

it would seem, particularly designed for what has come to pass—for we did every thing that was calculated to alter her intention, at least I did.²⁷ Knowing how much these afflictions press on your mind, I will be most anxious to hear that you are yourself again.

You have given all to God without any reserve. Nothing can happen to you which He does not appoint. You desire nothing but the accomplishment of His Holy Will. Every thing, how trivial soever, regarding you will come from this adorable source. You must be cheerful and happy, animating all around you. This [advice] is quite unnecessary, for I know you do not want²⁸ counsel—or comfort—yet I cannot entirely give up my poor old Child. You may be sure we all pray fervently for you, which is the best we can do. If you could have seen the general feeling that prevailed at recreation yesterday evening, you might almost have thought we were strangers to such sorrows.

You will soon now have an increase—the comfort comes soon after a well received trial. May God preserve and bless you, my own dearly loved child. Remember me most affectionately to all. Sister Ursula forgets me.²⁹

Your ever faithful and fondly attached
M. C. McAuley

I have been 3 hours out in the snow—walking—so I am growing young. 8 Sisters in retreat and so much to be done, I was obliged to assist. 7 to be received & Sister Scott professed on Wednesday next.³⁰

Autograph: Silver Spring

79. To Sister M. Frances Warde [Late February—March 1838]
Carlow

My dear Sister Mary Frances

The Register³¹ ordered by Revd. Mr. Maher has been here two months, waiting for Sister Moore who prints beautifully in every type to write the title

²⁷ Kate Coffey was apparently sickly before she entered, perhaps with some weakness of the lungs, and Catherine McAuley had evidently tried to discourage her entering the Carlow community on the grounds that convent life might be too hard for her. ²⁸ That is, lack. ²⁹ Mary Ursula Frayne was still temporarily in Carlow, and had apparently not written recently to Catherine McAuley. ³⁰ The extensive work of visiting the sick poor while so many of the sisters at Baggot Street were in retreat before their reception or profession meant that Catherine herself, who usually worked full-time in the House of Mercy, had to go out to visit the sick in their homes or in hospitals. Mary Aloysius Scott will profess her vows on February 21, and those who will receive the habit that day are Mary Catherine (Ellen) Leahy, Mary Gertrude (Elizabeth) Blake, Mary Clare Augustine (Clare) Moore, Mary Anne Teresa (Annie) O'Brien, Veronica (Mary Anne) Duggan, a lay sister, Mary Frances (Frances) Boylan, and Mary Camillus (Teresa) Byrn, Catherine McAuley's cousin and adopted child. All seven had been approved to receive the habit by a vote of the Baggot Street Chapter (the professed members of the community) on January 20, 1838. ³¹ The Register is the

page.³² She has been constantly employed, and now Bazaar work engages all their time.³³ I constantly spoke of your book—for a long time, indeed, a cut finger prevented her.

What pleasure it would afford me to be at your approaching ceremony, but it is quite impossible—two new Sisters and other circumstances must deprive me of that great indulgence.³⁴ I shall be anxious to hear from you as you say you are not quite well.

Your ever affectionate
M. C. McAuley

Miss Grace waits while I write.³⁵

Handcopy: Silver Spring

80. To Sister M. Frances Warde [March 13, 1838]
Carlow³⁶

... immediately after Easter—I have been there, it is quite finished, and will have a good garden for the weak ones.³⁷ I will find it difficult to add this charge

record kept in each convent of the important dates and appointments of each professed sister: her birth date (if known), her parents' names and location, and the dates of her entrance, reception of the habit, and profession of vows, as well as of her election or appointment to leadership roles (if applicable). In Catherine McAuley's day, the Register of each convent was a large, often artistically illuminated, volume with a page devoted to each professed sister. Often, as in Baggot Street, the relevant facts were recorded in a notebook before being transcribed by a calligrapher into the permanent Register. ³² Mary Clare Augustine Moore, the sister of Mary Clare (Georgiana) Moore, now superior in Cork, had entered the Baggot Street convent on August 8, 1837, and received the habit on February 21, 1838. The present letter was probably written after that date. Mary Clare Augustine was a superb artist and calligrapher, as her many surviving art works testify. Catherine McAuley naturally sought to have her do the calligraphy and illumination of the Baggot Street Register, and at least begin the Register for Carlow, but Clare Augustine's timing and Catherine's did not always jibe, as will be apparent in future letters. James Maher visited Baggot Street in early January 1838 and may have ordered the Carlow Register then—hence my dating of this undated letter. ³³ As a fundraising activity, the Baggot Street community held a bazaar of handcrafted goods each year after Easter. In 1838 the bazaar was scheduled to occur sometime after April 15, so preparations would have been well underway at the time of this letter. ³⁴ Catherine McAuley had earlier planned to go to Carlow for the episcopal consecration of Francis Haly (March 25) and the reception ceremony of Mary de Sales (Mary) Maher (March 26), but circumstances now prevented her. Anna Markey had entered the Baggot Street community on February 16, 1838; the other "new Sister" cannot be identified, unless Catherine is anticipating the entrance of Clare Butler and Mary O'Connor, which did not occur until April 15 and April 27, respectively. All new sisters needed Catherine's guidance in their early days in the convent. Moreover, the Kingstown lawsuit and the unsettled chaplaincy situation still hung over her head. ³⁵ The messenger who will hand-deliver this letter. ³⁶ This letter is composed of two autograph fragments which appear to belong to the same letter. Paragraphs one and two are on the front and back of one fragment, which was apparently cut off the bottom of the letter, probably off pages 1 and 2 of a folded (four-sided) sheet of stationery. Paragraph three with the closing was probably on page 3 because the reverse side of this second fragment

76. To the Reverend John Hamilton Convent, Baggot Street
February 6, 1838

Very Reverend Sir

Though I am aware I ought not intrude on your time which must be fully occupied, yet I feel as if indifference was taking place in my mind when I give up every effort to raise the Institution from its fallen state. Since the first of this year, thirty seven young women went to situations from the House, most of whom merely approached the Sacrament of Penance to obtain a note for admission. We are quite full again of persons under similar circumstances. On such occasions, Mr. Burke attended to the confessional for four or five days together, very often till after four o'clock, to afford them the means of reconciliation, before employment was obtained.

They leave us now, as they came, and there is noise and quarrelling amongst them, which the participation of the Holy Sacraments with due instruction used to cure. The alteration in the school is quite evident.²¹ They went to Confession every week in turn, and I assure you, Revd. Sir, Mr. Burke has frequently said he was very tired. Mr. Cavanagh of Fitzwilliam Street, with whom he resided for some time, mentioned here a few days since that Mr. Burke used to say, "That House gives work enough for any man."

I think it was providential that Doctor Meyler refused the salary,²² for I still hope that God will grant the spiritual assistance required, to meet the expense

transcription, of a previously published treatise by an as yet unidentified author. A great deal of research remains to be done on this topic, guided by an understanding of Catherine McAuley's penchant for transcribing parts of published works that appealed to her (or asking others to "prepare" them), and by a developed knowledge of her writing style and habits. So far, hours spent in the British Library, the National Library of Ireland, and the Central Catholic Library in Dublin have not yielded discovery of the original source of *Cottage Controversy*.

However, the title "Cottage Controversy" or "Cottage Conversation" or "Cottage Dialogues" is used by many authors of religious tracts that present debates between Protestant and Catholic proponents. In fact, "cottage controversy" appears to be a genre of apologetic writing that was popular in Ireland and England in the early nineteenth century, the authors of the debates or dialogues favoring either the Protestant or the Catholic doctrinal positions by the way in which they represented the arguments of the characters in the controversy. In the six conversations contained in the document said to have been composed by Catherine McAuley, the Catholic cottager Margaret Martyn, married to Thomas Lewis, a Protestant tenant, argues more convincingly than her landlord's wife, the Protestant Lady Plembroke]. However, in the second edition of J. S. Monsell's *Cottage Controversy; or, Dialogues between Thomas and Andrew, on The Errors of the Church of Rome* (Limerick: Goggin, 1839), first published in 1838, the opposite outcome is presented. In this volume Thomas is a Protestant and Andrew, a Catholic; at the end of their nine dialogues, the dying Andrew is gratefully converted to Protestantism.

²¹ As well as the young women in the House of Mercy, the children in the Baggot Street school for poor girls also used to receive the sacrament of Penance from Daniel Burke, the former chaplain. ²² Walter Meyler asked for an annual salary of £50; Catherine McAuley offered £40, and then £45, which he did not accept.

of which, we would make every exertion and be very kindly assisted. Relying on the charitable allowance you will make for this intrusion, I remain
Very Reverend Sir, with much respect, etc., etc.
Mary C. McAuley

Autograph: *Dublin Diocese, Murray Papers AB3/34/15, no. 11*

77. To the Reverend James Maher Convent, Baggot Street
February 15, 1838

Dear Reverend Father

I have just received your kind letter and feel exceedingly concerned at the melancholy communication.²³ Thanks be to God the event has been attended with such consoling circumstances. It must be a severe trial to her attached relatives from whom she so recently parted.²⁴ To my dear Sister Mary Frances it is I know a real portion of the Cross, and as such I trust she will embrace it—with humble resignation to the holy will of God. I have great happiness in knowing that she will receive all the solid council [counsel] and animating comfort which affectionate fatherly feelings can dictate. The usual suffrages for a deceased Sister will be offered here. The most sensible participation of the trial has already spread through the House,²⁵ and all unite in most earnest prayers for our poor Sister Frances and Community.

I remain, Dear Reverend Sir, with great respect, etc., etc.
Mary C. McAuley

Autograph: *Brooklyn*

78. To Sister M. Frances Warde Convent, Baggot Street
February 17, 1838

My ever Dear Sister Mary Frances

How deeply, how sincerely, I feel this second trial²⁶ which it has pleased Almighty God to visit you with, not in His anger—we will humbly hope—but to purify and render the foundation solid and according to His own heart—established on the Cross. The innocent amiable young person you have parted was,

²³ On February 12, 1838, Kate Coffey, a postulant in the Carlow community, while "on the Visitation of the Sick, slipped in the snow, and fell; she only seemed a little stunned for the moment, but after retiring to bed that night, she got a severe attack of hemorrhage of the lungs" and died on February 14 (Carlow Annals). ²⁴ Kate had entered the Carlow community only two months before, on December 8, 1837. Her family lived in Carlow. ²⁵ The community on Baggot Street. ²⁶ The death of Kate Coffey, a Carlow postulant, occurred on February 14 (see Letter 77). The first "trial" Frances experienced was the death of Dr. Edward Nolan on October 14, 1837.