange for the wages Thomas is going to receive he will give Mr Brown his time and labour; therefore, as Mr Brown reminds him, 'if you should be idle, and neglect my work, and waste the time which you have in a manner sold me, it would be all the same as robbing me of my money . . . You have put yourself in subjection to me, and your mistress, and are therefore bound to obey all our lawful commands' (Friend, 44). The terms offered to Thomas are less fair than those usually given to a wage-labourer in industry in those days, because the latter would be master of his own free time after work in the mill. Thomas, however, who has to work in the house and look after the little farm attached to the rectory, is in full employ all the time, and is additionally asked to pay especial attention to his master's property.\(^{48}\) Thomas is thus incapacitated in every respect, and Mr Brown even strips him of

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\(^{47}\) 'And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren, but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort' (1 Tim 6:2). 'And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him' (Eph 6:9). 'Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven' (Col 4:1).

\(^{48}\) '. . . many things belonging to me must necessarily come under your care; and you will have opportunities of wasting my property very much; but depend on it, if you do so, God will, at the great judgment, call you on an account for it' (Friend, 44 f.)
the last remains of his dignity as a human being when he requests him 'to inform me if you see my property wasted' by his fellow servants. Thomas knows he has no choice but to accept and 'thought in his mind on what Mr. Brown had been saying, which he found quite agreeable to the texts of Scripture he had written out' (Friend, 46).

It is clear that Mrs Trimmer found support in the Haustafeln, the code of household ethics in the New Testament. Research on the Haustafeln has shown their connections with another paraenetic form, the catalogues of virtues and vices, but of more interest in connection with Servant's friend are its structural and thematic analogies with the Haustafeln. James E. Crouch has shown that the various Haustafeln are logically and structurally rather uniform:

[E]ach consist of address (wives), exhortation (submit yourselves to your husbands) and reason or motivation (as is fitting in the lord) . . . the emphasis lies on the duty of the subordinate member (Crouch, 10).

This threefold structure clearly informs large parts of Trimmer's Servant's friend, and possibly other publications where she is just as much bent on enforcing subservience from children, the poor and domestic servants.

As far as the Haustafeln themselves are concerned, it is ironical to see that unlike the marriage and parent-child relationships, slavery, that is, the master-man relationship, is not a divinely ordained institution but a social one. However, eighteenth-century advice literature for servants always claimed that obedience, deference and respect from servants were divinely sanctioned. Trimmer does not expressly mention the reciprocal nature of the master-slave relationship, although at one point she says, 'The "Christian" should remember that there are such things as "relative duties", which cannot be practised on either side without familiar intercourse' (Guardian, i, 42), but it is not altogether clear whether servants should be included in this.

Within their biblical context, the Haustafeln – and this made them so very attractive to conservative and apologetic writers – are thoroughly patriarchal in their insistence on the upkeep of

49 The German term Haustafeln has been in use by anglophone theologians for some time, and it will also be used here. Martin Luther used the term Haustafel in Appendix ii of his Kleiner Katechismus for paraenetic passages in Col 3:18 ff and Eph 6:1 ff. Since Luther the term has been applied as well to 1 Tim 2:8-15, 5:1-2, 6:1-2; Titus 2:1-10, 3:1; and 1 Peter 2:13-3. Cf. David L. Balch, Let wives be submissive: the domestic code in 1 Peter (Ann Arbor: Scholars Press, 1981).


51 1 Peter, e.g., exhorts slaves to be submissive to their masters and wives to their husbands, the children being missed out here. But in all, the Haustafeln define six social rôles: wives, husbands, children, parents, masters and slaves.
traditional values. They are concerned with such themes as suffering, doing good, doing evil, speaking against or slander, justice and righteousness, the will of God – themes which were used by Sarah Trimmer again and again in the defence of what she believed in. The very fact, however, that servants' literature attacked such sins as unbelief, sloth, gaming, intemperance, profligacy, popular literature, and was especially written for servants and given to them to be read in their own free time, is in itself a sign of the quick changes within society. In origin obviously derivative, it is a modern literary form indicating that social upheaval was imminent. God's own handmaid must have been only too aware that she was in the middle of fighting a rear-guard action.