Forgotten Prophets: The Lives of Unitarian Women, 1760 – 1904

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

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The thesis starts with the observation that although women have been active in English Unitarian congregations since their foundation, they are absent from the standard writings on Unitarian theology and history. In the first chapter I situate myself within the Unitarian movement and as a feminist theologian and then examine relevant work by others. Through three main case studies and drawing on their 'documents of life' as well as published writings, I explore how Unitarian women from the mid eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century understood and acted out their faith. The first study, of Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825), shows how a woman could negotiate the various exclusions and use various opportunities to become a public Unitarian figure. The second study is based on the letters written to and by Helen Bourn/Martineau/Tagart in the 1820s and shows how a group of middle-class Unitarian women (including Harriet Martineau) related to their faith. In the third study I demonstrate how themes from these earlier times are developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, with particular reference to Frances Power Cobbe (journalist, theologian, and worker for animal and women's rights) and Gertrude von Petzold (the first women to be officially trained and fully recognised as a Unitarian minister). This provides a reworked story of Unitarianism in which gender issues are addressed and women are seen to have had an active presence.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The standard Unitarian literature, both in theology and denominational history, is almost entirely male dominated. Studies of the development of Unitarian thought concentrate on the writings of men, usually clergymen, and histories tell of significant meetings, acts of parliament, openings (and closings) of congregations and colleges as if all the participants were male. Yet since the foundation of congregations now calling themselves Unitarian, including those which originated from before the time when Unitarian theology emerged, women have been active in congregational life. The reasons for the exclusions of women from the Unitarian story vary over time and context, and are both social and theological. This thesis engages with the absence of women from the traditional story and in this introductory chapter explores the contexts of my work, while later chapters examine what it meant to be a Unitarian woman through three case studies spanning the last third of the eighteenth century and the whole of the nineteenth century. Once women's voices are heard, then a different narrative starts to emerge, and the conventionally told story of Unitarianism begins to appear distorted or at the least partial. First, I locate myself within the Unitarian movement and the broader religious feminist sphere. Then I explore briefly feminist theological concepts which undergird my work and also the issue of how to define a Unitarian woman, before documenting the absence of women from Unitarian writings. This is followed by a discussion of work done by others in uncovering women's history, and the omissions, exclusions and biases of conventional historical work.

But who is trying to rewrite the story, and why? When I offered myself to train for the Unitarian ministry in the early 1980s, I did so as a woman with a feminist consciousness, knowing that in order to become a minister I would have to go through the

process as if I were a man, and be trained to minister as if I were a man. I had become convinced that women could, and did, minister in a manner different from men, but it did not seem advisable to explore this during the acceptance process. By that time I was already aware that a small number of women had been recognised as ministers since the early years of the twentieth century, and that women had been active as preachers and in congregations for over a hundred years. There was an overt commitment to equal rights, but little awareness that women might have different perspectives. One instance of the implications of conceptualising ministry in a masculinist manner was brought to my attention much later, in 1995. In preparation for seconding the motion that the Rev. Anne McClelland be elected President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, I learned that her first application to train for the ministry (in the 1950s) was rejected on the grounds that she was too quiet a person, and did not have enough public 'presence' to be able to minister effectively. Her election as President, only the second woman minister to hold this post (the first was in 1940), and her distinguished career within Unitarianism, locally, nationally and internationally, demonstrated not only how wrong was the initial rejection but also the precepts it was based on.

As my ministerial training progressed, it seemed that I was being inducted into a male culture; all the models of ministry - prophet, priest, scapegoat etc.- were male; all the literature was male-centred. I adapted enough to pass in two senses of the word, to become a minister, and apparently as though a man; but I longed for evidence of a tradition in which I, as a feminist woman, could place myself. Although I was not the only woman ministry student during my training at Manchester College, Oxford, in 1983-6, I was often the only one to challenge male models or praxis. Feminist insights were not often appreciated by my teachers, so in order to achieve the goal of ministerial recognition, I 'toed the party line' more than I would have done in a more egalitarian and liberatory

atmosphere. Once I suggested that the role of 'mother' might be added to the models of ministry, only to have the idea instantly rejected by the college principal on the grounds that mothers are not powerful enough! I neither challenged this dismissal publicly, nor attempted to deconstruct what he might mean by powerful in this context. A second instance occurred during the sermon class. The students took it in turn to deliver a sermon, which was then discussed. The first question always asked by the principal was, 'how long was it?' (to which one of the male students always had the answer to the nearest second), and the second, 'was it a sermon?' The principal decided that my offering was not a proper sermon because it did not have a long enough peroration. However, when one of the other students told me later that he would never think of our tradition in the old way again as a consequence, I was very satisfied that my sermon had done what I hoped. My feminist consciousness had not developed in isolation, but was influenced by actions and writings beyond ministry training, so I now want to situate my work into the context of feminist Ecumenical and Unitarian activities of the last forty years.

Both in the wider British religious scene and within the Unitarian movement, women's gifts and participation have begun to be recognised. During the 1980s, the campaigns to allow the ordination of women within the Church of England achieved considerable publicity and eventual success. Active participation in 'Women in Theology' (of which I was chair in 1993-6), and the St Hilda Community brought me into contact with women working in other denominations (and in none), who had a vision of a world in which women's religious activity was taken seriously. While 'Women in Theology' was first set up to provide education for women who wished to become priests in the Church of England, it soon became absorbed in wider issues, such as feminist theology, women's liturgies, and the wider appreciation of women's participation within the churches. The St Hilda Community had a more specific aim and location: it met weekly in the east end of

London to be a women-led religious community that shared the experience of being church, and in particular of celebrating the eucharist (St Hilda Community, 1991 p. 5-12).

As a recognised Unitarian minister, it was in order for me to celebrate the eucharist in a college chapel, while Anglican women were not permitted to do so. Other groups in which I participated which were active at this time included the Movement for the Ordination of Women, which campaigned in a less radical way within the Church of England, the Britain and Ireland School of Feminist Theology, which promoted education in feminist theology in a variety of ways, and CWIRES - Christian Women's Information and Resources - which collected books and pamphlets relating to women and religion and was based in Oxford. For a time a Christian Feminist Journal was published; this helped to give publicity and keep track of the various Christian feminist groups which flourished ephemerally. Some university departments of religions and theology introduced elements of feminist theology into their courses, or promoted extramural courses on women and the church. At the outset some of these ventures concentrated on women's roles, and were often led by women, but the recent trend has been to change the focus of concern to 'gender' rather than 'women' and for male influence to re-assert itself.

Women in other denominations have begun to explore the role of women in the history of their traditions. Elaine Kaye, in introducing the United Reformed Church project 'Daughters of Dissent' at a recent conference, commented on the paucity of women's names in recent histories of the United Reformed and Congregational traditions, in contrast to the evidence that more women than men attended church during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She went on to say, "But the patriarchal ethos of the nineteenth century, reflected in the denominational structures and the restriction of the ordained ministry to men, meant that both official records and all but the most recent historical accounts give prominence to the contribution of men, but little attention to that of women"

(Kaye, 1998, p. 1). The project has now published its work, and this provides both stories of women within those traditions and reflections on possible methodologies (Kaye et al., 2004).

While this feminist activity was having some impact on the radical fringes of mainstream Christianity, a few people within the Unitarian movement began to realise the potential significance of both second wave feminism and feminist theology. In 1982, the Unitarian General Assembly commissioned a working party (of which I was a member) to produce a report on the implications of feminist theology for the movement, and the resulting document, Growing Together, contains a section sketching some aspects of the history of women in British Unitarianism (Croft, 1984). Five years later, Jeremy Goring's presidential address to the Unitarian Historical Society in 1989 questioned the ideology underpinning most Unitarian historical writing. He remarked:

> Since most Unitarian history has been written by ministers, there has been a tendency to emphasise the role of the ministers, and to overlook that of the laity – especially, one might add, that of the women (Goring, 1990).

Although Goring himself has written little to rectify this omission, others have take up the task. Subsequent volumes of the Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society have included articles on Elizabeth Malleson (Stinchcombe, 1991), Clementia Taylor (Ruston, 1991) and Gertrude von Petzold (Gilley 1997). Longer studies of Unitarian women in a wider context include Kathryn Gleadle's (1995) The Early Feminists, which examines the role the women and men on the radical end of the Unitarian spectrum played in the emerging women's rights movement of the 1830s and 40s. Ruth Watts has published a variety of articles on Unitarians and education and civil rights movements based her 1987 Ph.D. thesis, The Unitarian Contribution to Education in England from the late Eighteenth Century to 1853; those which relate particularly to Unitarian women include: The Unitarian Contribution to the Development of Female Education, 1790-1850 (1980),

Rational Dissent and the Emancipation of Women 1780-1860 (1985), Knowledge is Power – Unitarians, gender and education in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (1989, Education and Cultural Transfer: the Case of Unitarian Women from the Late Eighteenth Century to 1860 (1995a), and Rational Religion and Feminism: the Challenge of Unitarianism in the Nineteenth Century (2002). Her longer monograph, Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860, provides an overview of Unitarian women and education for most of the period covered by this thesis and gives the best available woman-centred interpretation of the Unitarianism of the time (Watts, 1998). Earlier biographies, such as that of Jo Manton on Mary Carpenter (Manton 1976), complement a wealth of nineteenth-century autobiographical and biographical material that is now little known, an ignorance that is discussed later. However, most of this biographical work emphasises the activities of Unitarian women in the wider sphere. It is much harder to get at the role and influence that women had within Unitarianism, the focus of this thesis.

But first I want to situate my work within the area of feminist liberation theology. Liberation theology, of which feminist theology may be considered a branch (see the title page of the journal Feminist Theology, 1992 onwards), has as its basis a commitment to justice. This entails both "hearing to speech" those women whose voices have not been heard in the church (Morton, 1985, p. 202-210) and engaging in a praxis which will liberate them from the oppressive practices of the church. The idea of praxis has been interpreted in a variety of ways, but in any event is central to any feminist theological enterprise (Hogan, 1995, pp. 64-84). Chopp comments that:

> Praxis brings together a stress on the interconnectedness of historical existence and normative concerns of freedom, on the one hand, and responsibility to change oppressive conditions into possibilities for human and planetary flourishing, on the other (Chopp, 1996, p. 221).

This observation is particularly relevant for the work of this thesis. Memory and hope are the central notions of such a theology (Warne, 2002, p. 55). Much of this thesis is

concerned with retrieving a memory of Unitarian women; hope is provided by the belief that things can change for the better (Warne, 2002, p. 55). Warne follows Charlotte Bunch in using a model that consists of four interrelated but not necessarily sequential aspects. These are firstly, description, identifying and naming what exists; secondly, analysis, discovering why that reality exists, and the reasons for its perpetuation; thirdly, vision, determining what should exist, and the values undergirding that reality; and finally strategy, "how to change what is into what ought to be" (Bunch, 1983, pp. 251-3; Warne, 2002, pp. 55-56). This thesis is mainly concerned with the first two elements of this methodology, but is strongly informed with the vision of justice developed from feminist theology. Strategising I think needs to be done in other contexts, perhaps using this thesis as a tool. Natalie Watson points out that the roots of feminist theology "can be traced back to a long history of women making space for themselves and establishing their own discourses of faith within a patriarchal church in which they were marginalised and excluded on the grounds of being members of the weaker sex" (Watson, 1998, p. 465). The importance of developing a "counter history" to bring to light women's activity as a means of uncovering the "technologies of patriarchy", that is, of <u>how</u> the exclusions and silencing have been brought about, has been discussed by Grace Jantzen (1995, pp. xvii, 323). Thus this thesis is one attempt to develop just such a "counter history" and to give myself, and other Unitarian women, both ministers and lay, a recognisable and usable past. As Letty Russell puts it:

> Human beings need to find identity and strength from the images of past history which can help to guide them in shaping their present and future... whatever the past may be, it becomes a <u>usable past</u> through reflection on its meaning and mistakes in such a way that human beings build a common sense of direction toward the future. Research into the hidden past of oppressed people frees them to gain a sense of history on which to build their future. (Russell, 1974, p. 73).

Russell goes on to point out the particular deprivation of women in searching for their past, especially in relation to church history, that " not only has the tradition been shaped

in such a way as to limit their options and access to a usable present and future, but they also have no cultural tradition of their own" (Russell, 1974, p. 81). The importance of developing "deeply supporting exceptional narrative strands – strands that work against the core narrative" is stressed by Christie Neuger. (2000, p. 85). Neuger is writing about physical violence against women, but her arguments and proposed strategies also apply to the more subtle violence of exclusions from the core narrative. But much has been done and written to give access to a usable past and present for women in the churches since Russell was writing in 1974, and I am not writing this thesis in a vacuum. In the last forty years women have challenged the possibilities and boundaries in the public religious arena, and women's religious activity in the present and earlier times is being written about, and read; some of this work is described in the following section. This thesis is just one work among many, then, which bring to light women's activities and so help create a usable past on which women can base a liberatory praxis. Some of the resulting literature, although there is little, apart from that already acknowledged, relating specifically to Unitarian women, is explored later in this chapter.

Who counts as a 'Unitarian women'? The answer is by no means straightforward or obvious. Should it depend on religious beliefs, activity within Unitarian institutions or other criteria? In the past, Unitarians have claimed many people as one of them on the grounds of belief or family connections. Raymond Holt, in his The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England, indicates that he uses the word Unitarian "in the widest sense to include every variety of Unitarian" provided that they are no longer living (Holt, 1952, p. 11). This inclusivity leads to the inclusion of a large number of people as Unitarian who would, I suspect, be most surprised by the label; but as Holt gives no evidence for the inclusion or exclusion of individuals, or more explicit criteria for his choices, it is difficult to know exactly how he made his decisions. Sometimes

historians have distinguished between beliefs and belonging, for example Wigmore-Beddoes and Wilbur have described members of the Church of England with Arian or Unitarian type beliefs (Wigmore-Beddoes, 1971, pp. 17-27: Wilbur, 1952, Vol II pp. 237-243). Currently, membership of a Unitarian congregation is considered the most appropriate criterion to apply, but until recently most congregations did not keep formal membership lists, with voting powers often restricted to either trustees or people who paid rents for pews (Walsh, 1992, p. 8; Davidoff and Hall, 1987, pp. 134-5). In this study, I reserve the label 'Unitarian' for those women who were associated with Unitarian institutions over a significant length of time, and with one exception, who also called themselves Unitarian. Thus I include Lucy Aikin and Joanna Baillie, for example, but exclude Florence Nightingale and Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, who both had beliefs that owed something to their Unitarian parents, as well as Mary Somerville, who is claimed by some as Unitarian but was not associated with any congregation. There are a good number of people who were Unitarians for part of their life, but not for a significant part of it; in this group I include Harriet Martineau for the first part of her life, until she broke with her brother James and the denomination. In this study I have not included Mary Ann Evans, better known as George Eliot, who was associated with Unitarians in her early adulthood and later was an attender an the Unitarian chapel in Hampstead, North London, but who was always technically a member of the Church of England. The one exception, who was associated with Unitarians and Unitarian congregations for significant periods of her life and whose beliefs were within the Unitarian spectrum, but who did not call herself a Unitarian, is Frances Power Cobbe, and her entitlement to the designation is discussed later.

One of the most respected works on British Unitarianism is the second volume of Wilbur's History of Unitarianism (1952), which is notoriously male-centred, as Goring has pointed out:

> Significantly, Wilbur's account of British Unitarianism mentions only four women: Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, Lady Hewley and Queen Victoria, none of whom... can possibly by classified as a Unitarian (Goring, 1990, p. 223).

Goring is correct as far as Wilbur's index goes; there are passing references to wives, daughters and even to the grandmother and aunt who brought up Joseph Priestley, but they are not named and their voices are not heard. The most comprehensive and well-used British history is The English Presbyterians by Bolam et al. (1968). This fares slightly better, in that four Unitarian women are named: Anna Barbauld is mentioned for her reply to Gilbert Wakefield's attack on public worship, her Thoughts on Devotional Taste and her pessimism in her poem 1811; Frances Power Cobbe is referred to as a theist; Harriet Martineau is named as critical of Lant Carpenter's teaching and as breaking with her brother James when she moved from Unitarianism to "non-religious political economy"; and finally, out of the period of this thesis, Mrs Sydney Martineau (nee Nettlefold) is reported as making an official speech in 1926 suggesting the amalgamation of the two extant Unitarian bodies, the National conference and the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (Bolam et al., 1968, pp. 232, 236, 273, 264, 269, 284). The most recent general work on British and European Unitarian history by Howe purports to take into account Goring's criticism of Wilbur in ignoring women, but he refers to only two British women; Mary Priestley as an able housewife and supporter of her husband Joseph, and Margaret Barr, a twentieth-century minister who worked with indigenous Unitarians in the hills of North East India (Howe, 1997, pp. 155-179). Works on particular topics within Unitarianism show a similar women-free story. Herbert McLachlan's history of the Methodist Unitarians, predominantly working-class in origin, refers to various women

as wives or daughters of preachers and also as benefactors and teachers, but gives no ideas of their opinions (McLachlan, 1919). More recently Frank Schulman's Blasphemous and Wicked, concerning the Unitarian struggle for civil rights in the first half of the nineteenth century, has no Unitarian women listed in its index (Schulman, 1997), neither does Leonard Smith's Religion and the Rise of Labour (Smith, 1993). John Seed's unpublished PhD thesis, "The Role of Unitarianism in the Formation of Liberal Culture 1775-1851", is largely gender-blinkered, and while he mentions a few women in passing, he regards them as passive family members and concentrates on men's agency (Seed, 1981). Works concentrating on Unitarian theology rather than history are even more male-centred. For the period of this thesis, there are no theological works by Unitarian women that are accessible to ministry students, and the standard reading lists consist only of men's work.

Next I turn to relevant work on women's history, with some of its omissions, exclusions and biases, considering first women's history in general, then women historians and religious women; then middle-class women, and finally dissonances and discrepancies in the various discourses. Of course the large-scale omission of women from most historical accounts is no new phenomenon, and is not restricted to religious history (Kelly, 1984, Olsen, 1978, Scott, 1992). It was recognised by some of the friends and colleagues of the women this thesis is concerned with, and they helped to redress the balance by writing and publishing accounts of famous historical women. Thus, for instance, May Hays, friend of Mary Wollstonecraft, published Female Biography: or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of All Ages and Countries, an ambitious but uneven compilation in six volumes, in 1803; and in 1821 she published Memoirs of Queens Illustrious and Celebrated in which she asserted "that there can be but one moral standard of excellence for mankind, whether male of female" (quoted in Kelly, 1993, p.

259). Lucy Aikin, Anna Barbauld's niece, in her Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth, first published in 1818, included the minimum of political history needed and this work can be considered a pioneering venture into social history, as according to the preface in the third edition of 1819, it concentrated on:

> a detailed view of the private life of Elizabeth from the period of her birth; a view of domestic history of her reign; memoirs of the principal families of the nobility and biographical anecdotes of the celebrated characters who composed her court; besides notices of the manners, opinions and literature of the reign (Aikin, 1819, p. vi).

Both these Unitarian women saw that the position of women in society needed more that just a recovery of past lives Thus Mary Hays used both historical and fictional writings to bring attention to injustices concerning women. Similarly Aikin, who early in her life (like her aunt before her) had been made aware of the limited possibilities she had of using her gift of eloquence compared with those available to boys (Le Breton, 1864, p. xvii), argued in her 1810 Epistles of Women, Exemplifying their Character and Condition in Various Ages and Nations that while women should not be "placed in all respects on a footing of equality" with men, they should be given every opportunity to develop their talents and intellects, for:

> no talent, no virtue is masculine alone; no fault of folly exclusively feminine;... that there is not an endowment, or propensity, or mental quality of any kind, which may not be derived from her father to the daughter, to the son from his mother (Aikin, 1810, pp v, vi).

This discursion from discussing women in history shows that, even at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Unitarian women were aware that just adding women to the masculinist canonical story is not a sufficient or adequate response. At the beginning of the twenty-first century contributions have become more nuanced. Some may be content to maintain the dominant discourse, which elevates the public and political activities of men over the sometimes quieter lives of women; however, those engaged in any sort of liberation theology or feminist research seek to deconstruct the oppressive power

structures of the past and bring to light the struggles and triumphs of those hidden from history. It is significant that the wealth of nineteenth century biographical material referred to earlier is no longer widely known. Some of this was considered important and widely read at the time, but has been lost to succeeding generations. This could imply that women's thoughts and lives were considered by publishers and the reading public to be of ephemeral value only. More likely it is only the lives of people who became nationally prominent, with a public profile, that were retained in the public consciousness, with the result that women's writings, being more usually confined to the private and domestic sphere, have usually been relegated to obscurity

Bonnie Smith has explored the some of the ways in which the practice of history has excluded not just women as subjects, but women as historians, from the academic discourse (Smith 1998). Analyses of the omission of women have led to investigations into "women's structural relationship to the societies in which they became actors" (Steedman, 1992, p. 165), promotion of the use of different kinds of sources, such as artefacts, family letters and other 'documents of life' and oral evidence, determinedly re-reading existing sources to take account of gender, and also asking different questions about where the women were and what they were doing (Davin, 1992, pp. 72-74; Plummer, 2001), all of which add up to a significantly different picture.

While women in general have often been ignored in historical narratives, this is perhaps particularly true of religious women, for as Lavinia Byrne, writing about Christian women social reformers, has noted, "Where church historians would write them out of the archives because their secular activities were deemed too radical, secular historians would have a problem with them because they were too religious. So they are betrayed by their brothers, and by the 'sisterhood' (Byrne, 1995, p. 3). Unitarian women have often been excluded from work by mainstream Christians seeking to recover

women's voices; Byrne herself does not include any British Unitarian women in her 1991 anthology of women's spiritual writings (Byrne, 1991). A further example is Julie Melnyk, who in her 1998 Women's Theology in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Transfiguring the Faith of their Fathers, ignores virtually all Unitarian writers of theology, such as Frances Power Cobbe and Sarah Hennell, while she only refers to Anna Jameson as an ex-presbyterian free thinker and considers her as an art critic, and to Harriet Martineau in connection with mesmerism after her break with Unitarianism (Melnyk, 1998, pp. 59-82). Indeed, the word 'Unitarian' is only mentioned as a description of the American Margaret Fuller, and in a note commenting on the number of Quaker and Unitarian women signing the 1865 Married Women's Property petition which listed Barbara Bodichon, Bessie Parkes, Mary Howitt, Anna Mary Howitt, Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Gaskell and Sarah Hennell (Melnyk, 1998, pp. 76, 80). Such exclusion of Unitarian women's theology cannot in this instance be blamed on the desire to restrict the work to mainstream Christians, as the final section is entitled "Beyond Victorian Christianity" and includes the "Mystic Fringe" and Buddhism (Melnyk, 1998, p viii). Gail Malmgreen's 1986 Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930 only mentions the word 'Unitarians' to note that Queen Victoria ignored them, but she does include, in her chapter on women hymn writers, Anna Barbauld as a dissenter and she also cites Helen Maria Williams (as a radical journalist), although she ignores Sarah Flower Adams, the only woman listed in twenty Unitarian hymns writers described by H. W. Stephenson in 1931 (Malmgreen, 1986, pp. 20-23, 114; Stephenson. 1931, pp. 25-31).

Now I turn to a discussion of work on middle-class women. As Denise Riley has argued, the category 'woman' has been constructed as an over-determined 'other' in relation to a presumtively male subject (Riley, 1988). But of course the lives of real women have related in complex ways to the categorisations, and the need to recognise

such differences between women in their attempts to make sense of their situations was highlighted in Liz Stanley's reply to Riley's article (Stanley, 1990 p. 154). The social positioning of middle class women during the period that forms the main focus of this thesis has been the subject of considerable debate. Much has been made of the development of a 'separate spheres' ideology, in which middle class women were increasingly confined to private and domestic roles (e.g. Hall, 1992, p. 75; Kent, 1999, p. 54). However, the picture of women being restricted to the home environment more during the nineteenth century than in the eighteenth, and then gradually increasing their public presence as more education, civil rights and career opportunities became available, is now seen as an oversimplification of a complex situation (Barker and Chalus, 1997, pp. 22-24). Amanda Vickery has highlighted the instability of the terms and actuality of 'public' and 'private' (Vickery, 1993), while Helen Plant has demonstrated that in religious circles, particularly Quaker and Unitarian groups, "'public', 'private' and 'domestic' spaces converged" (Plant, 2000, p. 2). However, at the same time even amongst the Quakers, seventeenth century egalitarianism had retreated into quietism during the eighteenth century (Gillman, 1988, p. 41) and a separate spheres praxis co-existed with separate men's and women's yearly meetings (Quaker Women's Group, 1986, pp. 12-18). Alongside this, though, women's ministry (speaking) was still usually acceptable in worship, although here even as early as 1701 one meeting declared:

> This meeting finding it is a hurt to Truth for women friends to take up too much time, as some do, in our public meetings, when several public and serviceable men Friends are present and are by them prevented in their serving, it's therefore advised that the women Friends should tenderly be cautioned against taking up too much time in our mixed public meetings (Q. W. G., 1995, p. 16)

Interestingly, Nancy Cott shows that it was precisely the context of separate spheres, where the Victorian woman was limited by the stereotype of being "ethereal, morally superior, spiritual and nurturant", that was the point of departure for nineteenth century

feminists: "'Womanhood' was their hallmark and they insisted that it should be 'human norm' too" (Cott, 1988, pp. 51).

During the time in question, the Unitarian movement was essentially one of the "middling classes" (Davidoff and Hall, 1987, p. 24), at least in its influential families, though in the nineteenth century more effort was made to reach the working classes. There is evidence to show that in the later part of the eighteenth century, women were slightly more free than in either earlier or later times to express opinions and mix in a variety of circles. Anna Barbauld and Mary Wollstonecraft could write and socialise more freely than could their niece and daughter respectively. However, the ways in which middle class women could earn a living expanded considerably during second part of the nineteenth century, though writing remained a constant throughout this time. Anna Barbauld (then Aikin) was a well-known published poet in the 1770s (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, pp. xxxi-xxxii). When Harriet Martineau's family lost its money in the collapse of their textile manufacturing business, she turned to writing rather than to needlework, because she could earn more in that way, though she did remark, "we had lost our gentility" (Martineau, 1983. vol. 1, p. 142). In the second part of the nineteenth century, when the reading public had expanded considerably, with many magazines and a multiplicity of newspapers, Frances Power Cobbe was able to sustain herself by her writing (in addition to a small annuity) (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 1 p. 214, vol. 2 p. 37).

Religious discourse played an important part in the social positioning of women. 'Separate spheres' depends partly on middle and upper-class men's ability to support a domestic way of life for their wives and daughters, related to the rise of capitalism, something marked by the publication of Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations in 1776 (Kent, 1999, p. 54), but its discourse is largely concerned with ethics and religion. Marlene LeGates has traced the change during the eighteenth century from women seen

as sexual temptresses to the ideal of a chaste and virtuous womanhood (LeGates, 1976) which was "more disposed to religious considerations than men" (Gisburn, 1789, quoted in Gill, 1994, p. 27). Phyllis Mack relates a parallel change in discourse about the soul, which is genderless in the seventeenth century, becomes associated more with mind in eighteenth century Quakerism, and takes on a less cerebral and more emotional 'feminine quality' by the nineteenth century (Mack, 1998, p. 259-260). Davidoff and Hall consider that the rise of evangelicalism contributed to the restriction of women to the domestic sphere (Davidoff and Hall, 1987, p. 117). If this were simply the case then Unitarian women, as rational dissenters who frowned upon enthusiasm, would have been less subject to the doctrine than others and there is no evidence for this. Enlightenment ideology, which informed much rational dissenting thought, was in fact not necessarily helpful to women's status. Rita Felski argues that "the discourse of modern rights and republican virtues effectively served to silence women through a recurring identification of the human with the masculine" (Felski, 1995, p. 14). The interplay between the emotion of religious sensibility and the reason of rational Unitarianism takes many subtle forms; some of these are illustrated in the three case studies that form the major part of this thesis.

Various commentators have pointed out the discrepancy between the spiritual equality offered to women in Christian teaching, and the cultural subordination which the prevailing society demanded (e.g. Davidoff and Hall 1987, p. 108; Crawford, 1993, p. 12; Ranft, 2000, p. 229). In the unsettled times of the civil war of the seventeenth century, women were able to claim considerable authority in the spiritual domain and in several of the radical sects became preachers and founders of congregations (Mack, 1992; Shoemaker, 1998, p. 212; Greaves, 1985b; Ludlow, 1985; Watt, 2001). The restoration of the monarchy and the 'glorious revolution' produced calmer times in which women's

lives were more restricted (Shoemaker, 1998, p. 214). Phyllis Mack has noted that after 1660 Quaker women's writings pay less attention to public activities and lay more emphasis on their humility and physical weakness, the result of "a recognition of the need to present themselves not simply as Friends but as females" (Mack, 1992, pp. 288, 319). At the same time, "the cultural gap between elite men and women widened" according to Crawford (1993, p. 185), with middle and upper class men becoming more attracted to reason and deism, while 'enthusiastic religion' appealed more to women and lower class men. Shoemaker sees this as:

> an increasing bifurcation of religious practice by gender, as men kept control of church leadership and regained their monopoly over public religious responsibilities... while women devoted themselves to household religious practices and to more 'enthusiastic' and emotional approaches (Shoemaker, 1998, p. 216).

This highlights the difficulties of women such as Anna Barbauld and Mary Hays in the rational dissenting congregations, working within an increasingly masculinist culture. By the end of the eighteenth century, middle-class women were firmly established in some more 'domestic' church roles, such as teaching children dispensing charity, sewing circles, visiting the sick, while mainly working class Methodist women preachers were strongly discouraged (Helsinger et al., 1983, vol. 2, p. 176; Chilcote, 1993, pp. 110-122). During the nineteenth century, visiting the poor and organising money raising bazaars and sales of work were added to the list. These activities, although essential to the life and continuance of the various church communities, did not count as religious leadership and are rarely acknowledged in congregational histories (Goring, 1990; Gill, 1994, pp. 1-2).

During this period, the general religious culture did not encourage women's public leadership, especially for 'respectable' middle-class ladies. In the Church of England there was no public place for women to contribute to worship and theology, except as passive recipients (Gill, 1994). In some ways the old dissent, including the

Presbyterians who were to make up the majority of Unitarian congregations (Bolam et al., 1968), were more akin to the socially hierarchical Church of England than they were to the evangelical sects. (Perkin, 1993, p. 101; Gill, 1994). Partly because Unitarian doctrines were deemed heretical by most mainstream denominations, the middle-class Unitarians were particularly susceptible to accusations of impropriety. This led to severe social restrictions on Unitarian women, in an age when respectability was increasingly essential to middle class life. Here Ruth Watts contrasts the sheltered domestic life of Lucy Aikin (1781-1864) with women such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Mary Hays (1760-1843) and Catherine Graham Macaulay (1731-91), who "stepped beyond the limits of 'respectability'" and so "lost credibility for their fragile achievements and opinions" (Watts, 1998, p. 84).

Thus both the theological radicalism and rationality, and the social positioning of Unitarianism, led to a peculiar combination of opportunities and restraints for Unitarian women. The emphasis on enlightenment rationality contributed to the invisibility of women, as already suggested, but it also encouraged a respect for the education of both sexes, and it has been argued that Unitarian women were better educated than most (Watts, 1998; Gleadle, 1995, p. 28). Good education could prove to be problematic, for it sometimes led women to be dissatisfied with the roles were open to them; as Bessie Raynor Parkes remarked in 1849, "What shall I educate myself for?... I feel possessed of all sorts of faculties, and constrained to put them to use" (Gleadle, 1995, p. 26). However, female learning had not to appear to be a distraction from the womanly role. Richard Polwhele's 1798 attack on Helen Maria Williams, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays and Anna Barbauld (all associated with Unitarianism to some extent) as "unsex'd females" because of their concern with radical politics demonstrated how quickly women who stepped out of 'proper womanliness' could become subject to ridicule and rejection

(Lonsdale, 1989, p. xxxix; Ty, 1993, pp. 3-14). The Unitarian preoccupation with respectability made these kinds of criticisms especially troubling and resulted in a particularly restrictive approach to women (Watts, 1998, pp. 84-5; Gleadle, 1995).

Unitarian reverence for education and reason meant that the traditional authorities for women's religious experience, such as direct access to the commands of the Holy Spirit, were less available to those without a good education in biblical languages and theology. Respect for a well-educated ministry which could give a lead in theological debate reinforced male dominance, and the concentration on God the Father, without reference to other persons of the Trinity or to Mary, reinforced the patriachalism of society, with both combining in the denial of female agency. J. C. D. Clark has argued that 'patriarchalism', literally meaning the organisation of authority during the Old Testament time of the Patriarchs, appealed to scriptural authority and so "to Biblical History as a source of political prescription" (Clark, 2000, p. 18). He also maintains that, for the seventeenth century theorists, patriarchalism was essentially concerned with the scriptural basis of political theology and was not primarily about gender relations at the time. This view is slightly modified by that of Hole, who considered that "patriarchalism largely ruled the day as far as social theory was concerned" but was less dominant as the source of governmental authority, being challenged by the notion of popular consent (Hole, 1989, p. 62).

However, feminist critics have emphasised that it is impossible to separate the religious culture stemming from the Old Testament from the actual ways in which women have been devalued in religion and in society. Here Serene Jones and Rosemary Ruether trace the thread of patriarchy from Greek, Hebrew and medieval cultures, (Jones, 2000, pp. 77-79; Ruether, 1996, p. 205-6), while as noted earlier Grace Jantzen discusses the 'technologies of patriarchy' in the reception of medieval mystics (1995) and in the

workings of psychology and philosophy of religion (1998). Both Jantzen (1998) and Pamela Anderson (1998) explore the way in which, according to Lacan, to enter the world of the speaking being is to become subject to the law/name of the father. When this is in the context of a Unitarian theology that worships God the Father unadulterated by son or spirit, and also without the mediation of Mary or the saints, then patriarchal theology and ideology are important factors in determining actual gender and power relations in a religious community. The emphasis on male dominance, however benevolent, epitomised by the nineteenth century 'paterfamilias' elides both social and religious masculine authority. It can be argued that most of the 'radical unitarians' who left the main Unitarian movement, studied by Kathryn Gleadle (1995), did so for social and political, rather than theological, reasons. The extreme patriachalism and patriarchy of some strands of nineteenth century Unitarianism, with an emphasis on social conformity and respectability, go a long way to explain the rejection of and by Unitarianism by people such as the South Place circle centred on W. J. Fox including Eliza Flower, Sarah Flower Adams and Mary Leman Grimstone (Gleadle, 1995, p37).

Both western culture and Christian theology and ecclesiology have conspired to silence women and render them invisible in the public religious sphere, the only area of religious activity that has traditionally been recorded. The extent to which the particular theology and social positioning of Unitarianism throughout the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries helped or hindered the religious expression of its women also need to be discussed. I do so through considering the lives of three women, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Helen Bourn/Martineau/Tagart and Frances Power Cobbe, in case studies covering the period from 1743 to 1904. This period includes the first organising on a national scale of rational dissenters into an organised national Unitarian network in the 1790s, and the gradual removal of anti-Unitarian legislation and dissenting disabilities in

civil law during the nineteenth century, ending with the recognition of the first woman Unitarian minister to undergo the full process of selection and training offered to men.

In the first case study I discuss the life and work of Anna Laetitia Barbauld and show how it differed from that of her contemporary Joseph Priestley. I demonstrate the strategies she used in order to retain her Unitarian respectability and credibility while developing a public presence, including moving from the 'females' genres of poetry and educational writings to public defences of Unitarian's rights and critiques of the government in the 1790s, and show how she suffered rebuffs in the changed political and cultural climate of the early twentieth century. I maintain that Barbauld's work helped to pave the way for Unitarian women seeking gain openings in professional writing and in ministry later in the nineteenth-century.

My second case study is of Helen Bourn/Martineau/Tagart, and concentrates on the letters written by her and her circle in the 1820s. This reveals insights into the lives of 'ordinary' middle-class Unitarian women, and how they lived their faith. While demonstrating the importance of Unitarianism to the women in the study, it highlights differences between the public rhetoric of Unitarianism at this time and the actual lives of women.

In the third study I discuss the Unitarianism of Frances Power Cobbe, her life and writings. A contrast between the attitudes of Cobbe, born into an Anglo-Irish landed family and Mary Carpenter, daughter of a Unitarian minister, demonstrates both restrictions and opportunities in relation to middle-class women in nineteenth century Unitarianism. I show how Cobbe's public writings and activism helped firstly to influence Unitarian thought and secondly to prepare the way for the acceptance of Gertrude von Petzold, as the first woman admitted for formal training as a Unitarian , minister.

My methodological approach is primarily biographical, and in addition to the works on women's history and historical methods including Jordanova (2000), Maynard and Purvis (1994), Gallagher et al. (2001), and others cited earlier in this chapter, it is informed by a variety of works on biographical methods. Those from a specifically feminist standpoint include work by Stanley (1992), Smith and Watson (1998), Nussbaum (1989) The Personal Narratives Group (1989), Heilbrun (1988) and Donnell and Polkey (2000); while more general biographical methodologies include those by Erben (1998) and Humphrey, Miller and Zdravomyslova (2003). The Daughters of Dissent project, published at the end of 2004 when most of my research was completed, has a helpful chapter of methodologies used in researching women in the United Reformed Church (Kaye et al., 2004). I also consulted general works on feminist methodologies such as those by Stanley and Wise (1993), Stanley (1997) and Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002). For basic ethnography, Geerz was useful (1973). My second case study involved extensive research on primary documents, mainly letters; Plummer (2001) provided a general guide; more detailed references to working with letters appear in the concluding part of that chapter.

Chapter Two

"The chief boast and ornament of her Sect": Ann Laetitia Barbauld[1]

Introduction

A case study of Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825) illustrates the conditions in which Unitarian women of her day lived, in three significant respects. Firstly, the times in which she lived were crucial for the formation of Unitarianism as an organised religious denomination, so that a study of her life and works shows the extent to which a woman's activity could influence the movement at this important stage. Secondly, she identified herself with the rational dissenters and the emerging Unitarian movement, and a focus on her demonstrates how a woman could negotiate the denominational and cultural structures of the time. Thirdly, she left a significant body of writing, both published works and private letters, which gives insight into her understanding of and her contribution to Unitarianism at a number of levels and different spheres of activity.

"Persecuted with a good deal of odium": Unitarianism in Barbauld's time

Unitarianism is best known in its difference from the Trinitarianism (briefly defined as the belief in one God in three aspects, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, equal and eternal) held by mainstream Christians. Although Antitrinitarian ideas were present in England from Tudor times, if not before, and developed during the Commonwealth (Gordon, 1970, pp.15-24), it was after the Toleration Act of 1689 that such views gained wider currency in both the Church of England and among dissenters. The Anglican Samuel Clarke's The Scripture

[1] The women who is the subject of this chapter spent the first thirty years of her life as Anna Laetitia Aikin, and published her first two books under this name. After her marriage in 1774, she took her husband's name of Barbauld. All her subsequent publications were under her married name, and she is known to later generations as Mrs Barbauld. I follow the practice of McCarthy and Kraft (1994, p. xix) in using Aikin when referring to events before her marriage and Barbauld subsequently. When necessary, I use her given names of Anna Laetitia to distinguish her from other family members. When referring to her in a non time-specific context, or to the body of her literary works, I refer to her as Barbauld. Barbauld's second given name is spelt Letitia by McCarthy and Kraft (1994) but most writers give this as Laetitia. Originally the a and the e were elided (as in the works edited by her niece, Lucy Aikin) but this is not available on my computer, so in this work Laetitia is the nearest approximation available.

Doctrine of the Trinity (1712), which discussed the contradictions concerning the trinity in the Bible, had the effect of promoting in both Dissent and Anglicanism the doctrines that came to be known as Arian. A brief definition of Arianism is the belief that the "Godhead was made up not of three co-equal and eternal Persons, but that God the Father was supreme and Jesus, though pre-existent and divine, was subordinate (Webb, 1984, p. 7). Alongside this christological development was the rejection of Calvinism, with its emphasis on the predestination of some to damnation and others to salvation, in favour of a more benign arminianism, which allowed for free will and the voluntary acceptance of salvation through Christ (Livingstone, 1977, pp. 34-5, 84; Clark, 1990, pp. 50-51). After the London dissenting ministers voted at Salters Hall in 1719 to place reliance on the Bible, rationally interpreted, rather than on later human formulations, Arianism grew among the Dissenters, especially through the Dissenting academies. At the same time, the teachings of Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), who had lived and worked in Southern and Eastern Europe, spread in England. Both Arianism and Socinianism had a variety of formulations, but on the whole the Socinians held that Jesus was not essentially divine, rather that God the Father shared his power with him at the ascension (Richardson, 1969, p. 314). Thus the Socinians held a less exalted view of Jesus, and later regarded him as totally human, not different in essence from other humans, though with a particularly close relationship to God the Father, a doctrine known as humanitarianism (Wilbur, 1969, II, p. 416-7, Gordon, 1970 pp. 37-38). During the eighteenth century a variety of views at variance with Trinitarianism were labelled 'Unitarian'. However, Theophilus Lindsey, at the end of the eighteenth century, defined Unitarianism more precisely as religious worship "addressed only to the One True God, the Father" (Wilbur, 1969, p. 292), and this steadily became the accepted usage.

The beginnings of nationally organised Unitarian activities date from the later part of the eighteenth century, particularly among congregations that had been founded in the years following the Toleration Act of 1689 (Ditchfield, 1968, pp. 46-47). This Act specifically denied toleration to those who denied the Trinity, and had for a time forced those with Unitarian ideas to avoid proclaiming these publicly (Gordon, 1895, p25). However, after 1770, dissenters were permitted to preach provided they took an oath confirming their acceptance of the bible as the foundation of their protestant faith. There was further relaxation in 1779, when parliamentary action no longer required dissenting ministers to assent to those articles of the Church of England which specifically referred to doctrine, though parliament refused to waive subscription within the national church to the whole of the thirty nine articles (Bolam et al. 1968, p. 229). The first avowedly Unitarian congregation was founded in 1774 by Theophilus Lindsey, who had resigned his living as an Anglican clergyman. This London venture attracted much interest and considerable support (Ditchfield, 1968, pp. 94-152, 231), including that of Anna Barbauld. She also helped in several attempts to secure the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (legislation that limited dissenters' participation in public life and subjected them to recurring fines), which were made with increasing support. The 1789 attempt was defeated in parliament by only 20 votes, and there were great hopes that the next campaign would be successful.

Then, in the same year, came the French Revolution. Rational dissenters had a long tradition of celebrating the peaceful revolution of 1688 (when the Protestant William of Orange replaced the Catholic James II) at annual dinners with numerous toasts, including one to "civil and religious liberty" (Watts, 1995c, p. 1). They supported both the American and French revolutions as the overthrowing of tyranny and the triumph of freedom. When news of the brutality and bloodshed in France reached England, all those who had supported the revolution were considered a potential danger to the British monarchy and

suspected of treason. Although rational dissenters distinguished between their support for the democratic ideals of the revolution and their condemnation of the excessive violence, this differentiation was recognised neither by their opponents not by the state. Not only did support for their own religious position decline, but they suffered hostility and violence at the hands of 'Church and King' mobs (M. Watts, 1995, p. 353). The burning of Joseph Priestley's meeting house and home in Birmingham in 1791 is but the best known of a country-wide spate of persecution. Hostility to the new religious doctrines, which emphasised freedom to think and to differ from the established church, was combined with a reactionary fear of political radicalism. The connection between religious liberty and civil liberty, already joined in traditional after-dinner speeches and the toast to 'civil and religious liberty', led many people to fear the religious radicals as a possible source of revolutionary fervour within Britain. This greatly affected Barbauld, her family and friends; in January, probably 1791, she wrote to her adopted son, Charles:

> Never within my memory, did public affairs occupy so large a space in the minds of every one, or give such scope to conjecture. Hampstead, as you may suppose, is among the loyal associators, & your Father, Mr Shiells, & Mr Lewis are the only ones who have not joined; they are persecuted with anonymous letters & a good deal of odium.
>
> As to Dr Priestley, scarce a day passes but he meets with some open threat, or some anonymous abuse – I do not wonder in such a state of things, that our Norwich friends, & particularly Mr W. Taylor should be pointed out as dangerous (Barbauld to Charles Rochemont Aikin, Jan 4th, quoted in Rodgers, 1958, p. 211).

Little wonder that the attempt in the previous year (1790) to secure the repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts failed by 180 votes, and in 1792 a Unitarian petition to secure a firmer legal status was also unsuccessful. Increasingly severe treason and sedition laws in the 1790s resulted in imprisonment and even transportation for a number of Unitarians. Joseph Johnson, Barbauld's publisher, was among those imprisoned (Unsworth, 1987, p. 152). One of the Unitarian responses was to organise themselves by founding a series of national bodies. In the spring of 1791, Priestley, Lindsey and Belsham were the main

instigators of the "Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue by the Distribution of Books" (Short, 1975, p. 2s). The Society hoped to convey both a respect for tradition, with a title reminiscent of the 1698 Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and a more contemporary purpose, with aims including "peace, liberty and good order in society" together with "the improvement of the species" (Short, 1975, p. 2s). In 1805 younger leaders more concerned with reaching working-class people founded the Unitarian Fund to promote missionary work and popular preaching. This work was aided in 1809 by the formation of the Christian Tract Society, which distributed Unitarian tracts and pamphlets. This was a counter to the Religious Tract Society, founded by Hannah More, a leading evangelical writer (Short, 1975, pp. 10s-13s). It was not until 1812 that some of the restrictions on dissenting worship were lifted, and 1813 that the Trinity Act, extending the protection of the Toleration Act to Unitarians, was passed (Bennett, 1913, p. 236). The Test and Corporation Acts were not repealed until 1828, three years after Barbauld's death.

"In what did it terminate?" Barbauld's changing reputation

Anna Laetitia Aikin was regarded as possibly the greatest woman poet of her day. Her first volume of poems, published in 1773, ran to four editions in the first year (Martin, 1883, p. 116), with further editions in 1776-7 and 1792, and an American edition in 1820 (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, pp. 357, 358, 360). The Monthly Review praised her work in the following terms, "We congratulate the public on so great an accession to the literary world, as the genius and talents of Miss Aikin. We very seldom have an opportunity of bestowing praise with so much justice" (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxi). In his youth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge walked from Stowey to Bristol, a distance of forty miles, to meet her (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxi), and Henry Crabb Robinson wrote, "In the

estimation of Wordsworth she was the first of our literary women" (quoted in Rodgers, 1958, p. 149). McCarthy and Kraft consider that, "At century's end Barbauld may well have been the most eminent living poet, male or female, in Britain". They cite the Ladies Monthly Museum of 1798, which confidently states that Barbauld's poems "are now in the possession of every person who has any pretensions to taste, and every library in the kingdom; and public suffrage has amply ratified their claim to distinction... Indeed little or nothing, in the same species, has ever appeared in our language, to which her poems ought to give place" (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxxiii).

Barbauld's early reputation as a poet broadened as she published a variety of prose works. Richard Samuel's painting of the Nine Living Muses of Great Britain included Barbauld along with Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Carter, Charlotte Lennox, Catherine Macaulay, Elizabeth Griffith, Angelica Kaufman, Elizabeth Sheridan, and Hannah More. Johnson published the picture as prints in 1777 and the original was exhibited in the Royal Academy exhibition of 1779. However, Barbauld's educational works, including primers for young children, religious instruction, and essays for juveniles, outlasted her literary fame, though some thought that her talents were wasted by being applied in this area. Samuel Johnson's verdict is the most well known:

> Miss (Aikin) was an instance of early cultivation, but in what did it terminate? In marrying a little Presbyterian parson, who keeps an infant boarding-school, so that all her employment now is, "To suckle fools, and chronicle small-beer." She tells the children, "This is a cat, and that is a dog, with four legs and a tail; see there! You are much better than a cat or a dog, for you can speak." If I had bestowed such an education on a daughter, and had discovered that she thought of marrying such a fellow, I would have sent her to the Congress (quoted in Rodgers, 1958, p. 71 and McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxii).

The main blows to Barbauld's reputation in her own lifetime came about from the change in political mood after the French revolution, with Britain's war with France, and the changing fashion of romanticism. The criticism of her poem Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, a political critique, resulted in her retirement from writing for publication, and contributed

to the obscurity of her reputation for many years. Its content and effect on Barbauld will be considered later in this chapter.

The change from the formality of the eighteenth century Augustan style to the romanticism of the early nineteenth meant that Barbauld's poetry was soon out of fashion (Franklin, 1996, p. xx). Her relations with Samuel Taylor Coleridge (who in his early adulthood was a Unitarian and candidated for the ministry, but decided to concentrate on writing instead) illustrate this. When they met in 1797 and in the years immediately following, the relationship was one of admiration from the younger aspiring poet to the established woman writer. He wrote to a friend in 1800:

> The more I see of Mrs Barbauld the more I admire her – that wonderful Propriety of Mind! - She has great acuteness, very great - yet how steadily she keeps it within the bounds of practical Reason. This I almost envy as well as admire – My own Subtleties too often lead me into strange (tho' God be praised) transient Out-of-the-waynesses (Letter to Estlin, 1 March 1800, Letters vol. I, p. 578, quoted in McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. 296).

After their first meeting, Barbauld wrote a poem (published anonymously in 1799) addressed to Coleridge, in which she advised him not to deviate in climbing the hill of science to rest in a grove "filled with strange enchantment" and the "maze of metaphysical lore", but instead to brace his mind with "Active scenes", so that,

> ... fair exertion, for bright fame sustained,
> For friends, for country, chase each spleen-fed fog
> That blots the wide creation –

She ended with the blessing, "Now Heaven conduct thee with a Parent's love"! (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 142). Later Coleridge related to his nephew that, "Mrs Barbauld told me that the only faults she found in The Ancient Mariner were – that it was improbable, and that it had no moral" (Woof and Hebron, 1997, p. 19). The impression given in anthologies as late as 2000 is that Barbauld's criticism, relegated to a footnote indicating only that she objected to the poem because it had no moral, came from a moralist of little literary significance. As McCarthy and Kraft put it, "It was her treatment of Samuel Taylor

Coleridge that firmly relegated Barbauld to small print, as it were; as his canonical stature rose, her claim to serious attention fell" (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002 p. 28). This is an overstatement, but it does seem that this incident had significance in the collapse of Barbauld's reputation. Coleridge clearly lost his admiration for Barbauld, referring to her as "Mistress Bare and Bald" (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxxiv) and he upset Crabb Robinson with his criticism of her in a public lecture on Milton given on 27 January 1812. Robinson wrote:

> There were some excrescences in the lecture, and he offended me by an unhandsome and unmanly attack upon Mrs Barbauld. He ridiculed some expressions in her Ode to Content, 'The hamlet's brown, primrose and violet' etc. – criticisms, he added, 'which Wordsworth made to me at Charles Lamb's two years ago.' That he should select among the living authors, a woman, and that a woman who has been among his admirers formerly, and I believe always shown him civilities, is ungenerous and unworthy of his better feelings (Henry Crabb Robinson, On Books p. 62, quoted in McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. 264).

Barbauld made it clear that she did not approve of either the poetry or the morals of many of the new romantic poets; and in 1818 she remarked to Crabb Robinson that Byron's latest poem (Beppo) was without poetry and in horrible versification, commenting that Byron, "filled a leaf in the book of fame, but it is a very blotted leaf" (Ellis, 1874 vol. I, p 301-2).

Andrew Ashfield (1995) gives two further reasons for Barbauld's later obscurity. First is her omission from the national collections, which helped to form the canon of important works of English poetry from the mid eighteenth century onwards. Large historical anthologies, such as those of Hugh Blair (1773-76), Samuel Johnson (1779-81) and Alexander Chalmers (1810), were influential in forming the traditional canon; but as these conformed to a convention of not printing the works of living authors, Barbauld was omitted. After 1810 fashions had changed, and the great collections started promoting the Romantic style. By the time Wordsworth looked at the omission of women from the canon, in 1833, Barbauld, and most of the other dissenting women poets such as Williams, Hays and Alderson, had largely been forgotten (Ashfield, 1995, pp. xi-xii).

The second is that Barbauld, together with other women radicals of the 1780s and 80s, had been branded as unfeminine, as "Unsex'd females" (Polwhele, 1798), and were obliterated from the ideology of the "exquisitely female 'poetess' in the 1830s (Ashfield, 1995, p. xii). (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxxiii-xxxiv). The antifeminist reaction to "Wollstonecraftianism", which developed after William Godwin's incautious biography of his wife in 1798, also played a significant part in denying Barbauld public recognition, even though she had to some extent distanced herself from Wollstonecraft. Barbauld's negotiation of this difficult area is considered later in the chapter. Some Unitarians did continue to publicise Wollstonecraft's ideas in spite of the public disapproval of Godwin's exposure (Taylor, 2003, p. 9), but the main effect was to contribute to the dismissal of Unitarians in general as irresponsible and dangerous radicals. Within Unitarianism, Barbauld continued to command respect on both sides of the Atlantic, as exemplified by Harriet Martineau's Monthly Repository article of 1822, in which she refers to Barbauld as "our first living female poet", and regrets that she has not published more (Martineau, 1822, p. 748), and the often unauthorised publication of her work in America. McCarthy and Kraft also provide three more obvious reasons for Barbauld's fall from popularity in the general population: her gender, her Dissenting allegiance, and the fact that she did not write plays or novels, genres more associated with women writers (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 31).

Immediately after Barbauld's death, her niece, Lucy Aikin, who was already a published author in her own right, collected some of Barbauld's letters and works, which she published in two volumes with a memoir (referenced under Barbauld, 1825), and an anthology, A Legacy for Young Ladies (Barbauld, 1826). Although Aikin's selection more than doubled the number of poems published, she exercised a very selective editorship, rejecting anything that she felt did not do justice to her aunt's memory. A great deal of

early material was omitted, and Aikin was clearly uncomfortable with controversial material as exemplified by her reference to Barbauld's Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, on Sects and on Establishments, that "This piece portrays, it must be confessed, that propensity to tread on dangerous ground which sometimes appears an instinct of genius" (Franklin, 1996, p. lxvi). Barbauld's other political and theological works, such as her two civic sermons, are omitted, and one wonders what else of a radical nature or treading on "dangerous ground" has been lost. Aikin was clearly anxious to portray her aunt as acceptable to the more rigid conventions of the 1820s, and down-played her part in the religious radicalism of the late eighteenth century. One example of this change in thinking is the difference in attitude to Mary Wollstonecraft and her family. Barbauld and Wollstonecraft, while not close friends, met socially, especially in the radical grouping centred on their publisher, Joseph Johnson, and in the society of rational dissent (Todd, 2000, pp. 135, 152, 411; Taylor, 2003, p. 40-41, Tomalin, 1992 p. 101). Aikin, however, dissociated herself from the lack of respectability of Wollstonecraft's daughter, Mary Shelley, as well as Wollstonecraft herself, and refused to meet the former at a party. Mary Martin, great-niece of Barbauld, wrote:

> The ladies of my family, though great admirers of Mrs Godwin's writings, were too correct in their conduct to visit her, and the same objection was felt to Mrs Shelley. When.... my Aunt Lucy was at a large party at Mrs Daniel Gaskell's, a lady who liked to collect every kind of lion in her rooms, who brought up Mrs Shelley to introduce her to my aunt, thinking no doubt to give a mutual pleasure, my aunt, however, resolutely turned her back on the fair widow, much to Mrs Gaskell's dismay, and to the surprise of my brother, who had escorted his aunt to the party, and was himself enchanted with Mrs Shelley's beauty and manners (Martin, 1883, p. 81).

Unfortunately, the bulk of Barbauld's unpublished material was destroyed in a bombing raid on London in September 1940, so it is now much more difficult to reconstruct what might well have been a more radical picture of her to be gained from the original sources (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxxv).

However, Aikin's interpretation of her aunt did have some success; a second edition of the Works appeared in 1826, and there was an American edition (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxxiii); and also various other pieces were published in journals in Britain and America during the late 1820s and early 1830s, sometimes without the approval of Aikin. The popularity of Barbauld's work in America in the early nineteenth century is shown in the letter which William Ellery Channing, a well-known American Unitarian minister, wrote to Lucy Aikin after Barbauld's death: "I can remember Mrs B's poetry from my early life, and I owe her more than delight" (W. E. Channing to Lucy Aikin, 27 February 1827, quoted in Le Breton, 1874, p. 182). Neither Lucy Aikin nor her brother Arthur, who had considered a biography and a reprint of Barbauld's works in the 1840s, defended her against the "campaign of detraction" conducted by critics such as Coleridge and Lamb (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. xxxiv).

Robert Aspland's undated lecture on Mrs Barbauld was not, as far as I know, published, but it was presumably delivered at least once, and so is likely to have had had some effect on Barbauld's reputation, at least within Unitarian circles. While very complimentary, it concentrates almost entirely on her poems and early life, avoiding her excursions into politics or theology, in spite of the fact that they moved in the same circles and clearly knew each other (Aspland n.d.). It relies heavily on Aikin's Works and must have been written within a few years of Barbauld's death. However, it was Barbauld's educational works, in particular her Hymns in Prose For Children, which were used throughout the nineteenth century (Ellis, 1874, pp. ix-x). Generations of British children were taught to read using Barbauld's Early Lessons. Elizabeth Barrett Browning and William Hazlitt are among those who acknowledged this early influence (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, pp. 11, 235-7). Barbauld was clearly known throughout the nineteenth century as an educationalist, and it was for her educational writings that Clara Balfour included her

as a representative character in her Working Women of the Last Half Century: The Lesson of their Lives in 1856.

It was not until the 1870s that further major biographical works emerged. Much of Barbauld's work was published in America, both during her lifetime and after her death. Encouraged by her father-in-law, Grace Ellis, a Boston woman, started work on a memoir and collection of Barbauld's works. Apparently spurred on by Ellis's visit to London to gather materials, Anna Laetitia LeBreton, Barbauld's great-niece, who possessed more family papers, published a memoir in 1874. In the same year Ellis's own two-volume work came out (Ellis, 1874). Although this contained little new material, the first volume was the first full-length biography. Both LeBreton and Ellis include brief references to Barbauld's work for civil and religious liberty, and LeBreton includes more family letters, but both concentrate on her poems and literature work and give uncritical praise rather than a wider assessment (Le Breton, 1874, Ellis, 1874). There were several editions of Ellis' volumes, the last appearing in 1884. According to McCarthy and Kraft (1994, p. xxxv), there has been no collection of Barbauld's work since then, apart from their own collection of all the known poems, and their later collection of both prose and poetry (McKarthy and Kraft 2002). However, the 1874 works did encourage an interest in Barbauld. In the following decade, memoirs of her were included in collective biographies written by Jerom Murch in 1877 and "Miss Thackeray" (Mrs Annie Ritchie), who collected four memoirs published in the Cornhill Magazine and published them as A Book of Sibyls in 1883. In the same year, Mary Martin published further family recollections by her mother, Le Breton.

Apart from brief notes by people concerned with English literature in Notes and Queries and some letters in the London Mercury of 1932 (Whiting, 1932), there was nothing of substance produced until Betsy Rodgers' biography of the family in 1958 and Catherine Moore's unpublished thesis of 1969. Rodgers gives some interesting

nonconformist background and hitherto unpublished letters, and includes Barbauld's nephews and nieces in the family story. Moore uncovered more of Barbauld's works published in journals, but is only interested in her as a literary figure, agreeing with Crabb Robinson's appraisal:

> Her conversation is lively, her remarks judicious, and always pertinent though she has not gone with the age in matters of taste and poetry, and has gone too exclusively with a sect in religion and morals; yet of that sect, Unitarian Christian, she is the chief boast and ornament (Robinson, 1967, p.68).

It was not until second wave feminism influenced the academic study of English literature, with an interest in finding and reclaiming women writers of the past, that Barbauld studies took on a new lease of life. One of the earliest articles here was by Marilyn Williamson in 1980. She critiqued Lawrence Stone's sweeping generalisations about the blue stockings of the late eighteenth century in his The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 and provided a more nuanced discussion of 'Who's Afraid of Mrs Barbauld? The Blue Stockings and Feminism' (Williamson, 1980). In the 1990s, there was considerable revival of interest in Barbauld, particularly in English departments in American and British universities. Apart from the McCarthy and Kraft edition of poems in 1994 and anthology of both poems and prose in 2002, there are numerous references to Barbauld in works on eighteenth century women and literature. Notable among these are the chapters by Ross and Wilson in Wilson and Haefner's Re-visioning Romanticism (1994), references in Ross (1989), journal articles by Anderson (1994) and Keach (1994, 1998). Anthologies of late eighteenth century women's poetry, such as those edited by Lonsdale (1989) and Ashfield (1995), include Barbauld, often with insightful comments on her background. The 1792 edition of her poems was reprinted in 1993 with an introduction by Jonathon Wordsworth. Stabler (2002) suggests that Barbauld's poetry now appears on British undergraduate Romantic reading lists. Barbauld's prose works have had less recent exposure, though the Folger anthology on women critics includes three excerpts from her

works of literary criticism (Folger, 1995), and Aikin's 1825 edition of Barbauld's works, with a new introduction by Franklin and the original memoir by Aikin, was reprinted in 1996. The title of Stabler's volume in the Transitions series, Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie, 1790-1830, indicates the extent to which Barbauld is increasingly known in academic circles (Stabler, 2002).

In recent years English scholars have begun to take more seriously Barbauld's religious background, as shown in chapters by Keach (1998) and McDonagh (1998), in Janowtz's Romanticism and Gender (1998), and articles by Bradshaw (1998), White (1999), Hilton (2000) and Mahon (2000). Although Stabler's main interest is Barbauld's poetry, she pays some attention to Barbauld's broader context (Stabler 2002). A forthcoming biography by McKarthy and Kraft should add much to a critical study of Barbauld. However, the recent biography by Wakefield (2001), while giving a readable picture of the context of Barbauld's life and introducing some previously unpublished letters, lacks interpretation and analysis, being more of an uncritical hagiography, and does not engage with the more recent literary criticism of her work.

In Unitarian circles Barbauld was known throughout the nineteenth century mainly as the author of Hymns in Prose for Children. The anonymous reviewer of Jerom Murch's study of Barbauld and her contemporaries in The Christian Life of 30 June 1877 begins by expressing gratitude for the Hymns, known since early childhood, while six months earlier, a substantial biographical sketch of Barbauld in the same journal begins with the comment that, "Less is known of the personal history and admirable character of this distinguished woman than is, for our own growth in true piety and goodness, desirable" (The Christian Life, 30 June 1877, p. 313; 4 November 1876, pp. 307-308). The centenary of Barbauld's death was commemorated by a variety of activities in Stoke Newington and several articles

in The Inquirer (The Inquirer, 1925, 7 March, pp. 147-148, 152; 14 March p. 164). During the following seventy years, knowledge of Barbauld all but disappeared.

However, the standard Unitarian histories now in use have largely ignored Barbauld; she is missing from the index of Bolam et al. (1968), though there are two brief references to her in the text, and she is completely absent from Wilbur (1952). The concentration on the history of ideas and legislation which led to the failure to recognise the part played by women has been discussed in the introduction to this thesis, and will be taken further in the conclusion. One notable exception to the omission of Barbauld is Herbert McLachlan's 1934 work on the contribution of Unitarianism to thought and learning in Britain 1700-1900. Its particular emphasis on the wider aspects of 'thought and learning' made the inclusion of a poet and educationalist more appropriate. R. K. Webb touches on Barbauld's religious position in his exploration of rational piety, but his article is in a book rarely used by ministry students or lay people and ministers outside academia (Webb, 1996b). In recent works on the history of education Barbauld's name appears, for example in a chapter by Kramnick (1980), as the subject of a chapter by Hilton (2000) and in a variety of writings by Ruth Watts (1980, 1995, 1997, 1998). Watts's PhD thesis of 1979 explored "The Unitarian Contribution to Education in England from the late eighteenth century to 1853" (Watts 1979). A string of articles following this specifically referred to women (1980, 1995a, 1997, 2002). Her profile of Joseph Priestley (1995b) and the traditional Unitarian toast, 'to civil and religious liberty' (1995c), raised issues connected with Barbauld, who is discussed at more length in Watts' longer work, Power, Gender and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860 (1998). Watts concentrates on Barbauld's educational activities and writings, and relates them to the Unitarian networks and power structures which formed the context of her life, in contrast to the literary analysis and emphasis on her poetry found in the studies by academics in the field of English

literature. This is useful and engaging because it shows how Barbauld's work helped to open up opportunities for other serious educational writing by Unitarian women such as Harriet Martineau and Jane Marcet, and throws light on the education of other Unitarian women such as Sarah Taylor, Sophia Frend, and Annabella Millbanke. In this thesis I quote more extensively from Barbauld's works in order to tease out her theology and her impact on the Unitarian movement, and take more account of recent work by English specialists.

More general works on gender and early feminism occasionally make references to Barbauld (see for example Kent's (1999) Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990, Cole and Swartz's (1994) Why Should I Wish for Words, and Barker-Benfield's (1992) The Culture of Sensibility). However, some well-known works, such as Rendall's (1985) Origins of Modern Feminism, Jones's (1990) Women in the Eighteenth Century, Hill's (1987) Eighteenth Century Women: An Anthology and Barker and Chalus' (1997) Gender in Eighteenth Century England, omit her completely. Histories of anti-slavery work often include a reference to Barbauld, with examples being Midgley (1992), Ditchfield (1986); and the excerpt in Jump (1997) where her work is included specifically to illustrate anti-slavery writing. Evidence of current interest in Barbauld is shown by the large number of entries, over three thousand, thrown up by a search on the world wide web using Google (accessed 11th November 2003), and her being the subject of an item on Woman's Hour, a BBC Radio Four programme, on 27 July 2002.

This brief survey indicates the varying fortunes of Barbauld's reputation and its impact on the literature about her. Some of the reasons for this are analysed in later sections. It is encouraging to note that interest in her literary and educational works is leading to a greater appreciation of her as a woman worthy of study in her own right, and as an active member of the religious body which was beginning to be known as Unitarian.

"The cursed Barbauld crew": Barbauld, Priestley and a Dissenting Friendship

Rather than repeat the biographical story of Barbauld as told by Aikin and developed by LeBreton, Rodgers, McCarthy and Kraft and Wakefield, I want to explore some dimensions of her life and work in relation to one of her longstanding friends, Joseph Priestley. Priestley is regarded as one of the most important figures in the formation of the Unitarian movement, his collected works, edited by his friend J. T. Rutt, extend to twenty-six volumes, and much has been written about him. The contrast between the lives of Barbauld, a woman, and Priestley, a man, helps to highlight the various exclusions and hindrances, both social and religious, which have led to the man being so much better known than the woman.

Although the careers of Barbauld and Priestley are in some ways strangely parallel, their early childhoods were very different. Priestley, born in 1733, was brought up from the age of nine by an aunt who was a strict Calvinist. He attended at least two local schools and had a private tutor in mathematics before becoming the first student at the dissenting academy at Daventry just after its move from Northampton, where it had been started on liberal principles by Philip Doddridge (Webb, 1996a, p. 36, Clark, 1990, p. 51). Anna Laetitia Aikin, ten years younger than Priestley, was brought up by her parents, the Reverend John Aikin, and Jane, nee Jennings. John Aikin was a Presbyterian dissenter who had given up congregational ministry because of health problems and ran a boys' school. Jane was also a Presbyterian. Anna Laetitia, known as Nancy to her friends, was educated mainly by her mother, who was very strict, and careful about how much contact her daughter had with the boys in her father's school. The girl, unlike her younger brother John, was not allowed to join the boys' classes, and had to persuade her father to teach her

Latin and Greek privately, though she read avidly in his extensive library (Rodgers, 1958, p. 30, Barbauld, 1825 vol. I, p. vii).

There was, of course, no thought of a career other than marriage and motherhood for the young woman. However Priestley was educated for a career at a dissenting academy and, after considering medicine, chose to be a dissenting minister, which role he undertook first at Needham Market and then at Nantwich. At each place he ran a school for the boys of the neighbourhood, and at Nantwich he also taught a class of girls (Clark, 1990, pp. 51, 55, 58-59). Aikin, on the other hand, stayed in the family home until her marriage, so when her father took the post of tutor in languages and belles lettres at the new dissenting academy in Warrington in 1758, she moved there with her parents. Priestley questioned the faith in which he had been brought up, and rejected it in favour of the more optimistic approach of the rational dissenters He discarded Calvinist teachings for a more benign Arianism, while his christological beliefs developed to Arianism, and later Socinianism and then full-blown Unitarianism (Clark, 1990, p. 86). Barbauld, on the other hand, was from early days brought up to be a rational dissenter and she never expounded on the doctrinal details of her religious beliefs, although her hymns and other religious writings suggest that her faith and her doctrinal position changed very little from the Arianism taught and practised by her father (Moore, 1969, pp. 129-142).

It was at Warrington that Priestley and Anna Laetitia Aikin became friends. After three years' residence, John Aikin became tutor in divinity, and Priestley came to teach languages and belles lettres. The following year, in 1762, Priestley married Mary Wilkinson, a young woman of eighteen, just a year younger than Anna Laetitia Aikin, and the two developed a close friendship. Although Anna Laetitia could not, unlike her younger brother, become a pupil in the academy, she was able to join in much of the informal education. The tutors were expected to have pupils to board in their own homes,

and in those settings much time was spent in improving pastimes, including debating and composing verse. Lucy Aikin described the atmosphere at Warrington thus:

> The most cordial intimacy subsisted among the tutors and their families, with whom the elder students associated on terms of easy and affectionate intercourse; and while the various branches of human knowledge occupied their graver hours, the moments of recreation were animated by sports of wit and ingenuity well adapted to nerve the wing of youthful genius (O'Brien, 1989, p. 93).

Robert Aspland also makes much of the lively society at the Warrington academy:

> Charming women and beautiful girls were there, some of whom could talk both wisely and well, and could throw over their convention – the veritable attraction of polished wit. There was Mrs Seddon, the minister's wife, a woman of fashion(?) and talents, there was Mrs Priestley, whose amiability was equalled only by her cultivation of mind and her powers of conversation... Then there were the gay and beautiful Miss Rigbys.... But amongst the belles and blue stockings of Warrington the place of honour must be officially reserved for the daughter of the Theological Tutor, Anna Laetitia Aikin. (Aspland, n.d. p.16)

As Aspland only knew Barbauld in her later life, his effusions about Anna Laetitia Aikin's social skills may have been exaggerated. Up to the age of fifteen, she was apparently a quiet unworldly girl, who had spent her early life largely in seclusion, although accustomed to the company of boys, her father's pupils. She knew very few girls, and "maternal vigilance... instilling into her a double portion of bashfulness and maidenly reserve;... she was accustomed to ascribe an uneasy sense of constraint in mixed society, which she could never entirely shake off, to the strictness and seclusion in which it had thus been her fate to be educated" (Aikin in Barbauld 1825 vol, I, p. viii). At the end of her time at Warrington, she wrote to Elizabeth Montagu, giving as one of her reasons for declining the invitation to set up an academy for young ladies the following:

> My next reason is that I am not at all qualified for the task. I have seen a good deal of the manner of educating boys, and know pretty well what is expected in the care of them; but in a girls' boarding school I should be quite a novice: I was never at one myself, have not even the advantage of younger sisters, which might have given me some notion of the management of girls: indeed, for the early part of my life I conversed little with my own sex. In the village where I was, there were none to converse with; and this, I am very sensible, has given me an awkwardness in many common things, which would make me most peculiarly unfit for the education of my own sex... I know myself remarkably deficient in the gracefulness of person, in

> my air and manner, and in the easy graces of conversation (Barbauld, 1825 vol. I, p. xxii-xxiii).

However, the society of the Warrington Academy clearly suited her, and she flourished there. Accounts of her time as Warrington tell of her beauty and wit (Rowan, Autobiography 1840, quoted in Rodgers, 1958, p. 51-2), and Aikin remarks that "the fifteen... years passed by her at Warrington comprehended probably the happiest, as well as the most brilliant portion of her existence" Barbauld, 1825 vol. I, p. ix). This may have been the exception to the remark she once made to her great niece, "that she had never been placed in a situation which suited her" (Le Breton, 1874, p. 26). How much this feeling of alienation was attributable to her personality and upbringing, and to what extent it was engendered by her position as a dissenter and a woman who pushed the conventional limits in her writings, is a matter for conjecture.

Although Priestley too enjoyed the social life at the Warrington Academy, he also had access to exclusively male theological conversations, as he recalled in his memoirs:

> I was singularly happy in the society of my fellow tutors, and of Mr Seddon, the minister of the place. We drank tea together every Saturday, and our convention was equally instructive and pleasing. I often thought it not a little extraordinary, that four persons who had no previous knowledge of each other, should have been brought to unite in conducting such a scheme as this, and all be zealous Necessarians as we were. We were likewise all Arians, and the only subject of much consequence on which we differed, was respecting the doctrine of atonement, concerning which Dr Aikin held some obscure notions. Accordingly, this was frequently the topic of our friendly conversations. The only Socinian in the neighbourhood was Mr Seddon, of Manchester; and we all wondered at him. But then we never entered into any particular examination of the subject (Priestley, 1970, pp. 90-91)

At some stage Priestley must have examined Seddon's beliefs more closely, for by the time he arrived at Leeds in 1769 he was calling himself a Socinian (Schwartz and McEvoy, 1989, p. xii).

As Priestley was tutor in English literature, he and Anna Laetitia clearly influenced each other. He claimed in his memoirs:

> I was a great versifier.... Mrs Barbauld told me that it was the perusal of some verses of mine, that first induced her to write anything in verse, so that this country is in some measure indebted to me for one of the best poets it can boast of. Several of her first poems were written when she was in my house, on occasions that occurred while she was there (Priestley, 1970, p 89).

Aikin did pay several long visits to the Priestleys in Leeds, and the theological exchange on one such stay is the subject of an examination later in this discussion, but it may have been Mary rather than Joseph who was Anna Laetitia's particular friend at this time. According to William Turner, Anna Laetitia's "warmest attachment appears to have been fixed on Mrs Priestley" (1825, p.184). Turner writes that Aikin's earliest surviving poem of any length, On Mrs P's Leaving Warrington, was thrown into the chaise of Mr and Mrs Priestley as they left the Academy to move to Leeds. It was not until the 1790s that Barbauld and the Priestleys were again to live reasonably close to each other, but they kept in touch by correspondence. Unfortunately, most of the letters and some of the poems they exchanged have been destroyed: the Priestleys burned virtually all their letters from their friends as a precautionary measure before their house was attacked in 1791 (Priestley, 1817-32 vol. 1, pp. 366-7), and most of the manuscript material that related to Barbauld has also been destroyed.

During the time that the families lived apart, Barbauld's and Priestley's lives were very different. After his ministry at Leeds, Priestley spent a period as librarian and tutor to the Earl of Shelburne at Calne in Wiltshire, before returning to the ministry in Birmingham. He spent a great deal of time on scientific experiments, as well as in writing increasingly radical theology. During the Church and King riots of 1791 his house and meeting house were destroyed, and he and his family narrowly escaped physical injury. After this, he spent three years within easier travelling distance of Barbauld, as minister at Hackney, before emigrating with Mary to America.

Meanwhile at Warrington, Anna Laetitia Aikin continued to write poetry and, encouraged by her brother, published in 1772 the volume that was to make her reputation, followed by a joint volume of prose pieces in 1773 (Aikin and Barbauld 1792). In 1774 she married Rochemont Barbauld, who had been a student at the Academy and had just qualified as a minister. They moved to Palgrave, near Diss in Suffolk. Here they ran a boys' school together, and in 1775 adopted Charles, the two year old son of John Aikin, Barbauld's brother. After eleven years of increasingly tiring work they left Palgrave, spent some months touring France, and settled in Hampstead, where Rochemont became minister to the Rosslyn Hill congregation, and Anna Laetitia took in individual pupils. Rochemont's tendency to mental health problems was probably the main reason why they moved to Stoke Newington in 1802, where Barbauld's brother had settled. Further deterioration in his mental state resulted in increasingly violent episodes, particularly towards his wife, and he drowned himself in 1808. The widowed Barbauld spent the rest of her life (dying in 1825) in Stoke Newington, with a considerable literary output until 1812.

These brief summaries of the lives of Priestley and Barbauld give the background to their interactions and interests, which are best examined by reference to their writings. Their published works demonstrate three main areas of mutual interest, education, politics and religion, each of which is examined below. However, their concern in all three stems from their position as rational dissenters. The ways in which they could express their faith in both their lives and their writings were of course profoundly influenced by their particular situations, and the possibilities open to them. They had much in common, both being middle-class and well-educated, but the publicly acknowledged avenues open to women were much more restricted than those available to men, a fact acknowledged by Barbauld in her writings On Female Studies:

> Men have various departments in active life; women have but one, and all women have the same, differently modified indeed by their rank in life and other incidental

> circumstances. It is to be a wife, a mother, a mistress of a family (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 476).

Although Barbauld worked within this mindset, she frequently pushed against the boundaries of acceptability. The contexts in which she did this, and the strategies she employed, are discussed later.

With regard to educational matters, both Barbauld and Priestley were teachers, and both had a special interest in English literature. Both taught in boys' schools, and both also taught girls, Priestley in his school in Nantwich and in church classes, while Barbauld took individual young women (including one of Priestley's grand-daughters) as pupils during her time at Hampstead. However, whereas Priestley taught boys and young men of all ages, it was considered appropriate for a woman only to teach younger boys, thus having a lower status and earning less money. Both taught a wide range of subjects, including English, history and geography, but only Priestley was thought able to teach science and doctrinal theology, though Barbauld, like many other women, was allowed to impart "practical divinity". Both were interested in educational methodology and used the same philosophical and psychological basis, David Hartley's Observations on Man. Hartley maintained that all ideas "arise from the impressions made by external objects upon the several parts of our bodies" (quoted in Watts, 1995b, p. 345) and developed an associationist psychology which stressed the importance of environment and experience. The wide curriculum and innovative educational methods devised by Barbauld for use in the Palgrave school are described by William McCarthy, who considers that the school was amongst the foremost in the country in its inculcation of the duties of citizenship in a democracy (McCarthy, 1997).

Barbauld's first educational book came directly from her perception of the needs of her adopted son, Charles. She realised that there were no books she considered suitable for teaching a young child to read, as she explained in her preface to Lessons for Children:

> This little publication was made for a particular child, but the public is welcome to make use of it. It was found that amidst the multitude of books professionally written for children there is not one adapted to the comprehension of a child from two to three years old. A grave remark or a connected story is above his capacity, and nonsense is always below it, for folly is worse than ignorance. Another defect is the want of good paper, a clear and large type and large spaces (Le Breton, 1874, p. 50).

In addition to acknowledging the practical requirements of large print with good spacing on good paper, and short sentences, Barbauld was a pioneer in applying Hartleyan associationist psychology to the education of young children. She was also a follower of Paley. Although an Anglican, Paley shared similar associationist views developed from Locke and Hartley, and so developed a method of inculcating firstly a sense of appreciating a benign creator from everyday experiences and observations, and secondly a habit of making moral choices (Hilton, 2000, pp. 26-27). For several generations Barbauld's books were the standard fare for early readers, especially among nonconformists. William Hazlitt is one such writer who learnt to read from Barbauld's Lessons (Keach, 1998, p. 44). Her Lessons for Children published in three sections, covering the ages of two to four years old in 1778-9 had a wider impact, in that they inspired other women such as Sarah Trimmer to write for publication (Turner, 1992, p. 120). However, Barbauld's approach was severely criticised by those who preferred the imaginative fairy tale rather than moral story, as Lamb wrote to Coleridge:

> Mrs Barbauld's stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery.... Science has succeeded to poetry no less in the little walks of children than with men. Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with tales and old wives' fables in childhood, you had been crammed with geography and natural history! "Damn them! I mean the cursed Barbauld crew, those blights and blasts of all that is human in man and child". (Kramnick, 1980, p. 230).

As Barbauld's approach was similar to that of Priestley, except that she wrote for younger children, it is possible that Lamb was attacking Barbauld at least partly because she was a woman, and a successful educator. Priestley's pioneering work on English grammar for

older children, developed at a time when English was not yet established as a subject in its own right in public and grammar schools and higher education, was held in much higher esteem by educationists (Watts, 1995b, p. 348).

Similarly in moral education, Priestley's lectures are designed for young adults of both sexes, while Barbauld's writings are either for young children, young women or family circles. Her Hymns in Prose for Children (1781) were intended to be learned by heart and recited by young children. Her preface explains her theory, firmly based on Hartley:

> The peculiar design of this publication is to impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind: fully convinced, as the Author is, that they cannot be impressed too soon, and that a child, to feel the full force of the idea of God, ought never to remember the time when he had no idea – to impress them, by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects, with all that he sees, all that he hears, all that affects his young mind with wonder and delight; and thus by deep, strong and permanent associations, to lay the best foundations for practical devotion in future life. For he who has early been accustomed to see the Creator in the visible appearances of all around him, to feel His continual presence, and lean upon his daily protection - though his religious ideas may be mixed with many improprieties, which his correcter reason will refine away – has made large advances towards that habitual piety, without which religion can scarcely regulate the conduct, and will never warm the heart (Barbauld, 1864, p. vi).

William Hazlitt learned the Hymns in Prose off by heart, as did Harriet Martineau and her brothers and sisters (Martineau, 1983, p.34). The Hymns were reprinted time and time again, in both illustrated and cheap versions, and translated into several languages, and were available for over a hundred years. They were used in Unitarian Sunday schools for most of the nineteenth century, and transcended the changes in Unitarian theology during this time; indeed, they could be seen as forerunners of the change from the rational biblically-based Unitarianism of Priestley to the more aesthetic conscience based Unitarianism developed by James Martineau from the 1830s onward (Webb, 1996b, pp. 299-301). Thus Barbauld's educational work had a formative influence over several generations of English people, especially Unitarians, yet this is now largely forgotten.

The third area in which Barbauld's educational activities were significant has no direct parallel in the written works of Priestley; this concerns female education. Hartleyan psychology indicated that men and women were potentially equal, but that they had different achievements because of their different situations. Barbauld did not challenge the conventional roles of the sexes, but she did advocate that women should be well educated in order to fulfil those roles satisfactorily. When in 1774 the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu suggested that they might run a college for young ladies, Barbauld declined, replying:

> A Kind of Literary Academy for Ladies (for that is what you seem to propose), where they are to be taught in a regular systematic manner the various branches of science, appear to me better to form such characters as the 'Precieuses' or the 'Femmes scavantes' [sic]of Moliere, than good wives or agreeable companions... But young ladies, who ought only to have such a general tincture of knowledge as to make them agreeable companions to a man of sense, and to enable them to find rational entertainment for a solitary hour, should gain these accomplishments in a more quiet and unobserved manner: - subject to a regulation like that of the ancient Spartans, the thefts of knowledge in our sex are only connived at while carefully concealed, and if displayed, punished with disgrace (Barbauld, 1825 vol.I, p. xvii-xviii).

Lerenbaum has pointed out that many women writers (including Barbauld) at this time received a good though unorthodox education, often from fathers, yet rejected a similar level of learning for other women: "Aware that their own training was unconventional, they seem to have borrowed their views of appropriate training for others from their elders or from books" (Lerenbaum, 1977, pp. 300-301). She attributes this to their desire to avoid controversy, and fear of calling attention to themselves as different from the standard model, as well as concerns about being thought 'masculine'. This problem was certainly experienced by Barbauld from the reception of her earliest publications. Some reviews of her poems criticised her for being too masculine and not passionate enough, as the following excerpt from the piece by William Woodfall in the Monthly Review of 1773 indicates:

> What we have hinted, in the style of criticism, & bordering on disapprobation, was extorted from us by a real disappointment. The true critic is superior to the popular notions which have so long been humiliating to the fair sex. We profess the most sincere admiration of the excellencies of our female authors; but the time is not come when the sex is to be discriminated. There is a sex in minds as well as in bodies, & the contest for superiority arises from our ignorance of this truth, & is managed on both sides by a mongrel breed of disputants who are neither male nor female. A woman is as perfect in her kind as a man: she appears inferior only when she quits her station, & aims at excellence out of her province. This is true, not only in common life, but in all branches of the arts, & of philosophy. We see by the speculative turn of the man, for what sciences he is designed. We see by the conversation of the woman, in what kind of knowledge she would excel. There may be exceptions to this rule, as there may be something like a mistake of sex, in some instances among all creatures: but a just observer sees the uniformity of nature, & attends to her designs. A lady of Miss Aikin's genius & candour cannot be displeased at what we thus advance, on general principles. If she, as well as others of our female writers, has, in pursuing the road to fame, trod too much in the footsteps of the man, it has been owing, not to a want of genius but to a want of proper education. If the amiable Writer of these poems had been educated more under the direction of a mother than of a father: if she had taken her views of human life from among her female companions, & not altogether under the direction of men, either living or dead, we should have now been as much enchanted by her feminine beauties, as we are now pleased & astonished by the strength of her imagination, the variety of her knowledge, & the goodness of her heart (Rodgers, 1958, pp. 59-60).

Barbauld seems to have taken this criticism to heart; she was for the rest of her life at pains to avoid appearing to compete with men, an attitude demonstrated in her poem, The Rights of Women, and to stay within the bounds of respectability, at least as far as any Unitarian woman could do so. That she achieved this is demonstrated by her inclusion in the mainstream Christian conservative Clara Balfour's selection of outstanding working women who benefited society, where she is described as having an "honoured name" as an educational benefactor (Balfour, 1856, p.6). Even so, as mentioned earlier, Barbauld was lampooned some twenty years after the publication of her poems by Richard Polwhele, who included her in "A female band despising NATURE's law... I shudder at the new unpictur'd scene, Where unsex'd woman vaunts her imperious mien." (Jones, 1997, p.186).

As Montagu's invitation came only a few months after Woodfall's review, his criticism may partially account for Barbauld's response, which went on to explain that the

sort of accomplishments needed for ladies were better learnt at home and visiting family and friends than in school, and that academic education ought to be acquired earlier in childhood:

> I should likewise object to the age proposed. Their knowledge ought to be acquired at an earlier period, - geography, those languages it may be proper for them to learn, grammar, &., are best learned from about nine to thirteen or fourteen, and will then interfere less with other duties. I should have little hopes of cultivating a love of knowledge in a young lady of fifteen, who came to me ignorant and untaught; and if she has laid down a foundation, she will be able to pursue her studies without a master, or with such a one only as Rousseau gives his Sophie. It is too late then to begin to learn. The empire of the passions is coming on; a new world opens to the youthful eye; those attachments begin to be formed which influence the happiness of future life; - the care of a mother, and that alone, can give suitable attention at this important period (Barbauld, 1825 vol I, pp. xix-xx).

A few years later, when Barbauld started writing for younger children, she clearly deviated from Rousseau's teaching (Hilton, 2000, p. 32) as is demonstrated in her essay On Prejudice, originally written for the Monthly Magazine in the late 1790s, in which she first criticised Rousseau's theory of suspension of belief:

> "Give your child," it is said, "no prejudices: let reason be the only foundation of his opinions; where he cannot reason, let him suspend his belief. Let your care be, that as he grows up he has nothing to unlearn; and never make use of authority in matters of opinion, for authority is no test of truth." (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 322).

She went on to question the desirability of a child growing up "without opinion to regulate his conduct", and noted that "this exercise requires at least the sober period of matured reason: reason not only sharpened by argumentative discussion, but informed by experience". She concluded:

> A reasoning child is not yet a reasonable being... Besides, taking it for granted (which however is utterly impossible) that a youth could be brought up to the age of fifteen or sixteen without prejudice in favour of any opinions whatever, and that he is then set to examine for himself some important proposition, - how is he to set about it? Who is to recommend books to him? Who is to give him the previous information necessary to comprehend the question? Who is to tell him whether or not it is important? Whoever does these will infallibly lay a bias upon his mind according to the ideas he has received upon the subject. (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 324).

> Barbauld illustrated this by showing the difference in available material between Catholic and Protestant countries, and demonstrating that even Rousseau does not delay in passing on ideas of patriotism and liberty. She restated the case for early associations of reverence and morality with happiness that she had expounded in the introduction to Hymns in Prose quoted above, and claimed the freedom beloved of all rational dissenters: "Do not expect the mind of your son to resemble yours... he was formed, like you, to use his own judgement, and he claims the high privilege of his nature (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 322-335).

In the field of female education, Barbauld showed some development from the conservatism of her letter of 1874. Although a classical education based on Latin and Greek was considered a masculine education (Lerenbaum, 1977, p. 288), she later wrote that Latin was acceptable:

> ... if a young person has leisure, has an opportunity of learning it at home by being connected with literary people, and is placed in a circle of society sufficiently liberal to allow her such an accomplishment, I do not see, if she has a strong inclination, why she should not make herself mistress of so rich a store of original entertainment: it will not in the present state of things excite either a smile or a stare in fashionable company. To those who do not intend to learn the language, I would strongly recommend the learning so much of the grammar of it as will explain the name and nature of cases, genders, inflection of verbs, etc.; of which having only the imperfect rudiments in our own language, a mere English scholar can with difficulty form a clear idea. This is the more necessary, as all our grammars, being written by men whose early studies had given them a partiality for the learned languages, are formed more upon those than upon the real genius of our own tongue (On Female Education, originally published in A Legacy for Young Ladies, Ellis, 1874 vol. II, pp. 280-281).

In the same essay, Barbauld seemed less frightened of offending convention when she affirmed that:

> Every woman should consider herself as sustaining the general character of a rational being, as well as the more confined one belonging to the female sex: and therefore the motives for acquiring general knowledge and cultivating the taste are nearly the same in both sexes. The line of separation between the studies of a young man and a young woman appears to me to be chiefly fixed by this, - that a woman is excused from all professional knowledge (Ellis 1874 vol. II, pp. 278).

However, the range of knowledge deemed to be inappropriate for women was very wide, including law, medicine, and subjects needed for instructing others "from the pulpit or the professor's chair", and

> A woman is not expected to understand the mysteries of politics, because she is not called on to govern: she is not required to know anatomy, because she is not to perform surgical operations; she need not embarrass herself with theological disputes, because she will neither be called upon to make nor to explain creeds (Ellis, 1874 vol. II, p. 278).

She went on to list desirable areas of knowledge for women; these included general and literary knowledge, Latin, French, History, and:

> The great laws of the universe... natural history, astronomy, botany, experimental philosophy, chemistry, physics. In these you will rather take what belongs to sentiment and to utility than to abstract calculations or difficult problems. You must often be content to know a thing is so, without understanding the proof (Ellis, 1874 vol. II, p. 284).

Barbauld considered that for women, the most important areas of study were "works of sentiment and morals". "Morals is that study in which alone both sexes have an equal interest; and in sentiment yours has even the advantage" (Ellis, 1874 vol. II, p. 285). This gives a clue to some of the differences of opinion between Barbauld and Priestley when it comes to writings on politics and religion.

With regard to political considerations, in the context of this chapter it is not relevant to do more than indicate briefly the political writings and activities of Barbauld and Priestley, although later I explore the devices and stratagems which Barbauld employed so that she could engage in this masculine field without losing her respectability. Both involved themselves in political issues, both those which directly affected the rights of dissenters, particularly Unitarians, and also more general humanitarian concerns. It was not unusual for rational dissenting men to involve themselves in issues of civil and political liberties, because as dissenters they were barred from university education and from public office. Women dissenters were barred from these activities because of their sex as well, so had little to gain directly in working for the repeal of the legal disabilities applied to dissenters. However, Barbauld did not make this gender distinction and was very active, particularly in the late 1780s and early 1790s, in working for freedom to "worship God

according to our consciences" as a "natural and inalienable right", not just to be tolerated (Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 360). The fact that political tracts were generally published anonymously gave women like Barbauld and Mary Hays[2] the freedom to engage in writing political propaganda without appearing to lose too much of their femininity, at least if their tracts had been judged in an open forum before authorship was discovered.

Barbauld produced various tracts and sermons for government-appointed fast days. She made a specific connection between religion and politics: "Every time Social Worship is celebrated, it includes a virtual declaration of the rights of man" (Remarks on Mr Gilbert Wakefield's enquiry into the expediency of public or social worship, Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 448). Barbauld's tone was generally much less inflammatory than the equivalent writings of Priestley, and she sometimes used humour to good effect, as in her elegantly written plea for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (Address to the opposers of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 360). Both Priestley and Barbauld wrote favouring democracy and government for the benefit of the majority of people rather than the favoured few. Priestley's tracts were usually written for an educated audience, while Barbauld's two Civic Sermons to the People were in a very simple style, for everyone to read, with apparently conformist beginnings but then subtle subversions which conveyed a message promoting education, democracy, and freedom of judgement while still managing to evade the persecution of dissenters in the 1790s. Her fast-day sermons, again published anonymously by Joseph Johnson (who was imprisoned for some months for sedition), were particularly effective anti-war pamphlets and went so far as to recommend "honourable delinquency", which today would be called civil disobedience. Mahon considers that that the fast-day sermons "are the only existing examples of the genre

[2] Mary Hays (1760-1843) rational dissenter, novelist and polemical writer, friend of Mary Wollstonecraft,

written by a woman. Moving outside the conventions of the feminine voice, Barbauld has appropriated the 'masculine' and excelled in it" (Mahon, 2000, p. 31).

Like many people, both Anglicans and dissenters, both Priestley and Barbauld opposed slavery; Barbauld's early poem written as an Epistle to William Wilberforce on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade was reprinted several times, and achieved considerable prominence. In it she expressed concern not only for slaves, but also for the corruption of the morals of all involved in the slave trade. Several households in the Aikin family supported anti-slave work by abstaining from using slave-grown sugar (Rodgers, 1958, p. 112). Midgley points out that women were often not permitted to sign anti-slavery petitions, so activism in writing and organising fund raising and public meetings was all the more important (Midgley, 1992, pp. 23-25).

Concerning religious writings and activities, in 1775 Barbauld published some Devotional Pieces compiled from the Psalms and the Book of Job. The pieces themselves were not particularly popular, but the preparatory essay, Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, on Sects, and on Establishments, gives interesting insights into Barbauld's theology (though she would not have presumed to label it so, seeing practical devotion and morals as areas more suitable for women). In her essay Barbauld followed an unknown "late and most amiable and elegant writer" (identified by McCarthy and Kraft as a summary of part of John Gregory's A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World, 1765) in considering religion in three different aspects (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 211):

> As a system of opinions, its sole object is truth: and the only faculty that has anything to do with it is reason, exerted in the freest and most dispassionate inquiry. As a principle regulation of our conduct, religion is a habit, and like all other habits, of slow growth, and gaining strength only by repeated exertions. But it may likewise be considered as a taste, an affair of sentiment and feelings, in this sense it is properly called devotion (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 232).

William Godwin and William Frend (Todd, 1987, p. 156-7).

She asked Mary Priestley for Joseph's views on her essay, and his reply highlights some of the differences in their theology:

> I cannot help considering the very title of your essay, viz. "on the Devotional Taste" to be a debasing of the subject. Agreeably to this you say (p.2) that devotion is "an affair of sentient and feeling, and has its source in that relish for the sublime, the vast and the beautiful, by which we taste the charms of poetry, and other compositions that address our finer feelings." You also say (p5) that "those who want this taste want a sense, a part of their nature."
> Now, if this be the case, all endeavours to acquire it must be in vain... (T)o consider devotion not as an affair of taste, but, as it certainly is, an elevated passion, or affection, adapted to a proper object, is not liable to any just objection (Priestley, 1817-1832 vol. I, p. 280).

Although Priestley preferred to consider devotion in terms of passion and affection, he judged that many serious people were justly offended when Barbauld compared devotion to human love, suggesting that the feelings of "profound adoration" of one person for another were not dissimilar from devotion to the Divinity, since "both have their source in the love of beauty and excellence" (Priestley, 1817-32 vol. I, p. 245).

In her essay, Barbauld examined the life-cycle of sects, from early fervour to mature reasoning and examination, and then to apathy and decline. She compared this to the stability and authority of established religion, and provided an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each. Barbauld's even-handed treatment of established religion offended dissenters, including Priestley. She wrote:

> An establishment affects the mind by splendid buildings, music, the mysterious pomp of ancient ceremonies; by the sacredness of peculiar orders, habits and titles; by its secular importance; and by connecting with religion, ideas of order, dignity, and antiquity. It speaks to the heart through imagination and the senses; and though it never can raise devotion so high as we have described it in a beginning sect, it will preserve it from ever sinking into contempt (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 251-252).

This displeased Priestley, who accused her of giving "a preference to establishments" (p. 282). He took particular exception to the last phrase in the above quotation, replying:

> It appears to me that the devotion of the Church of Rome, and even, in a great measure, that of the Church of England, as partaking of the same spirit, is so far

> from answering the most useful purposes of devotion, viz. That of being a security for the practice of virtue, that it is too often the substitute for the most substantial part of virtue, and in general has little or no connexion with the duties of social life. The feelings that are inspired by solemn processions, pictures, images, music, &., are very improperly called devotion (Priestley 1817-32 vol. I, p.283).

He regretted that she had not given more emphasis on "religious truths, and the rights of conscience" (p. 285).

Priestley also took issue with what he considered to be Barbauld's notion that "philosophy is unfavourable to piety" (Priestley, 1817-32 vol. I, p. 281). She actually wrote:

> Shall we mention philosophy as an enemy to religion? God forbid! Philosophy,
> Daughter of Heaven, that slow ascending still
> Investigating sure the form of things.
> With radiant finger points to heaven again.
> Yet there is a view in which she exerts an influence perhaps rather unfavourable to the fervour of simple piety.
> ... Philosophy represents the Deity in too abstracted a manner to engage our affections.
> ... A prayer strictly philosophical must ever be a cold and dry composition (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 237-239).

Recalling that "the Scriptures set us an example of accommodating the language of prayer to common conceptions", she continued:

> On the whole, it is safer to trust our genuine feelings, feelings implanted in us by the God of nature, than to any metaphysical subtleties... I may make use of an inaccurate expression, I may point him to my imagination too much in the fashion of humanity; but while my heart is pure, while I depart not from the line of moral duty, the error is not dangerous. Too critical a spirit is the bane of everything great or pathetic. In our creeds let us be guarded; let us there weigh every syllable; but in compositions addressed to the heart, let us give freer scope to the language of the affections, and the overflowing of a warm and generous disposition (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 240-1).

This emphasis on imagination and emotion is an interesting fore-runner of the writings of James Martineau, who knew Barbauld in his youth, and who dominated Unitarian thought and worship in the last part of the nineteenth century.

After contesting other specific points including the omission of something about religious truth and the rights of conscience, the concluding sections of Priestley's letter contained the following:

> I cannot say but that it gives me, as well as many others, much concern, that with respect to the important subjects of your essay, a person of your acknowledged genius, and a Dissenter, should have given so much countenance to a turn of thinking which is very seducing, and, I think, very alarming and dangerous... But though you and I, Mrs Barbauld, take different roads, I shall always think that you act from the best principles, and write with the best intentions. Our difference of opinion and conduct, therefore, is merely a subject of regret, without the least shade of blame (Priestley, 1817-32 vol. 1, p. 285).

This difference of opinion did not damage the friendship between the two, and Barbauld did make a small concession to Priestley's request that she might qualify some of her expressions in future publications of the work by changing the ending (Priestley, 1817-32 vol. I, p. 286) adding a final paragraph to the later editions of her essay. This reads:

> There remains only to add, lest the preceding view of sects and establishments should in any degree be misapprehended, that it has nothing to do with the truth of opinions, and relates only to the influence which the adventitious circumstances attending them may have upon the manners and morals of their followers. It is therefore calculated to teach us candour, but not indifference. Large views of the moral polity of the world may serve to illustrate the providence of God in his different dispensations, but are not made to regulate our own individual conduct, which must conscientiously follow our own opinions and belief. We may see much good in an establishment, the doctrines of which we cannot give our assent to without violating our integrity: we may respect the tendencies of a sect, the tenets of which we utterly disapprove. We may think practices useful which we cannot adopt without hypocrisy. We may think all religions beneficial, and believe of one alone that it is true (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 259).

This addendum may have been designed to placate not just Priestley, but a wider audience, for Lucy Aikin in the American edition of her aunt's works indicates that the Devotional Pieces met with no great success, "nor did the essay escape without some animadversion" (Webb 1996b, p. 299). In a letter written in February 1776 to the Rev. Dr Nicholas Clayton, Barbauld defended her essay:

> Permit me now to say a few words to explain my sentiments on the subject of devotional feelings. That the Philosophy which presents to us large views of nature

> and the laws of nature gives us a more grand or more magnificent idea of the Deity, I do not mean to deny, indeed I have asserted it, but that this sentiment is attended with such an [paper torn]hilation of ourselves as is really painful that it seems to set the Deity at distance from us, is what I cannot help believing, because I am sure I have felt it & know that I am not singular in feeling it. Yet I do not mean that such philosophical views should not be indulged, for they enlarge the mind, give some high pleasures, & set religion upon a broad and firm basis. All I would say is, that we must correct what unfavourable tendency they may have by often suffering our minds to dwell on those more affecting circumstances which arise in what one may call the personal intercourse of a devout heart with its maker, the former is the sublime, the latter the pathetic of Religion (Barbauld to Nicholas Clayton, 21 February 1776, Manuscript, Unitarian College Collection, John Rylands University of Manchester Library).

She goes on to consider two Psalms: 104, which to her represents philosophy, with "God in all his majesty"; and 103, which more touches "the heart and the springs of the passions". She concludes:

> A recovery from a fit of sickness, a seeming interposition of providence in any event which interested him, would probably give a man more devout feelings than studying Newton's philosophy.
>
> Are Philosophy and Devotion then inconsistent? No they are different views of the same subject, they require to be corrected by each other. The devotion of a mere philosopher will be cold, the religion of a mere pietist will be superstitious. But is it not owing to our imperfect natures that these two voices do not coalesce? I believe that it is & that in another world Philosophy and Devotion will be entirely the same thing (Barbauld to Nicholas Clayton, 21 February 1776, Manuscript, Unitarian College Collection, John Rylands University of Manchester Library).

Barbauld, in common with many women of her time and since, disliked doctrinal controversies, and in her 1775 Thoughts considered that the habit of disputing on religious subjects was a detriment to the "operation of religious impressions" (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 235), while she none the less accepted the desirability of free religious enquiry. This distinction was not acknowledged by Priestley, who of course defended religious controversy as necessary to the defence of religious truth, "which is indeed the necessary foundation of all religious practice" (Priestley, 1817-1832 vol. I, p. 284). He reflected that the orthodox Dissenters were supposed to be the most pious and devout, yet were "the most disputatious of all Dissenters" (p. 284). Priestley's readiness to discard beliefs in the light

of changing experience (alluded to earlier in this thesis) contrasts with Barbauld's suspicion of conversion, for she considered:

> ...it is happy for a man when he does not find much to alter in the religious system he has embraced: for if that undergoes a total revolution, his religious feelings are too generally so weakened by the shock that they hardly recover again their original tone and vigour (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 236-237).

In some of her works, including her Thoughts on Devotional Taste, Barbauld was as much interested in the psychology and sociology of religion as in its theology or philosophy. Her 1792 reply to Gilbert Wakefield's attack on public worship was to some extent a political work, defending the civil rights of dissenters, but in it she also seems to get near the idea that the human perception of God is what in the late twentieth century would be called projection:

> It is probable, however, that power, being the most prominent feature in our conceptions of the Creator, and that of which we see the most striking image here on earth (there being a greater proportion of uncontrolled power than of unmixed wisdom or goodness to be found among human beings), the Deity would naturally be likened to an absolute monarch: - and most absolute monarchs having been tyrants, jealous of their sovereignty... these features of human depravity have been most faithfully transferred to the Supreme Being (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 464-5).

Barbauld clearly did not attach very much importance to doctrinal differences. This is illustrated by her attendance at worship; apparently on the first three Sundays of June 1802 she attended Essex Street Chapel (Unitarian), the 'Helvetic Chapel' and a Roman Catholic Chapel (Rochemont Barbauld's diary for 1802, quoted in McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, pp. 332-3).

The differences in attitude between Barbauld and Priestley are highlighted in their disagreement over Barbauld's Thoughts. Priestley, as Barbauld said to her niece Lucy Aikin, "followed truth as a man who hawks follows his sport, - at full speed, straight forward, looking only upward, and regardless into what difficulties the chase may lead him" (quoted in Ellis, 1874 vol. I, p. 36). He felt free to change his mind and his beliefs, sometimes at great cost to him and his family, and considered that feelings were

subservient to reason. He typified the enlightenment "Man of Reason", the maleness of whom "is no superficial linguistic bias" (Lloyd, 1993, p.xviii). Barbauld, on the other hand, placed much more importance on training emotions, and emphasised the importance of feelings within faith. This "culture of sensibility", in which, according to Anne Radcliffe, "taste is identical to morality" was primarily associated with women (Barker-Benfield, 1992, p. 207). While Priestley was passionate about doctrinal developments, Barbauld gave these much less emphasis. Both these differences reflect a gender bias; in addition to the reason/emotion dimension, they also reflect the differing contemporary education and societal expectations of men and women. Middle-class men were expected to have more agency, with a profession and financial independence, whereas women were trained for domesticity and did not have access to formal academic theological education even in Unitarian circles (Watts, 1998, pp. 77, 96).

However, in many ways Priestley and Barbauld agreed about a great deal of religious thought. They both accepted Hartley's associationist psychology, with a holistic approach to their religion, and refused to separate it from the rest of life. One instance of the compatibility of their religious ideas occurred in 1767, when Priestley preached On Habitual Devotion to an assembly of ministers at Wakefield. He talked of the importance of having "habitual regard to God", with an analysis of the benefits of living in this way and a list of ways of promoting it. He said:

> A... good man... sees God in everything, and he sees everything in God. He dwells in God. He dwells in love, and thereby dwells in God, and God in him... His whole life will be one act of devotion (Priestley, 1767, reprinted 1836 in Tracts vol. IX, pp. 125-126).

Priestley recognised that most people do not live like this, and neither are they "practical atheists", but are somewhere in between. In his introductory preface, written some time later, he referred to Barbauld's poem, An address to the Deity, written in response to the sermon, and continued:

> If my theological publications have been more of a speculative than of a practical nature, it is merely because circumstances have led me to it, and by no means because the former are more pleasing to me. I hope I shall always consider speculation subservient to practice (Priestley, 1836, p. 119).

Eight years later, his priorities had been modified, as his previously quoted 1775 letter to Barbauld indicates. However, An address to the Deity was republished many times, even appearing in Mary Wollstonecraft's anthology, The Female Speaker, and gave a popular account of a life of "habitual devotion", so Barbauld's version was more influential in general society than Priestley's sermon. Part of it (lines 49-72) reads:

> If friendless, in a vale of tears I stray,
> Where briars wound, and thorns perplex my way
> Still let my steady soul thy goodness see,
> And with strong confidence lay hold on thee:
> With equal eye my various lot receive,
> Resign'd to die, or resolute to live:
> Prepared to kiss the sceptre or the rod,
> While God is seen in all, and all in God.
>
> I read his awful name, emblazon'd high
> With golden letters on th'illumin'd sky:
> Nor less the mystic characters I see,
> Wrought in each flower, inscrib'd in every tree:
> In every leaf that trembles in the breeze
> I hear the voice of GOD among the trees;
> With thee in shady solitudes I walk,
> With thee in busy crowded cities talk,
> In every creature own thy forming power,
> In each event thy providence adore.
> Thy hopes shall animate my drooping soul.
> Thy precepts guide me, and thy fear controul
> Thus shall I rest, unmov'd by all alarms,
> Secure within the temple of thine arms,
> From anxious cares, from gloomy terrors free,
> And feel myself omnipotent in thee
> (Barbauld, 1825 vol. I, pp. 120-121; McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p.5).

This early poem in fact sets the tone of Barbauld's religious philosophy for the rest of her life. Its theology undergirded her educational work, as seen in the preface to Hymns in Prose. While respecting the conventions, it also gives some clues to the basis of her assertiveness. Lines 7 and 8 assert that all are equal before God:

Worms, angels, men, in every sphere,
Are equal all, for all are nothing here.

In line 72, she feels omnipotent in the presence of God. Much of Barbauld's poetry is not specifically or overtly 'religious', but a sense of the presence of God, and an awareness of God in every thing and event permeates it all. Her popularity as a poet enabled her to reach and influence a wide audience, so she was a major influence on the religious thought of the growing English middle classes in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

I have already discussed how Barbauld's educational works were specifically calculated to develop both a moral discrimination and a sense of divine presence in everyday life. This universalism extended to a reverence for all life, as shown in the poem The Mouse's Petition, written for a mouse "found in the trap where he had been confined all night by Dr Priestley, for the sake of making experiments with different kinds of air":

Beware, lest in the worm you crush
A brother's soul you find:
And tremble lest thy luckless hand
Dislodge a kindred mind.

(McCarthy & Kraft, 1994, pp. 36-37)

William Turner (born 1761) related that this poem was attached to the wires of the mouse's cage, and Priestley duly released the mouse (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, p. 244). There is even a hint that Barbauld recognised good in other religions. Her unnumbered hymn prefaced "Ye are the salt of the earth" extols "the virtuous few, who season human kind, and includes the verse:

In every faith thro' every clime,
Your pilgrim steps we trace;
And shrines are drest, and temples rise,
Each hallow'd spot to grace.

(McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, pp.127-128).

Like Priestley, Barbauld attacked Calvinism with its cruel God. She considered that the prospect of eternal damnation runs counter to reason, morals and ethics, and that it

prevents penitence, quenches religious gratitude, and separates the connection between religion and common life (Remarks on Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry, Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 467-469). In her Discourse on Being Born Again, Barbauld emphasised human development by the "gradual discipline of years and events" (Barbauld, 1830, p. 11). She drew parallels between physical birth and human development on the one hand, and on the other the cultivation of the spiritual life, preparing for the life to come by seeing the "kingdom of heaven... in the midst of us" (Barbauld, 1830, pp. 2-12). Barbauld, again like Priestley, had a clear vision of the afterlife: heaven would be a place of rest and peace, and a union with those who had died, and was to be looked forward to, not dreaded.

Above all, Barbauld wrote to instil in people the feelings of devotion that would lead to "that habitual piety without which religion can scarcely regulate the conduct, and will never warm the heart (Hymns in Prose, 1864, p. vi). One reason why Barbauld has been dismissed as a 'romantic poetess' rather than acknowledged as a serious writer on religion is her emphasis on feelings. She recognised that this was not generally accepted, particularly within Unitarianism:

> ... as a rule of life, the authority and salutary effects of religion are pretty universally acknowledged, and though its tenets have been defended with sufficient zeal, its affections languish, the spirit of devotion is certainly at a very low ebb.... It is the character of the age to allow little to sentiment (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 233).

"Tell all the Truth but tell it slant": Strategies for making women's voices heard

Marlon Ross, in his discussion of women writers in the late eighteenth century, commented that "the most overtly politicized women belonged to a long tradition of Nonconformist religious and civil dissent" (Ross, 1994, p. 93). He went on to elaborate this position of what he termed double dissent:

> To be a woman within this movement was to possess equally with men the freedom of conscience valued so highly by the liberal dissenting tradition. Because it was a women's fate to learn how to balance a chaste conscience with faithful submission

> to the 'politic' father, she found that her feminine subordination gave her special knowledge which it became her obligation to spread as a voice of dissent. Her status of double dissent – as a political female and as a female within a nonconforming community deprived of civil liberties – presented obstacles equal to the opportunities it afforded, for it required her to articulate the insight peculiar to her dual position without having access to sanctioned political forms (academic oratory, parliamentary debate, legal pleading, court and ministerial intrigue, and so forth) (Ross, 1994, p. 93).

The acknowledgment of Barbauld's status of double dissenter in gender and religion was developed further by Keach (1998, p. 47) and provides a useful basis from which to explore the strategies she employed to enable herself to have a voice which could be heard by her contemporaries. The extent to which Unitarian women in general might be seen as "double dissenters" is explored later in this thesis. With some notable exceptions, which will be considered separately, Barbauld strove to keep overtly within the bounds of acceptability for her gender and class and to be seen as respectable (Keach, 1998, pp. 56-7). Considerations of genre, production, writing styles and her life-style demonstrate this.

In relation to genres, Barbauld usually worked in the genre forms acceptable for middle-class women of her time: poetry, educational and moral works, letters. However, she used these forms in orders to write on subjects both within and beyond conventional limits. Thus her poetry included forays into political topics, with two examples being, firstly, Corsica, written in 1769 but not published until 1772, in support of the campaign for British governmental aid in the fight for freedom on that island; and secondly, her Epistle to William Willberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade, published soon after the parliamentary debate in 1791 (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, pp. 21-26, 114-118, 232, 285-6). It was acceptable for women to engage in anti-slavery writing, as this could be seen as a moral rather than a political issue, but it was much rarer and considerably more risky in terms of reputation for women to take up other political concerns. Barbauld also comments on scientific discoveries in her poetry, as in her Inventory of the Furniture in Dr Priestley's Study, written in 1771 but not published during

her life-time (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, pp. 73-5, Rosenbaum, 2001 p. 376). Her knowledge of scientific matters was considerable, and she included scientific topics in both her poetry and in her educational works for all ages, so trespassing on an area usually reserved for men, but in a genre associated with women (McCarthy, 1997, p. 303; Stabler, 2002, p, 127).

In relation to production, Barbauld emphasised the domestic nature of her literary output. At the time when she wrote many of her poems, while she was at Warrington in her twenties, her poems circulated in manuscript among tutors and students, who passed them on, still in manuscript form, to the wider world (McCarthy Kraft, 1994, p. xxix). According to her family, she had to be persuaded to publish the poems that were to make her reputation (Barbauld, 1825, I p. xii). She usually wrote poems as gifts for family and friends, or left them as messages. As described earlier in this work, her Early Lessons were written originally for her adopted son, Charles, and only later published, with the explanation that, "This little publication was made for a particular child, but the public is welcome to the use of it" (Le Breton, 1874, p. 50). Similarly, her Hymns in Prose were originally written, one hymn at a time, for her pupils to recite, often antiphonally, during school worship (McCarthy, 1997, p. 304, McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 238). Only later were these educational works published. The extent to which Barbauld wrote for publication and thus for money, so possibly compromising her status as a respectable middle-class lady, is debatable. She wrote to her brother in 1787, "We are making a catalogue of our books; and I have left a great deal of space under the letters A. and B. for our future publications (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p.155). Although humorously expressed, this suggests that she was at ease with the idea of publication. Two years before this, she had written to her brother:

> I think we must some day sew all our fragments together, and make a Joineriana of them. Let me see: - I have, half a ballad; the first scene of a play, a plot of another,

> all but the catastrophe; half a dozen loose similies, and an eccentric flight or two among the fairies (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 9).

These comments show the extent to which Barbauld regarded her writing as a domestic, family production, in a space bridging the private and the public (White, 1999, pp. 511-512). It is also useful to consider the extent to which Barbauld wrote 'to earn a living', as a professional writer.

The collections of essays and educational material Barbauld produced in association with her brother, Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose in 1773 and Evenings at Home in 1793 were popular, but there is no record of her financial gain from this. Before her marriage, there was no pressure on her to earn money; and during her marriage the school at Palgrave was an important source of income for the Barbaulds, one in which she was fully engaged (McCarthy, 1997), an activity in support of her husband which was acceptable for a middle-class dissenting woman. Then after the Barbaulds left the school and moved to Hampstead, where Rochemont was minister to the Unitarian congregation, both he and Anna Laetitia tutored individual pupils, sometimes as boarders in their home. This too was an acceptable activity for married women within dissenting circles (Rogers, 1958, p.101). It is possible, indeed likely, that Anna Laetitia had more need of an income when she was widowed in 1808. It seems that Rochemont's father had intended his son to become a minister in the Church of England, and did not provide any financial support after he became a dissenting minister (The Monthly Repository, 1808, p. 707). This, coupled with the fact that he had been ill and unable to work for several years before his death, makes it unlikely he left much money. Indeed, Anna Laetitia may have earned more money than her husband did in the last years of their marriage, but there is no concrete evidence for this, as financial matters are not covered in any of the early biographies or published letters. The commercial letters and accounts of her main publisher, Joseph Johnson, were destroyed, but he did leave Barbauld and her brother fifty pounds each in his will, dated 1808 (Tyson, 1979, pp.

xiv-xv, 213). It is likely that the articles she wrote for various journals, such as the reviews she wrote for the Monthly Review between 1809 and 1815, provided some income (Turner, 1992, p. 228). Her long works of literary criticism, dating from the time of her removal to Stoke Newington in 1802, were certainly written for financial reward. In 1804 Richard Phillips, a bookseller, engaged her to prepare an edition of Samuel Richardson's letters which he had acquired; she produced five and a half volumes of correspondence and the first substantial biography of Richardson (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 360). In 1807, a consortium of thirty-seven booksellers commissioned "a selection of English Novels, with biographical notice and critical remarks, by Mrs Barbauld" (Athenaeum, vol. 2, p. 513, quoted in McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 375). This was published in fifty volumes in 1810, and demonstrates her status as a major cultural authority, which Kraft and McCarthy (2002, p.375) note she been accorded over thirty-five years of literary production. So, although Barbauld started her literary career in a domestic mode, by 1810 she had considerable status as a public and 'professional' literary figure in an area that was not too controversial for a woman.

The writing styles in which Barbauld wrote served mainly to emphasise her domestic roles as a woman, a mother (although by adoption) and a devoted member of her church. This enabled her to be accepted by, and so influential in, a wide range of middle class society. Her use of domestic imagery in her poems, educational works, and even in her religious and political works, greatly facilitated both their effectiveness and their acceptability. Ross (1989, pp. 216-217) and Wilson (1994, p.181) both illustrate how Barbauld writes about domesticity in a way that "simultaneously transcends and is caught in limitations of gender", with Ross commenting on Barbauld's poem, On a Lady's Writing, and Wilson exploring the imagery of needlework in Barbauld's works. That this

strategy, of emphasising domesticity, was successful is confirmed by the view of E. Robinson, writing in 1883:

> ...more that anything else, the writings of Miss More, Mrs Barbauld, and some others of this female coteri of whom we are now speaking, raised the tone of English thought with regard to the value of their sex. Yet in all their writings they never lost sight of domesticity as the basis of their sociology; and half consciously they preached the best of women's rights – the right to men's hearts (quoted in Williamson, 1980, p. 98).

Barbauld's educational activities were clearly interpreted at the time as an extension of a mothering role by some people at least. William Taylor, who became eminent in the literary world and was a pupil at Palgrave school, referred to her as "the mother of my mind" (McCarthy, 1997, p. 313). Barbauld certainly did not separate the domestic and the public spheres, and used illustrations from domestic life to point to both religious and political messages. This is shown in her depictions of domestic scenes in Hymns in Prose, for example in number five:

> As the mother moveth about the house with her finger on her lips, and stilleth every little noise, that her infant be not disturbed; as she draweth the curtains around its bed, and shutteth out the light from its tender eyes; so God draweth the curtains of darkness around us; so he maketh all things to be hushed and still, that his large family may sleep in peace (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 244).

As McDonagh comments in relation to the Hymns, particularly number seven, "This is a patriarchal universe, founded on a clear continuity and congruence between the domestic sphere and the public world of affairs of state, and religious belief" (McDonagh, 1998, p. 72).

More striking examples of Barbauld's domestic similes occur in her political writings. Her discourse written for the publicly appointed day of fast and humiliation, on 19 April 1793, when all places of worship were ordered to pray for divine aid in the war against France, was entitled Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation. It was originally published anonymously, as "a volunteer", and went into four editions. In it, Barbauld applied the sort of moral judgements made in family life to national politics, such as living within one's

means, pride, cruelty, and relationships with one's neighbours, with the effect of questioning the morality of the war but without overtly contravening the treason laws. Similar techniques were used in her two Civic Sermons to the People published as anonymous tracts by Joseph Johnson in 1792, which addressed the common working people of England. The first, entitled Ney, why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right made a plea for more general education and the dissemination of proper information, and explained why good government is the concern of everyone, in that it affected:

> how much of your wages and hard earnings are taken from you in taxes - how much of your corn you may put into your own barns, and how much you must put into the barns of other people – for what things you may be put in prison, and for what things your life may be taken away – by what means you may obtain redress if you have suffered wrong from anyone – to which of your children your little property will go after you are dead, or whether to any of them? – on what occasions you may be obliged to go into other countries to fight and kill people whom you have never quarrelled with, or perhaps be killed yourselves (Barbauld 1792b, pp. 10-11).

Barbauld then went on to discuss the new sedition laws (which created problems for dissenters in claiming their right to freedom of conscience). By referring to the new laws, and the ignorance of them which allowed so-called "Friends of the Government" to mistake "the matter so far as to think that pulling down of houses was promoting the peace and prosperity of the kingdom", she drew attention indirectly to the 1791 Church and King riots which destroyed several dissenting meeting houses and minister's homes, including Priestley's. She claimed that the invitation to study government did not apply to the "dissolute, idle, intemperate":

> But you, in whatever rank of life you are, who are sober, industrious, and thoughtful; you who respect the property and rights of your neighbour, and therefore demand that your own rights and property should be respected; you who have a home, and therefore have a country; you who have a provident care for your families; who are accustomed to say to yourselves, I will not buy strong drink to-day, because my children will have no bread tomorrow – you are worthy to consider the affairs of a community, which, tho' more complicated, are not materially different (Barbauld, 1792b, pp. 19-20).

The second civic sermon, From Mutual Wants Springs Mindful Happiness, asked why some men are set over others to govern them, and begins its reply by asking, "of what use Government is, for nothing that is useless can be worth supporting at all" (Barbauld 1792c, p. 3). It worked from the necessity to trade to acquire the mean of existence, and from the experience of men in local clubs and continued:

> If your child want to know what a State is, take him between your knees and say to him, "My child, when you were very little, our small cottage, and its spot of garden-ground, was all that you were acquainted with of the wide world. Your mother nourished you at her breast; I carried you in my arms; your brothers and sisters played with and caressed you... This first society is called a Family. It is the root of Society. It is the beginning of order, and kind affections, and mutual helpfulness and provident regulations. If this spring be pure; what proceeds from it will be pure" (Barbauld 1792c, pp. 5-6).

Barbauld went on by expanding the circle to society and to the state, and explained the need for laws, law enforcement, taxes and democracy by working from the domestic scale upwards.

While the genre of the Civic Sermons, the political tract, was not one that was considered suitable for women at the end of the eighteenth century, this was a convention that Barbauld negotiated by publishing anonymously; and also its style and content clearly show her use of the domestic situation to explain the wider world. This use of imagery and analogy is similar to the use of allegory, which has been characterised by Tierney-Tello (1996, p.21) as a way to tell truth, "but tell it slant", a device commonly used by women writing in authoritarian states under censorship. These conditions certainly applied to dissenters in England in the 1790s. Many of Barbauld's friends, including Joseph Johnson, her publisher and Gilbert Wakefield, a colleague of her husband's, were imprisoned, while Joseph Priestley's meeting house and home were burned down. In a letter to her adopted son probably written in the early 1790s, she was clearly concerned about the sedition laws:

> ...but of the Dialogue & fragment do not give any copies & do not read & show the Historical fragment, except to our particular friends, & return it to me when you have an opportunity because some things in it would appear too free if read to any

but friends (Barbauld to Charles Rochemont Aikin, Jan 4th, quoted in Rodgers, 1958, p. 211).

Barbauld might have recognised the wisdom of Emily Dickinson's poem, from which the phrase "tell it slant" was taken:

> Tell all the Truth but tell it slant –
> Success in Circuit lies.
> Too bright for our infirm Delight
> The Truth's superb surprise
> As lightning to the Children
> With explanation kind
> The Truth must dazzle gradually
> Or every man be blind –
> (Dickinson, 1970, pp. 506-507).

This is one way in which Barbauld differed from Priestley, whom she had characterised as being single-minded in pursuit of truth. She was much more aware of the circumstances in which her writing would be received and understood, and knew that, coming from a woman, her message was likely to be rejected if found unbecoming to her status. Barbauld's "alliance with the doubleness of language" contrasts with Priestley's more direct and confrontational approach (Rosenbaum, 2001, p. 376). However, Barbauld would have objected strongly to Michell's interpretation of slantwise writing as a form of lying, however excusable (Michell, 1990, p175). Telling the truth was important, as was sincerity. For Barbauld, a person, as well as their religion, should be uncorrupted by the malpractices of the day, and able to respond directly, "naturally" to God and to the world, not deadened by habit or spoiled by shame (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, pp. 20-24).

Regarding matters of life-style, Barbauld's way of life conformed to that expected of a respectable middle-class woman of her time. It was centred on her home, even if her writing activities took her into the wider world. She took care to observe the proprieties, and none of her biographers hint at irregularities in her private life. Williamson describes her life as "distinguished" (Williams, 1980, p. 89). This conventionality was an essential platform for her image as a writer on education, moral and religious topics. Williamson

notes that "the pattern of (Barbauld's) attitudes is in many ways less individual than representative of her time", in spite of her bravery in speaking out on some controversial issues, and considers that "Barbauld was as influential as she was conservative" (Williamson, 1980, p. 91). Secular writers and those belonging to the established church considered Barbauld's allegiance to the emerging Unitarian denomination somewhat problematic, so it seems that she made sure that wherever possible she appeared as respectable as possible, as a counter-weight. Her letter to Maria Edgworth, discussing the possibility of launching a women-led periodical, indicates her awareness of these issues:

> There is no bond of union among literary women, any more than among literary men; different sentiments and different connections separate them much more than the joint interest of their sex would unite them. Mrs Hannah More would not write along with you or me, and we should probably hesitate at joining Miss Hays, or if she were living, Mrs Godwin (Barbauld to Maria Edgeworth, August 30th, 1804, quoted in Le Breton, 1874, p. 86).

Mary Hays was Unitarian, Mary Wollstonecraft (referred to by Barbauld by her married name of Godwin) had Unitarian associations; but more problematic in Barbauld's eyes was the fact that both had had liaisons with men without marrying them.

Through most of her adult life, from the reception of her first venture into print, the enormously successful volume of poetry in 1773, onwards, Barbauld was made aware of the social dangers of appearing to step outside the conventional role of a middle-class lady. I have already commented on the effect of William Woodfall's professed disappointment in her apparent lack of feminine sensibility in persuading Barbauld of the need to appear more in conformity with societal expectations. William McCarthy, starting from the same review, has demonstrated how Barbauld's construction of herself as a gendered subject deals in a variety of ways with the restrictions she experienced (McCarthy, 1995, pp 113-137). His description of these as "compensation fantasies" belittles their power, but his reading of some of Barbauld's early poems as allegorical autobiography demonstrates one way in

which she was able to transcend society's restrictions while appearing to live in conformity with them.

Borderline negotiations

An investigation of two episodes in Barbauld's life when her respectability was questioned reveals both the constraints she worked under, and the strategies she used to stretch these limitations, showing the borderline negotiations that occurred around these. The first such occasion concerns Barbauld's relationship with Mary Wollstonecraft. The two women knew each other and met at social occasions, though they were not close friends (Wakefield, 2001, p. 61). They had much in common, both had their works published by Joseph Johnson and attended the frequent dinner parties he gave, and both had a connection with rational dissent. Wollstonecraft's time at Newington Green was over ten years before Barbauld moved there, but both women were associated with Unitarians for several decades. The local congregation of rational dissenters, including the minister Richard Price, and prominent lay members James and Sarah Burgh, gave Wollstonecraft a great deal of support in a variety of ways, including financially and practically as well as influencing her ideas (Kelly, 1992, pp. 27-8; Todd, 2000, pp. 55ff). Wollstonecraft admired Barbauld, and it is possible that Barbauld served in some respects as a role model for Wollstonecraft, for the older woman was both a successful educationalist and a well-known writer for both children and adults (Todd, 2000, p. 125; Jacobs, 2001, p. 47). Wollstonecraft did consult Johnson about Barbauld's school methods, but her own venture in running a girls' school was not successful, in spite of the help of the Newington Green dissenters, and she was anxious to make her living as a writer. She quoted Barbauld with approval in the preface of, and included several of Barbauld's works in, her educational anthology The Female Reader, published in 1789 (Kelly, 1992, p. 70; McCarthy and Kraft,

1996, p.221). In the 1780s and early 1790s, the two women both worked for civil rights for dissenters and campaigned publicly for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts at the same time, and quite possibly worked together on some occasions (Barker-Benfield, 1992, p. 473).

Although they had much in common, and both worked for the cause of human and religious rights, their positions within society and also their political and other views diverged during the 1790s. Barbauld did her utmost to remain within the bounds of the respectable middle-class rational dissenting community, while Wollstonecraft abandoned the conventions of such a life, particularly in the sensitive area of sexual conduct. Wollstonecraft's politics were also radicalised by her stay in Paris from December 1892 to April 1795 during much of the French Revolution and its aftermath, though her first interest in the Revolution seemed to stem from her review of Richard Price's sermon to the Revolution Society in November 1789 (Nixon, 1971, p. xii; Jacobs, 2001, pp. 84-87). The public disagreement between Barbauld and Wollstonecraft occurred around Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women, hurriedly written in the winter of 1791 and published early in 1792. In this work Wollstonecraft quoted Barbauld's work three times, twice with approval, and once in protest. In Chapter Four, "Observations on the State of Degradation to which Women is reduced by Various Causes", Wollstonecraft commented on the differences in education of the sexes. Men are taught to use their minds, while women are reared in a "false system of female manners", thus "robbing the whole sex of its dignity". She used two lines of Barbauld's early poem to Mary Priestley ("To Mrs P. with some Drawings of Birds and Insects") to illustrate this, apparently with approval; "Pleasure's the portion of th'*inferior* kind; But glory, virtue, Heaven for *man* design'd". However, she distorted Barbauld's meaning by ignoring the fact that Barbauld was using the term man generically to compare humans with animals rather than to compare men with

women. She described Barbauld as a woman of "superior sense", but then went on to castigate her for poem "To a Lady, with some painted flowers", describing it as an "ignoble comparison" (Wollstonecraft, 1994, pp. 122-3). Later in the same chapter, Wollstonecraft again quoted a Barbauld poem (Song V) to illustrate her point that "the passions of men have thus placed women on thrones. Women... will smile, though told that-

> In Beauty's empire is no mean,
> And Women, either slave or queen,
> Is quickly scorn'd when not ador'd."

Wollstonecraft was quick to point out that "the adoration comes first, and the scorn is not anticipated" (Wollstonecraft 1994. p.125). Barbauld took exception to Wollstonecraft's criticism of her painted flowers poem, and replied with another poem, The Rights of Women, in which she criticises those who wish to "Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend".

Critics vary in their assessment of this exchange. McCarthy and Kraft (1994, p. 189) comment that there is no evidence that Barbauld actually published the poem, and that it 'only' circulated in manuscript form. They consider that it is "an outburst of anger at Wollstonecraft" and that it need not be taken as representing Barbauld's considered judgement on women's rights. Biographers of Wollstonecraft have taken it more at face value; Taylor is particularly dismissive of what she sees as Barbauld's lack of solidarity (Taylor, 2003, pp. 184-185). She quotes Barbauld's letter to Edgeworth concerning a women's magazine (cited earlier in this chapter) and writes that, "Barbauld wanted nothing to do with radical feminist philosophers. Yet... it was Barbauld who, in the course of a long and stormy career as a professional controversialist, managed to tread on more masculine toes than nearly every other women writer of the age" (Taylor, 2003, pp. 185-186). Jacobs sees Barbauld's reply as joining Wollstonecraft in "mocking cunning females who use their

beauty to rule men", while showing the difference in their attitude to the issue of love and power (Jacobs, 2001 pp. 107-108).

After this episode, the paths of Barbauld and Wollstonecraft diverged, but there is no evidence of any personal animosity (Taylor, 2003, p. 185). Indeed Tomalin credits Barbauld with the two articles on Wollstonecraft that appeared soon after her death in the February and March 1798 issues of The Monthly Visitor, which are the most sympathetic and well-intentioned of the obituary notices; but Tomalin at the same time points out that they also damaged Wollstonecraft in their failure to examine her arguments and their assertion that "a demand for sexual equality threatened the very basis of civilisation" (Tomalin, 1992, pp 292-3).

The second episode that threatened Barbauld's social status was the reception of her epic poem Eighteen Hundred and Eleven. This work highlighted what she saw as Britain's moral decline and the rise of America, and was contrary to the spirit of nationalism prevalent at the time of its publication, 1812. It evoked a considerable opposition, a specific example of the reaction against the Enlightenment radicalism of the late eighteenth century. Southey, who had been a friend when his politics were more liberal, attacked several reformers when his own political opinions moved to the right, and his anonymous review of her poem in the Quarterly attacked Barbauld in a particularly cruel way. He ridiculed her pessimism, calling her poem a satire, and while recalling his youthful debt to her educational works, continued:

> But she must excuse us if we think that she has wandered from the course in which she was respectable and useful, and miserably mistaken both her powers and her duty, in exchanging the birchen for the satiric rod, and abandoning the superintendence of the 'ovilia' of the nursery, to wage war on the 'reluctantes dracones', statesmen and warriors, whose misdoings have aroused her indignant muse.
>
> We had hoped, indeed, that the empire might have been saved without the intervention of a lady-author: we even flattered ourselves that the interests of Europe and of humanity would in some degree have swayed our public consuls,

> without the descent of (dea ex machina) Mrs Anna Laetitia Barbauld in a quarto, upon the theatre where the great European tragedy is now performing. Not such, however, is her opinion; an irresistible impulse of public duty – a confident sense of commanding talents – have induced her to dash down her shagreen spectacles and her knitting needles and to sally forth, hand in hand with her renowned compatriot [William Roscoe, a fellow Unitarian, whose pamphlet on the war between Britain and France was reviewed in the same article] in the magnanimous resolution of saving a sinking state, by the instrumentality of a pamphlet in prose and a pamphlet in verse. (quoted in Rodgers, 1958, p.140-141, information in square brackets my addition)

Southey's review then went on to ridicule her argument in great detail, piece by piece, and ended by "warning her to desist from satire, which indeed is satire on herself alone", and requesting her not to "put herself to the trouble of writing any more party pamphlets in verse". This savage review with its personal attack was largely responsible for Barbauld's retreat from publishing original works in the last years of her life. Her status as respected middle-class lady had been brought seriously and very publicly into question, her behaviour ridiculed and her arguments about public life trounced as both unwomanly and contemptible, and her only defence was to retreat into a more conventional way of life. It may be that, if she had been younger, she would have found a way to overcome this undermining of her public status; but at the age of nearly fifty and in a time that was much more restrictive for middle-class women than during her early adulthood, she removed herself from occupying the cutting-edge of women's writing.

Barbauld, Unitarianism and woman: a conclusion

Here I want to consider three main points: firstly, Barbauld's contributions to Unitarianism as the movement is conventionally understood; secondly, her place as a woman within and in relation to the Unitarianism of her day; and thirdly, insights gained from a study of Barbauld which may be used to develop a broader understanding of Unitarianism.

Barbauld's contributions to Unitarianism can be summarised under the broad headings of ideas and theology, Unitarian literature, and the promotion of Unitarianism as an institution. Her theology was not particularly radical with regard to doctrine. She was probably influenced most by her father, who was an Arian rather than a fully developed Unitarian in terms of belief about the trinity (Priestley, 1970, pp. 90-91). She disliked doctrinal controversies, and considered that the habit of disputing religious subjects was of detriment to proper reverence for God:

> It is impossible to preserve that deep reverence for the Deity with which we ought to regard him, when all his attributes and even his very existence, become the subject of familiar debate (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 235).

She was also wary of radical changes in belief:

> ... it is happy for a man when he does not find much to alter in the religious system he has embraced; for if that undergoes a total revolution, his religious feelings are too generally so weakened by the shock that they hardly even recover again their original tone and vigour (Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, pp. 236-237).

However, as a rational dissenter, she recognised that free enquiry and reason are essential in the pursuit of religious truth, with the necessary freedom to "worship God according to our consciences" as a "natural and inalienable right" (Address to the opposers of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Barbauld, 1825 vol. II, p. 360).

Nowhere did Barbauld directly spell out her beliefs with regard to specific Christian doctrine, but they can be inferred from much of her writing, specifically her hymns and her sermon-like discourses. Her hymns, published in McCarthy and Kraft (1994), span most of her writing life; the earliest five appeared anonymously in Enfield's Hymns for Public Worship in 1772, numbers six to eight were first published in Barbauld's Poems of 1792, and the last three in a hymn book produced in 1802 (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, pp. 254, 274, 290, 301). Most of her discourses cannot be dated because they appeared posthumously in a variety of periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic. The one exception to this is prefaced "And what shall we do? Luke iii 14" and marked the death of John Howard

in 1790 (Barbauld, 1828c). In these works, God is to be revered primarily as creator, revealed especially in the works of nature and earth's harvest (Hymn II, Discourses 1828b, 1830). God is to be loved, primarily through his works, but not in a too familiar way. Barbauld's first hymn begins:

> JEHOVAH reigns, let every nation hear,
> And at his footstool bow with holy fear:

Later hymns are less specific in that they are addressed to people rather than God, but refer to a "God of purity" (hymn X) and "a God who heareth prayer" (hymn XI). Hymn VI was written for the marriage of Barbauld's friend Sarah Rigby and extols love, while hymn IX refers to music as the means by which men and angels, earth and heaven, may unite.

Most of Barbauld's hymns and discourses do not refer to Jesus, though they assume that the readers are Christian. The main exceptions are hymn IV, which is based on the beatitudes and on Jesus' last teachings and refers to Jesus as "Our dying master", and hymn III, which is an Easter hymn. Its theology seems at first sight rather orthodox, including Jesus descending to save those he loved, dying and ascending to reign at God's right hand, and is addressed as "my Saviour, and my king". However, this conventional pattern is deceptive. There is no reference to any form of trinity; Jesus "the friend of human kind... Descended like a pitying God". Hymn V reinforces this unorthodox view of Jesus as "The man of Calvary".

The discourses reveal what is most important in religious terms to Barbauld. Her new year's discourse (1828a) was written for people of middle years and urges them to consider the things which enlarge the mind, namely the work of God in creation, "salvation in and for you", conscience, providence as shown in the growth of civil and religious liberty, and duty to "co-operate with God". The 1828b discourse concerns sin; here Barbauld emphasises the need to lead a goodly life on earth; we must not expect God to change us into perfect beings if we do not do our utmost to work towards this. This work

suggests that Barbauld is not a universalist, in that it proposes that those who do not seriously try to live good lives will not be able to reach heaven. However, elsewhere Barbauld assumes that all people of goodwill will meet in heaven (hymn VI). Her discourse on being born again (1830) also refers to the judgement of God, but emphasises the "gradual unfolding of powers" and draws parallels between physical birth and development and the development of the spiritual life, preparing for the life to come by seeing the spiritual kingdom in the midst of this one (Barbauld, 1830, pp. 2-12). Barbauld specifically rejects Calvinism and its cruel God, and states that the prospect of eternal damnation runs counter to reason, morals and ethics, also prevents penitence, quenches religious gratitude, and separates the connection between religion and common life ("Remarks on Gilbert Wakefield's enquiry", Barbauld 1825, Vol II, pp 467-469). Although Barbauld assumed Christianity, as in her pilgrim hymn, number VIII, she also hinted that there is good in other religions; this was referred to in the earlier discussion of her religious writings.

Barbauld's main contribution to Unitarian thought was not made in the development of doctrine in the strict sense, but rather in a broader approach to religion, and particularly in the provision of literature that was read by many Unitarians, especially children, during most of the nineteenth century. Her insistence that religion must occupy the whole of life, feelings as well as reason, during every waking moment rather than just at specific times of worship, provided a basis for the mid nineteenth century changes subsequently developed by James Martineau: Martineau had learned her Hymns in Prose as a child, and so imbibed her holistic approach when cold rationalism was more in fashion. Barbauld's religious educational material was used extensively during the nineteenth century, and thus her work kept alive a more emotionally satisfying alternative on which later Unitarians, both women and men, could build. This influence has rarely been recognised by academic commentators or Unitarian historians and theologians, but certainly individual people writing

autobiographically often referred to the formative influence of Barbauld's writings. These include Elizabeth Gaskell, her aunts and her children; the Holland family; Mary Turner and her nephew, William Turner III; James and Harriet Martineau; William Hazlitt; the Smith family including Barbara Bodichon and her aunt Julia (Chapple and Shelston, 2000, p. 57; Uglow, 1993, p. 27; Chapple, 1997, pp. 89-90, 352; McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, p. 11 Burton, 1949, pp. 24-26). Even children who were not Unitarian, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Thomas DeQuincey, Mary Howitt and Frances Power Cobbe were brought up with Barbauld's teachings and noted the influence of these on them (McCarthy and Kraft, 2002, pp. 11-12, 235-236; Cobbe, 1894, pp. 37).

Barbauld's promotion of institutional Unitarianism in its formative phase has rarely been recognised in the standard Unitarian literature. However, her activism during her life time - including her promotion of civil and religious liberty, with her civic sermons, her work for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and her defence of public dissenting worship - is beginning to be acknowledged by more recent Barbauld scholars (Keach, 1998; McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, 2002; Mahon, 2000; Ross, 1994; Watts, 1998; Webb, 1996b White, 1999). Barbauld's network of friends and associates included most of the men recognised as pioneers in the establishment of the Unitarian movement as a practical reality, as demonstrated by Watts (1998, pp. 91-92). However, in the long term, it may be that her contribution to the development of Unitarian thought will be seen as the most significant.

Barbauld's place as a woman within and in relation to the Unitarianism of her day presents a more ambiguous situation. There is no doubt that Barbauld was well-known and respected in the rational dissenting and Unitarian communities of her day. As a young woman, she was famous nationally as a poet, and then after her marriage as an educationalist, especially in connection with young children and girls and concerning

religious education. During the 1790s, she was a prominent advocate of religious liberty, and in later life achieved recognition as a literary critic and editor. In all these areas, her concern with issues close to rational dissent and Unitarianism was evident and right from the start she championed moral causes such as Corsican independence and the anti-slavery campaign. Crabb Robinson's description of her as "the chief boast and ornament" of Unitarian Christians has already been cited (Robinson, 1967, p. 68), together with his criticism that she went too exclusively with the Unitarians regarding religion and morals. Mineka, writing on the young Harriet Martineau's possible ambitions to succeed Barbauld in Unitarian status, describes her (together with Hannah More) as a "popular female divine" (Mineka, 1944, p. 236). A divine was a current word for a minister in the eighteenth century; if Barbauld had been a man, it seems to me that she would have undoubtedly gone into the professional ministry. The opening up of such possibilities at the end of the nineteenth century will be discussed later in this thesis. But, at the end of the eighteenth century, as this avenue was closed to Barbauld, she found other ways of expressing herself and serving others, as I have indicated. However, as a woman she was denied a formal higher education, and the formal recognition that went with it. As a woman she was also denied a public platform as an orator or politician, and she was denied a Unitarian platform as a minister. She therefore had to acquire a platform in the only ways open to her.

Keller has described how Harriet Martineau "created an audience" so that she could further the Unitarian cause in a public way, and then went beyond the Unitarian audience (Keller, 2001, p. 140). It is likely that Harriet was inspired by Barbauld, and tried to emulate her in her ways of achieving an audience. Both contributed to Unitarian journals such as the Monthly Repository and The Athenaeum, though Harriet Martineau did so as a way of starting her literary career. This was not available to Barbauld in her early days as there were no specifically Unitarian periodicals in her youth, and in the 1760s it would have

been extremely unlikely for a respectable young woman to be a contributor to other journals. Barbauld's early spheres of activity, that is, poetry and education, did allow her to achieve an audience in an acceptable way, and it was through these genres that she could contribute to religious thought in the Unitarian movement and beyond. The value of these contributions to Unitarians throughout most of the nineteenth century is indicated by the first sentence of an article in The Christian Life on Jerom Murch's book, Mrs Barbauld and her Contemporaries: "We can hardly recollect the time when the name of Mrs Barbauld was unfamiliar to our ears... Her hymns in prose were learned in childhood" (The Christian Life, June 1877, p. 313).

The stirring times of the 1790s held the early promise of political reforms leading to greater freedom, but the later threats of revolution and persecution gave Barbauld an opportunity to contribute more directly to political and religious debate, and her writings were in the main greatly appreciated by the Unitarian community. In her later years Barbauld was still honoured by Unitarians, but the changing political and religious climate worked against the reception of further theological works from a woman whose formation was clearly eighteenth century. The early leaders of the Unitarian movement, such as Priestley and Lindsey, had died, and new ministers, such as Belsham and Carpenter, were more concerned with organisation and consolidation of the fledgling denomination and defending it from attacks by mainstream Christians. In such an atmosphere, the educational works of Barbauld retained a valuable place, but her criticisms of the government, such as in her poem Eighteen Hundred and Eleven (McCarthy and Kraft, 1994, pp. 152-161) were an embarrassment rather than a welcome contribution to a public debate.

Insights from this case study of Barbauld and her writings that are relevant to a broader understanding of Unitarianism include issues of identity and process, the idea of double dissent, and the relationship between theology and 'practical devotion'.

Unitarian identity has been linked firmly to the development of a non-trinitarian and a universalist theology. This movement of theological innovation was seen as one led by ministers; only men had access to both formal higher education and public position which enabled them to take such a lead. My study of Barbauld shows that people who had access to neither such education nor position could, and did, make a significant contribution to the development of Unitarianism in the sense of Unitarian thought and practice. It also demonstrates the incompleteness in the way Unitarian history has been written and taught and the consequences of this for understanding Unitarianism as a religious and social phenomenon. Understanding Barbauld's work and life has to take into account, as I have done, the domestic and social circumstances of her life and the ways this impacted on both her writing and the reception of this. In turn, this has implications for rethinking the importance of social and domestic context in the telling of Unitarian history in general, a point I shall return to in my conclusion to the thesis overall.

Significant here is Barbauld's status as a 'double dissenter' who not only belonged to the emerging Unitarian movement, but also dared to write publicly in its defence and in promotion of its practices and doctrines. Ross used the phrase originally in relation to political rights, signifying that dissenting women were denied their civil rights twice over, once as dissenters and then again as women. I have taken the phrase to be appropriate for a broader understanding in that Barbauld, in addition to belonging to the Unitarians, dissented from the cultural restrictions of her time, and pursued both a public career as an educationalist and a writer, and to some extent a public promotion of the Unitarian cause. Although Barbauld did not see her work as 'theology', her Hymns in Prose helped to form the attitudes of future generations of Unitarians, enabling them to appreciate that of the divine in everyday life. A study of Barbauld also shows how Unitarian life and activity was not restricted to propounding developments in doctrine, and allows a more

multifaceted understanding of Unitarianism to emerge; and this is one in which women as well as men, lay people as well as ministers, had a significant part.

The broad scope and influence of Barbauld's work was a factor in enabling other women to make a public contribution to Unitarianism after her life-time. Her influence on Harriet Martineau has already been cited. Later in the nineteenth century, Frances Power Cobbe was able to build on the work done by both Barbauld and Harriet Martineau in her work as a journalist and writer on religion and this will be explored later in the thesis. Of significance to all women who try to work within a particular cultural situation, yet work for the good of a wider society, is the example of Barbauld as a woman who insisted on fulfilling an appropriate domestic role while engaging in public life (Guest, 2000, p. 229). The delicacy with which Barbauld negotiated these roles points up that, while Unitarians were radical in religious ideas and sometimes in politics, they often had a conservative attitude to social convention (and which weighed heavily on middle-class women long after Barbauld's death). This can be seen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the attitudes to the training and recognition of women as Unitarian ministers, and a hundred years later to lesbian and gay ministers, some aspects of which will also be taken up in the conclusion to the thesis.

Chapter Three

"Intimacies of life in cultured circles": Helen Bourn/Martineau/Tagart and her Correspondence Network

Introduction

Helen Martineau never entered the public arena of writing for publication, and indeed was a woman who was in many respects typical of middle-class Unitarian women of her day, in remaining firmly within the private, domestic sphere, and not even achieving a standard obituary notice in any of the British Unitarian periodicals (though her reputation as a dinner party hostess to visiting American ministers did gain her an American notice). Her many friendship and family connections were also typical of the Unitarian families of her day (Davidoff and Hall, 1987, pp. 219-220; Seed, 1981, p. 221), while her wealth was not untypical of the elite Unitarian families whose male members became trustees of Cross Street Chapel (Seed, 1981, pp. 208-212). The letters written to and by Helen Martineau therefore help to provide insight into the lives and experiences of a generation of middle-class Unitarian women, giving evidence of the various ways in which they lived their faith and contributed to denominational life. However, it is in relation to this 'ordinariness', as I have termed it, that Helen Martineau's letters and her life take on interest and significance, as the ensuing discussion will show.

Helen's maiden name was Bourn; on her marriage to Thomas in 1822, she took his name of Martineau; and then after nearly four years of widowhood she married Edward Tagart in January 1828. For the sake of brevity and continuity I shall refer to her as Helen in this chapter. Unlike Anna Barbauld, Helen never entered the public sphere. She did not publish any of her writing, and did not need to earn any money. Virtually all that is known of her comes from her letters and those of her friends, apart from a short notice of an American obituary reprinted in The Inquirer and a brief unpublished family memoir. Helen lived from 1795 to 1871, and so her early life overlapped with that of Anna Barbauld. The

two women never actually met, although some of Helen's friends had known Mrs Barbauld, and Helen certainly knew some of Barbauld's writings. After her removal to London in 1828, Helen included Anna Barbauld's niece, Lucy Aikin, amongst her friends (Ban 9/50 Helen Tagart to Emily Tagart n.d.). Discussion in this chapter concentrates on the years between the death of Helen's first fiancé in 1817 and her marriage to Edward Tagart in 1828. After a brief consideration here of the sources used and the Unitarian and family backgrounds, I shall move on to provide an account of her life, with a detailed study of the events between her first marriage to Thomas Martineau and her second marriage to Edward Tagart, in order to explore the role of Unitarianism in her life, and those of her women friends.

The main sources drawn on in this chapter are letters written mainly between Helen and her friends and family. The first set of letters which engaged me in studying Helen's life and Unitarianism come from the manuscript collection of Unitarian College. The manuscript part of the Unitarian College Collection, which is in the Special Collections Department of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester, contains a packet of Martineau family letters. These have not been listed, but the card index indicates that there are about one hundred and ninety letters, and refers to "Taggarts; Robberds, etc.", with the spelling mistake remaining uncorrected. I have read all these in connection with this study. Several hundred Martineau family letters are included in the Harriet Martineau papers collected by Reinhart S. Speck and deposited at the Bancroft Library, University of California, at Berkley. For this study, I have worked on over one hundred and fifty of these letters that relate specifically to Helen. There is also a collection of Tagart letters in Dr Williams's Library, London. Six of these are original, and fifty-five are copies of original letters in the Unitarian College Collection. Also in the Dr Williams's collection there is an unfinished draft manuscript by Herbert McLachlan relating to Edward Tagart and the

progress of his courtship of Helen (DWL 24.242/1). After being a student at the college 1899-1906, Herbert McLachlan later returned as Tutor and Warden in 1911 and held concurrently the posts of both Principal and Librarian of Unitarian College until his retirement in 1944 (Ruston, 2004, pp. 121-130). After his death his son, John McLachlan, gave his father's papers to Dr Williams's Library, so it is probable that all the Tagart letters in Dr Williams's Library were originally part of the Martineau packet in the Unitarian College Collection. There is in addtion one letter to Helen in the manuscript collections of Harris Manchester College, Oxford, which I have also consulted. The Harris Manchester College collections also include memoranda of other Martineau letters. It seems that James Matineau obeyed family requests to destroy personal letters, but also made summaries or memoranda, mainly in shorthand, of them before he did so. His shorthand memorandum of letters written to him by his sister Harriet were transcribed in the United States by W. S. Coloe in 1958 for Professor R.K.Webb, and provide a typescript summary of what James considered to be the important passages in her letters, though the accuracy of these summaries cannot be guaranteed, and it is clear that some of the names written in longhand are wrongly deciphered (Porter, 1998, p. 146). In this thesis I have corrected some of the more obvious transcription errors and re-anglicised the spelling where I quote from this source. There is also a longhand hand-written transcription of letters to James from other members of the family, thought to have been made by his daughter Gertrude (Porter, 1998, p. 146). Unfortunately those from Helen and James's brother Thomas have not been transcribed, so although I have a list of the dates of these letters, I have not been able to read the contents, as the Rich's version of shorthand used by James is now not commonly known.

In carrying out the research for this chapter, I have also had access to some typescript pages of A Memoir of the Bourn-Tagart Family written by the father of Pippa

Tagart (personal communication, Pippa Tagart, 19 March 2001). This is based on some papers of Doris Harvey, a great grand daughter of Helen, although apparently the family lost track of the papers after the death of Ms Harvey some years ago. This memoir is undated and unpaginated, but contains transcripts of several letters. In addition, I obtained supplementary material from obituaries in various contemporary Unitarian periodicals. One letter of Helen's has appeared in print, which is her draft of a letter to Thomas Martineau, 29 November 1821 from the Bancroft Collection (Ban 9/53). This was apparently copied when it was still in Reinhard Speck's private collection and it appears in the documentary account of Victorian women's lives edited by Hellerstein et al in 1981. It is probable that this provided the information for Joan Perkin's brief reference to Helen Bourn (Perkin, 1993, p54). Finally, three letters to Helen from James Martineau are cited in the biography of James Martineau by Estlin Carpenter (1905), however, Drummond and Upton (1902), in their larger two volume edition of James's life and letters, do not refer to Helen by name.

It is typical of the approach to Unitarian history discussed earlier in this thesis that the two known works using the British collections of Martineau/Tagart letters have had male experience as their focus. The first of these, the unfinished manuscript by Herbert McLachlan (which can be dated in so far as he died in 1958), had Edward Tagart as its primary subject. Thus the description in Dr Williams's Library catalogue reads:

> Letters of Edward Tagart, and others, to Helen Martineau, nee Bourn, afterwards Tagart, with some letters by her, 1826-28. Transcripts made by Herbert McLachlan, with some originals.
> H. McLachlan intended publishing this correspondence as A Lover and his Lady: being a parson's love-letters a century ago and some others, a project not effected. He subsequently offered the material to Ralph Hale Mottram, who did not proceed with it (DWL 24.242).

Herbert McLachlan clearly had access to the Unitarian College collection letters, as his draft preface and introduction include quotations from letters in that collection but not at Dr

Williams's Library. His description of the College collection also resolutely ignores the fact that the majority of the letters it contains are from women:

> A large collection of letters written to or by the Rev and Mrs Edward Tagart disclose in some details the character of the life and work of Unitarian ministers and congregations during the first half of the nineteenth century. They also reveal the intimacies of life in cultured circles in Norwich, Manchester, and elsewhere, describe academic and other pursuits in Manchester College, York, and the interests of students outside its walls, and contain *inter alia* a charming yet singularly pathetic love story illustrating the old adage that "the course of true love never did run smooth." Incidentally, an interesting sketch is given of Martineau's first sermon in college by a fellow student (McLachlan, 1939, pp. 114-115).

More recently David Wykes (1997) has used the Dr Williams's Library Tagart letters, amongst others, as a source for an article on Unitarian ministers and their preaching in the early nineteenth century. In the Dr Williams's Library collection all the six original letters are by women, five of them by Helen Martineau while just over half the transcripts are of letters from Edward Tagart, thirty-two in all, with another eight from other men and fifteen from women. This clearly shows that McLachlan was more interested in the men's letters than the women's, as the Unitarian College collection, from which his selection was made, had a much higher proportion of women's letters, comprising of ninety-nine letters from women, and sixty-five from men, plus others that were written jointly or by authors whose gender is not apparent.

In this chapter, letters quoted or referenced from the Bancroft Library are designated 'Ban' followed by the box and number. Those from the John Rylands University are labelled 'JRUL' followed by the number given (which relate to the order in which they were stored - at some later date I shall work with the JRUL on re-classifying these in chronological order). The letters from Dr Williams's Library are prefixed by 'DWL' and also given the last part of the library catalogue number. Manuscripts from Harris Manchester College are prefixed by 'HMCO', and where references are to memoranda rather than to original letters this is stated. Of the over three hundred and fifty

letters consulted, only twenty-three are by Helen herself and date from before 1828 (when she married Edward Tagart), with most of these being drafts, often incomplete. The Bancroft collection includes five short letters written by Helen to her daughters in the 1850s, and a number of letters to Helen from Mary Robberds dating from the 1830s to the 1850s, and I have also used these, together with letters in the Unitarian College Collection from Ann Hardy to Helen over a similar period, for background information. In common with others of her time, notably Harriet Martineau, Helen asked that at least some of her letters be destroyed (JRUL 97, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 15 December 1827), so it is impossible to know to what extent her letters survived her death. For the letters I have quoted in this study, in places where words have been lost or are illegible, or where clarification is needed, I have added words in square brackets.

"A body, far and away superior to any other in intellect, culture and refinement of manners": Unitarianism and Unitarian lives in the 1820s

Helen attended Cross Street Chapel in Manchester and was steeped in the Unitarian movement, which underwent considerable changes during her lifetime. The dramatic events of the 1790s described in the previous chapter, together with the easing of restrictions on Unitarians in 1812 and 1813, had led to the spread of specifically Unitarian doctrines within rational dissent. This is illustrated in the obituary of Thomas Biggins Broadbent's father, the Rev William Broadbent, who was minister of the Warrington congregation for over thirty years and died in 1828:

> When he settled at Warrington he was a moderate Arian. By his continued researches into the Scriptures he became dissatisfied with the theological sentiments he had held, and in a few years became a decided Unitarian, and in time succeeded in bringing over the congregation, with the exception of three or four individuals, to his own opinions (Monthly Repository, 1828, p. 59).

This doctrinal development was mirrored in many other congregations.

At Cross Street Chapel, the first minister to preach Unitarian doctrines was John Seddon, who from 1741 to 1769 was co-pastor with Joseph Mottershead, an Arian (Head, 2000, p. 3). He was followed in the doctrinal sense by John Grundy, a passionate Unitarian, who was its joint minister from 1811 and then left in 1825 for Paradise Street Congregation, Liverpool. Grundy was keen to promote doctrinal developments and soon after the start of his ministry at Cross Street he began a series of theological lectures (Head, 1999). Some members of his congregation, who disliked controversy, opposed these. John Kenrick wrote to G. W. Wood, "one might be tempted to question whether passionate harangues to a miscellaneous audience have any direct tendency to promote religious truth" (HMCO MS Wood 3 folios 3v-4r, John Kenrick to George Rainer Wood, 7 January 1813; quoted in Wykes, 1997, p. 182). The congregation during the ministries of Grundy and Robberds included both Arians and Unitarians. The older families tended to remain Arians, while the newer, younger activists espoused the new Unitarian doctrines. In addition, people who were not Unitarian but appreciated the learning of the ministers and their intellectual sermons also attended, because they "found the preaching there better and more earnest, and the spirit more charitable than in other places of worship" (Shaen, 1908, quoted in Glendinning, 1982, p. 3). This group was typified by Susanna Winkworth, who described Manchester Unitarians as:

> a body, far and away superior to any other in intellect, culture and refinement of manners, and certainly did not come behind any other in active philanthropy and earnest efforts for the social improvement of those around them (Shaen, 1908, quoted in Glendinning, 1982, p.3).

Holbrook Gaskell, a prominent Unitarian at Warrington, and Helen's uncle, complained about new developments in Unitarian theology in a letter to his sister Ellen, Helen's mother:

> ...there is a party amongst us Unitarians which is labouring to reduce Christianity to a nonentity. The Christian religion is to consist merely of an obedience to the Precepts of Jesus. The great and sublime doctrines which he taught are not to be

> insisted upon lest the religious world should be set again on the subject of his Messiahship. The Evidences of Christianity are to be laid asleep in order that every class of unbeliever may congregate with and tacitly pass with the world as Unitarian Christians. This, I fear, this spirit is engendered by the anti-supernaturalism which is becoming so much the fashion – which I believe had its origin at York and is fast spreading, at least among Unitarians (JRUL 71, Holbrook Gaskell to Ellen Bourn, 4 August 1926).

Holbrook Gaskell's view, especially his dislike of the teaching at the Unitarian seminary, Manchester College at York, was particularly significant in view of his standing within the movement and his close connections to Cross Street Chapel. Helen was certainly aware of her uncle's views, as he aired them in a letter to her:

> I fear the spirit I condemn is shewing itself in the conversation and Preaching of too many Unitarians. It is to under-rate Christianity and to elevate it little above heathenism - at least very little above Deism. You see the writer in the last Repository signed A Unitarian Christian places the whole of Christianity in the precepts of Jesus. What then, are the great doctrines of Christianity of slight importance? To the Doctrine of a Resurrection – of the Divine Unity of the infinite Benevolence of God – the attestation of and Messiahship of Christ by the miracles he was enabled by the Father to perform. Are these doctrines individually and collectively of no importance? (JRUL 26, Holbrook Gaskell to Helen Martineau, 25 August 1826).

Grundy's ministerial colleague at Cross Street, who remained there throughout the period under consideration, John Gooch Robberds, was less interested in expounding doctrinal details and differences. He was described in the following terms at the time of his death in 1854:

> Belonging to no set school of thought, he did, perhaps, more than any of our ministers to unite the diverging tendencies amongst us, and to reconcile opposite views. Controversy and dogmatic preaching he thoroughly disliked, and, whenever it was possible, avoided. And we believe there are not many ministers left amongst us who unite with a spirit so truly devotional as his so large and genial an appreciation of the world, and so clear and cultivated a mind (The Inquirer, 1854, p. 256).

This was the person, who more than any other, influenced Helen during the period under discussion.

The breadth of opinion amongst the Cross Street congregation and trustees led to fear of division at critical times such as the appointment of a new minister. Mary Robberds, John's wife, voiced this, when she learned that John Grundy was leaving:

> Our grand subject of interest at present is Mr Grundy and the congregation. I told you in my short letter that he had accepted an invitation to Paradise Street, but I daresay you would scarcely believe it. So it is, however, and a great commotion it makes. He unfortunately omitted to mention in his letter to the congregation the reason for his making the change (his health) so there has been an opening for all sorts of conjectures. Some say that the additional salary is the motive, others that he had been hurt by the conduct of some individuals, and others again whisper that it is petticoat influence; but it is very certain that he is deeply and sincerely regretted by a large portion of the congregation, and I fear it will be difficult to supply his place...
> It makes him [Mr Robberds] however very anxious, and I don't think he knew before how much he was attached to his flock, he is so afraid of any division amongst them, or jealousies, or any underhand party spirit (JRUL 92, Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau, 25 February 1824).

The Robberds' fears were perhaps justified. Although John Hugh Worthington was chosen without this occasioning too many problems in the Cross Street Congregation, and he started there straight after his training at Manchester College, York, in early 1825, the fact that three Manchester College students, Worthington, Brown and Tagart, competed for the vacancy could have created tensions in York. James Martineau considered this point in the following way:

> I think it a pity that any Unitarian congregation should encourage such ministerial competition, but if it is to be allowed, it had better take place amongst 3 such intimate friends than among those less closely connected (Ban 6/107, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, 1 October 1824).

The vacancy caused by Worthington's early death two years later created many tensions, some of which are described later in this chapter.

The complicated congregational polity of Cross Street Chapel compounded theological differences within the congregation. There were two groups with power: the people who paid rent for pews, who had the right to elect a minister; and the trustees, a self selecting group of the congregation who received the pew rents and determined the

remuneration of the ministers. In 1824, a dispute arose about these different powers and how they were exercised, and an attempt was made to clarify the situation (Minute Book of the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel, pp. 47ff). This sort of constitution is still common in Unitarian congregations; it provides check and balances, and can work well if there is good will and unity of opinion; however, if the two groups have different ideas and do not co-operate, then they soon reach stalemate. This seems to have occurred in the autumn of 1827 when a successor to John Hugh Worthington was needed (Minute Book of the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel p. 77ff). At least three candidates were considered and invited to preach, but no decision was reached. Further candidates were sought, and eventually the following year William Gaskell, nephew of Holbrook, was appointed. As one of the original candidates was Edward Tagart, by this time Helen's fiancé, and the trustees included at least two of her relatives, James Darbishire and Samuel Dukinfield Darbishire, doctrinal differences could have clashed with family interests (Ramsden n.d. p. 63). Later in this chapter, letters from Helen and Edward Tagart are quoted detailing some of the difficulties experienced by them during the candidating process. The lack of a clear procedure for filling ministerial vacancies was of concern in Unitarian circles nationally; there was considerable disquiet about the increasing practice of hearing several candidates preach, and so risk dividing the congregation, as shown by letters by "V. F." and "Episcopus" in the Monthly Repository for 1828.

There was also concern about the future of the Unitarian movement generally, which appeared to be less vigorous after 1815, when peace with France led to economic depression and a decline in the building of Unitarian churches. This was in spite of the formation of the Unitarian Fund in 1805 to support missionary activities among poorer congregations, and of the Christian Tract Society in 1809, which distributed didactic and moral tracts by Unitarians such as Mary Hughes and Catharine Cappe, as a response to the

orthodox Religious Tract Society supported by Hannah More. (It is an interesting gender division of labour that both Unitarian societies were founded and organised by male ministers; however, while the lay missionaries were male, the tract writers were often female.) Part of the problem was the increasing hostility of more orthodox dissenters, resulting in various court cases against Unitarians, some for blasphemy, and others designed to remove property, both buildings and trust funds, from Unitarian control. One of the specific occasions for this hostility was the farewell dinner for John Grundy, held in Manchester in August 1824, when the Rev George Harris made a speech describing Christian orthodoxy as "slavish, mean, cruel and vindictive" (Ramsden, n.d., p.15). This was reported in the local press, and developed into a major confrontation, referred to as the "Manchester Socinian Controversy" (Schulman, 1997, pp. 50-59). Lismer Short's presidential address to the Unitarian Historical Society in 1975 gave a succinct account of this, while Frank Schulman (1997) has produced a more detailed history of the fight for legal safeguards for Unitarians.

The Unitarians had responded to the legal threats with the formation of the Association for the Protection of the Civil Rights of Unitarians in 1817, but further cohesion was thought advantageous. After quiet negotiation among leaders of the various Unitarian organisations, involving ministers such as Lant Carpenter, Robert Aspland, and William Johnson Fox, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association was formed in May 1825. This gradually absorbed the older Unitarian societies formed from the 1790s onwards, but achieved little popular support until after its reorganisation in 1838. These institutional responses to the growing evangelical nature of popular religion reflected the inclusion into the Unitarian fold of former Baptists such as Richard Wright, a prominent Unitarian missionary, and congregations which were poorer and possibly more fervent than the traditional Arian middle-class Presbyterian families had been. The tensions that

disturbed Cross Street congregation were thus reflections of a national situation (Short, 1975; Schulman, 1997). They were also played out at family and inter-personal levels.

Helen's father, Joseph Bourn, came from a long line of active dissenters. His father, grandfather, great grandfather and uncle were all ministers in the rational dissenting tradition (DWL 24.242, introduction). Joseph made a considerable amount of money in business. Although there is no formal record of the nature of this, it was almost certainly connected with textiles, as Harriet Martineau's letter to James indicated that Joseph hoped that his future son-in-law, Thomas, would become a fustian manufacturer in Manchester (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 8, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 11 April 1822). Joseph married Ellen Gaskell, from a largely professional family in the same religious tradition. Both families were active in rational dissenting and Unitarian activities in the South Lancashire and North Cheshire area. Helen was Ellen and Joseph's only child. She inherited a modest fortune from an uncle, the banker Samuel Jones (the husband of her father's sister Margaret), who died in 1819 (Tagart Memoir; Ouren, 1975, p. 22; Baker, 1884, p. 95). Samuel Jones, and his younger brother William, who died in December 1821, were trustees of Cross Street Chapel. It seems that Margaret Jones was related to Elizabeth Martineau senior, as Mrs Martineau wrote to Mrs Jones in 1880 to announce the death of "our mother" (Ban 8/25, Elizabeth Martineau to Mrs Samuel Jones, 1 December 1800). Joseph and Ellen Bourn lived at Cross Street, Salford, within walking distance of Cross Street Chapel, though their establishment included at least one carriage (Tagart Memoir).

In March 1824, Joseph Bourn suffered a sudden illness which resulted in a "complete aberration of mind", after which he often failed to recognise his friends and family members (JRUL 173, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 30 March 1824). For the first months of his illness Joseph was cared for at home, at first by his wife and servants, with additional help from Helen from summer 1824 and also a "trustworthy

companion" in the autumn of that year (Ban 7/71, Elizabeth Greenhow to Helen Martineau, 17 October 1824). Later, Joseph was committed to a small institution in Bury, where he was visited by family and Helen's servant Ann Hardy (JRUL 116, Ann Hardy to Helen Martineau, 12 September 1826). Holbrook Gaskell advised in 1827 that a statute of lunacy should be obtained so that Joseph's financial affairs could be arranged satisfactorily (JRUL 163, Holbrook Gaskell to Ellen Bourn, 14 July 1827). Holbrook Gaskell, Ellen's brother, was a prominent lay Unitarian who was interested in theology and a noted lay preacher; he looked after financial matters for Ellen and Helen after Joseph's mental deterioration. This included sending them banknotes by post and arranging payment of bills and collection of rents and dividends (Ban 7/60, Holbrook Gaskell to Helen Martineau, 6 July 1826; Ban 7/61, Holbrook Gaskell to Helen Martineau, 4 January 1827: JRUL 26, Holbrook Gaskell to Helen Martineau, 25 August 1826: JRUL 163, Holbrook Gaskell to Ellen Bourn, 14 July 1827). Joseph died in 1829, aged seventy.

The Martineau family was of Huguenot descent, and had been both numerous and prominent in the Norwich area for some time. Many of the Martineaus were pillars of the (Unitarian) Octagon Chapel congregation, where the Martineau men held a variety of offices. Thomas Martineau senior was a textile manufacturer who was successful for most of his life. But during the 1820s, markets for the bombazine and camlet he produced declined, and the firm got into difficulties (DWL 24.242.1). The war between France and Spain, where much of the family business was carried on, precipitated a crisis in 1823. From 1825 onwards, Harriet's letters to James contained a string of worries about the family business; she attributed the onset of her father's last illness to:

> great anxieties and precariousness of business affairs, compelling him to overdraw at the bank at the utmost limit, and still be at a loss how to go on; though having as yet incurred only one bad debt of £300, while banks are breaking and manufacturies closing by thousands all around (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 55, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 16 December 1825).

James's summaries of other letters from Harriet gave further evidence of the general industrial malaise:

> My father... has to ask Uncle David for an extension of time of repayment of £2000 due next February. The suspension of business, the failure of banks, and universal distress, creating insuperable dangers. Further evidences of the prevailing financial confusion are adduced (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 57, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 22 December 1825).
>
> Uncle David has set him at ease about the £2000; and Henry's spirits are so good, that my [father] thinks he must see his way through the present crisis; thought how to find a path through it we none of us can tell (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 59, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 12 January 1826).
>
> The state of business shows no improvement; my father's reduction of property amounting. By Henry's calculation, to £2500; but his creditors, especially Mr Rand and Uncle John, are most considerate and gracious (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 60, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 7 February 1826).
>
> Business much the same... Uncle Peter's bank will not stand (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 64, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 7 March 1826).

Thomas managed to pay off all his creditors, but there was no money to bequeath to his children when he died in 1826 (Martineau, 1907, p. 20). Thomas himself had been educated at the Barbaulds' school at Palgrave and was described as "a man of culture, fine taste, kindly spirit and unbending integrity" (Bosenquet, 1927, p. 5; Martineau, 1907, p. 20). Ellen, Thomas's youngest daughter, made a direct link between the Martineau family atmosphere of strong politics and firm nonconformist convictions and Anna Barbauld:

> My father was a plain business man... he had passed some portion of his childhood under the roof of the Barbaulds, and if he did not bring away much learning from them, I like to indulge the belief that from Mrs Barbauld he acquired the strong political leanings, and the firm principles of Nonconformity, that marked his after citizenship, and certainly descended in no equivocal way to his sons and daughters (Carpenter, 1905, p. 8).

Thomas married Elizabeth Rankin, from a Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarian family of merchants and sugar-refiners. Though the Rankins were of the same religious tradition, Elizabeth's education was thought to be inferior to that of most of the Martineaus, as she suffered the social difficulty of not speaking French, but she had considerable talent and

was the dominant force of the domestic scene (Webb, 1960, pp. 45-46, Wheatley 1957, pp. 28-29). Ellen wrote about her that:

> I believe that to my mother we must trace the beginnings of literary culture in our household. She had enjoyed perhaps fewer educational advantages, early in life, than her husband had done, but she had quick perceptions, indomitable energy, and wonderful tact in making the most of opportunities.... When no longer a child she was allowed to have lessons from a Mr Storey, who was probably an elegant scholar. She used to name this as the *one* educational advantage of her life, and she must have then been introduced to Shakespeare, Milton, Pope's Translations, and some general historical reading (Carpenter, 1905, p. 8).

Thomas and Elizabeth had eight children, most of whom were authors of letters in the collections used for this study. The oldest, Elizabeth (1794-1850), called Lissey to distinguish her from her mother, married a Newcastle doctor, Thomas M. Greenhow, in 1820 (Sanders, 1990, p. xxviii). Thomas junior (1795-1824), the oldest son, had trained as a doctor, and was in partnership with his uncle, Philip Meadows Martineau, a prominent surgeon in the town. He was also elected visiting surgeon to the Norwich Hospital in the autumn of 1819 (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, Memorandum p. 2, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 28 November 1819). Within the family Tom was considered to be particularly wise and was looked up to by his younger siblings, whom he had taught informally (Martineau, 1877, Vol. I pp. 43-44). The third child, Henry (1797-1844), was in the family business and frequently travelled about Europe, especially to Spain and Portugal, in this connection. Robert (1798-1870), married Jane Smith and joined his uncle, Mr Hodgetts, in the nail trade at Dudley in the Midlands, before moving to Birmingham to run a brass foundry in partnership with Mr Rudder in 1828. Rachel (1800-1878) was considered a delicate young woman. During the relevant period she spent time in Bristol with the Kentish family and then in Hastings for the sake of her health. She remained unmarried, and later ran a girls' school in Liverpool (Martineau, 1907).

Harriet (1802-78) was mainly at the family home at this time. After the family lost its money, she turned firstly to needlework in order to supplement the family finances, and then to writing, which was more profitable for her, as she wrote to Helen:

> I send some more articles for the Bazaar... The 8 bags will be likely to take, I hope: we think them very pretty. We cannot afford them under 6s/6d each. – If you think they will be a higher price, so much the better. Will you be so kind as to tell us whether any more will be likely to sell, and if so, which of the present set are most liked?
> ... I really think it worth while to do these little things now that we have more leisure time than we shall have when our family is larger, & there will be more work to be done. – Writing is the most profitable thing, & I do a good deal of it; but I cannot write all day. These trifles are an amusement to my poor mother too, & on that account I encourage them; for she has so many cares, that any amusement is welcome (JRUL 66, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 13 January 1826).

In 1826, Harriet became engaged to John Hugh Worthington, the young minister at Cross Street Chapel, mentioned earlier, who suffered a severe mental illness and then died in 1827.

James (1805-1900) was apprenticed to an engineer in Derby, where he lodged with the local Unitarian minister, the Rev Edward Higginson and his family. He and Higginson's elder daughter, Helen, had formed an attachment, but had agreed to keep this secret and not to see each other or correspond for four years until he had reached the age of majority, then twenty one (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 22, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 6 October 1823). Meanwhile, James abandoned his engineering apprenticeship with Mr Fox at Derby, and started training for the ministry at Manchester College at York (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 9, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 26 June 1822: pp. 9-10, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 15 July 1822). He began his training in 1822, so was a ministry student for much of the period under consideration. The parental ban on meeting and letter writing was relaxed, but it was not until April 1826, when James became twenty-one and was in his final year of ministry training, that the couple was permitted to announce their engagement

formally (Ban 7/84, Helen Higginson to Helen Martineau, 22 April 1826). James spent one year as temporary assistant to Dr Lant Carpenter at Bristol in 1827, helping with his school and also preaching. James and Helen married the following year, when James became minister in Dublin. The youngest Martineau sibling, Ellen (1811-89), was educated at home before being sent to the Kentishes and the Rankin's school in Bristol, where Harriet and James had been. Later she married Alfred Higginson, the younger brother of Helen and Emily (Ouren 1982, p. 61: Martineau, 1907, p. 22).

William Tagart, the father of Edward, who was to become the second husband of Helen Bourn/Martineau, was a wholesale linen draper in Bristol, in partnership with Mr Reynell and Mr Wreford, fellow Unitarians (Connell, 1944, p. 71). Following trade difficulties, the firm was dissolved and William moved to Bath to take up work as an accountant. His father's and grandfather's families were members of the Presbyterian congregation that became Lewin's Mead Unitarian Chapel in Bristol. He was described in his son's obituary as "a perfect gentleman in education, manners and deportment, and was justly esteemed by his family and fellow citizens" (The Inquirer, 1968, p. 699). William's wife was said to be a marvellous hostess and an accomplished pianist. Guests at the Tagart home included Coleridge, Southey and Cottle (Tagart Memoir). Soon after the move to Bath, Edward, William's second son born in 1804, was sent to the grammar school, where he proved to be very bright and won several prizes. In a later (1844) address Edward recalled:

> I remember distinctly a walk with my parents – now both in their graves – on a summer's evening, when I was about twelve years of age. The conversation turned, as with parents it will naturally do, upon the business or occupation which their children were to pursue. I was asked whether I should like to be a minister; and without hesitation I said that I should. From that early period my education and pursuits were directed to this end; nor have I entertained for a day, together, a single serious thought that any other occupation or profession would be more desirable, or more adapted to my disposition, principles, or taste (The Inquirer, 1858, p. 699).

Unfortunately William died the following year, leaving a pregnant widow and six children but very little money. The family moved to London and joined the Essex Street congregation. Their minister, Thomas Belsham, took an interest in the family, especially young Edward. In the autumn of 1819 at the age of sixteen - that is, below the usual age of entry for ministerial training - Edward was admitted to Manchester College, York. The oldest son, William Henry, started work in a warehouse to support the family and pay college fees for Edward. In 1825, when he was not quite 21 years old, but after five years of ministry training, Edward became minister of the Octagon Chapel Norwich. His preaching immediately made a favourable impression on the Martineau family when he went to candidate, and he was chosen by a congregational vote of sixty three for and eleven against, according to Rachel (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 45, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 8 January 1825: p 37, 5 February 1825). He later said of this time:

> Before I had finished my course at York, not yet twenty one years of age, I was chosen minister of what was then, and still is, one of the most important congregations of the old Presbyterian – now commonly called the Unitarian Dissent – the Octagon Chapel at Norwich. Its former minister, the Rev Thomas Madge, had just accepted an invitation to succeed the eminent Mr Belsham, as minister of the Essex Street Chapel. Far too young was I for that important station, and often I fainted at my post. I found myself upon entrance into life, totally without experience, in a situation demanding much. I felt here like the poor boy mentioned in St. John: -'There is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?' The many, however, made up for my deficiencies. They received with indulgence such poor services as I had strength and capacity to render. They bestowed upon me marks of kindness proportioned to their generosity more than to my merit; marks of kindness vividly brought back to my recollection and my heart (The Inquirer, 1858, p. 700).

Edward's mother and dependent siblings moved to Norwich with him, and the Martineau family played a leading part in helping them to get settled, having his sister Sarah to stay with them in their Magdalen Street house until permanent accommodation was found (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 49, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 5 May 1825; p. 51, 12 June 1825). They also encouraged James to stay in Norwich during the summer vacation "in order to interpret congregational people and

affairs to Mr Tagart on his settlement into his work" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 49, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 5 May 1825; p. 51, 12 June 1825). During his first year at Norwich, Edward was thought well of by the Martineau family:

> Of him and his sermons a most enthusiastic account is given; he is "an unspeakable treasure". There is undoubtedly to be great intimacy with him (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 53, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 1 October 1825).
>
> Harriet speaks enthusiastically of Tagart's sermons, which she hears perfectly, and praises his ministerial assiduity greatly (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 54 Harriet Martineau to James Martineau 12, October 1825).

Unfortunately Edward's older brother, who had continued to support the family by his work in London, became ill:

> Then comes an account of Mr Tagart's brother William, who is very ill from breaking a blood vessel. Mrs T has been sent for to London to nurse him and has brought him down to Norwich to be nursed. He is apparently in a very critical condition... unlikely to survive the next winter; yet he seems unaware of his danger (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 56, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 16 December 1825).

William's health deteriorated, and he died two months later (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, pp. 61, 62, 63, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 13 February 1826; 20 February 1826; Connell, 1944, p. 81: The Inquirer, 1826, p. 124).

Shortage of money had been a continuing problem for the Tagart family, and the congregation suggested various ways in which their new minister could earn more, mainly by writing, as "Mr Tagart will be thought too young for classes of young ladies" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 49, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 4 April 1825). William's illness and death meant that Edward became wholly responsible for the maintenance of his younger siblings and his mother:

> Mr Tagart had been obliged to make a confidant of Withers D[owson] about the embarrassed state of his domestic affairs; his income being unable to bear his mother's reckless expenditure on dress for herself and Sarah, [a daughter] and the necessary outlay for the invalid William, and his brother John... A plan is formed

> for insuring his life and he puts out proposals for private classes; and intends to get a connection for Review writing (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 57, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 22 December 1825).

The Octagon congregation was sympathetic to the difficulties of the impoverished family and helped in a variety of practical ways, including increasing Edward's stipend "in order to lessen the anxiety of the widow for the future provision of her younger children" (Tagart Memoir):

> Under the lead of Wither D. and Mr Cooper, the deacon, have brought the congregation [sic] to an immediate presentation of £50 to Mr Tagart, and a permanent increase of salary to £300 a year; and at the meeting the wish of Mr T. to have classes of pupils was announced, and the terms were laid on the table for detailed information.
>
> Mr Valentine wants to take the three little boys as pupils for £60, a most desirable arrangement for some time to come (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 61, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 13 February 1826).

Harriet reported to James that Edward's life was "not insurable", and that Edward wished Harriet "to open the way" for him to "pour out all his troubles" to James (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp. 61-62, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 13 February 1826). Elizabeth Martineau wrote to Helen for help in placing the oldest Tagart daughter as a school assistant:

> My mother's letter on the ends is addressed to sister Helen M.... She begs Helen M. to inquire from the Misses Lawrence whether they could receive Sarah Tagart as an assistant and give her the opportunity of continuing her personal improvement. Her needs and her qualifications are specified; and the circumstances of the family which compels every competent member to turn something into the common stock (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1. memorandum p. 59, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 22 December 1825).

In the event, Sarah went as an assistant to Miss Spencer's school in London, being "rigged out in clothes etc" and "the premium paid by friends of the situation" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 60, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 7 February 1826). Harriet reported:

> Sarah T. has gone to Miss Spencer's for a three year engagement purchased for her by a premium of £100 subscribed by friends; her wardrobe also being got up for her

> by the assiduous fingers, as well as purses, of Magdelen Street and other guardians (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 61, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 13 February 1826).

Helen was thanked for her part in this:

> I have never thanked you my dear for all the trouble you took in obtaining information for me respecting a proper place for Sarah Tagart and for your subsequent liberal and acceptable donation. By the help of kind friends we have supplied her with a substantial plain wardrobe and I think saved enough to pay half the premium which we hardly expected. She is much and seriously impressed by the new circumstances of her family, which are I suppose communicated to the poor girls for the first time, and I cannot help hoping that Sarah will turn out a very clever person and a valuable member of society (Ban 8/39, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 24 March 1826).

In December 1825 Harriet had reported difficulties with the Tagart family, summarised by James in the following words:

> There has been trouble, too, with Sarah T., who had behaved with some foolishness which has distressed Mr T., probably toward Rachel and Harriet, which, however, shall not (word indecipherable) against their devotion to her improvement (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 56, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 16 December 1825).

The following week Harriet criticised Mrs Tagart and Sarah for their "reckless expenditure" but was more sympathetic as William's illness reached its conclusion:

> So now one understands Mrs Tagart and allows for the unfortunate influences under which Sarah has been brought up (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 61, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 13 February 1826).

In March, Harriet reported to her brother the first indication that Edward's leadership of worship was not seen as beyond criticism:

> Harriet then reports the various reaction (sic) of Tagart's energies and spirits from the long repression which had weighed them down: and describes the subject and interest of his sermon; the other parts of the service are not quite what they might be (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 64, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 7 March 1826).

Her next letter described Edward as being "full of energy and in great spirits" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 65, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 26 March

1826), but at the end of April Harriet showed concern about his lack of financial discipline, according to James's summary:

> Tagart, delightful in the pulpit, she finds sadly careless and unconcerned about expense, never knowing what he owes or what he has, and allowing his mother to keep a luxurious home. But for Withers D., he would be in continual scrapes (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 66, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 28 April 1826).

It is possible that the financial difficulties of the Martineau family business, coupled with the trouble that the family had taken to help the Tagarts, made Harriet extra sensitive about the apparent carelessness over financial matters. But this did not stop Harriet from telling Edward about James's engagement to Helen Higginson, agreed on his twenty first birthday, 21 April, but not made public, possibly because of the serious illness of Thomas Martineau (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 67, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 7 May 1826). The details of Edward's subsequent relationship with the Martineau family belong to the story of Helen Bourn/Martineau/Tagart, the subject of this chapter. When Edward moved to London on his marriage to Helen, he planned to settle his mother and dependent siblings in Worcester, where a small income would go further (JRUL 95, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 3 December 1827).

John Gooch Robberds, minister of Cross Street Chapel, has been mentioned in relation to the variety of theological stances within Unitarianism. He, like the Martineaus, came from a Norwich family, and after his training at Manchester College in York had his first brief ministry at the Octagon Chapel before going to Manchester in 1811. During the 1820s he returned to Norwich frequently to visit his family. His wife, Mary, was the daughter of Mary and William Turner of Newcastle, and was also a close friend and correspondent of Helen. William was minister of the Unitarian congregation in Newcastle upon Tyne, and through his marriage to Mary Holland was related to the Rankin family and thus to the Martineaus (Harbottle 1997, p. 185). William's son, Henry became the minister

of the Nottingham Unitarian congregation, and married Catharine Rankin, who was Elizabeth Martineau's niece, in 1819. He died three years later, at the early age of thirty. The widowed Catharine Turner was significant not only as a friend and correspondent, but also as a potential role model for Helen.

Francis Darbishire, James Martineau's closest friend at Manchester College, was also a distant cousin of Helen, as her father's sister Sarah had married James Darbishire, Francis's uncle (Ouren, 1975, p. 22). The Higginson family has already been mentioned in connection with the Martineaus. Helen Higginson's brother Edward was also training for the ministry at York, and her younger sister, Emily, formed an attachment to Francis Darbishire, with the understanding that there would be an engagement (HMCO MS J. Martineau 3, memorandum p. 17, James Martineau to Frances Darbishire, 20 October 1826). Francis suffered from loss of voice and prolonged ill-health so had to abandon his ministerial training course (HMCO MS J. Martineau 3, folio 36, Francis Darbishire to James Martineau, 26 September 1827). He also had to relinquish his hopes of marrying Emily, a course of action necessitated "by his father's prohibition, as all others judge, by a condition of health and constitutional tendency, rendering marriage wrong" (HMCO MS. J. Martineau 3, memorandum p. 20, Helen Higginson to Edward Higginson, 20 February 1827). Francis joined his brother's law firm, and became a solicitor, but he never regained robust health and died in 1833 (HMCO MS J. Martineau 3, folio 36, Francis Darbishire to James Martineau, 27 September 1827; Drummond and Upton, 1902 vol. I, p. 32). Emily went on to marry Samuel Bache, who became minister of a prominent congregation in Birmingham for over thirty years (Ouren, 1982, p. 25; Carpenter, 1905, p. 36). Helen, Emily and Francis were all significant friends and correspondents of Helen Martineau.

Another significant link by marriage was that of the Gaskells to the Broadbents. William Broadbent's wife Rebecca was a sister of Roger Gaskell's wife Ann. Roger's sister, also called Ann, had married her first cousin, Holbrook (Ouren, 1982, p. 51).

"When my path of duty is clear before me, I am always happy": Helen Bourn/Martineau/Tagart

Helen Bourn was an only child, born in 1795 when her father was thirty-six. As her aunt and uncle, Margaret and Samuel Jones, had no children, she was the object of much attention from at least one aunt and uncle as well as from her parents. Her aunt Margaret sought the advice of Mrs Catharine Cappe, a close friend and expert in the education of girls, and Helen spent time with Mrs Cappe, both at her own home in York and at her aunt's home in Green Hill, Manchester (Connell, 1944, p. 74-75; Cappe, 1822, pp. 435-439). Helen was given a good education, which included classics, classical history and religion. Some of her schoolbooks survived until comparatively recently, with copies of essays and poems, some of which may be her original work (Tagart Memoir, n.d.). She was also good at sketching the various places she visited, including holidays in Wales, the Lake District and Scotland and she continued this practice in adulthood, to the delight of her friends who were always pleased to receive her drawings. There is a portrait of Helen as a young woman, which shows her to be very good looking, with a strong nose and chin and curly reddish brown hair (Tagart Memoir, n.d.). Catharine Cappe was involved with Manchester College when it moved to York in 1802, and it is likely that Helen first met young men training for the Unitarian ministry there while staying with Mrs Cappe.

Helen's first romantic attachment was to a young man who had not been a student at York, however. She became engaged to a promising young minister, Thomas Biggins Broadbent, who was a distant cousin of hers by marriage (Tagart Memoir; McLachlan DWL 24.242.1). He had graduated from Glasgow University with an MA and had become

Classical Tutor at a dissenting academy in Hackney before inheriting both money and property. However, he collapsed with an "apoplectic fit" at four a.m. one Sunday morning in November 1817, after finishing writing a sermon on the wisdom of virtue for delivery the following afternoon at the Warrington Chapel. He died, aged twenty-four, within a few hours, without regaining consciousness (McLachlan, DWL 24.242/1, Monthly Repository, 1817, p. 533). Thus at the beginning of the period of Helen's life that is covered by the bulk of the letters, she was a young woman who had experienced both material prosperity and dramatic bereavement. After Thomas's death, Helen suffered considerable mental anguish, and was helped enormously by John Gooch Robberds, her minister and personal friend, as she recalled some years later:

> When my heart was first thrown back into my possession, I felt an aching void and but for your friendship and affectionate attentions, but for that sweet interchange of sentiment which you allowed me to enjoy with you, I do not think I could have survived it, or at least my mind would have become the wreck of what it was – a state far worse than death! (JRUL 167, Helen Bourn to John Gooch Robberds, draft c. December 1821).

John Gooch Robberds was eight years older than Helen, and though only distantly related, often took on the role of older brother as well as minister, and she sometimes addressed him as brother in her letters (JRUL 30, Helen Martineau to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826; Ban 9/54, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 30 January 1824).

It was Thomas Martineau's sister Lissey who was the first of the Martineau family to get to know Helen: when she wrote to congratulate Thomas on his engagement to Helen, she reminded him that, "I was your Helen's first acquaintance in our family" (Ban 7/66, Elizabeth Greenhow to Thomas Martineau, 14 May 1822). In 1818, when Lissey first met Helen, Tom was twenty-six and Helen twenty-three. Lissey was spending some time in the house of her maternal grandparents, the Rankins, in Newcastle upon Tyne. Helen, in the company of John and Mary Robberds, visited Newcastle in the summer of 1818. Mary

visited her family in Newcastle frequently, and it would not have been considered unusual for Helen to accompany them. In her letter to Tom, Lissey wrote:

> Mrs R. the children and Helen Bourn stay a few weeks longer.... Helen is sweet, interesting nay heavenly beyond description. She looks well in health and her spirits are much recovered – in the family circle she is very cheerful – at all times calm and placid and seems to enjoy the pleasures of others though she does not join in them. My first meeting with her was a sad one but that over she appeared to have a sad enjoyment in speaking to me of her altered situation and the trials she has undergone (JRUL 155, Elizabeth Martineau Junior to Thomas Martineau, 19 July 1818).

It may have been through the Robberds that Tom and Helen actually met, as John Gooch Robberds made frequent visits to Norwich to visit his mother. Helen stayed with the Martineau family in Norwich in the autumn of 1820, according to James Martineau's summary of his sister Harriet's letter, which reported that, "Helen Bourn staying with us, but soon going" in early October 1820 (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 3, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 6 October 1820).

About this time, probably during her Norwich visit, Tom had declared his love to Helen, and he apparently proposed to her in a letter which arrived in Manchester before she returned from her travels. Helen drafted a reply immediately, writing that she appreciated the "pure and exalted sentiments" of his letter, but she wished to avoid giving him the pain of unnecessary suspense (JRUL 135, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft October 1820). She explained her decision to reject his proposal in these words:

> I have asked the advice of my friends, I have thought... seriously on the subject of your letter and my final determination is to reject your addresses. "consult your own heart" is the advice given to me by all who are most tenderly interested in my happiness. I have consulted it and concluded that esteem without love is not (a) sufficient. I cannot conscientiously give my hand (JRUL 135, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft October 1820).

Helen went on to remark on the attractiveness of a connection with the Martineau family, and the "delightful intercourse which I should enjoy with the different members of your valuable family", but wrote that:

> even this is not sufficient to weigh against the chance of... discovering when it is too late that I have ruined[?] both your own happiness and my own (JRUL 135, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft October 1820).

Tom clearly did not take this rejection as a final decision, and in a letter to him the following month, Helen considered herself "to be under the painful necessity of once more refusing to comply" (Ban 9/52, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 13 November 1820). She referred to "the reasons given in my former letter", and went on to clarify her situation as follows:

> I consider a course, such as you propose in the same light as an engagement, & for the reasons given in my former letter I cannot consent to it. I think you have a little understood me if you imagined I meant to assure you that there was nothing in your mind, character of circumstances that could at all interfere with our mutual & complete happiness. I said and I again repeat that I have a very high opinion of you, so much so, that I do not think it could be materially increased – but there are certain & undefinable differences of character and turn of mind, which cannot be easily explained & yet which may have a very important influence on the happiness of those who are to spend their whole lives together. but why should I attempt to enter into particulars, it is only useless and painful to both of us. Thanks & good wishes are all I have to offer you in return for your expressions of affection – but they are yours most cordially & with every friendly feeling (Ban 9/52, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 13 November 1820).

The following year Tom became ill, and Helen expressed anxiety about him to and asked for news about him from his sister Rachel, as she explained in a letter to Tom:

> I was indeed deeply grieved some weeks ago to hear of such unfavourable accounts of your health the idea seized my mind that perhaps it might be in fact be occasioned by the disappointment of yr hopes respecting me. & I felt that if yr illness terminated as I then feared, from the account I heard, that I should never forgive myself; it was under this impression that I wrote to yr sister Rachel being convinced that from her I should know the truth. Her reply was long in coming & I anticipated the worst. (Ban 9/53, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 29 November 1821).

Rachel eventually replied, and reassured Helen that Tom's health was much improved, but raised concern about his emotional state (Ban 9/53, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 29 November 1821). A correspondence between Tom and Helen developed from this, and he renewed his courtship, which Helen received reluctantly, writing:

> [Rachel's] account of the state of yr mind instructed[?] & affected me & perhaps prepared me to receive more favourably than I should otherwise have done the renewal of yr former proposals which the indication of the depth & steadiness of your attachment has aided materially (Ban 9/53, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 29 November 1821).

She went on to regret giving pain, and stated that she had refused to enter into correspondence in the belief that Tom "would soon forget me & find happiness in some other connection which had it not in my power to bestow"; and she had agreed to correspond and "comply with your wishes as far as a more confidential communication of our thoughts & ideas on this important subject", while still expressing reservations about "other difficulties existing in my mind" (Ban 9/53, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 29 November 1821).

Helen consulted John Gooch Robberds, who recommended that she agree to a correspondence to get to know Tom better. However, she was concerned that she was not in love with Tom in the intense way she had felt for Thomas Biggins Broadbent (JRUL 167, Helen Bourn to John Gooch Robberds, undated draft, about December 1821). From the draft of a letter from Helen to Tom in January 1822, it seems that John Gooch Robberds had interceded with her on Tom's behalf, as she wrote:

> Mr R suggested yr being anxious for a reply – so you may thank him for hearing from me so soon... long con[versation] with Mr R succeeding in convincing me that another en[gagement] not inconsistent with pure and holy attach[ment] but might even strengthen purify and exalt it (JRUL 134, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft January 1822).

Helen went on to explain that her feelings had not altered, but offered hope with the words:

> While I consented to a correspondence with you I did not expect that any immediate change would take place in my feelings but I thought it was only due to you after the proof of attachment you had given me to afford you every opportunity of becoming better known to me. The result is yet to be tried. You must have patience with me. A more confidential and reserved intercourse can alone produce any favourable effect upon my feelings towards you (JRUL 134, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft January 1822).

Tom must have written back very persuasively, for later that month he wrote to Helen's father declaring his intentions. Joseph's reply was courteous and prompt. He asked that Tom make "some sacrifice to obtain so desirable a treasure", and move to some part of Lancashire. He indicated that Helen already had "in her own right very handsome property now in funds, left by her Uncle Jones and likewise the considerable fortune which she has in expectancy both from her Mother and myself, we having no other child". He stressed that, as they had no other "near or dear relations", they would not want Helen to move away from the area. He also suggested that Tom study for a diploma and add the role of physician to that of surgeon, which did not carry prestige in Manchester (Joseph Bourn to Thomas Martineau, 23 January 1822, Tagart Memoir). Tom visited Manchester and must have convinced both Helen and her father, for by April 1822 an engagement had been arranged without Tom's agreement to move to the North West, in spite of continued misgivings from Helen evident in her draft letter to him soon after:

> I cannot draw such bright and beautiful pictures of happiness as yr glowing pen has traced... I cannot help acknowledging that my heart sinks sometimes at the tho'ts of all I must relinquish (JRUL 175, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 16 April 1822).

Harriet described these events from a different perspective:

> Full account of Tom's engagement to Helen Bourn; of the way in which it came about; of her father's absurd resistance unless Tom would give up his profession and come to Manchester as a fustian manufacturer. The wedding not likely to take place for about a year (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 8, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 11 April 1822).

Although by April 1822 Helen had agreed to the engagement, she was not at first willing for it to be made public, and Tom's mother wrote to her to request this, writing:

> We trust dearest Helen you will take into your grave consideration the awkward predicament in which we at present stand having daily occasion for equivocations & shufflings to which we are greatly unused, & in your gracious goodness relieve us by your permission as soon as is agreeable to yourself to acknowledge to those who ask, the happiness in prospect for us (Ban 8/27, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Bourn, 24 April, 1822).

In a draft letter Elizabeth wrote to James on 30 April that, "Tom's engagement to Helen Bourn is happily settled, though not yet announced to friends" (HMCO MS J, Martineau 2, memorandum p. 3, Elizabeth Martineau to James Martineau, 30 April 1822). However, although Helen told Tom that "you may mention our engagement", she continued to express reservations and difficulties (JRUL 174 Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, 1 May 1822). Thomas evidently shared some of this with his family, for Lissey (by now married to Thomas Greenhow) suggested to him that Helen was trifling with his affections and so lowering both her dignity and his (JRUL 38, Elizabeth Greenhow to Thomas Martineau, 3 March 1822). None the less, she was eager to give her congratulations when the engagement was officially announced (Ban 7/66, Elizabeth Greenhow to Thomas Martineau, 14 May 1822).

During the spring and summer of 1822 Helen continued to explore some of her reservations in drafts of her letters to Tom, writing about three areas of difficulties. Firstly, she continued to be concerned about leaving her family and friends, and wrote, "if you lived any nearer Manchester I should not hesitate" (JRUL 174, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, (draft, 1 May 1822). She even enlisted the views of family friends when she stayed with the Broadbent family, writing:

> Mr Broadbent... thinks I should not leave my mother & that is what I have felt. You may say my father remove to N[orwich]. Cannot – his estates in the neighbourhood – if I go M must accompany me & I cannot bear the thought of separation etc – would not answer for the consequences (JRUL 133, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, undated draft spring 1822).

There is no way of knowing if Helen actually sent a letter based on this draft, but it does reveal her thoughts at this time, and her use of other people's views, which she usually only seemed to follow if they agreed with her wishes.

In the second set of objections she rehearses concerns about the life-style of the wife of a doctor, in partnership with his uncle and expected to have pupils living in the

matrimonial home. She wrote about this on several occasions, and sometimes connected it to the problem of distance from Manchester:

> You say your uncle does not approve of yr being away[?] from your business as it hurts your interest. Is your business then yr first object in life? It is a pity you had not realised this sooner – perhaps yr Uncle would approve of yr being married by proxy... If you think so much of a journey to Manchester now, what am I to do all my life in that obscure quarter of the world. are we never to visit our distant friends - are we to take no journeys together (JRUL 174, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 1 May 1822).

> As I am not going to marry yr. Uncle & have nothing to do with his opinion I do beg & desire you will not bring his name in again. With regard to taking pupils into the house, you know my opinion well enough, if it were absolutely necessary I would not say a word about it but you must be aware that it is not the case & therefor I shall not consent to such an interruption of domestic comfort. You have already entered into some engagements. We must either wait till these are concluded or you must contrive for them to board out of the house (JRUL 176, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft 1 May 1822).

Clearly Helen was not used to being openly subservient to male authority, but when she thought it helpful to her argument she did quote the opinion of others:

> With regard to your pupils forming an obstacle to the accomplishment of your wishes. It is certainly with me an additional reason for delay & would be so if there were no others & those friends who are most interested in my welfare are of the same opinion – they think with me that if you were very anxious to remove the difficulty you would contrive for the young men to board out of the house for that is all that is required. Surely there is some respectable family in N. that would have no objection to such an inmate & surely the parents of the young men who I think are yr friends would agree to this arrangement to oblige you. But I beg that nothing more be said between us on this subject. You know my full opinion – on this point I shall be firm. I see no objection to yr having pupils if they board out of the house. If you thought motives of a pecuniary kind influenced you on this occasion it would greatly lessen you in my imagination (JRUL 133, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, undated draft spring 1822).

In spite of Helen's insistence at this point, later letters reveal that she did in fact accept her husband's pupils as boarders, so it may be that having written the drafts, Helen actually sent more conciliatory letters to Tom.

The third area of concern, and probably the one that underlay the other two, was that Helen still did not feel as passionately about Tom Martineau as she remembered her feelings for her first fiancé, Thomas Biggins Broadbent, whose memory was kept fresh by

her visits to the Broadbent family at Latchford and the times she visited his grave. She expressed this in her draft from Latchford as follows:

> My mind ought to be filled with visions of the future but alas! `I can only weep over recollections of the past. I cannot help comparing my present feelings with what they once were & the difference is so great that I sometimes think I have done wrong in according to your wishes, before I felt that [illegible word] glow of affection which ought to be the bond of such an engagement (JRUL 133, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, undated draft spring 1822).

Never the less, Helen did reconcile eventually herself to marriage to Tom, and wrote in terms which demonstrate how much religious sentiment was a part of her decision-making:

> I resolved to bid farewell to that spot that was dearest to me. The Day before (we left) I slipped out unperceived walked to ?W.[arrington] & having procured the key of the chapel I entered it alone & remained there nearly an hour. On <u>his</u> grave I read your letter & <u>there</u> I implored a blessing on our own union. While my mind was filled with the past, the present & the future - While I thought of all that had been & all that was – I saw things in their true colours. I felt that a life of usefulness and active virtue was the best preparation for that state where I hope for a reunion with those I have loved. I felt that a virtuous friendship in this world was the best preservative against [its or all?] follies and [its or all?] trials & as I prayed for strength & wisdom to act right - I felt my mind revived & cheered more that I can expect. From that time my prospects have assumed a more smiling app[earance?]. I felt a... conviction that all was for the best that all would be well & I have been happier ever since. Was it his pure and generous spirit hovering over me that wispered[?] well spent days & hours of sweet contentment yet to be enjoyed? (JRUL 169, Helen Bourn to Tomas Martineau, undated draft spring/summer 1822).

By September of the same year the various difficulties had been resolved, and Helen and Tom were married in Manchester, with John Gooch Robberds giving away the bride, a role sometimes undertaken by Unitarian ministers in lieu of officiating formally at the service (JRUL 76, Helen Martineau to James Martineau, 10 October 1825). It seems that at this time Unitarian marriages were not occasions when both families gathered for a large event, which may be due partly to the fact that until the Marriage Act of 1836 all marriages had to take place in an Anglican church (Bennett, 1913, p. 254). So it was not unusual that the Martineau family were absent and it certainly did not signify lack of enthusiasm for the union (Ban 8/28, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas Martineau, 8 September 1822). Indeed,

Tom's mother's letter to Helen congratulating her on the engagement is almost obsequious in its tone, with the inclusion on phrases such as the following:

> How you have rejoiced our hearts by your kind decision in favour of my dear Son it is impossible for me to express... whenever you generously consent to a union with him...
> (Ban 8/27, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Bourn, 24 April 1822).

Immediately after the wedding the couple went on a honeymoon tour of Scotland while Tom's mother saw to the furnishing of their house in Norwich (Ban 8/28, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas Martineau, 8 September 1822). Harriet reported on this to James, who was by this time a student for the ministry at Manchester College, York, with this summarised as follows:

> Tom's wedding journey in the highlands is discussed. They supped with Dr Fletcher at Edinburgh and were to be at N.Castle last Saturday; at Manchester next, and home on Wednesday the week after; inconsiderably late, she thinks, for Uncle Philip (who was Tom's senior partner in medical practice). Their house is all but ready, and their reception parties will be extended into Sessions week, enabling them to appear at the Ball, and have done with the ceremonial part of their settlement (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 12, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 3 October 1822).

Harriet's next letter gave further details of the newly weds' homecoming:

> Notice had arrived on the 6th from Tom and his [brother or bride?] of their return on Thursday evening, the 10th, with invitation for all to be at Bank St. [Tom and Helen's home] that evening to celebrate my mother's birthday; so they were all assembled to greet the arrival, and after a merry evening left early. They all appeared in public on Sunday, the 13th (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 13, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 13 October 1822).

Harriet further reported in November, "Their wedding gaities (sic) being well over they are delightfully settled in their charming home" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 14, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 9 November 1822). Tom then resumed both his medical practice and his work in the Octagon Chapel Sunday school, with Harriet commenting that:

> The delay in instructing the Sunday School is due to the mind of the present management to eliminate differences of opinion... only Tom's patient and persevering efforts resulted in a proper congregational school organization [sic]

> worked by six gentlemen and eleven ladies. (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 15, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 15 December 1822).

Two important events occurred in the few weeks after the marriage: Helen became pregnant, and Tom's existing lung condition deteriorated. Harriet reported on both to James:

> Account of Tom's state since an attack of illness (probably haemorrhage) of which I am presumed to have knowledge, though unmentioned in any previous letter.
>
> He has frequent coughing and is so liable to colds as to go out only in "a coach".
>
> He dined at Magdelen Street on Friday, was in good spirits, with appetite but is weak; lungs not yet affected, but in danger of it, necessitating great care. My uncle, himself ill, urged for him to attend to their papers; but Hull and Dr. Evans advise his consulting 2 or 3 eminent London doctors immediately, and quitting Norwich for the next winter, the latter for Madeira, the former for Penzance, as sufficient.
>
> His wife expects her confinement in the summer.
>
> Mr Madge calls every day and shows the most tender affection for him, The feeling is general, and expressed by a lady who said, "He is a young man not only universally esteemed, but universally loved". (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 18, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 2 March 1823).

Soon after this letter, the couple, accompanied by Harriet, spent some weeks on the south coast of England at Torquay (Drummond and Upton, 1902, p. 40). Harriet kept James informed about their journey to the South coast, Tom's health, and their daily activities:

> She describes the divisions of their day, her long before-breakfast walk as far as Bob's Nose, the N. point of the bay; the hours of study till the mid-day warmth prescribed the walk for Tom; the late reading which amuses the evening; plus the transcribing her Devotional Exercises occupies the little time she has for such occupation (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum, pp. 19-20, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 1 April 1823).

During this visit of about six weeks Elizabeth Martineau wrote at least two letters to Tom, Helen and Harriet, full of practical advice and news of friends and family in Norwich, and Helen received at least one letter from John Gooch Robberds, with news of Manchester friends (Ban 8/30 and 8/31, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas, Helen and Harriet Martineau, 17 April and 5 May 1823; Ban 9/6, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 22 April

1823). The group returned to Norwich early in May to make preparations for the baby's birth, and Helen's mother also came from Manchester to be of help. At this point, Tom seemed well enough for his uncle to expect him back at work (Ban 8/31 Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas and Helen Martineau 5 May 1823). The baby, a boy, was born safely on 18 June and christened Philip Meadows after his uncle, Tom's senior partner, at a service held in Norwich conducted by John Gooch Robberds (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 22, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 19 June 1822; Ban 9/4, Ann Rankin to Helen Martineau, 23 June 1823; JRUL 139, Helen Martineau to Thomas Martineau, 16 August 1823).

Helen seemed to have settled down happily into the combination of marriage and motherhood, telling Tom, "Believe me, my dear Love, when I say that I never was so happy before", in spite of some difficulties in dealing with the resident medical students when Tom was away, which she described thus:

> The youths were both at our tea & Worship did not come home till sometime after 11 o'clock which kept me up longer than I wished. I spoke to them the next morning & Worship stared me in the face & said you had left no orders with <u>him</u>. I applied to Sorting, who acknowledged you had spoken to him – but Worship persevered in it that as <u>you</u> had not told <u>him</u> about being out both at once, it did not signify. At dinner they seated themselves before I came into the room & Shorting sat all the time with his back towards me & his elbows on the table. The next morning your uncle called & I requested him to speak to them, which he did, & they have been rather more attentive since (JRUL 139, Helen Martineau to Thomas Martineau, 16 August 1823).

However, Tom's health varied but on the whole did not improve, so they decided to implement the plan to spend the winter in Madeira in the hope of him benefiting from the mild climate (a common practice at the time for people with tuberculosis) (JRUL 139, Helen Martineau to Thomas Martineau, 16 August 1823). Several friends and family members offered to go with the couple and their new baby, but Helen refused the offer of female companionship and they went alone, apart from three servants, Ann Hardy, Ann Tillet, and William (Ban 8/34, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas Martineau, 10 January 1824;

Ban 9/54, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 30 January – 1 February 1824). At the end of September, Tom and Helen group left Norwich for London, where they stayed at their "Aunt Lee's house" and were joined by their servants to travel to Portsmouth, where Thomas senior had gone before them to take "all necessary arrangements off their hands" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp 22-3, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau 6 October 1823). They were due to sail on 1 October, and they reached Madeira on 1 November (JRUL 142, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 25 September 1823; JRUL 171, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 28 November 1823). Immediately on arrival they sent a letter to the Martineau family at Norwich giving details of their journey and reporting that, "they and the little Philip have arrived in better health than they had at starting", though Tom had a chest cold and a fever. Once this letter had been read at Norwich, Harriet enclosed it with her letter to James (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 26, 30 November 1823 enclosing 1 November from Funchal, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau).

Sadly Philip, who was then four months old, showed signs of restlessness during the journey and became obviously ill soon after their arrival in Madeira. He died on 27 November (JRUL 171, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 28 November 1823). During this time abroad Helen and Tom received long letters from family and friends in England, giving both comfort and news, and they, especially Helen, in turn wrote much about their stay in Madeira. In particular, "their long and beautiful letter communicating the baby's death" apparently received between the tenth and fourteenth of January 1824, was copied several times and sent to various members of the family, including James (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 29, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 2 February 1824). Nor did the hoped for improvement in Tom's health occur, and the family were concerned by contradictory reports, as Harriet told James:

> There may be a call for Helen from Madeira, whence come reports, certainly difficult to reconcile; Tom himself writing in high spirits (pulse down to 80), under the conviction he is recovering, while Helen's accompanying letter shares her opinion that his disease even makes progress and it is easily becoming only too plain (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 32, misdated 12 November, probably April, 1824).

It was decided that brother Henry, who was already at Gibraltar on business, should visit Tom and Helen, and he set sail from Lisbon at the end of April, according to Harriet, summarised by James as follows:

> Helen will be able to speak her whole mind to Harriet [probably transcription error for Henry], so that we shall learn all, which could hardly be expected before, as Tom reads all her letters. She secures all the strength of mind of one experienced in sorrow, and directs their reading and purposes in the way most suitable to their position on the confines of two worlds (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 34, 12 April 1824).

During Henry's visit, it was decided that Tom and Helen should return home, as Harriet reported to James after Henry returned:

> Report of Henry's arrival on Tuesday, and Madeira impressions...
>
> He went to Madeira on the 3rd inst., and the understanding of it was the belief that Tom and Helen should return by the first good vessel a few weeks hence, in consequence of Mr Bourn's sinking state, together with the opinion of Drs. Renton and Heineken, that Tom's case was hopeless and the end not far.
>
> Helen bearing her trial calmly, and all feel that the suspense was harder to meet than the settled expectation of parting in the autumn (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 37, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 28 May 1824).

Amongst other concerns, Helen was worried about her father, who had suffered some sort of sudden mental illness, described to her in a letter from John Gooch Robberds as resulting in "a complete aberration of mind" (JRUL 173, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 30 March – 5 April 1824). Accordingly, Tom and Helen, still with their three servants, left Madeira on 14 May (Ban 9/55, Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, 28 May – 5 June 1824). During the voyage Tom's health took a turn for the worse, and he died on the ship on 3 June. Helen described the events in detail to John and Mary Robberds. She hoped to be able to bury her husband on land, but the ship was becalmed and she agreed to

a burial at sea (Ban 9/55, Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, 28 May - 5 June 1824). She returned overland from Bordeaux through France, and was met by Henry at Calais. He then accompanied her across the English Channel, with a short stay at their relations the Lees, in Newington Green, North London, on the way to Norwich (Ban 8/84, Henry and Helen Martineau to Ellen Bourn, 28 June 1824). After a week with the Martineaus, Thomas Martineau senior escorted Helen with Ann Hardy via London to her family home in Salford, as part of a business trip (JRUL 165, Helen Martineau to Ellen Bourn, 2 July 1824).

The immediate concern on Helen's arrival home was the situation of her parents, and she resolved to dedicate the remainder of her life to caring for them. This proved to be a considerable burden, as her father's sanity had not returned and he needed constant supervision. According to Harriet, "Helen M.'s position there with her parents is very desolate and empty of all external sources of conversation" (HMCO Ms J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 42, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 7 October). Elizabeth Martineau supervised the dismantling of Tom and Helen's Norwich household, and advised Helen to make things easier for herself by employing a trustworthy companion for her father and setting up in a house of her own near John and Mary Robberds (Ban 8/92, Rachel and Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 14 August 1824). Both these actions were taken, but how much weight Helen attached to her mother-in law's advice it is impossible to say. The companion to her father was in post by October 1824 (Ban 7/71, Elizabeth Greenhow to Helen Martineau, 17 October 1824), but Helen did not move into her new home until the following year. James summarised Harriet's news of this as follows:

> Harriet... is now helping Helen prepare for the removal to a small house in Oxford Road at £70 rent, the only one to be had thereabouts. She has sent for her furniture from Norwich and Harriet stays a while to aid her in settling in to more steady

interests and occupations (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 46, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 5 February 1825).

It may have been about this time that her father became a resident in a small institution run by a Mr Goodlad in Bury, where he was visited from time to time by both Helen and her mother, and also, when they were away, by Ann Hardy (JRUL 47, Ellen Bourn to Helen Martineau, 5 August n.y.; JRUL 166, Ann Hardy to Helen Martineau, 12 September 1826).

Over the winter Helen clearly suffered some reaction to the distressing events of the previous year, to which must be added her previous bereavement of her first fiancé. She wrote to the Martineaus about her "loss of tranquillity" (Ban 8/92, Rachel and Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 14 August 1824). Several of the Martineau women and Mary Robberds all offered advice. Lissey suggested she spend more time with friends, and also "making such a change in your occupations as may cheer your mind and benefit your health" (Ban 7/71, Elizabeth Greenhow to Helen Martineau, 17 October 1824). Rachel, in addition to the advice about Helen getting her own home, reminded her that exertion was necessary to maintain tranquillity (Ban 8/92, Rachel and Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 14 August 1824). Then Harriet and James (who had spent several weeks in the late summer of 1824 on a walking holiday in Scotland) came to stay with Helen at Christmas (Ban 6/108, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, 10 December 1824; Ban 6/109, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, 4 March 1825), with Harriet suggesting that a strict discipline of study coupled with public charitable works was what was needed (Ban 4/81, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 12 May 1825).

Helen's state of despondency lasted, or least recurred frequently, for much of the winter of 1824 and the spring and into the summer of 1825, though she busied herself with suitable good works, including helping to set up an infant school (Ban 8/42, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 16 June 1825; JRUL 54, Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau, 22 June 1825). There are no further references to the school in the letters, but

during the summer Helen resumed her usual practice of visiting friends and relatives, returning to the Martineaus in Norwich for at least a month in July and August. At Norwich, the minister of the Octagon Chapel, Thomas Madge, had resigned in order to assist Thomas Belsham at Essex Street Chapel, London, and in July a new minister, Edward Tagart, took up the position fresh from college (Evans, 1897, pp. 150, 190). Edward's background, his youth and inexperience have already been sketched earlier. Helen was present at Edward's ordination, which she described to John Gooch Robberds (Ban 9/8, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 16 August 1825).

On her return from Norwich Helen continued to be subject to bouts of despondency, and perhaps partly because of this formed a close friendship with her brother-in-law James, who was also subject to depression. She saw in James many similarities to her late husband and thought that in some ways he was starting to fulfil the role of his late brother, as she told him:

> I thank you for your note, & in reply to your expressions of gratitude for any trifling services which it may be in my power to render you, I can only repeat that if the pleasure and improvement which I derive from your society were not a sufficient recompense, I have still stronger motive in my earnest desire to show by every means in my power, respect & affection for the memory of him who is gone. & how can this more strongly carried than by affectionate attentions to those of his family remaining... It seem to me that you are rising up in some measure to supply his place in you family. I can trace (- & I do it with the most heartfelt delight) many traits of resemblance in your mind, in your character & in your disposition. In short, I am never in your company without feeling this. This must partly account for the very deep interest which I take in all that concerns you, & my unwillingness to lose even a few hours of your company (JRUL 76 Helen Martineau to James Martineau, incomplete draft 12 October 1825).

James and Harriet had already detected an improvement in Helen's character, noted by Harriet earlier that year:

> The conversation about the Madeira experiences evinced how large an influence Tom's mind and character had exercised on his wife and opened depths in her unexplored before. The order of his life and thoughtfulness for others are vastly increased and the weak sentimentality which, it was thought, Mr Robberds encouraged, is exchanged for practical reality (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 45, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 8 January 1825).

This summary by James reveals not just the increased esteem in which Helen was held, but also the values and expectations of the Martineau family, which were significant in future events.

Helen seems to have been generous with her inheritance, and frequently gave gifts both in money and in kind to various members of the Martineau family. Certainly Robert and Jane wrote several times to thank her, as did James, and occasionally Elizabeth, who several times mentioned the financial hard times affecting the textile trade and the family in particular (Ban 8/96, Robert Martineau to Helen Martineau, 20 January 1825; Ban 8/86, Jane Martineau to Helen Martineau, 16 November 1824; JRUL 168, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, n.d.; Ban 6/108, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, 10 December 1824; Ban 8/42, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 16 June 1825). She also helped people who were not related, such as a medical student who qualified as a doctor and went out to India, A. B. Cumberland (JRUL 50, A. B. Cumberland to Helen Martineau, 12 April 1826; Ban 7/41, A. B. Cumberland to Helen Martineau, 16 April 1827).

In spite of her fits of depression, Helen kept up a round of activities appropriate to her position, including hosting a stream of visitors over the winter. These included Henry Martineau in the autumn and at Christmas, James Martineau and Helen and Emily Higginson, whom she had not met before, but in whom she took an interest because of James's attachment to Helen, which he had confided to his sister-in-law in spite of the condition of secrecy imposed (Ban 7/72, Elizabeth Greenhow to Helen Martineau, 27 November 1825; Ban 6/106, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, 6 January 1826; Ban 7/82, Helen Higginson to Helen Martineau, 21 January 1826). Then in the spring of 1826, Helen was also privy to the growing affection between Emily Higginson and Francis Darbishire (JRUL 161, Francis Darbishire to Helen Martineau, 6 April 1826). All the various correspondents over this period seemed to be concerned with illness, either for

themselves or others. James Martineau suffered from both depression and overwork, and his closest college friend Francis Darbishire also suffered from an increasingly worrying chest and voice problem. Helen was part of a group who lobbied for James and Francis to be allowed to spend time studying in Germany as a relief from the English climate and the pressures at Manchester College; however, as James's health improved and that of Francis grew worse, the plan was abandoned (HMCO MS J. Martineau 2, memorandum pp. 13,15, James Martineau to Francis Darbishire, 4 May 1826). Some in her circle thought that Helen's experience was leading her to exaggerate symptoms of disease, with Harriet Martineau writing to Francis Darbishire that:

> It is most natural and indeed almost inevitable that my sister Helen should, from her past circumstances, be remarkably quick-sighted in detecting disease; and that her fears should magnify trifling symptoms into alarming ones. She has herself more than once admitted to me that she never feels a peculiar interest in any young person without beginning to look for consumptive symptoms (Ban 1/59, Harriet Martineau to Francis Darbishire, 30 June 1826).

Certainly Harriet was concerned that if James's health were thought to be delicate then he would have difficulty in finding a ministerial position. However, there was also enough serious illness among Helen's friends and relations to cause real concern without the need for any exaggeration. Quite apart from the deaths of elderly people and babies, Edward Tagart's older brother died in February, then Thomas Martineau senior died on 21 June, and Robert Richard Rankin, a cousin aged 27, died in July (Monthly Repository 1826, p.24; p. 370; p. 430).Not surprisingly anxiety about health matters was a common feature of letters written between friends and family in the first half of the nineteenth century, with, for instance, the correspondence between Lucy Aikin and William Ellery Channing showing a similar concern (Le Breton, 1864, pp. 67, 74, 260, 269, 345).

In the summer of 1826, Helen set off on her travels to various of her friends and relatives, including the Leicester family of John Hugh Worthington, the new young minister at Cross Street Chapel; and she reached Norwich early in August, where she

stayed for well over a month, until late September. Helen would surely have been aware that there was an increasing attachment between John Hugh Worthington and Harriet Martineau as this had been developing over the past two years. James had noted that, "My father and mother authorise me to ask Hugh Worthington to pay us a visit" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 22, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 2 June 1823), and it seems that John Hugh Worthington visited Norwich again the following year, as James was asked to report at what time he would visit (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 30, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 24 February 1824). John Hugh and Harriet met again in Manchester probably on several occasions, but certainly in 1825 when Harriet stayed with Helen (Keller, 2001, p.122). On one occasion, Worthington called and after two hours talk went a walk with them and stayed to dinner, and 'won Mrs Bourn's heart'" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 45, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 8 January 1825). James's comments in his memorandum of Harriet's letters give more information:

> Then comes a disclaimer on Harriet's part of more than simply friendship with J. H. W. and an estimate of him as confessedly not comparable with Tagart, in reply to some apprehension which I had expressed in my last letter. (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 53, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 1 October 1825).

Never the less, James was not wrong about the connection between Harriet and John Hugh, as the next extract from the memorandum indicates:

> This August letter is due to a visit of J. H. Worthington to declare expressly his devoted attachment to her and his offer of marriage; thus confirming an intention which everyone but himself had read in his demeanour towards her in Manchester last year.
>
> In the interval he had been greatly out of health, depressed and unequal to the effective discharge of his duties at Cross Street, a state of things which he attributed to the anxiety of mind on her account, and distrust of his own worthiness to proceed further.
>
> His great agitation on their last meeting when he arrived betrayed his real feelings; and his speedy recovery of self-possession, and subsequent flow of bright and easy

spirits on discovering his welcome rendered it credible, by the rebound, that the low state in which he had been for the past year, was referable simply to his unbearable suspense.

His meaning now was unmistakable not only to the home party, but to others, including the Tagarts, Edward especially, who recognised the spirituality of his preaching.

Harriet's letter is an unreserved opening out of her feelings to me, with an obvious longing to accept J. H. W.'s proposal, yet a misgiving about her ability to realise his hope, and some sympathy with the fears of his friends respecting his health. On those points chiefly, it is probable, rests her appealing to me, as an intimate friend (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 70, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 18 August 1826).

After this summary, James added a note:

Contained in my life memoirs I have an entry, that on August 17th, 1826 Harriet engaged herself to J. H. W.: if so, her consultation with me in this letter next day must have been not very real (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 70).

The situation was made clearer in Harriet's next letter to James:

Harriet amplifies and continues down to date her account of J. H. W.'s visit, and sermon on Sunday.

Under the former head, the result is the same suspense of decision as that described in the previous letter.

"If he proves strong in body and mind, if for six months he can perform his arduous duties with credit and honour, will you with pleasure see me place my hopes of happiness on him?"

"I am yet afraid that the winter should prove such an one as the last; but if it does not, if our friend at length answers to his early promise in all respects, I am sure you will be quieted and easy on my account."

Under the latter head, the preaching, the impression on a very large congregation is described as exceptionally great.

Henry Dowson says, "That young man is all spirit; he lifts one up, one knows not where".

Thus the acceptance is contingent, conditioned on the winter's experience (HMCO Ms J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 71, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 22 August 1826).

The conditionality of Harriet's acceptance of John Hugh's proposal was to prove significant, but before the end of Helen's Norwich visit, Helen Higginson, Mary Robberds

and Mary Darbishire were aware of the connection, though it was never announced officially by the Martineau family (Ban 7/87, Helen Higginson to Helen Martineau, 1 September 1826; JRUL 112, Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau, 8 September 1826; JRUL 88, Mary Darbishire to Helen Martineau, 8 September 1826). With two of the Martineau siblings now engaged, talk of marriage must have been 'in the air' in the Martineau household that summer. Helen, now aged thirty-one and a widow for just over two years, had conveyed to John Gooch Robberds a year before that she was "most fitted to give and receive pleasure in the sweet intercourse of domestic life" (Ban 9/8, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 16 August 1825). In the same letter, John had assured her that, " you are yet young of age and why should it be improper that in the course of your remaining years there may again be one near on whom you may bestow your heart's warmest affections".

Consequently it was not surprising that in the summer of 1826 Helen fell in love. What did surprise people was the object of her affections: the new, young, impoverished, minister of the Octagon Chapel, a man some nine years younger than Helen. There is no doubt, however, that Edward could be charming and that he was an attractive young man with McLachlan quoting an unknown contemporary source in describing Edward thus:

> He possessed good personal qualifications for the pulpit. His countenance, if it were not handsome, was expressive and refined, his manner composed and easy, earnest without being noisy; his voice was deep and rich, his enunciation was singularly distinct, the tones always sustained and his pronunciation unusually correct (McLachlan, DWL 24.242.1).

McLachlan (who dated Helen's birth as 1797 rather than the more commonly accepted 1795) interpreted the early relationship of Helen and Edward in the terms of pity:

> In the early intercourse of lover and lady compassion appears to have been the primary emotion each felt in the presence of the other. Edward saw a young widow now twenty-eight years of age, whose life story for eight years had been one of sorrow almost without compare. Helen was moved to pity by the spectacle of the young minister manfully meeting the demands of a rather critical congregation and

> struggling with his responsibility for the maintenance of a mother and her large family (McLachlan, DWL 24.242.1).

I think that in addition to the compassion of which McLachlan speaks there was a good deal of sexual attraction, as well as compatibility of mind, religion, and hopes of future life styles, discussed further later in the chapter.

The rapid development of the feelings between Helen and Edward is obvious from letters between Helen in Norwich and John Gooch Robberds in Manchester. Unfortunately only one of Helen's letters at this time survived, but as it runs to over 4,800 words, it gives a significant amount of detail (JRUL 30, Helen Martineau to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826). Helen wrote to John several times in August, telling him of her growing attraction to Edward, apparently describing him as having become "dangerous" to her and a marriage to him as "impossible" (JRUL 150, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 24 August 1826). In his reply he advised her, "The decision, as I told you before, is plainly yours", and he asked her to:

> ...throw yourself out of your situation, for a moment, & look at it as if it were another's - & then tell me whether a lady who, in such a situation, asks for advice, be not in fact asking to be persuaded to follow her inclination (JRUL 150, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 24 August, 1826).

John Gooch Robberds then went on to outline a variety of objections to the possible marriage. Helen then wrote again, and in his reply he said, "Your last letter made one thing exceedingly plain – and that is that your affection is hardly to be considered any longer in your own power", and he warned her against any hasty action (JRUL 152, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 5 September 1826). Helen gave a detailed account of the events of both the development of her relationship with Edward, and the shock and hostility of members of the Martineau family, to John Gooch Robberds. She reported that the first part of her visit to them had been pleasant, with "reading parties and the increased conversations which we enjoyed". She went on:

> They were then all full of Mr W[orthington] – comparisons were constantly made between him and Mr T[agart] always to the disadvantage of the latter, which I though unfair when I came to see more of him.....I soon discovered the secret of Mrs M's prejudices. She cannot always make him do as she likes. He had a manly independent mind...Mr W., on the contrary, had had no will, no thought but those which Mrs M. and Harriet have dictated to him during his stay here. I never attempted to defend Mr T. but perhaps their conduct strengthened my interest in him unconsciously to myself, and when I listened to the natural flow of pure and elevated thoughts which escaped him in our numerous walks and conversations – when I saw with what a beautiful influence religious hopes and principles tempered a spirit somewhat too ardent and enabled him to restrain and control his natural abhorrence of every thing mean and sordid and dishonourable, into a steady Christian feeling becoming his profession – when I heard him talk about that profession with an earnest and zealous desire for its best interests – I could not but sympathise in such feelings, and as I watched the noble spirit within I forgot the difference in age and felt that I looked up to him - And when in less serious moments, when full of poetry and enthusiasm, he gave full swing to his wild and luxuriant fancy, enlivening it now and then with sportive sallies which reminded me of you, and sometimes echoing my own thoughts in a way that no on ever did before but you, I said to myself, "with such a companion I think I could be happy" (JRUL 30, Helen Martineau to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826).

This extract from Helen's letter, extremely long even by her standards, vividly illustrates her feelings and helps to show why she was attracted to Edward, for both his personal qualities and the seriousness with which he regarded his profession. Helen went on describe Edward's proposal, apparently encouraged by a joking letter to him from John Gooch Robberds in which the idea had not been dismissed as improper or unlikely. Helen apparently agreed not to make a decision until she had discussed the matter with John, but insisted on telling Mrs Martineau senior of the proposal. The news was greeted with surprise, indignation, and anger. Harriet Martineau too reacted with "violent and unchristian expressions", while Henry spoke in more reserved ways about Edward being a fortune hunter (JRUL 30, Helen Martineau to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826).

The change in the Martineau family's perception of Helen is evident from James's memorandum of Harriet's letters, which reads:

> Sister Helen M. is a most delightful inmate without a trace of the little jealousies which were formerly apt to disturb; in particular her demeanour to my mother (who is not comfortable) is most judicious and considerate (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 72, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 30 August 1826).

> Written at her return home from Buckenham [sic] to find sister Helen M. changed for the worse in measure and habits of mind; behaving ill to my mother, cross to everybody, and alienated from a past experience which has hitherto been so kind to her.
>
> It is all accounted for by an apparent intention to marry Tagart, who has not been deterred by 10 years difference of age from an offer of marriage, favourably entertained, and not discountenanced by Mr Robberds, when confidentially consulted.
>
> Harriet treats it with the greatest indignation and disgust, as worldly in Tagart and both heartless and "mad" in her. As it is not yet a conclusive engagement, Harriet implores me to write a warning protesting to her at once and save her from her apparent infatuation.
>
> The letter is marked by a painful excitement, which carried me away at the time and induced me to write a letter of fearless remonstrance; for I shared the romantic overestimation of her which had become prevalent in our circle of friends.
>
> Both she and Tagart were quiescently [sic] commonplace, not to say vulgar, in character, and had been credited with an elevation of aim which they were sure to disappoint (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp. 72-3, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 4 September 1826).

There is no record of a precipitate letter from James to Helen, through James recorded that he received a letter from Helen dated 12 September 1826, and his reply of 22 September is quoted later (HMCO MS J. Martineau 2, memorandum p. 325). In addition, the family soon controlled their emotions, "the family now behave to me as usual for I threatened to leave them and they were alarmed, so do not grieve for me or hasten here sooner than you intended" (JRUL 30, Helen Martineau to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826), with possible reasons for the Martineaus' opposition to the engagement being considered later in this chapter. There is no record of the conversations that took place when John Gooch Robberds arrived in Norwich, but Helen apparently acted on the advice of John and Mary, to allow the passage of time and absence before coming to any decision (JRUL 112, Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau, 8 September 1826; JRUL 152, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 5 September 1826, HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp. 73-74, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 27 September 1826). James Martineau was away

from Norwich during this episode, first at Derby with the Higginsons, and then in Bristol, where he was deputising for Lant Carpenter, who was ill. However, he expressed his concerns about the matter, apparently criticising the conduct of Edward for both his "precipitancy" and "imprudence", although in his later letter to Helen he distanced himself from the emotional excesses of his mother and Harriet and remained on friendly terms while trying to give careful advice about the difficulties of such a connection, writing:

> I believe that you have confounded in your own mind your feeling towards me, and those towards Harriet and my mother. I of course know nothing of their conduct toward you, but I will confess to you that I shd. not be surprised to find that too much exasperated feeling has pervaded it; each of them, perhaps my mother often, uses language inconsiderate and vehement, and if you were not prepared to expect this, it was certainly not for want of my forewarning. But whatever be the course which they have pursued in this affair, judge of me separately.
>
> ... I think you have felt me to be unsympathizing, when I was not provided with the means of sympathy... Your description of your causes of uneasiness touches me very deeply; and Heaven alone knows how much I c. do or bear to solace your sad lot and breathe into your life a less transient peace than now hovers over its course. But is not this very evil likely to clothe with particular fascination any prospect of change?... Believe me, I think you wd. find but little alleviation of this source of care in the situation to which my friend Tagart wd. remove you. That you shd. not see this I am not surprised; nay I even think that for any one on your circumstances to withhold the attractions of such a prospect as been held to your choice, to resist the power of E. T's noble qualities and the persuasion of his soul-thrilling eloquence, [needs?] no ordinary strength of mind; but it must be exerted, or yr. happiness is a wreck (Ban 6/111, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, 22 September 1826).

The commotion caused Helen considerable stress and she became ill soon after she returned to the north. She went to stay with her Uncle Broadbent near Warrington, and John Gooch Robberds praised her for her struggle to retain her serenity and tranquillity (JRUL 121, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 9 October 1826). Meanwhile Edward continued to correspond with John Gooch Robberds, whom he had known since his time at Manchester College, where John was a frequent visitor (Ban 9/7, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 19 May 1823; JRUL 162, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 29 October 1823). Since the very beginning of his ministry Edward had relied

on help and advice from John on ministerial concerns such as suitable sermon topics as well as on more personal matters (JRUL 49, John Gooch Robberds to Edward Tagart, 10 August 1825; JRUL 130, Edward Tagart to John Gooch Robberds, 9 October 1826). On the surface, friendliness with the Martineau family was restored; in her letter of 24 October Elizabeth was full of concern for Helen after learning of her illness through a letter from Ann Hardy to Ann Meadows, writing:

> I should be with you my dear Helen and think I could prove to you that I consider you as one of my children and that I feel the same affectionate interests in your concerns which I have ever done (Ban 8/44, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 24 October 1826).

However, Harriet's version to James is rather different:

> Sister Helen M. left us, to all appearances, in all peace and charity; to conform with a letter from my mother, and Harriet immediately followed her, full of affection, and begging to hear of her prospective arrival at home. After more than a week had elapsed, came a letter to my mother plainly insulting; saying that she had made a great [mistake?] in her marriage to her son, and had been warned by many friends against any connection with our family, for she would repent for it; and repent she did! And she insists on a written apology from my mother and Harriet as the condition of any future intercourse.
>
> This letter my mother sent for Mr Robberds to see; that through his mediation she might be brought to a better frame of mind; my mother at the same time writing to her an affectionate note, without word of rejoinder of reproach.
>
> J. H. W. reporting, on the information of her servant, that she was ill with fever and in great danger, her strange behaviour was supposed to proceed from this cause, and Mr Robberds was alluded to for information.
>
> Harriet, going to the post for his answer at the earliest moment, had an answer from herself put into her hand, the contents of which were "most dreadful"; bidding us farewell; saying that she should not recover, and that surely no one had ever such bitter friends on a death bed. Harriet attributed this to the delirium of fever; but it turned out that she had not been dangerously ill at all, with any wandering or any danger.
>
> Mr Robberds wrote to Henry, assuring them of this, the ailment was only a bilious attack. He was shocked at her manner of writing and would do his best to extract from her the apology due for it.
>
> Harriet declares that my mother's forebearance and gentleness have been above all praise (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp. 76-7, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 27 October 1826).

The Martineaus' quarrel with Helen and Edward Tagart disrupted their usual feelings of support from their Unitarian activities in Norwich, as Edward was their minister, with Harriet writing to James that "... the relations with him as minister are spoiled" (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 74, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 27 September 1826).

However, later that year more worrying news occupied the Martineau household. John Hugh Worthington, whose health had been somewhat delicate for most of the year, suddenly became mentally ill, to all appearances insane, though this word was not used directly at this stage in the correspondence (JRUL 75, Helen Higginson to Helen Martineau 28, November 1826; HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 78, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau 2 December 1826). It was obvious to all, however, that the illness was severe, with Helen Higginson referring to Helen's news of "intervals of sanity", but describing the illness as "a darkness more awful than death" (JRUL 75, Helen Higginson to Helen Martineau, 28 November 1826). Helen (Martineau) seems to be the one who kept the Martineaus and others informed of the news about John Hugh. After the initial shock, when she suffered "a few hours of violent illness", Harriet took the news stoically and seemed to be reconciled to a future without him, telling Helen, "I think of him as if the grave had already closed over him" (Ban 4/83, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 2 December 1926). James's summary of Harriet's letter to him on the subject reads as follows:

> The last letter since the terrible seizure of J. H. W. at Manchester with the illness which seems to have plunged at once into delirium. How it was imparted to her does not appear; though she speaks of having seen all the letters about it, except the one from me to Henry and a note of my Helen's to the same. But she evidently is well aware of the entire loss of mental equilibrium; for she speaks of the present sufferer as being not her J. H. W., but another existence, whose conscious experience has no relation to that of her beloved. For her, the real J. H. W. <u>is</u> what he <u>was</u> and he <u>will be</u> when they meet in Heaven; hence, she is calm, and can wait

> till she is fit to join him (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum p. 28, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 2 December, 1826).

This resignation to the loss of the man whose identity was for Harriet inextricably linked with that of the gifted young minister helps to explain why she refused to visit him after the onset of the illness. This attitude was copied by her mother, and James, who also declined to visit John Hugh, though all three sympathised with those who had the care of him and were grateful of news from Helen. James drafted a letter to John Hugh, explaining why he would not visit, that he "thought it would be no kindness to you", as:

> I am wholly unaccustomed to the sight of severe illness & being of rather a nervous temperament, the sight of it impresses me so strongly that I am in danger of being possessed by far too favourable an impression of the patient's state (Ban 6/128, James Martineau to John Hugh Worthington, draft 6 March 1827).

James went on to give three particular reasons for not visiting: a "feeling of delicacy toward your friends", wishing not to make matters worse "in regard to your convalescence" and because of " a desire to secure Harriet's peace of mind". He admitted that, "I may have erred in my judgement", but wrote that until the previous day he had no idea that John Hugh could receive a letter from him (Ban 6/128, James Martineau to John Hugh Worthington, draft 6 March 1827). However, he decided not to send the letter, but rather to rely on Helen's diplomacy, writing:

> With respect to my letter to J.H.W., as it was designed solely to relieve him from a painful impression, which has vanished without its influence, you were certainly right in concluding that no further object was to be answered by its delivery; and I am grateful for your discretion. For precisely the same reason, I shall not wish Mrs W. to see it, unless she is unsatisfied about my conduct; but if she retains any doubt on the subject, or is in any danger of returning to her former disapprobation of my conduct, I should be glad for her to read my self-defence. You are at full liberty to read the letter, and if in your correspondence with Mrs W. you think any portion of it might be used with good effect perhaps it might not be a bad way of removing any latent prejudice which she may yet have. Of this, however, you are the best judge; do as you think best. By this time you will probably have heard that our Norwich friends begin to think of J. H.W.'s aberration of mind in a more serious light, and that it is determined that poor Harriet shall <u>not</u> go to Leicester... (Ban 6/113, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, 19 March 1827).

As James and Harriet were very close, it is possible that their reasons for not visiting John Hugh coincided. Certainly this family characteristic of not visiting the seriously ill applied also to James and Harriet's father: when it was clear that his father was terminally ill, James did not visit until the last few days of the illness, and Harriet did not visit her parents while they were away from home. Harriet's family were obviously very protective of her during John Hugh's illness. Reports of his condition varied dramatically, from optimism that it could be cured, to "hopeless and alarming" reports from John Gooch Robberds, and Harriet told James that she was prepared for either outcome (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp. 79-80, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 11 December 1826, 23 December 1826). Letters from John Hugh's mother or sister (both were called Albina) were generally more optimistic, while John Gooch Robberds was more often pessimistic, so Harriet and Elizabeth trusted Helen's judgement at this time, because her assessment tended to neither extreme (Ban 8/45, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 17 December 1826). Harriet and her mother's relationship with Helen improved with the onset of this crisis, as Harriet reported to James:

> The relations with both sister M. and Mr Tagart appear to be materially improved; and she describes conversation with Tagart more friendly and candid than seemed possible from the former account.
>
> All the correspondence with Mr Robberds she has seen; and it is of a kind that makes reconciliation not very difficult to bring about (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp. 79-80, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 11 December 1826).

However, Harriet made it clear that she was still not happy about the relationship between Edward and Helen, as James recorded:

> Harriet is amazed at Tagart's "presumption" in thinking that he can make Helen M., if he marries, just what he thinks and likes; and the calmness with which he betrays the fact that he is by no means in love with her for what [sic] she now believes (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp. 79-80, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 11 December 1826).

It is possible that Harriet's discomfort at the continuing relationship of Helen and Edward was connected to her own initial admiration of Edward, and the loss of her expectations of becoming a minister's wife herself, but this is not the main explanation, given that the displeasure was there from the start, when John Hugh was not ill. John Hugh's health seems to have varied over the next few months, with periods of lucidity and of physical illness as well as insanity. It seems that there was no clear diagnosis, but to Harriet and her family John Hugh's illness made him not the person to whom Harriet had provisionally become engaged, and if he was not to be able to offer her the life of a minister's wife, then the connection could be severed. The Martineaus recalled the provisional nature of Harriet's engagement to John Hugh, though Harriet continued to write to John Hugh for some weeks; but then she formally terminated the connection in March (Ban 8/47, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 16 March 1827). About the same time, Francis Darbishire broke off his understanding with Emily Higginson on account of his poor health. James Martineau was grateful for this, telling Helen, "You may imagine then what a relief it was to be absolved by himself from our pledge to guard his interests; we feel that he is right and our duty to him and to Emy are no longer at variance" (Ban 6/112, James Martineau to Helen Martineau, 6 March 1827). Francis's future has already been sketched. Meanwhile John Hugh Worthington's illness became more severe and he was moved from Manchester to his family's home in Leicester in March. Harriet, through her mother declined to visit, but:

> is more anxious than before to obtain from [John Hugh's family] her letters to J.H.W., for which she made urgent application. They contain much that was purely confidential affecting other people, which she is bound to rescue from possible misuse (HMCO MS J. Martineau 1, memorandum pp 81-82, Harriet Martineau to James Martineau, 14 May 1827).

John Hugh Worthington died at the beginning of July 1827 (Christian Reformer, 1827, p. 372).

Meanwhile, Edward Tagart continued to obtain news of Helen from John Gooch Robberds. The resignation of John Hugh Worthington from the Cross Street ministry presented Edward with something of a dilemma. He was clearly interested in the vacancy, but did not want to appear indelicate. John refused to give advice about Edward's possible move to Manchester, writing that "I wish not to take upon myself the responsibility of either helping or hindering a measure the consequences of which appear to me as uncertain" (Ban 9/11, John Gooch Robberds to Edward Tagart, 9 April 1827). Clearly Edward and Helen wrote to each other during this period, as the first letter in the collections from Edward to Helen, dated April 1827, is obviously a reply to one of Helen's. At this stage they still seemed undecided about whether they had a future together, but had agreed to meet, in that Edward was planning to visit Helen in Manchester. Thorny questions like where to live arose. Edward did not feel he could leave his ministry at Norwich, but the attitude of the Martineaus made difficulties, especially for Helen (JRUL 122, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 2 April 1827). The visit took place in June, when Edward intended to stay with the Robberds (JRUL 93, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 22 May 1827). By July, their engagement had been agreed and was public knowledge (JRUL 101, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 2 July 1827). Edward, who had "nothing in life but my character", tried too hard to impress Helen's friend and relations, and was very confused by the lack of established protocol in expressing interest in the Cross Street vacancy (JRUL 93, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 22 May 1927; JRUL 107, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 8 July 1827; JRUL 108, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 28 November 1827). Edward preached at Cross Street in the summer and again at a candidating service in October. The Cross Street Trustees minute book records that meetings of pew holders were to be called on 26 September and 7 December; neither of these produced an invitation

(DWL 40, 46, Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 27 October 1827, 31 October 1827; Minute Book of the Trustees of Cross Street Chapel pp. 77, 80).

It seems from John Gooch Robberds' letter to Helen of 25 October (written from London), that Helen and Edward had intended to be married earlier in October but had postponed it, and that Helen had agreed to move to Norwich, in spite of the fact that Edward had already tendered his resignation because of her earlier reluctance:

> I have no hesitation, however, what to feel about your generous determination to go to Norwich rather than compromise your husband's independence. Knowing how painful must have been the struggle, I admire you in proportion for the victory... I am sorry that the Norwich people cannot make greater allowance for his very peculiar circumstances. But I trust, the possibility of keeping him will reconcile them to a little suspense. Mr E. Taylor, to whom I had mentioned there was a chance of your consenting, on your husband's account, to go to Norwich rather than deprive him of an important station, wrote instantly on receiving from Mr Newson and Mr G. Sothern [?] news of the resignation, to deprecate any precipitate measures (JRUL 144, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 25 October 1827).

Edward's letter to Helen, written the day before, confirms that he had indeed tendered his resignation, but had the chance to rescind it in the hope that Helen would agree to go to Norwich, and he pleaded with her to agree to this:

> Why not preserve the usefulness, independence & reputation [word missing] will say, of yr husband & consider the feeling of his congtn. towards him as sufficient reason for sacrificing every private feeling... Let us make this the scene of our duty... It appears to me it wd be wrong to risk the chance of Manchester (JRUL 110, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 24 October 1827).

Yet Helen's letter to Edward written the same day indicated that she thought that Edward's candidating visit to Manchester visit would result in his being chosen, telling him, "Dukinfield has just called "to say that he feels little or no doubt now that you will be chosen unanimously (DWL 38, Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 24 October 1827). But when Helen received Edward's plea, she did not receive it kindly, having had "a fatiguing and agitating day", returning from the sick bed of her uncle Broadbent at Latchford and dealing with the effects of a serious fall by her mother. She wrote:

My feelings on the subject of not going to Norwich are stronger than ever now that I see the attachment of the Norwich people to you and their opinion of me is built on such slight foundations – and if as Mr Ed. Taylor suggests, (for I have a letter from Mr Robberds today, who tells me that Mr E. T. thinks my Conduct has been noble and generous, and that no one could ask more from me) the Norwich people let their pride interfere in a case like this when they know the difficult circumstances in which you were placed, they are not worthy of either of us and I understand he has written to tell them so. I have some pride and dignity also, and it is every bit roused at the present moment, and I should think meanly of myself were I to yield. They think because I have given up so much for them that they can oblige me to make a still greater sacrifice but they have gone a wrong way to work. I say that congregational letter to you was insulting to both and I would rather give up my engagement with you than consent to go to Norwich on condition that you give up Manchester.

... You talk of my sacrificing my private feelings as if they were all. Oh, my dear friend, if you know so little of the motives that have influenced my wish to remain in Manchester I have said so much to you in vain. Think of my father, think of my mother and then wonder that you could ask more of me than I have already granted. It would almost kill my mother to go there, she has such a strong aversion to the place, and even if she did go, she would talk to every Lady about the conduct of the Martineaus and I should have no peace. She even does it here when she has an opportunity. Oh! I could say much respecting her, which would show you that it would be a sacrifice of my duty as well as happiness. I could say much about my father and all his estates being in this neighbourhood and the constant reference to me on matters of business sundries.

... I thought you little know the sacrifice made that night when I consented to go there – but – no matter – I stand firm to what I said then and if the Norwich people value their own pride more than you – why let them console themselves with it (DWL 40, Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 27 October 1827).

At the same time, in a letter which must have crossed in the post with Helen's,

Edward had resigned himself to leaving Norwich, writing:

...the Norwich people are speculating on my resignation & making very free remarks behind my back. And you... What are you thinking of? ... wondering at my hard-heartedness & wrong headedness in urging you to come to Norwich – almost resolving to give me up, & send me about my business for wishing you to take a step which must jeopardy [sic] your happiness and endanger your life. Well, dearest Helen, you will never hear a word more from me about Norwich....

Is it possible that I can be minister of Cross Street? (JRUL 104, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 27 October 1827).

When she received this, Helen obviously regretted her earlier letter, writing:

I almost fear that my last letter may not seem to you to be written in so kind a tone as it ought to be, & that it might give you pain – if it did, I intreat [sic] your

> forgiveness, but I wished you to feel quite at liberty, I wished you to feel that if the tie to Norwich was stronger than that which binds us together, that you would consent to break it, and stay with your congregation – nor should I have blamed you for doing so, if you felt it your duty – Your letter to day, kind & beautiful & valuable as it is to me, has cost me more tears than any I ever read – I now feel the responsibility of my influence in its full extent – I feel indeed how much you have sacrificed for me, & that whatever I may be as a wife, to you, I never can adequately repay you, unless I can cause you to feel that you are equally useful beloved & respected in the new sphere to which our hopes tend – more so, you can never be – Till your letter to day, & that from the congregation (gratifying as it is), which shot a chill through my heart – I had cherished the remnant of a hope that your congregation, would relent, that when they came to consider the difficulties of your situation – they would consent to give you a little longer time, one fortnight longer would have been everything to us...
>
> In an election nothing is certain, & tho' the chances are still very much in your favour here – yet the last preacher always leaves the most powerful impression & Mr Wallace had more admirers than I expected – still as far as I can judge he would not stand in your way. I shall not be surprised if they invite Dr Hutton first, (tho' there are many who prefer you) - & you the next if he refuses – this is quite what I expect. It all seem to me to hang on Dr H. & I wish more than ever that you had written to him to ask his private instructions – it would have made us so easy at this time. But there is now nothing for it but patience... I shall know on Friday what passes at the meeting of trustees (DWL 46, Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 31 October 1827).

Edward wrote what Helen noted as a "very affectionate and comforting letter" in return, and waited with as much patience and cheerfulness as he could muster for the Manchester decision (JRUL 106, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 2 November 1827). But the Cross Street meeting did not go according to their hopes, and in a letter now missing Helen had to tell Edward that he had not been chosen as the new minister at Cross Street. He took the news well, and immediately set about finding a position in London:

> Your letter just recd. & for which I have waited with considerable anxiety, is much what I expected it would be. I have all along considered Manchester a mere chance.
>
> ... I am not sorry for this, my dear Helen, except so far as the disappointment preys upon your spirits. For myself I consider no sacrifice too dear which has purchased yr. entire confidence & perfect love. I had fixed my heart upon objects incompatible with each other. I have made my choice & am ready to abide by the consequences. Nor are the consequences very frightful. Manchester is out of the question, we will suppose, if Providence ordains it so. I sacrifice Norwich for you, you sacrifice Manchester for me. I am secure of finding another situation sooner or later, wherever we live let our mutual love convert every unpleasantness into joy.

...My business is to look out for a place where I can actively exert myself in my profession & where receiving an independent income I can marry you with respectability, satisfaction to myself – & realize those home comforts which with you I must have. With you for a wife & a congregation of any sort I shall envy no man & covet no man's situation. You dread a London life. It is not what I shd. have chosen. But Providence points thither. Many are happy there. There is as much, nay more independence in London than any where else. If I can get a salary of £200 a year at York St. for one year or become even a preacher at Mr. Fox's there let us live. Nobody will trouble us with questions. We can have some society – probably very good & we are good enough for each other.
... I shall write today to Mr. Edton[?] to know what is done about York St. & to Mr. Edw. Taylor to enquire abt. Fox's eveng. Congregation.

... My dear Helen, your respectability & comfort as a wife depends upon the independence of yr. husband. It appears to me that yr. own estimation in the world depends upon yr. putting yourself entirely into my hands – supporting me in everything – being guided by my judgement, I mean as to my public functions, as to what I do or think proper to be done as a Uni[tarian] minister. I have given up Norwich for your sake. But it wd. neither be for your credit or mine that my settlement elsewhere, my actions as a public man, depend entirely upon you. In a word all that you have to do now, is in my intentions to support me. I hope & pray that I shall make you a good husband. Let me see that I do, let me but see you made happy by my love, let me but see that this is every thing in the world to you, that with this you can brave every evil & be on any trial, & I have my consolation, my ample support...

I have other claims, my dear Helen, besides my bond of union with you. For the sake of my brothers & family whom I cannot forget it might have been better had I never attempted to bind you to me by ties of a dearer nature than them all. But I have done so. We must reconcile all claims as well as we can in every situation to some things we must reconcile our minds which we cd. wish otherwise. Meanwhile I wish you to feel what I feel that together we shall be happy any where, and feeling this my aim & resolution is on every acct. to settle somewhere as soon as possible (JRUL 99, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 5 November 1827).

Helen wrote on this, " A very manly, decided letter" and two days later she wrote to Edward to report on the situation at Manchester and agree to going to London:

I feel comparatively happy now for my suspense is ended & I see now what we have to do, & when my path of duty is clear before me, I am always happy, let circumstances be what they may. The congregation have had a most tumultuous meeting – some wishing for one thing, some another, but all the rational ones for <u>you</u>, & after a great deal of discussion & a variety of opinion being expressed – they have at length decided upon inviting several other candidates to preach, & to put off the election till the 18th of January & perhaps longer. They have decided to ask Dr. Hutton to came and preach as <u>candidate</u>! amongst others – what a shabby way of proceeding...(DWL 50 Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 7 November 1827).

Once the decision had been made, Helen made the best of it, writing:

> Well, they are a set of ____ but n'importe, we can do without them & we shall be very happy & the London climate will suit me better than any other. It is only for your sake that I regret Norwich – for my own I shall be a thousand times happier in London. - & we shall be so independent & you will be so much admired & your fame will spread about & they will all be wishing they had chosen you. My Mother too is more reconciled to this idea than Norwich – she says she will remain where she is for the present & keep on this house till she sees whether we like London... Miss Lloyd and Mrs Robberds will take care of her while I am away. All is for the best dear Edward, if we are resolved to make it so & it depends after all far more upon our selves than upon circumstances, whether we are happy or otherwise. So do your best in London – consent to go to York Street for 6 months if they will have you & let us settle there as soon as possible.
>
> I have many friends in London & we shall have as much society, & some of the very best - if you like.
>
> In short, I am very happy & I admire the spirit of your letter exceedingly. You shall have your own way, for the future & your wishes, I will make mine. (DWL 50, Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 7 November 1827).

Yet Helen's letter the following week suggested that her mind was not entirely made up; she advised him about being too forthright, and gave details of Cross Street's plans to hear further candidates, and commented;

> Your chance is really still a good one, though I have given up all hope to myself, & tell myself it will not be & do not allow my thoughts to dwell upon it for a moment, & whenever they tend that way – I repeat to myself, "any where with him".
>
> ... It was only for your sake, believe me, that I gave Norwich a thought. I now gladly relinquish it unless you tell me that you feel it your duty to remain there, & then I have not another word to say. It is happiness enough to live with you any where (DWL 51, Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 14 November 1827).

Fortunately Edward was offered the ministry of the London York Street congregation on terms he found acceptable (JRUL 108, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 28 November 1827). One advantage of York Street was that the ministerial appointment was in the control of one man, Mr Agar, who had recently opened the chapel, so the decision could be made quickly and without any awkward trustees' meetings (The Inquirer 1858, p. 700). The offer of the York Street ministry was accepted, on the understanding that Edward would be available to begin early in 1828 (JRUL 96, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 5 December 1827).

While all this was going on Helen kept up her usual correspondence with her women friends. She was particularly anxious to gain their approval for her marriage, especially in view of the disapproval of at least part of the Martineau family. However, at first Helen and Emily Higginson followed Lissey Greenhow in offering congratulations and good wishes for Helen's happiness, but not their approval (Ban 7/73, Elizabeth Greenhow to Helen Martineau, 4 August 1827; Ban 7/79, Emily Higginson to Helen Martineau, 16 July 1827; Ban 7/92, Helen Higginson to Helen Martineau, 21 June 1827). But by October, perhaps chastened by the death of their mother, and certainly helped by James's more considered opinion of Edward including his recognition of Edward's capabilities as a minister, Helen and Emily showed more sympathetic understanding of the engagement (Ban 7/93, Helen Higginson to Helen Martineau, 6 October 1827; JRUL 119, Emily Higginson to Helen Martineau, 31 October 1827). Emily's flowery prose indicated her change of heart:

> I own that I was unable <u>at first</u> so fully to give you my sympathy, but you will not on that account believe it to be <u>now</u> the less sincere... Often as I heard the fear expressed that your present attachment would not be a source of increasing happiness to you, I did not allow the forebodings of others to influence my belief that you would find in a growing intercourse with Mr. Tagart the happiness you sought; often have I said, they <u>will</u> be happy for there are qualities in both characters which can not fail to render them so; my knowledge of Mr. Tagart & all my strong prepossessions in favour of him I have derived from James who appreciates him as even you could wish, & it has often been delightful for me to turn to James & hear his praises when my hopes for you have wanted cheering.
>
> ... I know too what the power of human sympathy is to calm and support under an afflictive bereavement. I do not wonder that this was the first bond of union between yourself & Mr. Tagart.
>
> ... I fancied you spoke of James less warmly than usual in your last letter, but indeed I think you know not how kind & affte. his thoughts of you are, & my dear friend forgive me if I say I think you do not know all Helen's love for you, do not fear then when next you write to show the same affection you were wont to do & which I believe you still feel for us, for it is always returned with a warmth which will never grow cold by time or separation (JRUL 119, Emily Higginson to Helen Martineau, 31 October 1827).

Catharine Turner refused to take sides between the Martineaus and Helen, returning unread the correspondence which Helen had lent her, but tendering very warm good wishes for her "future peace, happiness and usefulness" and also offering to do what she could in order to effect a reconciliation with the Martineaus (JRUL 31, Catharine Turner to Helen Martineau, 5 October 1827).

December 1827 passed with Helen dithering about whether or not she could bear to leave Manchester, and Edward making arrangements to leave Norwich, come to Manchester and start his new ministry at the York Street Chapel in London at the beginning of February. The collections include eight letters from Edward to Helen for this month; but unfortunately none of Helen's has survived. The couple were married in Manchester on 21 January 1828 and then had a short honeymoon in Derbyshire before taking up residence in London. On her marriage, Helen "placed at his (Edward's) control her moderate fortune, with confidence in his judicious employment of the amplest means for good and generous purposes and objects, to which she uniformly encouraged him by the fullest sympathy and trust" (The Inquirer, 1858, p. 700). Edward was minister of the same congregation for thirty years, until his death in 1858 at the comparatively early age of fifty-four on his way back from visiting the Unitarian churches in Transylvania in his capacity as secretary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. James Martineau succeeded him as minister to the congregation.

Helen and Edward had five children, three girls and two boys. Of the girls, Helen, the oldest, married a Liverpool solicitor, Enoch Harvey, a second cousin of William Gaskell, and had at least two sons. Their family grave at the Ancient Chapel, Toxteth in Liverpool records that Enoch died in 1890 aged 64, "his wife Helen Bourn, daughter of the Rev. Edward Tagart died 1911, aged 82", and that their youngest son, Henry Samuel Bourn, died in 1897. Helen and Edward's middle daughter, Lucy, never married; she

became a leader in a variety of Unitarian enterprises and died in 1925. The youngest, Emily, did not marry either, and died in 1890. The oldest son, Edward Bourn, died aged nearly three years, "after a long and painful illness, borne with singular patience and sweetness" (Christian Reformer, 1841, p. 599). There was another son, William, about whom little is known. Helen lived the rest of her life in the London area, moving to Wildwood, a large house on Hampstead Heath in the 1840s, still with the faithful Ann Hardy. She kept up a correspondence with Mary Robberds until Mary's death in 1869 and remained on friendly terms with James Martineau. She died in January 1871. The English Unitarian periodicals did not print an obituary; but in March of that year The Inquirer reprinted a notice written by the Rev Dr Bellows from The Liberal Christian of New York. This reads:

> We learn with sympathetic sorrow of the death in London, on January 28, of Mrs Helen Tagart, widow of the late excellent Rev. Edward Tagart, of London. She will be long remembered for her interest in the cause of that Unitarian faith which her husband lived and died in promoting, and which his wife exemplified in her character and wide hospitality of heart and hand. Her house was the resort of the most intelligent and distinguished representatives of the Unitarian body. She was fond of gathering them around every American clergyman who had any claims to such attention. Twenty years ago we recollect to have met Dr. Colman, as the centre of many guests, at her table; and it is but three years since we sat again at the same elegant board, with the venerable Mr Madge, with Martineau and Taylor, and many others of almost equal interest. Mrs Tagart, who must have been beautiful in her youth, preserved a very erect and striking appearance even after seventy. She was much blessed in her children, as in her fortune, and in the memory of her husband, which seemed ever green in her heart. We offer the surviving family the homage of our grateful recollections of the many virtues and the many courtesies associated with the name and memory of so many loving children and grand-children – the centre of so large a circle of grateful and revering friends (The Inquirer, 1871, p. 193).

To the last, Helen lived her Unitarianism through her friendships and hospitality although as the discussion which now follows indicates it had other important dimensions in addition.

The Epistolary dimensions of Unitarianism in the letters of Helen and her circle

All the writers of the letters I have drawn on express faith in God. Helen herself frequently refers simply to "God" (Ban 9/55, Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, 28 May – 5 June 1824; JRUL 167, Helen Bourn to John Gooch Robberds, n.d. c. December 1821; JRUL 76, Helen Martineau to James Martineau, 10 October 1825; JRUL 165, Helen Martineau to Ellen B Bourn, 2 July 1824) or "our God" (JRUL 171 Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 28 November 1823; JRUL 139, Helen Martineau to Thomas Martineau Jnr., 16 August 1823). Occasionally she writes of God as "Father" (JRUL 171, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 28 November 1823), but more often as "Almighty Parent" (JRUL 171, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 28 November 1823; Ban 9/55, Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, 28 May – 5 June 1824). Often the idea of goodness and care is associated with God, such as "a good Providence" (JRUL 135, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft October 1820) and "that Good Being who alone knoweth the issue of all events" (Ban 9/52, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, 13 November 1820). God is also "wise and kind (Ban 9/55, Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, 28 May – 5 June 1824) and "ever present with us" (JRUL 171, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 28 November 1823); he "will deal mercifully with us – he will order all things according to his wisdom and his love"(JRUL 139, Helen Martineau to Thomas Martineau Jnr., 16 August 1823). This sense of comfort in the overwhelming goodness of God, coupled with the lack of fear that God would punish or condemn, marks out Helen's faith as Unitarian, and is present in her letters at least as much in times of difficulty and bereavement as it is in times of happiness. The following longer extract illustrates the comfort that Helen found in her faith at a time of bereavement, the day after the death of her baby son:

> I said last night, I had never known what sorrow was before, & yet we were both greatly comforted by the blessed hopes & promises of our holy religion & when we joined in prayer to the Father who had afflicted us we were able to say "thy will be done". Oh, what a destitute state we should be in, without these consolations but with them how rich in comfort & in hope! Surely the time will come when we shall again meet our beloved child in all his purity & intelligence & with those virtuous dispositions which we already thought we saw indications of, fully expanded into a perfection which he could never have attained here – yes, till that happy time arrives, he will be safe in the keeping of his Almighty Parent, who can care more & better for him than the tenderest earthly love (JRUL 171, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 28 November 1823).

Elizabeth Gaskell inscribed something similar in her diary of her daughter's childhood and Anita Wilson has commented on this as a contrast to mainstream Christian attitudes (Wilson, 1996, p. 25). However, the distinction is not exact, as some of Charlotte Bronte's letters portrayed a similar benevolent deity though she struggled with Calvinist doctrines that never troubled Helen (Murray, 1982, pp. 117-118, 153-154).

Helen's theology is also distinguished by the omission to any reference to Jesus Christ as God, or to the third person of the Trinity. This is not surprising, but it is remarkable that her surviving letters do not contain any reference to Jesus. This would not be typical of most written Unitarian theology of the time, which still assumed that while Unitarianism was defined as worship of God the Father only, its teachings and practice continued to be based on the Bible and on Jesus' teachings and example (Tarrant, 1912, pp. 85-88; Lloyd, 1899, pp. 201-203).In this regard, both Edward Tagart and John Gooch Robberds make occasional references to Jesus Christ, Robberds, for instance, taking as a sermon topic the "test of friendship to Jesus" in November 1823, and referring to the role of the Unitarian minister as "minister of Jesus Christ" (JRUL 92, Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau, 25 February 1824; JRUL 49, John Gooch Robberds to Edward Tagart, 10 August 1825), while Tagart refers to hope, "buried in the grave & the redemption of Israel nailed to the cross" and preaches a sermon on the text "I very thought within myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the praise of Jesus of Nazareth" (JRUL 97, Edward

Tagart to Helen Martineau, 15 December 1827; JRUL 102, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau. 1 May 1827).

In the letters I have drawn on, Catharine Turner is the only woman to refer to Christ in her own letters. Thus she testified to the importance of religion in her own life, as a way of allowing the mind to overcome physical and emotional difficulties:

> By rendering His blessings and promises more present to the mind, He enables us to bear the visitations of His Providence with meekness, or even cheerfulness – whilst the motives to exertion these promises afford, overcome many lesser ailments, and make useful health and strength, under circumstances which without these supports would have exhausted and wearied our frame (JRUL 79, Catharine Turner to Helen Martineau, 28 August n. y. probably 1926).

She goes on to comment that another blessing afforded by religion was that it "assimilates and renders dear and interesting to each other characters originally very different". Alluding to Paul's letters in the New Testament, she also writes that:

> The Apostle's figure of the Church of Christ being as one body with many members, thus becomes just and apposite - and our Saviour's prayer may in time be fulfilled that his disciples may be one with him and with each other, as he is with the father (JRUL 79, Catharine Turner to Helen Martineau, 28 August n. y. probably 1926).

These Unitarian letter-writers quote scripture much less frequently than would be expected from mainstream Christians, though their allusions make it clear that they are well-acquainted with the bible. One of the rare occasions when Helen provides a biblical quotation is during her description of the death of her husband Tom, when she writes to Mary Robberds that:

> The day before we left Palmeira I opened accidentally upon the following passage in Joshua – "Be strong and of good courage, be afraid not, for the Lord thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest". In the dark and sleepless hours of night – in the solitary moments of the day, in fear, in doubt, in perplexity these encouraging words like the soothing accents of a friend, have poured their blessed influence on my spirit. How can we be desolate and alone with such a volume of consolation open to us! We should there find what is suited in all seasons and all circumstances, did we always open our hearts to its influences but alas! We too often neglect its perusal till we are no longer in a condition to profit by it (Ban 9/55 Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, draft 28 May-5 June 1824).

The afterlife was very real to Helen and her circle, providing a real comfort in bereavement because promising a reunion with the one who had died. Here, after the death of Thomas Biggins Broadbent, when she is seriously ill, Helen writes that "I looked anxiously forward to the time of reunion, as a period not far distant – this idea alone possessed my mind and afforded me impossible delight" (JRUL 167, Helen Bourn to John Gooch Robberds, draft c. December 1821). And when her son Philip dies she takes comfort in the phrase, "Is it well with the child? And she answered, it is well", another of the rare biblical quotations in Helen's letters, though she makes no reference to its context, which is the story of Elisha reviving the child of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4 (JRUL 171, Helen Martineau to John and Mary Robberds, 28 November 1823). Later, after the death of her husband Tom, when she returns to the Martineau family in Norwich, she is sure that they are all comforted by the thought that "his happiness was now unperishable" (JRUL 165, Helen Martineau to Ellen Bourn, 2 July 1824).

Others of these letter-writers too express similar sentiments, with Harriet Martineau going so far as to speculate on the process of reunion, writing in July 1824, soon after Tom's death that:

> When they (the years of your life) are gone, the next thing will be the meeting with many many dear friends with one whose soul appears to us to be prepared for that state without any more previous discipline and with your sweet peaceminded child; who has had experience of the love of God, and who has never had to fear His frown. I believe that these friends all repose in death, at present, and that they will enter upon the scenes of another world at the same moment as yourself. This appears to me the more probable, and it is the belief which affords me the most pleasure, and makes me think of a reunion with greater satisfaction than I could otherwise do, but there is no reason why all should not adopt the belief which pleases them best (Ban 4/77, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 7 July 1824).

Helen's faith in the afterlife is not so analytical, but it is patently very real for her. Then when Tom died, she writes that she "could not believe he was gone and as I knelt by him I silently offered up my prayers to God for support and consolation, the world and all that it contains dwindled into nothing and Heaven and Immortality seemed full in view" (Ban

9/55, Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, draft 28 May-5 June 1824). She assumes here that everyone would get to heaven, a belief which is typical of early nineteenth century Unitarian thought, with its rejection of hell and its tendency to universalism (Watts, 1995, p. 83).

For most of the people in Helen's circle, their Unitarian Chapel or Church was the centre of their religious life, and one of the most popular topics in their letters was the sermon. When Helen is away from home she begs for accounts of sermons, and Mary Robberds in particular is careful to provide detailed lists, such as one of sixteen sermons with texts sent to Helen at Madeira (JRUL 92, Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau, 25 February 1824). Ann Hardy also sends reports of sermons to her mistress when she is away from home, and even attended the communion service at Cross Street, although she herself was an Anglican (JRUL 8, Ann Hardy to Helen Martineau, 14 August 1826). For the most part, sermons are accepted as aids to devotion, and are considered successful if they give rise to elevated thoughts (Ban 7/74, Mary Darbishire to Helen Martineau, 3 January 1824). Some hearers were more difficult to please than others, however, with Elizabeth Martineau writing of Thomas Madge's Christmas day sermon;

> The Sermon was unsatisfactory to us yesterday on the whole – being controversial as is generally the case on this occasion – but the conclusion was beautiful and was I am sure part of it designed for us: whose circumstances are so obviously different from former happy years (Ban 8/33, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas and Helen Martineau, 25 December 1923).

Three months later she writes that Mr Madge's sermons had "fallen off again very much", and that he has difficulty in finding sermon topics. She thought his funeral sermon for Mr Houghton "bore... more of the marks of a studied composition than of an affectionate and cordial regard" (JRUL 18, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas and Helen Martineau, 30 April 1824).

Both Harriet Martineau and her mother praised Edward Tagart's sermons during his first year, both for their content and their audibility, which was especially important to Harriet, as she was becoming increasingly deaf (Ban 4/82, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 13 November 1825; JRUL 40, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 11 July 1826). Both John Hugh Worthington and a Mr Jones who was also a candidate for the pulpit at Cross Street are criticised for being inaudible, while Ellen Bourn reports on Mr Green at Liverpool as an indifferent preacher, commenting that "he has a very unpleasant tone which resembles a man crying the last dying speech and confession" (JRUL 87, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 8 November 1825; Ban 7/28 Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau 23 April 1827; JRUL Ellen Bourn to Helen Martineau, 5 September 1826). On the other hand, Mary Darbishire went to Stand Chapel north of Manchester to hear Mr Dean preach (as well as to see her relative Sam), writing, that "Mr D's style is heavy, but the weight and excellence of his matter makes me forget the peculiarities of his manner (JRUL 88, Mary Darbishire to Helen Martineau, 9 September 1826).

Sermons were important because they provided spiritual nourishment, comfort in sorrow, and an endless topic of conversation. Scripts of them were copied and circulated, not just by ministers who saved themselves work by using each other's creations, but also among lay people, especially women, for whom the reading and discussion of sermons was an acceptable leisure time activity which provided some informal religious instruction (Connell, 1944, pp. 80-81; Ban 7/71, Elizabeth Greenhow to Helen Martineau, 17 October 1824; Ban 8/88, Jane Martineau to Helen Martineau, 19 October 1825). Sermons for special occasions, such as funerals or Christenings, were especially treasured (JRUL 40, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 11 July 1826; JRUL 6, Ellen Yates to Helen Martineau, 2 December 1826). Prayers, too, were copied and circulated. For instance, Jane Ellen Yates copied out for Helen her brother's recollection of a prayer delivered at Sunday worship for

her dying father (JRUL 63, Jane Ellen Yates to Helen Martineau, 6 November 1826). The extempore prayer which James Martineau delivered at the family gathering before Helen and Tom left for Madeira was written down and sent to several family members (Ban 8/33, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas and Helen Martineau, 25 December 1823). There are copies of several other prayers in the Martineau letters package at John Rylands University Library, apparently kept by Helen for many years. In addition to morning and afternoon services on Sundays, many congregations held communion services regularly, most commonly after the morning service. This was the case at Cross Street and the Octagon Chapels, and was one of the things Helen missed in Madeira (Ban 9/54, Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, 30 January 1824: JRUL 30, Helen Martineau to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826).

Although Sunday was the central focus of congregational life, there were other activities based around the chapel. For instance, many of the congregations ran Sunday schools for working class children. Thomas Martineau junior held a significant role in the Norwich school, his younger sister Ellen taught a class and also made clothes for at least one poor scholar (Ban 4/74, Harriet Martineau to Thomas and Helen Martineau, 3 January 1824). John Gooch Robberds held classes for young people at Greenheys (JRUL 92, Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau, 25 February 1824). The ministers also held classes or reading groups for members of their congregations; in Manchester, for instance, a group of five young women including Henrietta Bakewell formed a reading group with John Gooch Robberds, and a group read William Ellery Channing at Helen's house (Ban 7/45, Mary Darbishire to Helen Martineau, 3 January 1824; JRUL 79, Catharine Turner to Helen Martineau, 28 August n.y. possibly 1827). The congregations ran friendly societies for the lower classes, and libraries and book societies flourished (JRUL 30, Helen Martineau to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826; Ban 8/34, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen and

Thomas Martineau, 10-12 January 1824). A little later new venture wider than the individual congregation, occurring first in Manchester, then copied in Liverpool, was the bazaar, where ladies sold needlework and food to raise money for the education of Irish children (JRUL 72, Jane Ellen Yates to Helen Martineau, 7 October 1826).

There is almost no mention of politics in the women's letters, but John Gooch Robberds reported to Edward Tagart that the Cross Street congregation was getting up a petition for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Laws (Ban 9/11, John Gooch Robberds to Edward Tagart, 9 April 1827). Elizabeth Martineau referred several times to the political situation in France and Spain, but this was in relation to its effect on the family textile business, and mainly when her son Henry was travelling in Spain, and therefore possibly in some danger (Ban 8/31, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas and Helen Martineau, 5 May 1823; Ban 8/32, Elizabeth Martineau to Thomas Martineau, 30 November 1832). From the women's letters, however, there is very little evidence that the Cross Street Chapel congregation was active in social reform of the sort suggested by Susanna Winkworth cited earlier and although her description is ten years later, other sources suggest that it also applied to the 1820s (Seed, 1982, p. 5).

Apart from the money-raising bazaar, the women showed little political consciousness; for instance, only Ann Hardy, Helen's maid, referred directly to the poverty in Manchester (JRUL 62, Ann Hardy to Helen Martineau, 4 September 1826). It was not uncommon for women's letters to family and friends to pay little attention to political matters, but a comparison with Elizabeth Gaskell's letters written from Manchester from the 1830s onwards indicates that while Elizabeth Gaskell did make occasional references to needy people and attempts to help them, Helen Martineau did not (Chapple and Pollard, 1997). This suggests that Helen was more concerned with her own situation, and had little interest in wider matters of social justice or philanthropy. Thus while there is reference in a

letter to her that Helen was planning to open an infant school, Helen herself did not refer to this in her surviving letters (Ban 8/42, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau 16 June 1824). Ann Hardy, being of lower social standing than Helen, may have felt nearer to the poverty to which she referred than her mistress, so class and wealth may be significant. However, this circle of middle-class women wrote a great deal about usefulness and duty in a more personal way. Indeed, the importance of Unitarian values and attitudes comes across strongly in Helen's letters around themes concerning rationality, usefulness and duty, as I go on to show.

When Helen had to make a decision she apparently tried to do so according to current ideas in Unitarian circles about rationality. Thus drafts of several letters to Thomas Martineau show the detailed process by which she arrived at her decision to marry him. The first letter, in October 1820, stated clearly the suitability of Thomas as a husband, his character and his family his family. Her sole reason for rejecting him was that she did not love him. Interestingly, her choice of terms suggests that both love itself and the process of thinking about the pros and cons of the marriage were positioned in a rational discourse of "cool" or "careful" thought:

> I have asked the advice of my friends, I have thought "[coolly/carefully?] seriously" on the subject of your letter and my final determination is to reject your addresses – "consult your heart" is the advice given to me by all who are most tenderly interested for my happiness. I have consulted it and I considered that esteem without love is not a sufficient (word missing). I cannot conscientiously give my hand (JRUL 135 draft Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, c. October 1820).

It was only after renewed application from Thomas, and after concerns that her rejection might have affected his health, that she reconsidered this decision. She again consulted John Gooch Robberds, when she was conscious not only of the need to make a rational decision, but also a self conscious one:

> Some say that the differences in character and turn of mind would be of advantage to me, as I am too much under the guidance of feeling and imagination – perhaps it is so – however, no one shall say that they have had too much influence over me in

> the most important act of my life (JRUL 167, Helen Bourn to John Gooch Robberds, draft c. December 1821).

Clearly Helen had absorbed the typical requirement of rational dissent, the need to use one's own judgement, and she demonstrated an independence of spirit that would have been unusual in someone from a different religious upbringing, with the issue of rationality and equality in gender relations within Unitarianism being explored in more detail in the concluding part of this thesis. Helen described her feelings on the death of her first fiancé, "when my heart was first thrown back into my possession", that she was ill and ready to die, and rather disappointed to find herself getting better:

> but when returning health gave vigour to my mind as well as body – I felt that all was wise and right and good – I resolved as much as possible to revive all former habits, and endeavor (sic) to take an interest in former scenes and [resort/recourse?] to source of usefulness or enjoyment that was thrown in my way – it took me many a struggle, but I was enabled to do it – Still there was an aching void - everything seemed changed (JRUL 167, Helen Bourn to John Gooch Robberds, draft c. December 1821).

Her reasons for reconsidering marriage seemed largely concerned with her need to find a purpose in life; unlike most other women, financial considerations were not an issue for her:

> It is true that I powerfully feel the want of some interest in life – some occupation in which my mind and heart can be engaged and I know of no situation whose duties I am better qualified to fulfil, than those of a wife – where <u>love</u> exists those duties most be easy and delightful, but without it how should I be able to perform them – I acknowledge that by such a connection my sphere of usefulness would be materially increased and consequently my happiness – for at present I am often distressed at the idea that I am of no use to anybody (JRUL 167, Helen Bourn to John Gooch Robberds, draft c. December 1821).

Helen's decision at least to explore the prospect of marriage with Thomas was encouraged by advice from John Gooch Robberds:

> You remember the conversation you had with me... I became sensible that another engagement – such as one you supposed - would not be inconsistent with the most tender and holy attachment to <u>him</u> who was gone – but that it might even strengthen and purify it (JRUL 167, Helen Bourn to John Gooch Robberds, draft c. December 1821).

After agreeing to resume correspondence with Thomas, however, Helen refused to be hurried, and even after the engagement was agreed she found reasons for postponing the marriage, expressing considerable doubts and difficulties in the three areas discussed earlier in this chapter. However, Helen eventually agreed to the marriage, largely it seems on Thomas's terms, although she had tried to think rationally, she had asked advice from her friends and minister, she consulted both reason and feelings, and she took responsibility for her decision. This seems to have been a process in which her own thought played a large part, as one would expect from someone brought up within the Unitarian tradition, but it is hard to tell how much was genuine rationality, and how much a more superficial rationalisation. Religious sentiment was not absent, as on the occasion when she visited for the last time the chapel where Thomas Biggins Broadbent had preached, and prayed for strength and wisdom, with a subsequent feeling of cheerfulness (JRUL 169, Helen Bourn to Thomas Martineau, draft n.d. c. late May 1822).

Although the circumstances were different, Helen's decision-making process about her second marriage showed a similar pattern. Her emotions were powerfully engaged, but she refused to make a decision without much careful thought and advice from John Gooch Robberds, who also advised Edward. For the years up to the marriage of Helen and Edward, the collections contain twenty-two letters from John Gooch Robberds to Helen, and twelve from Helen to John. For the three years before his marriage to Helen, the collections contain nine letters from Edward Tagart to John Gooch Robberds, all asking for advice, mainly about his relationship with Helen and procedures for getting another ministerial position (JRUL 127, 128, 129, 130, 132, 154, 155, 157, 158, written between September 1826 and August 1827) and four from John Gooch Robberds to Edward Tagart (JRUL 49, Ban 9/10-12, written between October 1825 and August 1827). The collections clearly have many letters missing, but these numbers give some indication of the amount of

consultation, thought and consideration that Helen (and Edward) gave to decisions regarding marriage. It was only after a period of nine months' absence from Edward that she agreed to meet him, and came to a decision about their relationship (JRUL 122, Edward Tagart to Helen Martineau, 2 April 1827). Again the question of place of residence was a major consideration, and again, in the end she married him, but not before a great deal of vacillation and until he had found a ministry that was acceptable to them both.

The possession of an appropriate calling and a useful position was a prerequisite in a husband, even if there was no financial need, suggesting that although Helen had strong emotions, her decision-making was strongly influenced by more practical concerns, especially in relation to her Unitarian community. Certainly not all Helen's letters demonstrated rational decision-making, as shown in the quotations given in connection with Edward's ministry after marriage, for example the one written when she was disappointed about the Manchester decision, quoted earlier (DWL 40, Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 27 October 1827). In this connection, John Gooch Robberds on more than one occasion suggested to Helen that her consulting him was possibly only asking for her decision to be confirmed, and he acknowledged the strength of her feelings in relation to her rationality (JRUL 150, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 24 August 1826; JRUL 152, John Gooch Robberds to Helen Martineau, 5 September 1826). So perhaps the appropriate conclusion is that although Helen made much of taking rational decisions, she was not a wholly rational creature.

The need to be useful was not unique to middle-class Unitarian women, but it was of perhaps greater importance to members of a rational religion who did not need to earn their own living. Many of Helen's friends were driven by the need to earn money. Catharine Turner and Helen and Emily Higginson combined both income generation and utility by running schools. Helen helped with a Manchester school and also occasionally in

her friends' schools, but lacked both the financial necessity and the interest to sustain this work. Some of her acquaintances, such as Ann Lloyd, found places as governesses. This avenue was closed to Harriet Martineau, who needed an income when the family business folded, because of her deafness. Harriet first tried needlework, and Helen helped her to sell this (JRUL 68, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 7 November n.y.; 1825?; JRUL 66, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 13 January 1826). However, Harriet soon found that she could make more money in a much more congenial way, by writing (JRUL 66, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 13 January 1826). Helen was generous in buying many copies of Harriet's early books as gifts (Ban 4/86, Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, 9 April 1827). Helen herself was a gifted writer and her letters were much praised for the vividness of her descriptions (JRUL 92, Mary Robberds to Helen Martineau, 25 February 1824), but she lacked the incentives to write for money or fame, or even for the furtherance of religion.

Throughout the letters I have drawn on there are many references to usefulness as desirable in both men and women, so its value was not restricted to one gender. However, the opportunities for its expression seemed to have been much more limited for women, and therefore a cause of anxiety. The gradually increasing opportunities for middle-class women, and for women within the Unitarian community, are discussed in a later section of this thesis. The extracts from Helen's letters quoted previously illustrate how important the notion of usefulness was to her in the decision to marry. Perhaps this was something of a rationalisation, as she had the example of many women friends who lived useful lives without being married, notably those who ran schools, such as Catharine Turner, Jane Ellen Yates, Ann Lloyd and Miss Spencer. Of all the women in Helen's correspondence network, she seemed to be the one least engaged in good works and the most absorbed in her own feelings. In this regard at least, she could be seen as something of a moneyed dilettante,

whose actions in this respect did not conform to her rhetoric, except perhaps vicariously in her choice of husbands.

There are almost as many references to duty as there are to usefulness in Helen's letters and those of her friends often in relation to other people. Thus when describing the death of Thomas, Helen wrote, "God has heard my prayers and enabled me to perform my duty without shrinking" (Ban 9/55, Helen Martineau to Mary Robberds, 28 May-6 June 1824). In the heat of the moment she also contrasted duty with love, when she told Henry Martineau that she had married Thomas "more from a sense of duty than inclination" (JRUL 30, Helen Martineau to John Gooch Robberds, 6 September 1826). Elizabeth Martineau used the word even more frequently than Helen, and seems to have been very strong-minded about doing her duty regardless of other circumstances. After nursing her husband through his final illness of several months, she refused to let grief get in the way of duty, and wrote to Helen, "I dare not stir up feelings which may interrupt duty... active duty must be my study" (JRUL 40, Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 26 July 1826). For these women, duty was played out mainly in the domestic sphere, in relation to their care for their family. Yet after Tom's death, when Helen had clearly done her duty to the last and was unwell when she was back in Manchester, first Rachel and then Mrs Martineau thought that Helen had over stretched herself and reminded her that:

> You must not distress yourself my dear Sister on account of any diminution of your tranquillity. If there be any it is easily accounted for without accusing you of any failure in piety, of any falling off in your duty... In the steady performance of your duty to yr poor father you will have abundant satisfaction, but do not let your idea of this duty carry you too far. Your bodily strength must be preserved to enable you to endure the mental exertion which you are called upon to make, & I cannot think it your duty to sacrifice yourself entirely to his service.
>
> The more I consider your present situation & the scene continually before you, with the constant painful business of it – the more I am convinced that you are doing yourself harm, & going a step <u>beyond</u> what is your duty (Ban 8/92, Rachel and Elizabeth Martineau to Helen Martineau, 14 August 1824).

The gendered concept of duty, and the different way it played out for Unitarian men is discussed in the concluding chapter.

The values and practices of Unitarianism permeated Helen's existence, as the foregoing discussion amply shows. She lived very much within the conventions of middle-class Unitarian society: virtually all the letters in the various collections are from Unitarians, indicating that her social circle was almost entirely composed of other middle-class Unitarians. Her independent income removed the financial incentive for her to step outside the bounds of the domestic sphere. If she had been a man, I am convinced that she would have chose to be a Unitarian minister, but instead she twice chose the role of minister's wife. She clearly loved the social aspects of the role, and was a regular attender at Sunday services, but there is little evidence in her letters of her desire to do philanthropic work, such as poor or sick visiting. Although she did show some interest in teaching, she did not seem to be committed to it on a regular basis. The death of her first fiancé thwarted this ambition in her early life, but the death of her first husband provided another opportunity for her to seek to become a minister's wife, although this may not have been a conscious desire. She seems to have seen the role of minister's wife primarily as helpmeet, telling Edward, "May my future life be devoted to the blessed employment of helping you to every honourable & useful exertion of your talents" (DWL 51, Helen Martineau to Edward Tagart, 13 November 1827). The obituary notice quoted earlier shows how well she fulfilled this role.

Epistolary Selves; Comments on the letters as a set

Letters have been described as belonging to a feminine genre, associated with the private and domestic sphere of activity (Huff, 2001, p. 952; Kenyon, 1992, p. xvii), although other work on the epistolary medium takes on a very different approach; Decker,

whose Epistolary Practices studies letters already published in collections, maintains that the reading of "other people's mail... erases the line between public and private domains" (Decker, 1998, p. 5), while Stanley considers that letters disturb or refuse the binary distinction between private and public (Stanley, 2002, p. 264; 2004, p. 224). Virtually all the letters in this particular study were written between friends and family, but not all were written by women, thus considering them as a set disrupts the gender distinction implied by Kenyon when she writes of similarities which lead to a tradition of women's writing (Kenyon, 1992, p. xvii). It will be argued in a later section of this thesis that religion pervades both private and public areas of life and so subverts the 'separate spheres' ideology of Victorian England. So although all these letters can be designated as 'private' ones, they also impinge on the more public life of the Unitarian movement. This is most obvious when the process of changing ministries is discussed, but also includes discussions of public worship and congregational activities such as charity work and Sunday Schools. These subjects are discussed by both men and women, but take up a greater proportion of letters written by male ministers and ministry students. This bears out Kenyon's comment that middle and upper-class men, schooled in classical languages, often approached letter writing from a book-learning perspective, rather than from acute observation of people and their conversations (Kenyon, 1992, p. x). One example of this male approach in letters of this study comes from the observation that the only letters that discuss doctrinal theology at any length are from a lay man, Helen's uncle, Holbrook Gaskell, and he became so engaged with his theological argument that he used a Latin phrase to his sister, who he assumed would not understand, and so apologised (JRUL 71, Holbrook Gaskell to Ellen Bourn, 4 August 1826) Other collections of letters which are mainly between ministers, such as the Benson collection of the Unitarian College Collection, John Rylands University Library do include significant theological discussions. However, the letters I have used in this study

are replete with mentions and discussions of the everyday aspects of Unitarian congregations.

In the introduction to this chapter I discussed the current location of the letters used in this case study, and commented on how other researchers have used them. The letters can be considered as a "set", because although they are currently in four different libraries they are all connected to Helen's life up to January 1828, thus representing an 'epistolary community' or even a series of overlapping epistolary communities (Stanley, 2004, p. 218). Although biographers commonly use such a set of letters which include letters to a person from a variety of correspondents as well as letters written by that person when researching their subject, such sets do not usually form published collections. Published letters more often take the form of as near as possible complete collections of letters by a particular person, for example Elizabeth Gaskell's letters collected by Chapple and Pollard in 1966, followed by further letters edited by Chapple and Shelston in 2000. Other collections concentrate on one writer's letters to just one other person, such as Harriet Martineau's letters to Fanny Wedgwood, edited by Arbuckle (1983). Haight's nine volume collection of George Eliot's letters goes some way towards a more inclusive set, as it includes some letters to Eliot from her partner and friends (Haight, 1954-5, 1978). For a collection of letters to make a 'correspondence', it should contain both sides of the correspondence and so show some reciprocity (Stanley, 2004, p. 217). One published Unitarian example of this is the correspondence between Lucy Aikin and William Ellery Channing, although this is not complete, and some letters seemed to go missing, either failing to survive the Atlantic crossing at the time, or being lost subsequently (Le Breton, 1874b). Such reciprocity occurs to some degree at two points in the letters I have drawn on, firstly during the Madeira stay, and secondly for a short period before Helen's marriage to Edward. When Helen was in Madeira, her letters home were passed round her family and friends, and sometimes copied

so that more family members could share them. It is perhaps odd that none of Thomas Martineau Jnr.'s letters to Helen survived. During the courtship, there are several drafts of Helen's letters to Tom, but presumably Helen must have destroyed all of Tom's at some point. James Martineau's memorandum shows that Tom wrote to him both before and during his marriage, and there is only one letter from Tom to his sister Harriet in the Bancroft Collection, so it seems that the Martineaus too destroyed his letters. Decker has commented that when they asked for their letters to be destroyed, this was not always to be taken at face value, but raises questions of ethics when reading, quoting or publishing other people's letters, an issue which I shall consider later (Decker, 1998, p. 25).

One dimension of the letters that is lost in their transcription is what Decker has called their "artifacticity" and Hall their "materiality" (Decker, 1998, p. 4: Hall, 2000, p. 83). Written before the days of the penny post and envelopes, most of them are written on one large pieces of paper folded and sealed with sealing wax, so the address and often one or more postmarks are all on the same sheet of paper. The exceptions to this are drafts of letters that were not sent through the post, and some others delivered by hand, either close by or by friends who were travelling to visit the recipient. Many have been cross-written, so that there is a large amount of writing on the one sheet, and one even has a third layer of diagonal writing superimposed on the horizontal and vertical lines of script. In some cases the hand-writing is extremely difficult to read, or is so elaborate that it speaks volumes about the writer. Some of the paper, though this is usually of a smaller size, has a black border, indicating that the writer is in mourning after the death of a family member. This non-verbal communication of the context and immediacy of the letters is not conveyed by typescript excerpts.

A letter is by definition written from a person (or several people), but the 'self' of the writer is not immutable. Stanley writes of Olive Shreiner's 'eventful I' as the self is

influenced by the events of the day (Stanley, 2002, p 262-4), while Kenyon refers to the "multiplicity" of the letter-writer (Kenyon, 1995, p. xx). Bodenheimer has highlighted the social construction of the self in May Ann Evans's letters (Bodenheimer, 1994, pp. 3ff), while Montefiore discusses the extent to which letter-writers 'stage' themselves, even to the extent of duplicity (Montefiore, 2002, pp. 98-9) Sometimes women writers were aware of this, for example Elizabeth Gaskell, but I suspect Helen presented different aspects of herself to her different correspondents without a great deal of introspection (Gleadle, 1995, pp. 29-30).

The primary aim of most of the letters is to develop or maintain relationships. This involves sharing news and information about people, asking advice and opinions, and asking for news. This social task has often been described as women's work (Kenyon, 1995, p. ix), and certainly was a vital part of the Unitarian network of the day, though it has rarely received more than cursory acknowledgement from Unitarian historians. Occasionally the letters accompanied money, for example from Holbrook Gaskell to Helen, and from Henry to Elizabeth Martineau to James Martineau, or gave practical information like the times of coaches, or travel plans. The letters all seek to mitigate the effects of geographical distance on relationships (Decker, 1998, p. 57). This is especially so of those written while Helen was away at Madeira. At this time, the letters both to and from Madeira gave the sort of information to the recipients would want to know, about health and happiness of family members, showed concern about the absent friends and relatives, occasionally gave advice, and gave detailed descriptions of activities and scenes of interest.

As the surviving letters are clearly only a remnant of those actually written, with many of the letters referred to in the collection now missing, it is hard to form an overall opinion of the letter-writing habits of the people concerned. Some people wrote more letters than others, and some were more insistent than others that their letters be destroyed.

Towards the end of his life, James Martineau destroyed many family letters, but made shorthand memoranda of sets of them, while Helen kept the letters from Edward, and put comments on the address panel of some of them. But even Helen practised some form of censorship; one of the letters has a horizontal strip cut out of it. James noted in his memoranda from time to time that he had omitted letters or passages because they were too personal. It is impossible to know how many letters were destroyed on these grounds; from internal evidence it is possible to deduce that letters from Helen and Harriet Martineau were burnt, and this may have applied to others. Once letters were sent they were out of the writer's control, so it is not surprising that collections of letters associated with particular people should consist mainly of letters to them rather than from them. This is true, for instance, of the Unitarian College Collection of Martineau letters, which, together with those now at Dr Williams's Library, seem to have been kept by Helen herself. A significant example of this characteristic of letter collections concerns the letters of Frances Power Cobbe, some of which are used in the next chapter of this thesis. The Cobbe collection at the Huntington Library in California consists of over a thousand letters sent to Cobbe, and very few by her, while the Somerville Collection in the Bodleian Library in Oxford contains far more letters written by Cobbe, in this case to Mary and Martha Somerville.

Not all letters were from one writer to one recipient. As the cost of postage (born by the recipient) was based on the number of sheets of paper, it was considered desirable to fill up the sheet as completely as possible. So sometimes a letter would be started by one person, and then finished by another. John and Mary Robberds shared letters to Helen in this way, as did various members of the Martineau family, and sometimes the Higginson sisters. It seems likely that Helen and Tom shared letters this way when they were in Madeira, according to the Martineau replies and James's memoranda. Sometimes letters

were addressed to more than one person, such as a married couple - for example John and Mary Robberds - and sometimes it could be assumed that the letter would be shared with other family members. At one stage in her quarrel with Elizabeth and Harriet Martineau Helen sent copies of letters to Catharine Turner, who sent them back unread so perhaps it is this sort of activity that accounted for the Martineaus' desire for letters to be burnt.

Even though many letters have not survived, it is still possible to make some judgements about who were the main letter-writers in this circle of friendship and family relations. Helen's reputation as a writer of long and interesting letters has already been mentioned. Of special significance here would have been the letters from her first husband, Tom, now entirely missing, and from her second husband Edward during their courtship. Many of these latter survive, and give a vivid picture of his character in the difficulties before the marriage. Helen's friend and minister, John Gooch Robberds, is a constant support and source of advice and comfort throughout the period of the study. He also wrote graphic descriptions of the scenery near Manchester, in North Wales, and in the Isle of Wight that would read well in any travel book. Of the other male writers, James Martineau wrote less often, but was a valued friend even when his sister and mother had fallen out with Helen, and her uncle Holbrook Gaskell wrote short letters mainly to do with family finances. It is interesting to note also the absence of letters from some significant men in this circle. The collections contain none from Helen's father or Tom's father, for example. Most of the letters are from women, and apart from Helen and Tom's mothers, Tom's married sisters and Mary Robberds, practically all the women who wrote more than one letter were single. There are only two fairly short letters from her mother, Ellen Bourn, who was clearly not a great correspondent. Tom's mother wrote fairly frequently, mainly with advice or practical information, and often her letter paper was shared with one of her children, usually Harriet who was at home for most of the period. Other significant writers

include Catherine Turner, who as a school mistress was too busy to write very often, but whose opinion was valued, and Helen and Emily Higginson, who were delighted to become friends of Helen and wrote long flowery letters in spite of their teaching responsibilities.

Helen's letters are mainly drafts, and most of them come from the fraught times when she was making up her mind whether or not to marry firstly Tom and then Edward. The first eight are all drafts, some with much crossing out, mainly to Tom, with two to John Gooch Robberds sharing her feelings and asking advice about whether or not she should allow a relationship with Tom. Then comes a crucial gap of over a year, before a letter actually posted was written to Tom when he went away for a few days a couple of months after Philip was born (JRUL 139, Helen Martineau to Thomas Martineau, 16 August 1823). Helen must have written many other letters during this time, but they are not part of these collections. The next group of three surviving letters is from Madeira, all to John and Mary Robberds; and these appear to have been posted, except for possibly the last, written on board ship during the journey home. From James's memorandum it is clear that Helen, sometimes together with Tom, wrote several letters to the Martineau family during this time; and these have not survived except in James's summaries. Once she arrived back in England, Helen wrote a short letter giving her travel arrangements to her mother, the only letter to her mother which survives in this set. The only two letters to survive from 1826 are a letter to James Martineau, showing she clearly valued his friendship, and a short letter written to enclose a present to Mrs Nichols, a woman she met in Madeira, which may not have been sent. The one letter from 1826 is the long letter actually posted to John Gooch Robberds written after Elizabeth and Harriet Martineau had reacted so strongly to her offer of marriage from Edward Tagart. The last five letters all date from one three week period, between 24 October and 14 November 1827, when the

question of where Edward could minister after they were married was so fraught, and are all postmarked.

Clearly these are only a small proportion of the letters that Helen actually wrote. Most of them date from particularly troubled times of her life, and may well have been kept because of this. The extracts provided earlier show how all the letters I have drawn on by Helen are entirely within the domestic sphere, and almost all are concerned with her own feelings and actions, her desire to do what is consistent with both her own desires and what she regards as religious and social duty. In this respect they give a very rare insight into the life of an otherwise unremarkable Unitarian woman. But this is not the use for which they were originally intended; for them to be read by others is an invasion of Helen's privacy, and to take them out of their first context can give rise to misunderstandings (Decker, 1998, p. 9; Holton, 2004, pp. 4-6; Stanley, 2004, p. 219). Thus it is important to acknowledge the 'afterlife, when the present tense and perspectival quality of the letter become subsumed in a historical perspective where both personal information and knowledge of wider social structures are sought' (Hallet, 2002, pp 111-116; Stanley, 2004, p. 223).

Chapter Four

Changing a "Perverse and Mischievous Tradition": Frances Power Cobbe and Nineteenth-Century Unitarianism

Introduction

Standard Unitarian histories are strangely, but predictably, silent about Unitarian women in the nineteenth century. As cited in Chapter One, there is no mention of any women of this period in Wilbur (1969), except for a reference to Queen Victoria, who was certainly not a Unitarian. Bolam et al. (1968) refer to Harriet Martineau's breach with her brother James and her criticism of Lant Carpenter's teaching at Bristol and they briefly describe Frances Power Cobbe together with Francis Newman as "theists, almost aggressively neutral towards Christianity" (Bolam et al., 1968, pp. 264, 269, 273). In a section on "The Institutional Church", they refer in passing to philanthropic activities conducted by the minister, where "some help was given by the ladies and young people", but later give more prominence to the non-Unitarian Mrs Humphry Ward's unfavourable comments after attending the opening of Manchester College's buildings at Oxford in 1893 (Bolam et al., 1968, pp. 263, 276-7). Gow's work on Unitarianism in Britain is still used as a standard reference by some; in a chapter headed "Unitarian Laymen", it has one acknowledgement of a woman in a list of well-known hymns by Unitarians including "'Nearer my God to Thee' by Sarah Adams" (Gow, 1928, p. 157). But a closer study shows that Unitarian women were active in many ways during this time. The case study of Barbauld in Chapter Two shows that some women did contribute to the Unitarian story in significant ways, both as advocates for its public presence and as providers of spiritual and educational material. The study of Helen Martineau and her circle in Chapter Three demonstrates the ways in which Unitarian women cemented the connections between Unitarian families across the country by their correspondence, visiting and marriages, thus helping to form a more cohesive denomination. For the most part, their lack of concern for

theological dogma enabled them to bridge the increasing doctrinal divisions within the movement; this may have been crucial in stopping the denomination from splitting, but no work has yet been done to demonstrate whether this is actually so.

This chapter builds on the two earlier case studies, to look more broadly at the ways women in the nineteenth century broke through some of the barriers and began to be recognised more publicly within the Unitarian movement, culminating in the induction of the Rev Gertrude von Petzold as a fully recognised minister in 1904. A brief sketch of the Unitarian movement from 1830 to 1904 sets the scene in the rest of this Introduction. A discussion of Frances Power Cobbe's ideas and contribution is followed by a comparison with Mary Carpenter, so as to illustrate the ways in which Unitarian women were increasingly able to contribute to the Unitarian movement in new ways, and then by Gertrude von Petzold, to show how these earlier advances could later be built on.

The background to discussion in this chapter is provided by the divergence between the bible-based Unitarians who followed Priestley, and the anti-supernaturalists, who reckoned that following the teachings of Jesus to be more important than debates about his status, which I noted earlier was indicated by Holbrook Gaskell in his 1826 letters to his sister and his niece grew wider during the remainder of the nineteenth century (JRUL 71, Holbrook Gaskell to Ellen Bourn, 4 August 1826; JRUL 26, Holbrook Gaskell to Helen Martineau, 25 August 1826). Although it is something of an oversimplification to describe the Unitarian movement as having two opposing camps, there is some truth in the idea as long as it is recognised that there was considerable variety within each group and that some Unitarians, for example John Gooch Robberds, belonged to both or neither. On the whole the bible-based Christian group was more conservative in theology, but more concerned with social justice issues. It was stronger in the growing towns of the North of England, included a mixture of working class and middle class adherents and supported the Unitarian

Home Missionary Board, which later became the Unitarian College, from its inception in 1854. It also pioneered social work amongst the urban poor with the establishment of domestic missions in the larger cities from the 1830s onwards (Webb, 2004, pp. 19-25). The anti-supernaturalists found a leader in James Martineau, who gradually left behind his old Priestleyan biblical necessitarianism. He was among the Unitarian ministers who were in the forefront of the reception of biblical higher criticism, and so stopped regarding the bible as either inerrant or the main authority for religious belief. However, he also tempered this emphasis on reason with a lofty devotional spirit, continued reverence for Jesus Christ and a reliance on conscience. Thus the anti-supernaturalists included those firmly against belief in miracles, such as W. J. Fox, as well as an increasing number who were drawn to the erudition and spiritual aestheticism of James Martineau and his colleagues, an aestheticism which was still attached to Christian devotion (Bolam et al., 1968, pp. 253-257). This was the group that dominated the teaching at Manchester College after it moved to London in 1853 and then to Oxford in 1893 (Smith, 1986, pp. xxii – xxiii).

By the end of the century, the two groups were represented by different hymnbooks and periodicals, with The Christian Life providing an outlet for the conservatives, and The Inquirer serving the Martineau camp. Until 1844 external pressures prevented the rift becoming too great, because the attack on Unitarian property, which grew after the Manchester Socinian controversy, forced all Unitarians to work together. After the orthodox non-conformists gained control of the Unitarian Chapel in Wolverhampton and the substantial Lady Hewley trust of York in 1836, on the grounds that when they were first established Unitarianism was illegal, all Unitarian property originating before 1813 was at risk. A coalition of Unitarian members of parliament, lawyers and prominent lay men worked with others, including Gladstone, to secure the passing of the Dissenters' Chapels

Act in 1844, which allowed Unitarians to keep all property which had been in their control for over twenty-five years (Webb, 2004, p. 24).

After this crisis passed, the two wings felt freer to express their differences. In 1866 the conservatives, now led by Samuel Bache, who had married Emily Higginson, tried to insert a qualification for membership of the B&FUA to include a recognition of "the special mission and authority as a Religious Teacher, of Jesus Christ", implying to some acceptance of miracles and Jesus as messiah. This was defeated, not because the Martineau wing had more supporters, but in order to preserve freedom of belief (Webb, 2004, p. 23). The anti-supernaturalists received more support when the writings of the Americans Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Theodore Parker (1810-1860) reached England. Both had spent some time as Unitarian ministers, before finding that their radical views made them unpopular, and they then concentrated on other work. James Martineau saw Emerson's work in developing a "religion of the spirit" as the "culmination of the theological progress of Unitarianism (Tarrant, 1912, p. 68). However Parker's rejection of belief in miracles let to the spread of modern Theism amongst Unitarians in America and Britain; and his popularity in Britain came to rival that of James Martineau after Frances Power Cobbe edited his works for British audiences (B&FUA, 1906, p. 379), though Martineau-type Unitarians still considered themselves Christians. At the other end of the Martineau group were ministers like John Page Hopps, who found affinities with spiritualism, yet remained within the Unitarian fold (Bolam et al., 1968 p. 273). Towards the end of the century, there were two further attempts to make national Unitarian organisation more efficient, as many congregation had declined to join the B&FUA on the grounds that it might infringe on congregational independence, even though they were happy to combine in more local district associations and missionary enterprises. James Martineau's plan for a Presbyterian system funded by a levy on congregations was rejected, but instead a mainly consultative

body of individuals and congregations met triennially. Its title embodied the variety of belief and nomenclature within the Unitarian movement, being "The National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, and other Non-Subscribing or Kindred Congregations" (Bolam et al., 1986, pp. 275-6).

"Intuitive Morals and Religious Duty": Frances Power Cobbe and the Boundaries of Unitarianism

Until very recently there was little accessible information about Frances Power Cobbe apart from a short biography, along with those of Emily Davies, Josephine Butler and Millicent Garret Fawcett, by Barbara Caine in her Victorian Feminists (Caine 1992). In the early years of the twenty-first century, however, three useful works have been published. The first of these is an account of Cobbe's theological and ethical writings by Sandra Peacock (2002). This was followed by a detailed biography by Sally Mitchell in 2004, and Lori Williamson's long-awaited biography in 2005 based on her 1995 thesis. Williamson's work concentrates on Cobbe's anti-vivisection and feminist work and pays little attention to her religious activities, whilst Mitchell gives a more rounded picture, but both omit significant areas of her Unitarian activism. In addition to these secondary sources, I have also consulted letters in the Huntington Library in California, the Bodleian Library and Harris Manchester College Library in Oxford and Dr Williams's library in London as well as Cobbe's published writings, including her autobiography (Cobbe, 1894). In what follows, I pay particular attention to the development of her religious ideas and what this and her enactment of these convictions tells about the boundaries of Unitarianism.

Frances Power Cobbe, unlike Anna Barbauld and Helen Bourn, was not born into a Unitarian family but discovered Unitarianism in early adult life. Her family were Anglo-Irish landowners with an estate at Newbridge, just to the north of Dublin, and were Anglican. Her relatives included several clergymen; her great great grandfather had come

to Ireland as Chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and created the Newbridge estate, becoming Archbishop of Dublin in the eighteenth century. The house had been enlarged by her grandfather and boasted a long drawing room that lent itself to magnificent entertaining. Frances was the youngest by five years of five children, the only girl, born in 1822 when her mother was forty-five. Although her parents were well off, her father spent a great deal of time and money overseeing and improving the estate, and her mother became a semi-invalid the year after Frances was born, Mitchell indicates this illness was caused by a miscarriage followed by depression, while Cobbe herself and Williamson refer to an accident resulting in a damaged ankle which was mis-treated by doctors (Mitchell, 2004, p. 26, Williamson, 2005, p. 10, Cobbe, 1894 vol. 1, p. 33). A few months after Frances's birth, the family moved to the environs of Bath for three years, to be near the boys' school, but returned to Newbridge when she was four. Her childhood was fairly lonely, as her brothers were away at school most of the time, and she was looked after by a series of nursery maids and then governesses, as was the usual practice in moneyed families. Although her father was an evangelical Anglican, she was taught to read by the use of Anna Barbauld's Lessons for Children published in 1778. School holidays, when not only her brothers but also a variety of cousins came to stay, were highlights in her year. Frances's education consisted of morning lessons with a governess and free time to read in the library in the afternoons. There were also regular times for bible reading and family prayers, and church attendance on Sundays was assumed. One significant event she remembered and related in her autobiography was the first time she doubted the truth of a bible story, the story of the feeding of the five thousand. In spite of this worrying doubt, Frances was a devout and earnest child who took religion seriously. There were frequent visits to England, especially to Bath, and then a stay of two years at an expensive girls' boarding school at Brighton, which was intended to 'finish' her as a young lady, but which she hated. In the

summer of 1838 Frances, together with three cousins, was confirmed into the Anglican Church near her Irish home, and the following Christmas her formal education was ended at the age of sixteen. The next summer she experienced some sort of conversion to evangelical seriousness, and resolved to make religion the focus of her life, with much prayer and bible reading. This may have been a reaction to the marriages of her various cousins or brothers, some of which were obviously unhappy, and the budding careers of her brothers and male cousins; an attempt to find a future as a single woman unattracted to marriage and not expected to follow a career or earn her own living (Mitchell, 2004, p. 45).

Frances was taught the management skills needed to run the large household at Newbridge, including budgeting and accounting, staff supervision training and payment, menu planning and so on, and she took over the running of the house, presumably intended as practice for a future role as a married woman. However, Frances did not enjoy the Dublin balls at which she was supposed to meet eligible young men, and preferred to study, with much varied reading, and local charity work on the estate. As the potato famine began to be felt, there was much distress to relieve at this time. Her religious intensity continued, but her ardent desire to be a devout Christian was troubled with distressing doubts about the veracity of the bible, fuelled by her reading of Gibbon (Cobbe, 1894 vol. 1, p. 89). After four years mental struggle, she gave up Christian beliefs, and was for a time what would come to be called agnostic, but soon started to pray again, and began to believe in God as the "Lord of conscience" (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 1, p. 93) commenting that after this episode she never again doubted the existence of God.

Cobbe was much influenced by her reading, including many works by Deists and, although she may not have recognised them as such, by Unitarians. Thus after reading one of Elizabeth Gaskell's stories she came to the conclusion that "Love is greater than Knowledge", and she also read a biography of Blanco White, Francis Newman's work on

the soul and James Martineau's Endeavours after the Christian Life (Cobbe, 1894 vol. 1, p. 96-7, Mitchell, 2004, p. 59). But the book that transformed her life was Theodore Parker's Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion, which she bought as soon as the first British edition was mentioned in the Athenaeum in 1846 (Mitchell, 2004, p. 64). Parker was an American Unitarian minister who had developed the ideas of William Ellery Channing and the Transcendentalists into a theism which did not depend on biblical authority or regard Jesus as other than a great teacher; and so, although still within the Unitarian orbit, was on its radical fringe. In Britain, Parker's views became much more popular in the Unitarian movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. Parker's position was similar to that being developed by Cobbe, and she described his book as "epoch making" (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 1, p. 97).

Parker's God was much less distant than the deists', being directly accessible to each person as the revelation of "God's holiness and love in the depths of the soul" (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 1, p. 98). His belief in the immortality of the soul became especially important to Cobbe, as her much loved mother died within the year (1847), and its importance was reinforced in the correspondence she began with him. Then after her mother's death, Frances told her father about her change in belief, and as a result she was sent to live with her ailing brother Tom in the remote Donegal countryside for nearly a year. The one thing gained from this stay, it seems, was that Tom taught her some Latin and Greek (Mitchell, 2004, p. 72). But Frances's services as an efficient housekeeper were missed, and she returned to Newbridge the following year, with the understanding that religion was not discussed, and that she need not attend either family prayers or Sunday church. During this time Frances began to write secretly, and while in Donegal, where there was little with which to occupy herself, she had written an essay on deism. However, back in Newbridge, her wide reading included Harriet Martineau, Barbara Leigh Smith (later Bodichon), Anna

Jameson and Kant, and she began writing a work on Kant, eventually published anonymously in 1855 as An Essay on Intuitive Morals. Part I. Theory of Morals. In this work she interpreted Kant to provide an ethical system which was intellectually satisfying, yet accessible to thinking people. In the final section she noted some gender differences in "male and female Codes of Honour", for example that lying is not acceptable for men but counted trivial in women, and that the "cowardice which would bring ignominy to the Man" is "taught to the woman as the proper ornament of her sex" (Cobbe, 1859, p. 269; quoted in Mitchell, 2004, p. 79). Cobbe then began work on the second Part of this essay, concerned with practical morals, and her reading for this included Mary Carpenter's work on reformatory schools, published in 1855. When Part II was published in 1857, it was received favourably by Francis Newman and James Martineau, who both became friends of Cobbe within a few years. However, later in 1857 her father died and Frances's world changed completely.

The Newbridge estate was inherited by the oldest son, who then ran it with his wife, so Frances lost her role in running the household, and unless she was prepared to stay on as some sort of redundant dependent, she lost her home too. Just three weeks after her father's death she set out on her travels, and moved from a rooted, wealthy way of life to one of comparative poverty and mobility. She had been left an annual allowance of £200, with an additional £100, which latter she used to travel to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. This journey proved an eye-opener in many ways, taught her different forms of self-reliance, and boosted her confidence in the possibility of living as an independent woman. On her return to England, she met Unitarians in London who provided her with an introduction to Mary Carpenter, who was looking for a companion to lodge with her and share in her work with delinquent children. Cobbe arranged to do this and lived with Mary Carpenter most of the next two years. She found Mary's Spartan life-style and constant

overwork a considerable strain, but experienced the work, especially visiting poor families and workhouse projects, as fascinating. Cobbe spent the spring of 1860 in Italy with the women friends she had met during her travels, staying with Isa Blagden and visiting the elderly Mary Somerville, who became in many ways a mother figure to her. She also spent time with the dying Theodore Parker, and was one of the few permitted to attend his funeral (Mitchell, 2004, pp. 110-112).

When Cobbe returned to Bristol later in 1860 she carried on with her poorhouse work in conjunction with Margaret Elliot, the daughter of the Dean of Bristol Cathedral and relative of future Prime Minister John Russell, but took lodgings separately from Mary Carpenter. This gave her time to write, and she and Elliot wrote a paper for the September 1860 meeting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (NAPSS), one of the few mixed public organisations that allowed women to deliver papers and eat at public dinners (Mitchell, 2004, pp. 107-8, 113). When this paper was published it appeared with her full name as author, the first of her publications to do so, and she demonstrated her appreciation of the need for publicity to further her cause by organising a further eighty-four articles and letters in fifty-four different newspapers dealing with the poor conditions of sick wards in workhouses (Mitchell, 2004, pp. 113-4). The following year, she used her contacts to get an article on workhouses printed in Macmillan's Magazine, the first for which she was paid. This set the pattern for Cobbe's future career as a writer and propagandist on social justice issues, rather than a hands-on worker, as she had been when collaborating with Mary Carpenter.

During her next stay in Italy the following winter she reported on the political situation for The Daily News and wrote articles on arts for various publications. She very much enjoyed the company of the women artists, and became particular friends with a Welsh sculptor, Mary Lloyd. Although back in Bristol she was still officially doing social

work, she actually concentrated on writing, and gave a paper at the 1862 NAPSS meeting proposing that women should be admitted to universities, her first public advocacy of women's rights, an area that took increasing amounts of her attention over the years to come. The following year, she started work on editing fourteen volumes of the writings of Theodore Parker, writing a substantial preface on the religious demands of the age. These were published individually between 1863 and 1871, and remained the only collected works of Parker for fifty years, achieving substantial sales in both Britain and America (Mitchell, 2004, p. 131). Also in 1863 Cobbe published her first theological book in her own name, Broken Lights: An Inquiry Into the Present Condition and Future Prospects of Religious Faith.

In Broken Lights she surveyed current Christian denominations from the point of view of a theist and found them all, even the Unitarians, to be wanting, as they still placed too much emphasis on the god-like qualities and actions of Jesus, compared with the theism of Parker. (Mitchell, 2004, pp. 135-136; Peacock, 2002, pp. 75-88). She contrasted the traditional bible based Unitarians with the 'New School' and continued:

> It remains to be seen how far the New School will have the courage to go forward and form a nucleus round which the more advanced thought of the time may gather. Its leaders already possess so many great truths, and are so worthy to put themselves forward, that one is tempted to ask Where is it they fail? How is it that men like these, with such words to speak and willingness and power to speak them, have failed to reach the heart of England, as Theodore Parker, with doctrines hardly ostensibly different from some of theirs, reached the heart of so many thousands both in Europe and America? The answer must surely lie here: that those differences, apparently small, between his Theism and their Unitarianism, really touch the root of the matter. Parker worshipped One God alone – our only Moral Lord – our present Teacher – our future Judge. The Unitarians, while giving to Him alone the name of "God", and jealously reserving it and all acts of worship for Him, have yet persisted in giving to Christ that position which, practically to us as moral beings, is a divine one; namely that of our Moral Lord and Teacher, and future Judge (Cobbe, 1864, pp. 95-96).

This passage demonstrates Cobbe's own position in relation to Unitarianism, and will be further considered later in this thesis.

In 1863 the second part of Cobbe's Essay on Intuitive Morals was republished under her own name as Religious Duty and attracted considerably more notice. From this time onward, Cobbe's writings encompassed social issues, travel and religion, and are too numerous to detail here, although it is worth noting that she developed the practice of writing for a variety of journals and then at intervals collecting articles together to form a book; this maximised both her earnings and her exposure to the book-buying and opinion-forming public. As it was now clear that Cobbe could earn enough from writing to supplement her allowance from the Cobbe estate, after her next stay in Italy she left Bristol to live in London. There she set up house with Mary Lloyd, and the two spent the rest of their lives as a devoted couple.

Once resident in London, Cobbe developed an impressive array of contacts to further both her writing and the causes she espoused, to which was added a concern for animals and an increasingly active campaign against vivisection. In this she was joined by Mary Lloyd, who took a greater part in the work for animal rights than she had for women's concerns. In addition to her writing and campaigning, Cobbe became a very effective public speaker and organiser and she and Mary enjoyed a lively social life, with frequent dinner and tea parties. Many of the people she worked with had Unitarian connections. This included the women associated with the Kensington women's discussion society, such as Clementia and Helen Taylor, Barbara Bodichon and Anna Swanwick; and various members of James Martineau's congregation, including Charles Lyell the geologist, William Shaen the lawyer and William Carpenter the psychologist, Mary's younger brother.

Cobbe's reputation as a journalist and campaigner was considerable. She produced a variety of works on religion advocating the use of rational thought and scientific methods which were taken seriously by the more liberal wing of Christian thinkers, and her regular

anonymous leaders in several daily papers influenced a significant proportion of the population. She is reputed to be the first woman who had a regular staff desk in a national newspaper office (Williamson, 2005, p. 93). However, after Cobbe took on the cause of anti-vivisection, her sense of perspective and her seemingly always limited ability to make compromises seem to have diminished. She became less convinced that scientific methods and discoveries were leading to a better world. Although at first she welcomed Charles Darwin's work on evolution, once she realised that it could lead to a determinist view of moral development and did not support her idea of the intuitive knowledge of God, she turned against him. In 1876 she founded and headed the Society for Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection, commonly known as the Victoria Street Society from the address of its headquarters, and spent the next eighteen years working tirelessly on its behalf. However, she was involved in tensions with members of staff and resigned in 1898, after loosing a vote about whether or not the society should campaign against all vivisection, or just that done with unnecessary cruelty. Although by this time she had retired to live in Mary's Lloyd's family home near Dolgellau in West Wales and was in her late seventies, she immediately founded the British Union for the Total Abolition of Vivisection to continue this work. Before leaving London she produced many articles attacking science for undermining the spiritual and moral values, and lost a number of friends over this.

Mary Lloyd had always preferred living in the country, and although she and Frances often spent summer months away from London, both separately and together, an experiment of living in the English countryside within commuting distance of London was not a success. In 1884 they moved to Hengwrt, Mary Lloyd's large house on the Welsh coast. However, as the house was owned jointly by Mary and two of her sisters and they all needed income from the property, it was often let out, especially in summer, when the couple lived in a series of smaller houses nearby. Although Mary and Frances could not be

considered to be poor, they always struggled to maintain a house and servants and keep up a middle-class professional life-style on their joint income. They were just about to sign away Hengwrt on a long lease when Frances received a substantial legacy of about £25,000 from Anna Yates, a Liverpool Unitarian who had been at Lant Carpenter's school in Bristol when James Martineau and Mary Carpenter taught there in 1828 (Mitchell, 2004, p. 335). In retirement, Cobbe continued to write, and after some dithering about whether to publish it in her life-time, published an autobiography in 1894 which was an immediate success. Two years later, Mary Lloyd died, leaving Frances to a rather lonely old age in spite of frequent visits from friends and relatives. She died in 1904 and was buried next to Mary in the local parish church, with the funeral address given by Estlin Carpenter, Unitarian minister and Mary Carpenter's nephew.

As both Mitchell and Williamson state that Cobbe never became a Unitarian, it is necessary to explain why I take a different view and claim Cobbe as a significant Unitarian woman (Mitchell, 2004, p. 151; Williamson, 2005, p. 90). In the Introduction to this thesis I discussed my criteria for deciding who to include as Unitarians and who to omit, based firstly on association with Unitarian institutions rather than individual beliefs, and secondly on how the individuals described themselves. Using these criteria Cobbe is a Unitarian in the first instance, but not in the second, so in this section I explore Cobbe's Unitarian involvement before going on to examine her beliefs and their practice in her life.

Apparently Cobbe first learned about Unitarianism during a visit to Cheltenham in the summer of 1842 or soon after, when she heard sermons by the Evangelical rector, Archibald Boyd. A small group of Unitarians had begun to meet in Cheltenham in a private home from about 1832, and built their first church in 1844, which was the subject of some hostility (Crosskey et al., 2004, p.23; Wigmore-Beddoes, 1971, p. 97). Cobbe wrote of this time:

> I can remember Mr Boyd about this period preaching at Cheltenham, and denouncing the Unitarians with such singular vehemence, that it induced me to institute careful enquiries concerning a body of whose tenets at that time I was in total ignorance (Cobbe, 1872, pp. 105-106, cited in Wigmore-Beddoes, 1971, p. 97).

Cobbe's enquiries and her Unitarian reading referred to earlier engaged her curiosity still further, but her first visit to a Unitarian chapel, in about 1847, was not auspicious. In her autobiography she described it thus:

> I knew that there were Unitarian chapels in Dublin at this time, and much wished to attend them now and then; but I would not cause annoyance to my father by the notice which my journey to the town on a Sunday would have attracted. Only on New Year's Day I thought I might go unobserved and interpolate attendance at the service among my usual engagements. I went accordingly to Dublin one 1st January and drove to the chapel of which I had heard in Eustace Street. It was a big, dreary place with scarcely a quarter of the seats occupied, and a middle-class congregation apparently very cool and indifferent. The service was a miserable, hybrid affair, neither Christian as I understood Christianity, nor yet Theistic; but it was a pleasure to me merely to stand and kneel with other people at the hymns and prayers. At last the sermon, for which I might almost say, I was hungry, arrived. The old Minister in his black-gown ascended the pulpit, having taken with him – what? – could I believe my eyes? It was and old printed book, bound in the blue and drab old fuzzy paper of the year 1819 or thereabouts, and out of this he proceeded to read an erudite discourse by some father of English Socinianism, on the precise value of the Greek article when used before the word Theos! My disappointment not to say disgust were such that, - as it was easy from my seat to leave the place without disturbing anyone, - I escaped into the street, never (it may be believed) to repeat the experiment (Cobbe, 1894 vol., 1 pp. 104-105).

However, both Mitchell and Williamson agree that Cobbe was a regular attender at the Little Portland Street Unitarian Chapel when James Martineau was the minister (Mitchell, 2004, p. 151; Williamson, 2005, p. 90). Evidence for this is found in her recollections of James Martineau, when she wrote:

> ...when my friend Miss Lloyd and I planned to share house in London (about 1864) one of our first and greatest interests was to become regular attenders at Mr Martineau's services in Little Portland Street Chapel. It was a long way from our home in South Kensington, and we had no carriage; yet I do not think we ever missed – rain or shine - a Sunday morning service when we were in London; nor a week-day evening lecture (several series of which lectures were delivered in the winter); nor the Ethical Lectures, to which we were kindly admitted among the students in Manchester College. We had seats in the gallery of Portland Street Chapel very nearly opposite the pulpit, and thus had every advantage for hearing the

> noble sermons which made up the richest part of our happy lives (Cobbe, 1900, p 175).

In her autobiography, Cobbe refrained from commenting on James Martineau as a person, as he was still living when she wrote, but she gave summaries of several of his sermons and must have been one of the few people who could really understand them. She considered that her Sunday attendance at Little Portland Street Chapel was a very important, even "vital" part of her London Life (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 2, p. 145), and described her Sunday experiences in the following words:

> From the upper regions of thought where he led us, we were able, - nay compelled, - to look down on our daily cares and duties from a loftier point of view; and thence to return to them with fresh feelings and resolutions... And lastly and above all, there was always the man filled with devout feeling, who by his very presence communicated reverence and the sense of an all-seeing God (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 2, p. 146).

Mitchell quotes a conversation between Cobbe with Gladstone, in which Cobbe described James Martineau as "my pastor"; while Estlin Carpenter quotes her as referring to him as "my spiritual captain" (Mitchell, 2004, p. 225; Carpenter, 1905, p. 411). James Martineau advocated that, although individuals may or may not choose the label Unitarian, a congregation should be broader than any particular doctrinal position, and on this wrote that:

> Unless some witness is soon borne to the possibility of separating the religious life, not indeed from doctrinal conviction, but from concurrence in doctrinal conviction, the spiritual bonds of society itself seem in danger of dissolution (quoted in Booth, 2005, p. 1).

James Martineau clearly considered Cobbe to be within the Unitarian community, viewed in its broader aspect, when he wrote:

> Profoundly as I am attached to the Christian inheritance, from personal feeling and social conviction of its vital importance, I do not find that <u>to individuals</u> it makes any serious difference in the religious life, whether they keep or whether they resign the name. Between Theodore Parker and Miss Cobbe my natural sympathies in religion know no distinction; nor should I know, were I not told, which of them continued on the Christian line (Carpenter, 1905, p. 484).

And in order to give expression to this catholicity of spirit, James Martineau and some of his colleagues in 1867 formed a broadly based society, the 'Free Christian Union', whose object was:

> by relieving the Christian life from reliance on theological articles or external rites, to save it from conflict with the knowledge and conscience of mankind, and bring it back to the essential conditions of harmony between God and Man (Carpenter, 1905, p. 457).

Strictly speaking, Cobbe did not regard herself as a Christian at this time, but she joined the Free Christian Union and went to some lengths to attend its meetings as several of her letters to the officers show (Frances Power Cobbe to unknown recipient, no date, DWL 24.133.55; Frances Power Cobbe to Edward Enfield, no date, DWL 24.133.158). The Union failed to attract a wide following, and only lasted three years, but Cobbe's membership of it certainly indicates her involvement with as well as interest in Unitarian activities.

Other such connections included Manchester College, which was based in London during the time that Cobbe lived there and used the title Manchester New College. In relation to this, she petitioned James Martineau to allow women to attend the lectures given to the male theological students. One of his replies has survived, and reads as follows:

> Your proposal cannot but be very grateful [sic] to me, and, so far as my own will has a suffrage in the matter, there is no difficulty in the way.
> But what our College authorities may have to say to it, I cannot foresee. It is possible that they may be unfavourably affected to one or two awkwardnesses which are inseparable from our arrangements and which do not exist in University College. Our lectures are given in the upper rooms of a building which is throughout a mere nest of students' chambers, and in which hitherto the presence of ladies, on the staircases and in the passages has been unknown. And the young men who live there, - and think the whole place their own for romps and fun – are not our (Manchester New College) students, amenable to us, but Univy. Hall students, under a distinct administration by Mr Beesly. We are only tenants of 2 or 3 rooms. This double government a little complicates the matter, by requiring double consent. Then again, my classes are liable to be so very small, – one, two, or three, – that, in the presence of even a few ladies, the poor shy youths would be hardly numerous enough to keep each other in countenance. Where the classes are large, and assembled in a theatre, this kind of difficulty is much less felt, than in our domestic [?], which gathers us round a table, and admits of occasional interruption of the

> lecture by question or remark. Many a student who would naturally submit a difficulty to me, would be shut up by the presence of lady listeners, not known to him like his companions or his professor.
> If however a way can be found through these little hindrances, I shall be delighted to aid in opening it. I can only say, that the proposal shall be brought under the notice of the Commee, and their opinion elicited before the end of the present month (Huntington, CB 600, James Martineau to Frances Power Cobbe, 1 June 1873).

Cobbe did not take no for an answer. There is an undated manuscript, in handwriting similar to James Martineau's, headed "list of occasional students"; and under "Ethics" there are seventeen names, fifteen of which are women, many recognisably Unitarian, including Miss Cobbe, Miss Lloyd and Mrs A. Swanwick (HMCO MS James Martineau 15, viii). According to one college history:

> The controversy over the admission of women to the college was settled in London, after a resolute little company headed by Frances Power Cobbe and Anna Swanwick had made their way into Martineau's lecture-room. The debate was prolonged over two years, ending with the vote for admission at an adjourned meeting of the Trustees in February 1876. That was the period in which degrees of London University were also opened to women, and for several years, up to the time of his retirement, women, as occasional students, attended Martineau's lectures (Davis, 1932, p. 194).

Cobbe's autobiography is strangely silent about this episode, apart from noting that she attended several courses of Martineau's lectures of the gospels and on ethical philosophy, without mentioning the college (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 2, p. 145). It is only in her Recollections of James Martineau, quoted above, that she refers to attending the ethical lectures at Manchester College (Cobbe, 1900, p. 175.).

Although after James Martineau retired Cobbe stopped attending the Little Portland Street Chapel on a regular basis and went to hear the heretical Anglican Charles Voysey preach, she retained her Unitarian connections, and not only worshipped but also herself began to preach, in Unitarian churches and chapels in the London area (Manton, 1976, p. 152; Mitchell, 2004, pp. 213, 265; Ruston, 2005 conversation). The sermon Cobbe preached at the Free Unitarian Church at Reading on Sunday morning, 8 September 1878

was later printed with the concluding prayer and was made available free of charge from Cobbe herself. It was on the kingdom of God, and used words of the Lord's prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven", as a basis for an exhortation to work for justice, truth and love (Cobbe, 1901). It was clearly acceptable as a Unitarian sermon, as there is a hand-written note on the copy in Harris Manchester College Library indicating that it was given again at Northampton on the 8 May 1904, obviously by someone other than Cobbe herself!

It seems that this sermon was not known to Peacock or Williamson, as neither of them refers to it; and Mitchell briefly records the event without comment and fails to list the sermon in Cobbe's published works. In her autobiography Cobbe also refers to another sermon, "doomed to be saved" which she preached at Clerkenwell Unitarian Chapel in 1873 (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 2, p. 56), although when this was printed in Hopes of the Human Race it was described as an address read on 5 October 1873 (Cobbe, 1880, contents page). Peacock and Williamson also completely ignore Cobbe's part in establishing the Unitarian congregation at Aberystwyth, while Mitchell only mentions that she paid a subscription to it, noting that George Eyre Evans, unpaid minister of the Unitarian Chapel at Aberystwyth, visited her on several occasions and quotes his account of his last visit to her shortly before her death (Mitchell, 2004, pp. 360, 366). The short history of the Aberystwyth congregation by Islwyn ap Nicholas however provides more details and relates that Cobbe:

> was a supporter of the Unitarian cause at Aberystwyth from its inception, both morally and financially... The little band of Unitarian worshippers at Aberystwyth were never more cheered in their lonely outpost than when they received a letter of encouragement and a token of her practical sympathy (Ap Nicholas, 1977, pp. 17-8).

It is also noteworthy that while Cobbe was buried in the local parish church, her funeral was conducted by two Unitarian ministers, Estlin Carpenter and George Eyre Evans, in

accordance with her wishes (Ap Nicholas, 1977, p. 18; Carpenter, 1904, p. 249). Clearly Cobbe was in practice very much part of the Unitarian movement.

On the grounds of doctrine, Cobbe's beliefs were found within the Unitarian denomination of her day, albeit in a minority. Francis Newman, for example, maintained his Unitarian membership while he was a Theist, and his beliefs were very similar to those of Cobbe. Her friends Mr and Mrs Appleton, also Theists, used to say, "You know we are Unitarians of the widest school, we are friends of Parker" (HMCO MS Misc. 2, 203, Frances Power Cobbe to John Chapman, 26 January 1864). After her conversion to Theism, Cobbe maintained that her beliefs changed very little; she was proud of the fact that she had worked out her beliefs for herself, but it is evident that both Theodore Parker and James Martineau influenced her religious ideas considerably. She certainly rejected historical authorities and relied on reason, conscience and the direct intuition of God, maintaining that "within our own nature, however marred or defaced, lay the present testimony to the everlasting right" (Carpenter, 1904, p. 250). She described her faith in these words:

> The faith of the future will not leave men to their present task of seeking to form an idea of God, accommodating, as best they may, their sense of righteousness with presentations of His character and dealings contained in sacred books and "schemes of salvation". It will bid them descend into their own hearts and find there the ideal of all Holiness and Love. True, that that ideal, even in the best of us, will be but imperfect... But the image, so far as it can be traced, - so far as we can behold the reflection of God's face in the inward mirror of the soul – will be a true picture of him (Cobbe, 1864, p. 161).

Peacock interestingly emphasises the role of Cobbe's treatment by her family in informing her idea of God: a reaction against a domineering evangelical father showed in her picture of a loving, justice- making God, and the death of her mother led her to seek belief in an afterlife when they would be reunited (Peacock, 2002, pp. 34-55). Although Cobbe still referred to God as he, she wholeheartedly adopted Parker's practice of recognising the feminine in God, writing:

> On the throne of the universe, Lord of Life and Death and Joy and Sorrow, there sits goodness itself – goodness unfading, unalterable: never wearied with our misery or disgusted with our failures; but loving us all, the Saint and the Sinner, with one infinite all-embracing love, of which a Mother's tenderness is a reflected ray, a Father's yearning care the faint and far-off type (Cobbe, 1864, p. 161).

The principles of her beliefs were "the absolute goodness of God; the final salvation of every created soul; and the divine authority of conscience", and these together with her talk of "the divine spark of divine life within us" became a popular way of expressing Unitarian belief right up to the twenty-first century (Cobbe, 1864, p. 171, 173). Coupled with this was an emphasis on both prayer and practical duty. Here Cobbe edited a collection of prayers for theists, to which many Unitarian contributed, writing a long preface justifying the place of prayer which ended, "If we are to be made holy, we must ask the Holy One to sanctify us. If we are to know the infinite joy of Divine Love, we must seek it in Divine Communion" (Cobbe, 1881, p. xxxvii). Religious Duty was the title given to the only part published of the projected "Practice of Intuitive Morals", in which she considered that "ALL duty, whether towards ourselves, our neighbours, or more immediately to God, is properly in strict ethics Religious Duty" and listed religious obligations as thanksgiving, adoration, prayer, repentance, faith and self-consecration (Cobbe, 1863, pp. viii, 4).

Cobbe's attitude to mainstream Christianity softened as she grew more wary of the anti-religious tendency in late nineteenth century developments in scientific thought; as Estlin Carpenter said of her in his funeral oration:

> She reached a finer appreciation of the place of Jesus in history than she had been willing to accord him in the first years of revolt. She saw that his career corresponded in the larger story of the race to that moment of quickening which she had herself personally experienced... what she now found in the Gospels was a new spirit of life (Carpenter, 1904, p. 25).

And Cobbe herself wrote in 1884 that:

> ... the Christianity of our day tends, as it appears to me, more and more to resume the character of the religion of Christ, i.e. the religion which Christ believed and lived; and to reject that other and very different religion which men taught in Christ's name (Cobbe, 1884, p. 798)

In fact Cobbe reached a very advanced understanding, that ideas about Jesus are socially constructed, writing:

> Each Christian age has indeed, (as I remark in my Dawning Lights), seen a Christ of its own; so that we could imagine students in the future arguing that there must have been "several Christs", as old scholars held there were several Zoroasters and several Buddhas. Just as Michael Angelo's Christ was the production of that dark and stormy age when his first awful form loomed out of the shadows of the Sistine, in no less a degree do the portraits of Ecce Homo and the Vie de Jesus belong to our era of sentiment and philanthropy (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 2, p. 45).

And she commented about her own stance, that:

> Yet as regards my own personal feeling, I must avow that the halo which has gathered round Jesus Christ obscures him to my eyes. I see that he is much more real to many of my friends, both Orthodox and Unitarian, than he can ever be to me. There is nothing, no, not one single sentence or action attributed to him of which (if we open our minds to criticism) we can feel sufficiently certain to base it on any definite conclusion, and this to me envelopes him in a cloud (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 2, p. 45).

It was in fact Cobbe's refusal to acknowledge Jesus as any sort of moral lord which I conclude led her to say that, in the 1840s, in the strict doctrinal sense of the word, "I was not then, nor ever, a Unitarian, but simply a Theist" (Cobbe, 1900, p. 175). However, Cobbe's editing of Theodore Parker's works, and her related publicising of his views in England led to the spectrum of belief within British Unitarianism changing so as to incorporate Cobbe's beliefs. As William Smith wrote in 1866, "Indeed, from week to week there's nothing but Theodore Parker: the man seems to be canonised already, certainly his works are the textbook of the Unitarians here (JRUL UCC B1 47, William C. Smith to John Gordon, 24 July 1866). The Unitarian 'text book' mentioned by Smith was probably Cobbe's edition, as no other collection was apparently available in Britain at that time (Mitchell, 2004, p. 131). It was not just doctrine, but the acceptance of a breadth of doctrines within Unitarianism, that Cobbe found difficult. This catholicity has been demonstrated earlier by quotations from James Martineau, which contrast with Cobbe's evangelising crusade on behalf of Theism, a crusade she persevered with for the rest of her

life. Indeed, Peacock considers that Cobbe "never strayed far from the climate of Evangelical belief in which she had been raised" (Peacock, 2002, p. 268).

It was not only Unitarian beliefs that Cobbe influenced. I have already discussed how she was instrumental in getting women admitted as occasional students at Manchester New College. She also wrote on the role of women in the church. Both Peacock and Mitchell list two of Cobbe's articles on women and the church. The first, "Women's Work in the Church", is mainly concerned with the Church of England and was published in The Theological Review in 1865. In this Cobbe dismissed the idea of separate women's organisations and once again attacked institutional religion (Peacock, 2002, pp. 99-101; Mitchell, 2004, p. 415). The second, listed but not commented on by Peacock and accorded only a one sentence mention by Mitchell, is "The Fitness of Women for the Ministry", first published in The Theological Review in 1876 and reprinted in the collection entitled The Peak in Darien in 1882. In this article, Cobbe rehearsed various reasons why women should not be ministers, ranging from lack of education, brains or strong voices to the fact that "women are (thanks to all sorts of causes, historical, political, personal with which we need not concern ourselves) actually much deconsidered by men. Would not their deconsideration be reflected on Religion itself if they were to become authorised ministers? (Cobbe, 1882 p. 219). She went on to note that, "... the Broad Church school has been trying to efface the stamp of effeminacy from their order, to cultivate "Muscular Christianity", and make laymen of the order of the author of "Sword and Gown" remember that a priest is not necessarily on old woman" (Cobbe, 1882, p. 219). Cobbe recognised that many of these problems could be overcome: only particularly able women would get through the selection and training at places like Manchester New College, and some women had some advantages over many men. Thus she considered that women could be better at expressing ideas and oratory, and that their ready sympathy and "special facilities" would

give them an advantage in pastoral matters (Cobbe, 1882, pp. 233-240). Women she thought were also better at practical acts of religious duty, and living by their conscience (Cobbe, 1882, pp. 243-9). The last section introduced what would now be called feminist theology, seeing female qualities in both Jesus Christ and God:

> In Jesus Christ the ideal characters of both sexes seem almost equally blended... Is not the compassion of "a Mother for the son of her womb" a still profounder image of the Divine Live than the father's pity? Ought it not also to be brought home to our comprehensions (if in any measure human words may so bring it) through the lips of mothers and motherly-hearted women?
> The loss out of our religion of all those ideas which may be classed as the doctrine of the Motherhood of God has been attended with evils innumerable. The church of Rome, in obedience to a vehement popular instinct, has sought to make up for the defect by Mariolatry. The orthodox Protestant churches, by sternly adhering to their masculine Trinity, had indeed preserved the awe and moral reverence which the Divine Kingship and Fatherhood demand, and which the paganism of Virgin worship has obliterated. But how much have they not last by excluding those sentiments which can only be given to One in whom we recognize, not only Justice, Holiness and Beneficence, but also Tenderness, Sympathy, Love? (Cobbe, 1882, p. 261)

Cobbe ends this article with a plea both for women ministers and for the expression of more motherly aspects of God.

While twenty-first century feminists would want to take issue with Cobbe's assumptions about the nature of gender differences, and about qualities of motherhood, most would also recognise that Cobbe's writing was considerably in advance of most people's thought:

> If there be, then, as I humbly believe and trust, in the nature of our great Parent above, certain characters of tenderness and sympathy with His creatures which are more perfectly shadowed, more vividly reflected, in the love of human mothers for their children than by aught else on earth, if there be, in short, a real meaning to the old lesson that God created Woman as well as Man in His own image, - the image being only complete in the complete Humanity, - then I think it follows that there is urgent need that woman's idea of God should have its place in all our teachings of religion. I think that there must be truths in this direction which only a woman's heart will conceive, and only a woman's lips can teach; truths, perchance, which have come to her when baby-fingers have clung round her neck in the dark while infant trust overcame infant terror, and she has asked herself; was there anything in heaven or earth which could make her cast down to destruction, or even let slip from her clasp of care and guardianship, the helpless little child thus lying in her

> arms, - a living parable of all our race in the everlasting Arms of God? (Cobbe, 1882, pp. 261-262).

Unitarians continued to wrestle with almost identical ideas one hundred years later (Croft, 1984).

Cross-currents in Unitarianism: Frances Power Cobbe and Mary Carpenter

A comparison between Frances Power Cobbe and Mary Carpenter helps to illustrate the ways in which Unitarianism could both help and hinder the reception of women's contributions, depending on the point in time and the context, but also the aptitudes and character of particular individuals. Mary Carpenter was a very different character from Cobbe; she was naturally shy and retiring, and she adored her father, Lant Carpenter, Unitarian minister at Exeter and then Bristol. From him she imbibed a traditional biblical Unitarianism and a stern sense of duty as well as a good education. From an early age she attempted to follow in his footsteps, albeit within the bounds of propriety, so she taught at Sunday school and in the minister's day school and generally assisted his work (Carpenter, 1879; Manton, 1976; Sargant, 1987). Indeed, the early parts of all three biographies of Mary Carpenter are full of references to Mary's devotion to her father and his influence over her thought long after his death in 1839, when she was thirty-two. After two visits from the American Unitarian minister to the poor, Joseph Tuckerman, in 1833 and 1834, she longed to work with the poor children of Bristol, but for fifteen years stayed dutifully at home to teach firstly in the minister's school, and then in a school for 'young ladies' run by her mother and her younger sister in order to help provide sufficient income for the family. Manton quotes a comment from an American who met Mary Carpenter in the last year of her life, who said, "old as she was to me, she used to give me the feeling that I was always talking with someone's daughter, her words had so much filial reverence in them" (Manton, 1976, p. 18). This is in direct contrast to Frances Power Cobbe, who enjoyed her status independently of her father's position, writing of her time in London:

> The few who troubled themselves to think who I was, had taken it for granted that I belonged to a family of the same name, minus the final letter, in Oxfordshire. In a country neighbourhood the one prominent fact about me, known and repeated to everyone, would have been that I was the daughter of Charles Cobbe of Newbridge. I was proud to be accepted, and, I hope, liked on the strength of my own talk and books, not on that of my father's acres (Cobbe, 1894, vol. 2, p. 83).

In the conclusion of this thesis I shall comment on the disempowering nature for women of much of the Unitarian emphasis on the fatherhood of God and its links to an earthly patriarchy, already touched on in the Introduction.

Frances Power Cobbe first met Mary Carpenter in 1857 when she arranged to board with her in Bristol and help her in her work with poor and delinquent children. In doing this, Mary Carpenter was at last fulfilling her earlier dream; and she lived on her own and spent her time teaching in a ragged school and supervising a reformatory. Cobbe was expecting to find a kindred spirit, but was disappointed. The Carpenters' Unitarianism, with its reliance on the bible and allegiance to Jesus, was very different from Parker's theistic Unitarianism, and when Cobbe tried to explain her distress at Mary's "stiff and prickly orthodoxy" and frequent references to Christ, Mary was apparently "wounded by my remarks", as she wrote to a friend (quoted in Mitchell, 2004, p. 105). Both published firstly a volume of collected prayers and devotional readings, and, towards the end of their lives, private editions or their own compositions. Cobbe's Alone to the Alone has already been mentioned and consists of prayers for theists; towards the end of her life she also published, for private circulation, a book of her own poetry and devotional material, Rest in the Lord, in 1887. Mary Carpenter's first collection, Morning and Evening Meditations (1845), was her first published work and consisted of prose reflections on scripture verses, of which nearly half were her own compositions, followed by a poem or a hymn, arranged to give daily material for a month, and for special occasions in the Christian year. It was published anonymously at first, as she was too modest and lacking in self-confidence to want to be named (Manton, 1976, pp. 69-70). Her name only appeared as the author when Samuel

May printed it in America, and then on future British editions, of which there were five (Manton, 1976, pp. 70, 78-9). Her book of original verses and reflections, Voices of the Spirit and Spirit Pictures came out in 1877, and while in the preface she gave her address, no name appears on its title page.

Although both Cobbe with her Theory of Intuitive Morals, and Mary Carpenter with her Morning and Evening Meditations, published their first books anonymously, the reasons for doing so were quite different. Cobbe was advised that her work would not be taken seriously if it were known to be by a woman, and she was also respectful of her father's antagonism to it. No such problems applied to Mary Carpenter, as it was quite acceptable for women to produce devotional material, and the book was dedicated to her father with the words, "A first Offering of love and gratitude in the memory of a revered father" (Carpenter, 1845). The production of these devotional works illustrates to some extent some of the differences in character between the two women. Thus Watts describes Mary Carpenter as "stifled by the conventions of female propriety to an almost crippling extent", and goes on to demonstrate that she developed her ideas and found her 'voice' firstly through conventionally acceptable channels of chapel based philanthropy and only later went on to extend the boundaries as her concern for the children in her care drove her to seek wider audiences (Watts, 2002, p. 47). This contrasts with Cobbe, whose first work, on ethics, was outside feminine genres, and who took care to get her name known in order to further both her career and the causes she espoused (Mitchell, 2004, p. 115). But in spite of her self-deprecating start, it should be acknowledged that Mary Carpenter went on to be a considerable public figure, giving evidence before government committees, travelling four times to India to promote girls' education and to America (Watts, 2000). She even began to work for women's suffrage, and on one occasion, three months before her death, was on a public platform when Cobbe spoke on women's rights in Bristol in 1877

(Mitchell, 2004, p. 250). Both women were passionate about justice and about religion, and both significantly affected public policy, but it was Frances Power Cobbe, the one who was more marginally placed within Unitarianism, who had the greatest effect on the course of Unitarian beliefs in Britain. She influenced Unitarian beliefs in her promotion of Parker's theology, and she paved the way for women to study at Manchester College, so making it possible for Gertrude von Petzold to become accepted as a minister.

Gertrude von Petzold and the 'Practical Work of Ministry'

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Unitarians in Britain were much inhibited by their felt need to appear conventionally respectable in spite of their heretical opinions, perhaps because of the class position of many leading figures within it. Watts has described this inhibition thus:

> ... because of their anxious quest for 'respectability' in a world which anathematized their religious beliefs, they tended to mind the proprieties which restricted the lives of middle-class women (Watts, 2002, p. 41)

This particularly concerned women who felt they had a gift for public ministry, because public speaking by women was associated with lower classes, Quakers and dangerously 'enthusiastic' sects. Nevertheless, some women did speak out, and were accepted in some sense as ministers. British Unitarians learned of women ministers in America, including Antoinette Brown, who was ordained by the Congregationalists in 1853, though she became Unitarian after a few years (UUWHS, 1997, p. 7); Lydia Ann Jenkins who was officially sanctioned by the Universalist Church in 1858 (UUWHS, 1997, p. 9); and Olympia Brown, who knew and was inspired by Antoinette Brown (no relation) entered the Universalist ministry in 1863, and is widely acclaimed as the first woman ordained by full denominational authority rather than by a local congregation or district (UUWHS, 1997, p. 9: Hitchings, 1985, p. 31). By 1870, five women had been accepted by the Unitarians and

Universalists; in the next twenty years this grew to seventy women ordained, but not all had paid pastorates. There was a concentration of women ministers in the small congregations of Iowa, where there was a shortage of ministers, and very few women ministered in the more comfortable and popular East coast (Tucker, 1990, p. 3-4). Meanwhile, in Australia in 1873 Martha Turner became minister of the Melbourne Unitarian Church. Turner came to Britain ten years later, and preached in many English and Scottish congregations.

The Scottish connection was significant here, in that there was already there one woman Universalist minister, in Glasgow, Caroline Soule. Caroline Soule was an American by birth, a Universalist whose minister husband had died suddenly while there were still young children to maintain. A teacher by training, she took to writing, and also organised the first national women's group within the Universalists, the Women's Centenary Aid Association, which raised funds and did practical work. The experience of public speaking that this involved led her to start preaching. In 1875 she took a break for health reasons, and travelled in England and Scotland, where she helped to organise the Universalist Convention. She returned in 1875 as a missionary for the Women's Centenary Association, and became minister of the Universalist Church in Glasgow, where she was ordained in March 1880 at the age of fifty six (Harris, 2004, pp. 438-9; Hitchings,1985, p. 134-135). This was possibly the first formal ordination of a women minister in Britain. Caroline Soule ministered until her retirement in 1892, and for a time had pastoral oversight of the Dundee Unitarian Church while its minister was away (Gilley, 2004, p. 2).

Therefore, while there were no fully recognised women ministers in England, women's ministry was not completely unknown. Added to this were the numerous occasions, mainly unrecorded, when women did the minister's job, not just visiting and so on, but also preaching. Thus when Lucretia Mott, the American Quaker anti-slavery campaigner came to England on a speaking tour in 1840, she spoke from several Unitarian

pulpits (Tolles, 1952). Later women on rare occasions conducted worship and preached; the example of Frances Power Cobbe here has already been cited. Mrs R. J. Jones, still spoken of with respect in Aberdare, South Wales, was active in educational, philanthropic and political spheres and also, according to her 1899 obituary, "When her husband was prevented from preaching, she often occupied the pulpit for him" (The Inquirer, 1899, p. 167). Women's speaking in church was not restricted to the middle classes. For instance, George Fox, minister from 1857 to 1865 of the working class Methodist Unitarian congregation in Mossley, North East of Manchester, wrote that, "From their connection with Methodism, quite a number of people, both men and women, could pray and speak at meetings" (Fox, 1910, p. 33 quoted in Peart, 1999, p. 70).

But speaking at meetings, or even preaching, is of course by no means the same as being recognised as a minister. Unitarians had prided themselves on having a learned ministry, and for this a formal higher education was seen to be required. For a considerable time it was not easy for male nonconformists, let alone women, to achieve this. And even when women did gain access to higher education in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was not generally to faculties of theology. Unitarians had a tradition of valuing education, and of educating women; they founded Bedford College, for example, and ministers often taught both sexes in their schools, evening classes and public lectures. But conventional propriety was important. This was evident in the letter from James Martineau to Frances Power Cobbe quoted earlier, listing the difficulties of allowing women to attend lectures at Manchester New College. The opening of the college to women occasional students in 1876 has already been noted. In 1892, the college formally accepted two of the American women ministers for a year's study and was even prepared to grant them a certificate. The college records list them as occasional students, and the annual report for 1893 states "The Rev Marion Murdoch and the Rev Florence Buck of USA have been

admitted free to such lectures and classes as, under the direction of the Principal, they may desire to attend". This was apparently greeted with enthusiasm, as the committee went on to record that "The committee further most emphatically endorse the welcome given in the following passage from a report of the Principal on the current session, 'An interesting feature of the new session is the presence of two ladies from the United States. The college cordially welcomes this addition to the number of its students, and the ladies, on their side, evince the warmest interest in the students of the college, and in some of the classes in the University'" (HMCO Annual Report for 1892-3). It is most likely that this was one of the factors that encouraged Gertrude Von Petzold to attempt to become a minister.

Gertrude Von Petzold was born in what was then Thorn in East Prussia (now known as Torun in Poland) in 1876. Her father was in the army, and she had a conventional religious upbringing (Gilley, 1997, p 157). She said of herself:

> I always loved the bible. As a child it opened to me a world of dreams and yielded abundant nurture to my imagination. My mother taught me to pray, and through her I learned to know God as a loving Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ as my brother and spiritual guide. As a little girl I wrote spiritual songs, and through my mother, who had many sad experiences in life, I learned to concentrate my emotions in the realm of the religious. Later I received religious instruction in the schools, and when I grew older, committed whole bible passages to heart, and could repeat the Lutheran catechism with all its comments and bible texts without a break (Gilley, 1997, p 157-158).

By the time she was eighteen, Gertrude had passed the exams which qualified her to teach, but did not feel that she was well enough prepared and wanted more, a higher education. So she decided to come to Britain, which she said "had long recommended itself to me as a land of freedom" (Gilley, 1997, p. 158). She spent two years learning the language and teaching part-time, and then started to read for a degree at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. She wrote of this time in her life:

> I now began to study medicine, but my heart was not really in it. Other matters were exercising my mind. Ever since I had left the normal school I had begun to doubt the traditional forms of Christianity as the catechism had taught them to us. I had especially arrived at the conclusion that many of the Bible stories could not possibly

> be understood literally, as was required of us at the school. What, then, was true in the Bible? What was true in Christianity? What could one still believe of the so-called plan of salvation, and the essential Christian doctrines which had been so impressed upon us at the school?
>
> Such questions occupied me continually. I had begun to read theological books, and was determined to come to a clear understanding on these points. At length I resolved to devote myself strictly to the study of theology. To do this, however, I must first acquire a theology degree, and this would take three or more years of preparation, with a further three years of special theological study (Gilley, 1997, p. 158).

During this time, Von Petzold developed a calling to enter the ministry, on which she wrote:

> At the same time the determination had arisen within me to dedicate myself, if it were possible, to the practical work of the ministry. It must naturally be a free church; for in the first place only such a church would appoint a woman to its ministry, and, secondly, my theological studies had convinced me of the untenableness of the dogmatic faith of my school-days/ having myself struggled up to perfect freedom in religious matters, I felt that only in such a free atmosphere could I pursue my chosen vocation (Gilley, 1997, p. 158).

So Von Petzold applied for entry as a ministry student to Manchester College, by then in Oxford. The portraits of Gertrude Von Petzold show her to be a beautiful young woman; she was described as having a "pale, spiritual, classically-featured face, whose pallor was emphasised by the dark mass of black hair resting above the wide, white brow, a graceful, gracious presence, full of dignity and charm" (Gilley, 2004, p. 4). As a student she is described in a university reference as a perfect lady, by birth and by feeling, character and behaviour at all times. Her St Andrews reference also describes her as having a keen clear intelligence, as a fearless thinker, desiring nothing but the truth, Morally, she was high-minded and straightforward and "No folly or silliness of any kind have ever appeared in her". The only criticism made is that she was not always conciliatory enough, or considerate of others (HMCO MS M. N. C. MISC. 12/iii p. 22, reference from St Andrews University, illegible signature, 26 September 1897). Her letter of application, in early September 1897, sent from a Southampton address, shows that she was not unduly subservient or modest in her attitude, as she wrote:

> I write to apply for one of the Exhibitions offered each year by Manchester College to undergraduates of other universities who intend to study for the Ministry of Religion at the said College, but are unable to meet all the expenses of a university career. I enclose the certificate as prescribed in the prospectus, but I am sorry to say I could not obtain the signature of a minister, as I do not know any among my acquaintances who would undertake to give it (in direct opposition to I Corinthians 14). However I intended to substitute for this the signature of Principal Donaldson, United College, St Andrews, but I now hear he is not at home. Also I do not enclose the prescribed Medical Certificate as I am only expecting it by the end of this Week, having written off for it to a Dr in St Andrews whom I consulted last winter and who after a thorough examination (then for a special purpose) testified to my perfect health. I hope that these things will not stand in the way of my application being successful, for as you will understand any correspondence with University Officials is so much more difficult out of term – and I am particularly anxious not to wait any longer with my application as it is of importance to me to obtain the above named exhibition for the coming Winter Session, for I should like to go on studying at the United College, St. Andrews, where last Winter I prepared for the Scotch Arts Preliminary which I passed in April. Would it be possible to arrange the date of the Examination as soon as possible in this month?
> I hope that you will not think me troublesome, but there is no evading the fact but that I am dependent on obtaining one of these Exhibitions in order to study for Graduation at a University. Still I may say this that to become a minister of free and undoctrinal religion is a wish very dear to me, dearer than I can put in words.
> There only remains to mention that I am of German Nationality but, as far as I can foresee now, I mean to settle as a Minister in Great Britain; especially as there is not the least chance for my doing so in my own country. You will understand that I should not like to pledge myself always to live in Britain, but this, if I read rightly, is not made a condition to any applicants. (HMCO MS M. N. C. MISC. 12/iii p. 22).

In spite of her impatience, this seems to have worked. Gertrude von Petzold got her bursary and went on to read moral philosophy at St Andrews and an MA arts course in classical languages at Edinburgh University, all the while received grants from Manchester College, and also from the Hibbert Trust to enable her to study for two terms in Germany. As Alan Ruston comments, "the Hibbert Trust's significant help deserves a mention – their support was quite a thing to do from a group of ageing male lawyers who were not always takers of risks" (Ruston, personal communication by Email, 1 July 2004).

It was the autumn of 1901 before von Petzold finally took her place in Oxford as a regular student for the ministry. She was the only one who was not in residence in college, but there was an another woman, Harriet Johnson, who was admitted to classes, but not

apparently for ministerial training. The college appeared to be gracious in its welcome, with the President, William Colfox, referring to von Petzold as "a lady who has taken an excellent place in classical honours at Edinburgh"; and he went on, "She is cordially welcomed to the class-rooms of the college, and the committee hope that her career within its walls may lead to successful work in a ministry in which there is room for the high religious influence of cultured womanhood" (HMCO 1902 Annual Report). However, all did not go as smoothly as this might suggest. After the acceptance of von Petzold as an external exhibitioner in 1897, the various committees and sub-committees of the college had struggled to decide on a policy about accepting women students for the ministry. They came eventually to the conclusion that each case should be judged on its merits, but the Academical sub-committee of 1898 stated that:

> We do not at present see prospect of any opening for Women's Ministry in English churches, save in the quite possible case that a woman of exceptional ability may make such an opening for herself. Devotion to Church work or Domestic Missions may induce women to devote their whole time to what may be regarded as a Deaconess's ministry; but this would grow out of personal and local circumstances in each case, and is not likely to lead to a demand for opportunity of theological study (Minutes of Meeting of General Committee, Monday November 21st 1898).

Nevertheless, the committee decided that it was quite possible to make arrangements to train women for the ministry, including the provision of "all necessary separate accommodation for Women Students in Manchester College". The clerk, Edwin Odgers, finished the committee minute with this phrase, "I may add that we are not in favour of any addition to the printed regulations that might seem to indicate that Women Students are expected, or invited or accepted as a matter of course". (Minutes of Meeting of General Committee, Monday November 21st 1898). This ambivalence seems to have been typical of Unitarian attitudes to women at the time, and will be considered further in the Conclusion of the thesis.

So von Petzold took her place at Oxford, receiving a very mixed reception. A fellow student wrote:

> I was a student at MCO at the some time as Gertrude von Petzold when the other male students refused to have her sitting at the refectory table with them, so I championed her, and talked them round so that she was able to eat with the rest of them. I supported the suffragettes as she did (Gilley, 2004, p. 4).

The only report of her college career in the college archives is by the elocution and voice production tutor, who wrote:

> She has a good strong voice, but some of her vowels and consonants still have a foreign effect, She would do well to take it from those who have made a special study of the subject, that a foreigner is not gifted with a mouth of such a form as makes the correct pronunciation of the English sounds impossible. There is some improvement. (HMCO MS M. N.C. MISC. 85, appendix 3 p. 290).

Von Petzold clearly worked on this, as it was said of her in her first ministry that she had a rich, clear voice, with excellent elocution (Gilley, 2004, p. 4). Indeed, R. J. Campbell in 1911 described her as "one of the most brilliant women speakers of the day, a scholar of repute, and I think, the only ordained minister of her sex in the country" (cited in Gilley, 2004, p.4).

Although von Petzold completed her ministerial training to a very acceptable standard, there were fears that no congregation would appoint her as minister. However, she had already been in demand as a guest preacher, for example Frances Power Cobbe had invited her to preach at the opening of the new Unitarian Chapel in Aberystwyth in the spring of 1903 (Gilley, 1997, p. 159). There were nine candidates for the ministry at the Narborough Road Church in Leicester, eight men and von Petzold, and after a whole series of candidating sermons, she was chosen unanimously (Gilley, 1997, p. 160). Her induction service took place on 29 September 1904. In his charge to the minister, Principal Drummond did not refer to her gender, but Joseph Wood's charge to the congregation wondered if women might not have special qualities for ministry, noting the delicacy and peculiarity in the ethical note struck by women writers. On von Petzold's acceptance into

the Unitarian ministry, R. A. Armstrong said, "We recognise the courage of her who tonight breaks a perverse and mischievous tradition" (Gilley, 2004, p. 4). Her future career, and that of the other ministers who followed, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Some of the issues raised by her entry into the ministry will be considered in the Conclusion to the thesis as a whole.

Able Women: A Brief Chapter Conclusion

Von Petzold and Cobbe were clearly both very able women, who, coming to Unitarianism in adult life, were able to take and develop the opportunities the denomination gave to women without being over constrained by its concern for respectability. Would Cobbe have become a Unitarian minister if she had been born at the same time as von Petzold? I think not, for three main reasons. Firstly, Cobbe always maintained a position of marginality towards Unitarianism and a zealous evangelism for theism, while von Petzold fully embraced Unitarian ideology, particularly its commitment to freedom of belief, thus she wrote of her appreciation of the Unitarian movement:

> (it) required of its ministers and its members alike only the worship of God and the service of man, in the spirit of Jesus Christ. I here entered the service of a congregation which had no binding dogmas or creeds, no consistories, synodal authorities, and the like, but is conjoined only through the genuine, intimate relationship of religious feeling and Christian endeavor (sic) (quoted in Gilley, 1997, p. 159).

Secondly, I do not think that Cobbe would have been willing to live a conventionally 'respectable' life that would have been required of a minister, especially a woman. Interestingly von Petzold also lived with a woman companion, Rosa Widmann, described as a 'friend and helper' but little is known of their relationship (Gilley, 1997, p. 165). I also doubt that Cobbe would have been willing to forego her political activism or her freedom to choose her own activities in order to be a minister. A third reason, and perhaps the most significant, is that Cobbe found her vocation in her writing and in her political activism.

She described her work as a leader writer for the Echo as "her pulpit", and she wrote in her autobiography:

> I wrote on the whole more than 1,000 leading articles, and a vast number of Notes, for the Echo during the seven years in which I worked on its staff... I had the comfort of thinking that, as regarding social ethics, my work had given some measure of tone to the paper. It was my pulpit, with permission to make in it (what other pulpits lack so sadly!) such jokes as pleased me; and to put forward on hundreds of matters my views of what was right and honourable (Cobbe, 1984. vol. 2, p. 74).

It is hard to imagine that Cobbe would have given this up in order to be a minister in a movement whose name she did not wholeheartedly claim for herself.

Von Petzold had opportunities for education that were not available to Cobbe in her young adulthood, not only the possibility of studying for a degree in Scotland, but also entering Manchester College. Cobbe herself had worked to help to create these opportunities, as I have demonstrated earlier. By the end of the nineteenth century, women were becoming more visible in Unitarian pulpits. I have already noted some of the foreign born women who occupied British pulpits, and one lay person, Mrs R. J. Jones who preached in place of her husband. There is evidence that women preachers and congregational officers were generally becoming more acceptable. At Aberystwyth, for example, where most services were taken by lay people, a promising student, Lena Jones, encouraged no doubt by Cobbe, was on the preaching plan, while two other women students, Bessie Evans from Llandysul and Jane Evans from Ciliau Aeron, were elected joint secretaries for several years from 1902. When the London Unitarian Lay Preachers Union was re-established in 1911, three women were on its list (Ruston, 1973, p. 14). Beyond Unitarian circles women were seen to have more of a public presence by the end of the nineteenth century: some professions such as medicine had opened their doors to women, and political campaigns such as those for women's suffrage, following earlier

activism form married women's property rights, and anti-prostitution laws, had contributed to this.

These changes can be linked back to some of the challenges faced by Anna Barbauld, and her ingenuity in extending the sphere of her influence. Barbauld's legacy of writing on 'practical divinity' was followed by much more writing by Unitarian women, particularly for other women and children; an example from the end of the century is James Martineau's daughter Gertrude Martineau's 1889 Home Counsels, a series of improving stories about two children, Kenneth and Agnes, first published individually in the Sunday School Helper, a monthly magazine filled with material and advice for Unitarian Sunday school teachers, to which both men and women contributed freely. A survey of the 1890 volume contents with an identifiable author gives 58 items by men and 34 by women, though the men's articles, mainly by ministers, tend to rely more on academic knowledge of ancient languages and the bible (The Sunday School Helper, 1890, unnumbered contents pages). Such a journal was not published in Barbauld's time, as the Sunday school movement was only just beginning to grow significantly and utilise lay teachers, many of them women, in appreciable numbers at the end of the eighteenth century (Laqueur, 1976). Although Helen Martineau/Tagart did not follow her sister- in law Harriet's advice about engaging in public philanthropy, many of her friends did; this has been documented in a general way by Prochaska (1980). This paved the way for women to move into paid social work of various kinds. More specific to Unitarian middle-women, reflecting their often superior education, and also the need for widows, wives and daughters of ministers to earn money, was their involvement in running week-day schools (Watts, 1998, pp. 135-6: 2002, p. 41).

Barbauld, Martineau/Tagart and Cobbe each related to Unitarianism in different ways. Barbauld was at the heart of the emerging denomination, but would, I think, have

preferred the term rational dissenter. She campaigned publicly for its rights in the 1790s, and provided it with educational and devotional material, some of which is still in use. Barbauld's theology was Arian rather than Unitarian in the strict sense, but she was not over concerned about details of doctrine. This contrasts with Cobbe, who was concerned about particular beliefs, and perhaps never quite absorbed the tolerance of different beliefs that cradle Unitarians often assumed. While Barbauld met the educational and some spiritual needs of the movement, and influenced it towards a finer appreciation of sensibility and awareness of God's presence, Cobbe directly helped to change and extend its core beliefs. Martineau/Tagart did not have the public presence of either Barbauld or Cobbe, and a study of her indicates the distance between those who loyally attended Unitarian congregations and the more visible activists, for example that even in a congregation which such a lively reputation for involvement in public affairs, many of its members, especially women, could remain immersed in their own family lives. Yet without such supporters, the movement could not have survived. In a sense, Martineau/Tagart was as much at the centre of the movement as Barbauld, and shared her lack of concern over individual doctrines.

Yet the movement has become what it is because some of its members changed their ideas, or came in with different ideas, and persuaded others to follow. Priestley, Lindsey and James Martineau did this, and Cobbe follows this masculine pattern in her promotion and development of Parker's theism. Although it was Cobbe who helped to spread theism in England, it is Parker who is remembered, not Cobbe. Indeed, one thing common to the three women is that their names are not generally known within the current Unitarian movement. There have been some attempts to revive Cobbe's name in relation to animal rights on the centenary of her death, a year also commemorated for the centenary of the induction of von Petzold as minister in Leicester. Barbauld is hardly remembered at all

by most Unitarians, except as one of the authors of a harvest hymn, in spite of the revival in interest in her in academic circles.

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion to my thesis, I take up some of the issues raised in earlier chapters; these include the impact of Unitarian theology on women, the idea of 'double dissent' and gender differentiation within Unitarianism, tensions of ambiguity and ambivalence concerning women in Unitarianism. I also indicate some elements of a way of retelling the Unitarian story that would include women and thus change that story in some consequential ways.

In the Introduction to the thesis, I suggested that the theological emphasis on the Fatherhood of God to the exclusion of other images could combine with Victorian images of the 'paterfamilias' to create an extreme patriarchalism. Although this doubtless occurred in some instances, in fact it did not apply significantly in the three case studies that the thesis provides. Anna Barbauld was married to a man whose character was less stable and probably weaker than hers, while Helen Martineau showed considerable independence of spirit in spite of her domesticity, and Frances Power Cobbe not only rejected masculine authority in her own life but appropriated images of God which included aspects of femininity. One of the ways several Unitarian women subverted the patriarchal theology of 'God the Father' was to feminise aspects of divinity; Cobbe was not the only one to do this. Mary Carpenter used the symbolism of the motherhood of Mary mother of Christ to urge women to "bestow maternal love" on deprived children, (Yeo, 1998, p. 131). Anna Jameson, claimed by some as a Unitarian, was also inspired by images of the Madonna in art to appreciate the feminine qualities of God (Yeo, 1998b, p.128-9). Florence Nightingale, who though brought up Anglican absorbed Unitarian thought from her father, fantasised about a female Christ (Harthill, 1996, p. 126; Zemka, 1997, p. 173). It was not until towards the end of the twentieth century that Unitarian women began to reclaim this forgotten heritage. However, for most women doctrinal details were not the most important

aspect of their Unitarianism. Anna Barbauld would have agreed with Elizabeth Gaskell when she pleaded for "some really spiritual devotional preaching instead of controversy about doctrines"(Chapple and Pollard, 1997, p. 537).

Of more significance was the social pressure that restrained women from sharing in theological discourse. Barbauld circumvented this by framing her theological writings as poetry or education, with the more acceptable designation of 'practical divinity', and using much domestic imagery. Martineau/Tagart did not venture into the public sphere, so her expressions of her Unitarian faith in her letters were not regarded as 'theology'. However, throughout the century Unitarian women had been able to contribute articles to Unitarian journals. Pieces by Barbauld and Harriet Martineau in the Monthly Repository have already been noted; this journal, particularly when it was edited by George Fox between 1828 and 1838, was noted for its inclusion of women writers (Mineka, 1944). Most contributions to the journal were anonymous, but Mineka identified the following women writers during its publication from 1806 to 1818: Anna Barbauld, Catherine Cappe, Mary Hughes, Harriet Martineau, Emily Taylor, Sarah Flower Adams, Mary Leman Grimstone (later Gillies), Catherine Hering, Letitia Kinder (later Field), Jane Roscoe, Caroline Southwood Smith, Harriet Taylor (later Mill) (Mineka, 1944, pp. 395-428). Later Unitarian periodicals, such as The Inquirer, The Christian Life, Christian Reformer and The Unitarian Herald also gave women the opportunity to contribute poems and articles, although only a small number actually appear to have done so.

By the time that Cobbe came to publish, it was beginning to be more acceptable for women to write on religious topics, but for her early works of philosophy, like Barbauld had done before for more contentious pieces, she published anonymously. However, she soon began to sign her work, and indeed to seek publicity as a professional journalist. Her pioneering writing encouraged other women to publish theology in their own names. Sarah

Hennell (1812-1899) "spent most of her life in theological speculation", according to Height (1954, p. lviii). From a midlands Unitarian family, Hennell worked as a governess for some time and was a friend and a long-time correspondent of Mary Ann Evans, better known as George Eliot (Haight 1954, pp. lv-lix). Hennell wrote several volumes of theology, which apart from the first two, do not appear to have made any impact at the time (some pages of the volumes in Dr Williams's Library were uncut when I first borrowed them) and have been almost totally forgotten. The earliest of her publications of which I am aware is her 1857 'essay' (of 172 pages) Christianity and Infidelity: An Exposition of The Arguments of Both Sides, which won the fourth Bailie prize of £20 in 1854 for "the most logical and complete yet condensed epitome of all relevant facts, arguments and objections... by Infidelity against Christianity" and vice versa (Robertson, 1929, vol. I, p. 251). It was published with her name as H. H. Hennell, so her gender was not obvious, apparently the book "enlarged the area of critical thinking" and was "thought provoking" according to Robertson (1929, vol. I, p. 251). Sarah Hennell won the next Bailie prize offered in 1857 with her The Early Christian Anticipation of an Approaching End of the World and its Bearing upon the Character of Christianity as a Divine Revelation published in 1860 with her first name written in full. Her later works met with less success. These include Thoughts in Aid of Faith (1865), in which she tried to reconcile biblical higher criticism with her version of philosophical theism, and Present Religion as a Faith Owning Fellowship with Thought (1865), a three volume work relating theism and a kind of evolutionary theory. Apparently increasingly obscure volumes were added in 1873 and 1887, not now generally available; George Eliot herself found some of this difficult to follow (Haight, 1954, p. lviii). Fortunately, other women had more success, including Florence Nightingale, with her Suggestions for Thought to the Searchers after Truth

Among the Artizans of England, privately printed in 1860, but republished in an abridged edited by Poovey in 1991.

A further theme which emerges from this study is that of ambivalence and paradox. Threaded throughout this work is the paradox of educating middle-class women, but expecting them to stay within conventional gender roles. A specific instance of such ambivalence met von Petzold at Oxford, when she was officially welcomed by the principal, but shunned by some of the students. Such women were often ambivalent about their role in their family relations: thus Elizabeth Gaskell chafed at the imposition of her husband reading her letters, but at other times regretted that he was not more masterful (Uglow, 1993, pp. 78, 116-7; Gleadle, 1995, pp. 29-30). The ambivalence of Barbauld, who worked hard to maintain her domestic image while also taking part in public debate, has already been discussed.

Unitarianism too played an ambivalent role for women; it encouraged some to speak and act, as Marilyn Brooks has demonstrated for Mary Hays, Anna Barbauld's contemporary, stating that Hays "found her 'voice' in Dissent" as it "provided Hays with a means of formulating... the major concerns of her mature life" and "stimulated her into articulating these concerns" (Brooks, 1995, p. 22). It also gave women an entry into philanthropy and Sunday school teaching outside their homes, yet often denied them full participatory rights in the governing of local chapels (Bushrod, 1954 pp. 91-3; Davidoff and Hall, 1987, pp. 134-6). Some women also felt ambivalent about their Unitarianism; Cobbe's position has already been noted, but other women who more clearly identified themselves as Unitarian considered it prudent not to publicise this allegiance. Margaret Gillies, the artist, was one woman who hid her Unitarianism from her friends and biographers (Yeldman, 1997, p. 2), and the difficulty in discovering the extent to which others such as Mary Somerville and Anna Jameson identified as Unitarian indicates how

prevalent this was. For Gillies, whose unconventional liaison with Thomas Southwood Smith already made her a dissenter from social expectations, the addition of the Unitarian label was too much of a burden, given that she needed to sell her work in order to survive financially.

The term 'double dissent' was used by first by Ross and later by Keach in relation to Anna Barbauld's status as both a political female and a dissenter deprived of civil liberties (Ross, 1994, p. 93; Keach, 1998, p. 47), but the concept can usefully be extended to explore the extent to which other women pushed against the boundaries of Unitarian expectations of middle-class women. Unitarian women are by definition dissenters in the traditional use of the term; if they then dissent from the norms of Unitarianism, or of social convention, they then become 'double dissenters'. I have already demonstrated the ways in which Barbauld stretched the limits of acceptability yet still retained her Unitarian position. Helen Martineau/Tagart did not move beyond the conventions of either Unitarianism or middle-class society, and did not venture into print, and so cannot be classed as a double dissenter. However, Cobbe clearly moved from a position of establishment, both in religion as an Anglican and in society to one of double dissent, attending Unitarian worship but dissenting both from most Unitarian thought and social convention – almost a position of 'triple dissent'. In the previous chapter, I discussed the extent to which women converts to Unitarianism were less bound by Unitarian patriarchal conventions, and so seemed more able to move beyond the expected spheres of activity; it may well be that having dissented from one upbringing or tradition, it was easier to make subsequent actions of dissent. This would suggest that Barbauld, whose only religious circle was that of the Unitarians and radical dissenters, was taking more personal risks in her gradual widening of her sphere of activity than Cobbe, whose networks and connections were more extensive and not so dependent on her religious identity.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the changes in the attitudes to women's and men's roles have already been mentioned, but this had further implications for religious life which have not yet been discussed. One such is the gendering of 'duty', a virtue extolled and promoted by all Christians, evangelicals and Unitarians. I have already noted that Helen Martineau/Tagart saw duty in terms of her personal and domestic actions, indeed for most women, duty was conceived in terms of duty to one's family. However, public duty, which Barbauld would not have separated out, became more detached from private duty. Thus among the members of Cross Street Chapel, the women often took no part in the civic duties and political leadership undertaken by the men. One interesting development, which may have delayed the acceptance of women as preachers and ministers in mainstream denominations, was the Victorian claim to manliness made by Protestants in Britain. This has been well documented, for example by Vance in The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought (1985), and more generally by Tosh and Roper in 1991 and Tosh in 1999. Tomes has related it specifically to the non-conformist ministry, writing that 'manliness' had been "a quality Nonconformists admired in their ministers from the middle of the 19th century" (Tomes, 2002, p. 9). When the Victorian formulation of 'woman's mission' to exercise moral and benevolent influence (Krueger, 1992, p. 91) is coupled with the idea of the 'manly' minister, a complex message for religious women results. For Evangelicals, the two images could be seen as complementary; but the Unitarian emphasis on education, and making moral, rational decisions overlaid on the social mores of the time complicated the situation. However, it is impossible to tell how this influenced the acceptance of Unitarian women preachers and ministers.

My case studies of Anna Barbauld, Helen Bourn/Martineau/Tagart and Frances Power Cobbe and their circles show that the conventional works on Unitarianism omit

much that is important in describing the movement. In order to gain a richer understanding it is necessary to gain a larger picture, to reframe the discourse so that a broader perspective emerges. Instead of concentrating on ideas and organisations, as did the traditional writers such as Wilbur (1952), Bolam et al. (1968) and Webb (1996a; 1996b; 2004), a view of Unitarianism as a subculture, with its own mindsets, ideologies and practices inside and outside its institutions, such as that taken by Hutcheon in her study of Harriet Martineau's relations to Unitarianism, is helpful (Hutcheon, 2003). As Hutcheon's work refers more specifically to American Unitarianism, all its details do not necessarily apply to Britain, but its approach is transferable. However, Harriet Martineau's early life, as a Unitarian growing up in Norwich at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was firmly rooted in British Unitarianism, as indicated in the chapter on Helen Bourn/Martineau/Tagart in this thesis. Hutcheon considers that the Unitarian subculture includes, firstly, the history, tradition and ethos of the Unitarian movement; and secondly, the social positioning of Unitarians in the context contemporary with the subject. Thus she identifies for Harriet Martineau the influence of the entrepreneurial spirit, the "challenging teachings and the many admirable role models", the Unitarian connections which "for many years, opened intellectual windows and political and social doors", the experience of being an outsider, as well as its ambiguous attitude to girls' education and roles (Hutcheon, 2003, p. 30). With this perspective of the broad Unitarian subculture, the 'forgotten prophets', the women who sustained the movement and helped to ensure its survival, could be honoured for their part in the story.

What does it mean to be a 'forgotten prophet'? It is clear that that the women who are the main subjects of this thesis have largely been forgotten by twenty-first century Unitarians, but the concept of prophesy needs further discussion. Walter Brueggemann has

demonstrated that prophesy can be thought of as having two main aspects. Firstly, he writes:

> The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 3).

Feminist theologian Sharon Welch has shown how "dangerous memories" of past oppression and struggles can be harnessed to empower work for change, while Mary Grey has highlighted the importance of who is doing the remembering, and bringing different forms of remembering into the tradition (Welch, 1985, pp. 32-54, 92; 2000, pp. 49-64, 180; Grey, 1997, pp. 184-6). Brueggemann's second aspect of prophesy is to energise people and to bring them to "engage with the promise of newness that is at work in our history with God" and so reclaim the "possibility of passion" where all care for justice and are concerned for others, (Brueggemann, 2001, pp. 31-7, 59-69). He advocates enabling a community to root itself in "energising memories" (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 1). Welch has described this as a "community of resistance and solidarity" (Welch, 1985). Forrester, from a more political perspective, emphasises the need for social analysis in order to expose injustice, while Tracy, Hastings, Grey and Gill all stress the need for imagination and critique to be centred on details of actual practice (Forrester, 1998, pp. 168-9; Tracy, 1981, pp. 393-5; Hastings, 1995, p 21; Grey, 2000, p. 41; Gill, 1981).

In her discussion of church women's prophesy, Marta Palma has noted that whereas in the Old Testament male prophets frequently "condemned, threatened or promised punishment, women prophets more often proclaimed, encouraged, and challenged people to work for justice through practical action" (Palma, 1996, pp. 228). The extent to which this applies to more recent times in the following discussion of each of the three women in my case studies as 'forgotten prophets'.

Anna Barbauld proclaimed a vision of a religious community where people were educated to appreciate divinity in every aspect of daily life. While this advocacy of "habitual devotion" was also found in men's writing and preaching, it was not the defining ethos of the emerging Unitarian movement (Priestley,1836). Thus, for much of the nineteenth century, when Barbauld's Hymns is Prose were in print, she provided an alternative vision of a way of being Unitarian, and was in some ways a forerunner and possibly contributed to the move from rationalism to aestheticism promoted by James Martineau in the second half of the nineteenth century (Barbauld, 1864). In the 1790s, when Unitarians were persecuted for their claims to civil and religious rights, she 'spoke truth to power' with her defence of public worship and her analysis of government oppression (Barbauld, 1792b, 1792c, 1825, vol. 2 pp. 353-469). Thus Barbauld can clearly be claimed as a prophet. The case is not so easily made for Helen Martineau/Tagart. She did not go against the prevailing culture of her time, nor did she speak out publicly to denounce evil or injustice. Yet she and her epistolary circle maintained a community of devotion and support without which the Unitarian movement could not survive. The "minute particulars" of her life as described in her letters witness to a sense of God's presence, a call to duty, and a responsibility for rational decision-making fit in with Hastings' citation of Blake in the need to do good in detailed and particular ways noting "There is a particularism in prophecy" (Hastings, 1995, p. 21). Although Helen Maraineau/Tagart's life lacked the radical call to alternative memories and work for justice that is the hallmark of most definitions of prophesy, her lifelong faithfulness to Unitarianism and her support of a hospitable and supportive community provide an 'energising memory' necessary to prophesy.

Frances Power Cobbe is much more clearly recognisable as a prophet in the traditional mould. She campaigned for justice throughout most of her adult life; for women

and for animals, she was part of a feminist 'community of resistance and solidarity' and her life style with its financial independence and partnership with another woman, demonstrated a possibility for women freed from Victorian patriarchy. Her promotion of theism and a vision of God that included feminine aspects showed new possibilities which many Unitarians later followed. Cobbe certainly fulfilled Palma's picture of a woman prophet in that she "proclaimed, encouraged, and challenged people to work for justice through practical action" (Palma, 1996, pp. 228). That Cobbe has been forgotten among Unitarians has already been discussed.

Each of the three women has had a particular contribution to the story of Unitarianism. Barbauld has demonstrated the possibility of an 'everyday spirituality' that is grounded in the tradition and in the daily realities of women's lives, and not dominated by doctrinal controversies. Her delicate balancing of the need for 'respectability' with a pushing out of the boundaries which restricted women provides a role model for Unitarian women even in the twenty-first century. The story of her work for civil rights and her defence of public worship should be added to the conventionally told history of Unitarianism to demonstrate that it was not only men who moulded and the movement, even when only the public story is acknowledged.

Bringing Helen Martineau/Tagart's story into Unitarian history serves to remind people that a religious movement is primarily about the way in which 'ordinary' people live out their faithfulness to a vision, not just a system of ideas and doctrinal theology. Thus it only comes alive when these are lived in the "minute particulars" of actual lives, and create what Hutcheon has described as a subculture (Hutcheon, 2003). Walter Lloyd hinted at this at the end of the nineteenth century and Goring pointed this out nearly a hundred years later, but each spoke in generalities; it is only when particular 'ordinary' lives are known

that this aspect of Unitarian history can be added to the story (Lloyd, 1899, p. 236; Goring, 1990).

The incorporation of Frances Power Cobbe's life and work within Unitarian history increases awareness of the theological diversity in Unitarianism in the second half of the nineteenth century as well as demonstrating Unitarian commitment to justice and higher education for women and a care the humane treatment for animals. This passion for the care of the non-human can be seen as a fore-runner of later aspects of Unitarian concerns seen in Will Hayes 'Bible for Animal Lovers (1938) and the inauguration of the Unitarian Animal Welfare Society in 1998 which regards itself as continuing the work started by Cobbe (UAWS Newsletter, 1998).

If the dangerous and energising memory of the lives of these Unitarian women taken to be significant for telling the British Unitarian story, the version of Unitarian history available currently is changed significantly. Emphasis on the picture of a movement defined by doctrinal controversy engaged in by male participants is moved to one of a subculture in which the lives of ordinary people are seen to be important in embodying the doctrines. Details of particular lives and struggles show how hard-won principles are worked out in practice and so create a "useable past" and "energising memories" (Russell, 1974, p. 73; Brueggemann, 2001, p. 1). Not only does this provide a more comprehensive and inclusive way of thinking of Unitarian history, but it enables a more praxis oriented identity to emerge and so promotes a platform for a lively justice-making movement for the future.

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