

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

Fall Student Research Symposium 2020

Fall Student Research Symposium

12-10-2020

There All Along: Emily Dickinson's Nimble Belief in the Face of Religious and Societal Convention

Anne Schill

Utah State University, anneschill3@gmail.com

Addy Kirkham

Utah State University, addy.kirkham@icloud.com

Miranda Cundick

Utah State University, mandileigh11@gmail.com

Callie Griffeth

Utah State University, calgal1717@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/fsrs2020>

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schill, Anne; Kirkham, Addy; Cundick, Miranda; and Griffeth, Callie, "There All Along: Emily Dickinson's Nimble Belief in the Face of Religious and Societal Convention" (2020). *Fall Student Research Symposium 2020*. 80.

<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/fsrs2020/80>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Fall Student Research Symposium at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall Student Research Symposium 2020 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.





There All Along

Emily Dickinson's Nimble
Belief in the Face of
Religious and Societal
Convention



Addy Kirkham, Callie Griffeth, Mandi Cundick, and Anne Schill

Historical Background

Second Great Awakening

Forced religious fervor in

- Sunday School classes

- Church

- Home study

- Ideologically religious textbooks for schoolwork

Central message: you could only be “saved” by “grace alone.”

Most spiritual questions had only one accepted answer.

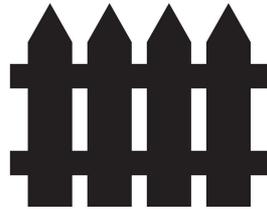
Emily Dickinson’s history of questioning religious norms

- Stopped attending prayer meetings at age 13 because she feared being “deceived”

- “No-hoper” at Mount Holyoke Seminary

Importance of Fascicle Nine

Explores societal and religious boundaries during the Second Great Awakening and how they affected certain groups of people.

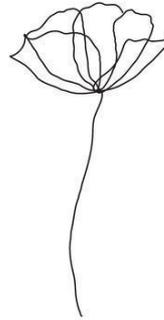


Original Impressions of our Primary Poem

Some—keep the Sabbath—going to church—
I—keep it—staying at Home
With a Bobolink—for a Chorister—
And an Orchard—for a Dome—

Some—keep the Sabbath, in Surplice—
I—just wear my wings—
And instead of tolling the bell, for church—
Our little Sexton—sings—

“God” preaches—a noted Clergyman—
And the sermon is never long.
So—instead of getting to Heaven—at last—
I’m—going—all along!



Tone

Bright
Fanciful

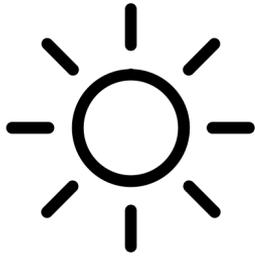
Imagery:

Beauty of nature
Alone but not alone

Message

The speaker sees her
personal form of spirituality
as an acceptable alternative
to traditional religion

Sheet One: the Internal vs. the External



Make me a picture of the sun —
So I can hang it in my room.
And make believe I'm getting warm
When others call it "Day"!

Draw me a Robin — on a stem —
So I am hearing him, I'll dream,
And when the Orchards stop their tune —
Put my pretense away —

Say if it's really — warm at noon —
Whether it's Buttercups — that "skim" —
Or Butterflies — that "bloom"?
Then — skip the Russet — on the tree —
Let's play those — never come!

Leaf Two “What is — ‘Paradise’—”



What is — “Paradise”—
Who live there—
Are they “Farmers”—
Do they “hoe”
Do they know that this is “Amherst”
And that I — am coming — too—

Do they wear “new shoes”— in “Eden”—

Is it always pleasant — there —
Won’t they scold us — when we’re hungry —
Or tell God — how cross we are —

You are sure there’s such a person

As “a Father”— in the sky —

So if I get lost — there — ever —
Or do what the Nurse calls “die”—

I shan’t walk the “Jasper” — barefoot —
Ransomed folks — won’t laugh at me —
Maybe — “Eden” a’nt so lonesome
As New England used to be!

Sheet Three

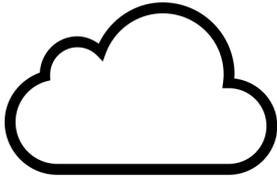


You love me — you are sure —
I shall not fear mistake —
I shall not *cheated* wake —
Some grinning morn —
To find the Sunrise left —
And orchards — unbereft —
And Dollie — gone!

I need not start — you're sure —
That night will never be —
When frightened — home to Thee I run —
To find the windows dark —
And nore more Dollie — mark —
Quite none?

Be sure you're sure — you know —
I'll bear it better now —
If you'll just tell me so —
Than when — a little dull Balm grown —
Over this pain of mine —
You sting — again!

Sheet Four: the Known & Unknown



The Skies can't keep their secret!
They tell it to the Hills —
The Hills just tell the Orchards —
And they — the Daffodils!

A Bird — by chance — that goes that way —
Soft overhears the whole —
If I should bribe the little Bird —
Who knows but *she* would tell?

I think I won't — however —
It's finer — not to know —
If Summer were *an axiom* —
What sorcery had *snow*?

So keep your secret — Father!
I would not — if I could —
Know what the Sapphire Fellows, do,
In your *new-fashioned world*!

Sheet Five

We don't cry — Tim and I —
We are far too grand —
But we bolt the door tight
To prevent a friend —

Then we hide our brave face
Deep in our hand —
Not to cry — Tim and I —
We are far too grand —

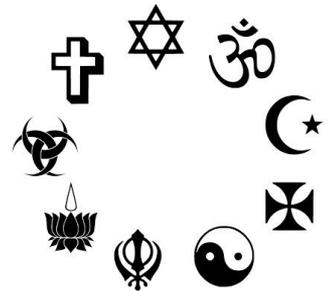
Nor to dream — he and me —
Do we condescend —
We just shut our brown eye
To see to the end —

Tim — see Cottages —
But, Oh so high!
Then — we shake — Tim and I —
And lest I — cry —

Tim — reads a little Hymn —
And we both pray,
Please, Sir, I and Tim-
Always lost the way!

We must die — by and by —
Clergymen say —
Tim — shall — if I — do —
I — too — if he —

How shall we arrange it —
Tim — was — so — shy?
Take us simultaneous — Lord —
I — "Tim" — and — me!



Sheet Six



An awful Tempest mashed the air —
The clouds were gaunt, and few —
A Black — as of a spectre's cloak
Hid Heaven and Earth from view —

The Creatures chuckled on the Roofs —
And whistled in the air —
And shook their fists —
And gnashed their teeth —
And swung their frenzied hair —

The morning lit — the Birds arose —
The Monster's faded eyes
Turned slowly to his native coast —
And peace — was Paradise!

Other Poems on Sheet 7

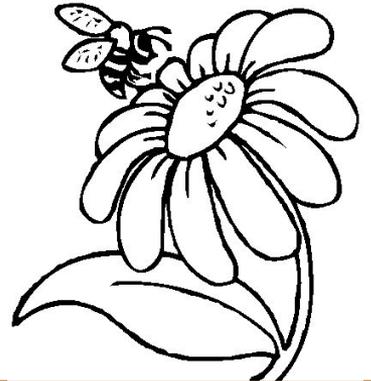


He forgot—and I—remembered—
‘Twas an everyday affair—
Long ago as **Christ** and **Peter**—
“Warmed them” at the “Temple fire.”

“Thou wert with him”—quoth “the
Damsel”?
“No”—said Peter—‘twasn’t me—
Jesus merely “looked” at Peter—
Could **I** do aught else—to **Thee**?

The Flower must not blame the Bee—
That seeketh his felicity
Too often at her door

But teach the Footman from Vevay—
Mistress is “not at home”—to say—
To people—any more!



Sheet 7—continued

I should not dare to leave my friend,

Because—because if he should die
While I was gone—and I—too late—
Should reach the Heart that wanted me—

If I should disappoint the eyes
That hunted—**hunted** so—to see—
And could not bear to shut until
They “noticed” me—they **noticed me**—

If I should stab the patient faith
So sure I’d come—so **sure I’d come**—
It listening—listening—went to sleep—
Telling my tardy name—

My heart would wish it broke before—
Since breaking then—since **breaking then**—
Were useless as next morning’s sun—
Where midnight frosts—had lain!

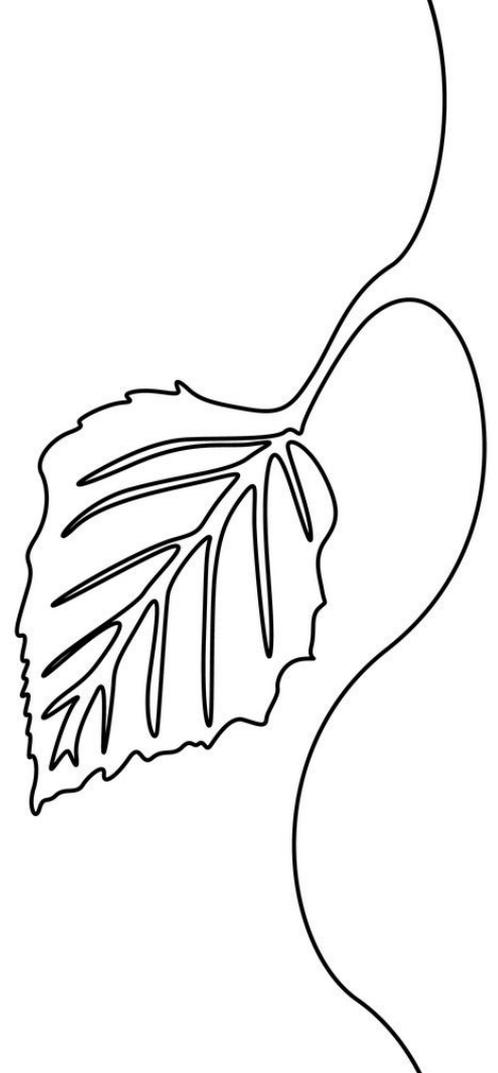


Sheet Seven: A New Understanding

Some—keep the Sabbath—going to church—
I—keep it—staying at Home
With a Bobolink—for a Chorister—
And an Orchard—for a Dome—

Some—keep the Sabbath, in Surplice—
I—just wear my wings—
And instead of tolling the bell, for church—
Our little Sexton—sings—

“God” preaches—a noted Clergyman—
And the sermon is never long.
So—instead of getting to Heaven—at last—
I’m—going—all along!



Questions

Works Cited

Dickinson, Emily, ed. Introduction. *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them*, Harvard U P, 2016, pp. 1-22.

McIntosh, James. *Nimble Believing: Dickinson and the Unknown*. U of Michigan P, 2000.