



# FAITH IN THE TOWN

LAY RELIGION, URBANISATION  
*and* INDUSTRIALISATION  
*in* ENGLAND

1740~1830





## KS3 / LESSON 2

# – TRADITION *and* CHANGE –

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## INTRODUCTION

As we have seen from the previous lesson, society changed forever with the industrial revolution. The Britain before industrialisation – a rural economy, where goods were made by hand, travel was limited and food was grown locally – will never return. The church was the centre of country and urban life in the medieval era, but as we have seen, Christian belief did not retreat as Britain industrialised. Christian faith continued to sustain and guide people, despite, maybe because of, rapid social change.

We can see that Christianity remained a fixed point in people's lives during the industrial revolution. Communities did not lose their need for the guidance and support the church had offered for centuries, even as society changed forever around them. In this lesson we will consider the ways Christian churches in this period were forced to change in order to meet new needs and new ways of thinking.

Religion might seem set in stone, unchanging, but organised religion has always had to keep up with the pace of social changes in order to be of use to successive generations. In this lesson pupils will learn about how social development allowed new voices to preach the Gospel, but the bigger underlying question is how religion copes with change.





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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### Emerging

- Give one reason why women preachers were popular, and one objection to women preachers.
- Give two reasons why people were attracted to the new churches.

#### Expected

- Give one new development that could be seen as a threat to the Church of England.
- Give one reason why people might reject the traditional church (Church of England).

#### Exceeding

- Give a supported view as to which is the greatest change to religion and society.
- Give a supported view as to whether shopping around for new churches represents more or less commitment to faith.

### RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED

- Show images of industrialisation from last lesson.
- Small pieces of paper and Blu Tac.
- 'Character cards' cut up for each group (**Resources for Pupils, p.03**).
- You might want to print the letters on **pp.04–06** of the **Resources for Pupils** PDF.







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## NOTES FOR TEACHERS

### STARTER:

#### What threat faced the Church of England?

- Show images of changing towns from last lesson. Ask the class to suggest positive and negative changes to society during the industrial revolution.
- Ask students to return to their notes and highlight or underline all the church denominations mentioned last lesson.
- Return to answers to last lesson's question. At the end of the lesson pairs gave a 25-word answer to this question: The industrial revolution changed society for ever. What possible threats does the Church of England face in this period?

Send one half of the pair to share their answer with others and listen to other answers.



#### 1: A church for the poor?

- Display the Letter from the Bolton Unitarians, (**Resources for Pupils, p.01**) on the main screen so the class can see it at once.

Give out three pieces of paper saying:

**'They need a bigger church building'**

**'They are Unitarians'**

**'Some people do not like the traditional church'**

Give these to three individuals- ask them to attach (with Blu Tac) by the text that supports the statement. Ask the whole class to give reasons from the text why many people have rejected the traditional church.

- Display the writing by Christopher Thomson, (**Resources for Pupils, p.02**), on the main screen. Give three pieces of paper saying:  
**'Thomson is a poor man speaking to other poor people'**  
**'Thomson argues that the church has not treated the poor with respect'**  
**'Thomson suggests that the poor need food, leisure and education to be as good as the rich'**  
As above, ask three individuals to attach the statement by the text.
- Give groups a few minutes to read back over their notes. Ask half of the class to look for evidence that some people do not like the Church of England. Can they find any reasons why?  
Ask the other half to find reasons why new churches are growing. Listen and share answers.
- Discuss as a class how far the Church of England is a church for the poor. Collect answers.





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## NOTES FOR TEACHERS

### 2: Who can teach?

- a) Copy and cut up the character cards on **p.03** of the **Resources for Pupils** PDF. These are the diaries and letters of female preachers in this period. Give one card per group/ pair. Ask pupils to read and create ONE sentence explaining their character's experience. Send envoys to other tables until each table has read or heard about all 3 women.

- b) Begin to read the **Text for Teachers 3** on female preachers (**p.05**) to the class. Ask half the class to listen out for reasons why some Christian churches supported women preachers, and the other half to listen out for reasons why some Christian churches did not.

Students put their hands up as soon as they hear a reason. Stop, listen to the students' reasoning. Repeat the sentence if necessary. Start to create a table with two headings: '**In support of women preachers**', and '**Against women preachers**'. Ask individuals to copy down at least three reasons.

- c) Look at the collected reasons for women preaching or not preaching. Give pupils time to talk about whether they find any of the reasons persuasive; do they agree or disagree?
- d) Return to the discussion above regarding threats to the Church of England. Do students think the free churches allowing women to preach could threaten the Church of England further? Or would it put some Church of England people off the free churches?

### 3: Competition

- a) Read the letter by 'Amicus' to the Stockport Sunday School (**Resources for Pupils, p.04 & p.05**). Ask students to read out lines reflecting the writer's cause of concern. Ask students to read out lines suggesting the writer's solution.
- b) What tone does the writer take towards the children and their parents of this area? Discuss.
- c) Read the two letters on **p.06** of the **Resources for Pupils** PDF (one with an anonymous author, one written by Sarah Gibbons). What do each of the writers want? [answer: to join free churches. 'Chapel' is a word used to denote a non-Church of England church].
- d) Discuss whether the class think the writers are dissatisfied with the Church of England, or positively attracted to other churches?
- e) Read the letter by John Pease and the diary of Benjamin Braidley on **p.07** of the **Resources for Pupils** PDF. What are these men doing? [Trying new churches and new preachers].
- f) Ask the class to discuss whether trying out new churches like this shows more commitment to Christian faith or less?

### 4: Plenary

Ask groups to suggest one example of the following phenomena:

- **Women preaching the Gospel**
- **People trying out several different churches**
- **People rejecting the traditional church**
- **People attracted to new churches**

Jot their examples on the board.

Groups propose which of these reflects the greatest change to religion and society and explain why.





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## NOTES FOR TEACHERS

### *Text for Teachers 3 : Female Preachers*

Women had been preaching since the 17th century. Some churches had more women preaching than others, some had none at all. Women preachers spoke in churches, homes and the open air. They explained Christian teaching and the bible, hoping to welcome people into the Christian faith.

The traditional view of women was at home engaged in domestic duties. Some would have seen women standing up and teaching, often in the open air, as dangerous, both to the women themselves and to the children and husband they were neglecting. Moreover, some churches did not want to look as if they were breaking with tradition, in case this put people off. They wanted to appear respectable and trustworthy. Churches who did not want to look too radical would not use female preachers.

However, some people would have seen women preachers as not 'unladylike' departures from tradition, but part of women's duties in teaching, educating, supporting and caring for others.

It seems that women preachers travelled to many towns, cities and villages, staying with members of the church they were visiting. This shows they had networks of support. Some were exceptionally gifted at speaking to small or large crowds. These women attracted much interest which enabled their churches to gain followers. Many small churches were able to grow due to the work and skill of female preachers. Women were useful when there weren't enough male preachers to cover an area. Women preachers could welcome people to the church before they changed their minds and lost interest.

Women preachers were attractive to young women who had left villages and come to work in towns. They would join churches to find new friends, attracted by female preachers who welcomed them. Some people found attending sermons in the open air more pleasant and less intimidating than a church, especially if they were not familiar with church customs. It did not matter if they had old, worn clothes or didn't know how to behave. Women preachers who preached outdoors gained new converts this way.

However, some people criticized women who attracted rural, unskilled people. They were worried about the impact on the Christian community if large numbers of uneducated, poor and unsophisticated people joined.

The Quakers were the most welcoming to women preachers, recognizing their success in spreading the Christian message. John Wesley, who founded the Methodist church, argued that some women had an 'exceptional call' from God. However, this was also used to argue that most women did not have a call from God, and should not therefore preach.

Some women provided spiritual support and guidance in an unofficial capacity. After the service, run by a male preacher, they would offer refreshments, listen to people's anxieties and pray with them or give advice. Many women unofficially managed to spread the Christian message in this way.