

– TRADITION *and* CHANGE –

RESOURCES FOR PUPILS

Printed letter regarding Unitarians in Moor Lane, Bolton, Lancashire, August 1823

‘Dear Sir,

We the undersigned, in the name and behalf of the Congregation of Unitarian Christians assembling in the Unitarian Meeting-House, Moor Lane, beg leave respectfully to solicit your attention to the following statement:-

In the Summer of 1821, some individuals separated themselves from Religious Society to which they had previously belonged, for the purpose of forming a Congregation on what they deemed the purest principles of Christianity. They at first assembled together in a small upper chamber in a private house. Here they were joined by many who for a long period had totally absented themselves from public worship, occasioned by their disgust at orthodox dogmas, and the time-serving and tyrannical conduct of too many Christian professors.

The room at length became too small for the numbers who attended, and on the 18th November, 1821, the Cloth Hall was engaged by the Society for the better accommodation of themselves and friends in worshipping the One God and Father of all.’



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Autobiography of an Artisan, 1847

by Christopher Thomson

A word to my class

‘It has not been the fashion hitherto to trouble the philosophers of our country with the moral history of beggars, simply because they were the despised class, and consequently too mean to teach a lesson.

Give the artisans and peasantry food, and leave to study political economy, with occasional leisure to wander in the fields and lanes - to trace the river’s banks - there to read the revelations of Universal Goodness - there to feel the loving care of the Great Father for every plant, and flower, and creeping thing - to hear the humanising music of the song birds... Educate them - and trust me, for I have had six-and-forty years’ close communion with them - educate them, and you need not dream of mobs or daggers!

How antagonistic are our practices!

The preachers exhort their flock! We pay an orthodox hierarchy millions per year to preach exclusion, and punish with contempt our poverty.

Our poverty has been a barrier to admission into any school, save the so-called charity schools. A mere apology for learning has been doled out to us who are just allowed to learn enough to “get the catechism” [biblical teachings] some to write our own names, few to learn the simple elements of accounting. Then, with such acquirements, early in life, started to the factory or dung-yard, to earn a few pence to assist in procuring a family bread loaf.’



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CHARACTER CARDS:

*Female
Preachers*



Esther Tuke, August 1785

Esther is a Quaker. In her letter she describes visiting a town to bring Quakerism to the people.

In a town hall of two rooms together, there was not less than a thousand people.

It is a beautiful place but the inhabitants seem strangers to Quakers, as if there are not such people on earth. They looked upon us as entertainment. There were so many people and so much noise that some could not hear or see.

At times the tumult was distressing beyond description. I feared the floor would collapse!

I look back with astonishment that I was able to stand and deliver, as a woman speaker. This excited them above all things.

Many begged for another meeting, our Captain gave us leave to return in the morning.

I believe we have been in some of the very worst sort of towns, full of smugglers and devoid of all Religion.



Diary of Jane Maxwell Smith, 1827

Jane, 20, is a Methodist. She describes her aunt's informal preaching and teaching.

24th June: This being the Sabbath I rose rather earlier than usual. Uncle & Aunt Holden came over to see us. After supper Uncle preached in Chappel.

Afterwards Aunt address'd the congregation in a very pathetic... manner, alluding to the many that had been call'd away and the great necessity they were to be ready for our solemn charge. So that truth might never surprise us unawares...

A great number remained to hear Uncle's sermon in the evening which was very striking. Aunt spoke after service as before.

25th June: About 8 o'clock I join'd them at the Class... Aunt spoke most feelingly, which was very edifying.



Letters from Sarah Crosby to Mary Fletcher

Mary Fletcher is a widely respected Methodist preacher.

1794: We have lately been favour'd here [Leeds] with a good simple woman whom they call Praying Nanny: She Prays very loud, & after the manner of Brother Bramah; but more uncommon.

She has been made very usefull at several churches. Men, Women, & Children have been brought into Liberty. The Spirits of Many there have been quickened, & the spirit at Prayer pourd upon them, in Prayer Meetings.

1799: We have a good work going on Here. We are still increasing in Numbers, & I trust in grace; we have Lively Meetings, & Preachings.

Mary Barrat is a Sister of one of our Preachers; She is full of zeal, & desires to do good; is a good young woman I believe the People in these parts are fond of Her... She preach'd in our pulpit, & the House Crowded but 2 of our Preachers, did not like it. but Many young people were affected.

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‘Gentlemen, your fame is gone out into all lands and your praise is in the Hearts of Thousands for that you have rescued the Prey from the Jaws of the Lion and saved many from Destruction.

From all the Accounts I have heard, as well as from what I have seen myself there is no doubt but you preserve the best discipline and bring the Children forward in Learning beyond anything that has been effected in any other Sunday School perhaps in the World; but as I sometimes take a pleasure in going through the different parts of the Town & particularly the out skirts at various times in the Week & on the Sunday evenings particularly I have observed with considerable Concern the precious Souls that are squandering away their Time in various Amusements or worse Pursuits.

To these Evils it appears to me your own disciples are very much exposed I suppose you dismiss the Children about 4 o’clock not to return again to School. How must these Children be employed

Letter from ‘Amicus’ to the Methodist Sunday School, Stockport, c. 1810

‘Amicus’ was a false name, so we don’t know anything about the identity of this writer.

Till 9 at night on these Summer Evenings? Nothing is to be expected from their Parents except a bad Example & I fear frequently many of their Parents are so ignorant & wicked as to encourage them even by precept in Idleness, Mischief & worse things.

Can therefore nothing be done to engage the Children in the Evenings for 3 or 4 hours... I have often thought that if Masters would collect the Children together & go in a body to take a regular walk into the fields it would prevent much worse wickedness and would be an innocent way of promoting the Children’s Health. In many parts of this very populous Town it is astonishing, the Quantities of Children that are to be found especially on Sunday Evenings playing about. A very great proportion of these are in a state of total depravity & ignorance of their duty both to God and Man; rejecting or at least neglecting the only means of their Information.

Continues...



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Let the Children be collected together, & those Masters especially who are Singers, & let them go in precession to some distant parts of the Town, particularly such as New Bridge Lane, Lancashire Hill and having found a vacant spot let them sing some Hymns & if any choose pray with them.

But supposing to all this were added an Oration fro[m] a Minister, would it not be attended with great good? Many were very much pleased with the attempt of some of the Calvinist Ministers last Summer in the Market Place &c, if to this had been added the attraction of so many Children and their singing it would have drawn together a much larger Number of Hearers; - This might be accomplished every Sunday this Summer when the Weather is favourable you are favoured with a great variety of acceptable Ministers and others perhaps might sometimes join you in this, we are Bretheren & all engaged in one Common Cause for Christianity is or ought to be such.

Amicus’.

Letter from ‘Amicus’ to the Methodist Sunday School, Stockport, c. 1810

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TRADITION
– and –
CHANGERESOURCES
FOR PUPILS*Anonymous letter**'To the Church of Christ assembling in
Annetwell St. Chapel Carlisle'*

*[part of a collection of letters written by people wanting to
join Lowther St Congregational Church, Carlisle]*

'I have not had the advantage of a pious [strongly religious] education which I now lament tho I have been accustomed to attend the Church of England but alas I went there not with any desire to be profited but merely because it was customary to go to some place of worship... Since I became a teacher in this Sunday School I have derived great advantage from the conversation of my dear friends and fellow Labourers in this delightful work'.

*Letter from Sarah Gibbons,
4 Nov 1814*

Sarah Gibbons is an ordinary working woman from Carlisle. This means that we know very little about her life.

'I have long had a wish to Join your Church but my situation in life has hitherto prevented me from offering my self as a candidate for admittance amongst you... I was brought up to the Established Church of England and of which I was sometimes a hearer when any Noted Minister was to preach.

I allways had a reverence for the Scriptures even in the day of my Ignorance and Sin, tho I neither followed its precepts nor understood its meaning... The first time I came to the Chapel was when our dear friend Mr Hill was preaching. I was attracted by the sound of his voice & was drawn by an Irresistible force to come in. But the serious manner in which he addressed his hearers and the Solemn and affecting way in which he prayed struck me with asstonishment and awe'.



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***Letter from John Pease in London to
Thomas Pease in Darlington, 7 Feb 1797***

*John is visiting London and writes to his brother
Thomas in Darlington. They are both Quakers.*

'I have not been at Meetings perhaps so very constantly as I might have been but I have often been there, last first day I was at Houndsditch meeting. The first day [Sunday] before I was [at] St. Pauls Church, where I met Harker.

I have been at Hackney hearing Dr. Belsham the celebrated successor of Dr. Priestly, & at several other Places from Curiosity.'



Diary of Benjamin Braidley, 1815

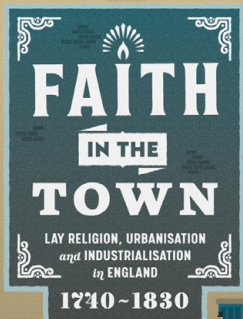
*Benjamin lives in Manchester and in 1813 became a teacher
at the Church of England Bennett Street Sunday School.*

'Wednesday 12th April,

On Saturday, I attended the Meeting of the Provisional Committee, at which I first saw Revd Josiah Pratt; the Revd Daniel Wilson & the Revd William Jowell.

On Sunday Morning I heard one of the best of Sermons, by Mr Pratt, from these words "Thy Kingdom Come". In the Afternoon I heard Mr Jowell, at Ardwick Chapel and in the Evening, Mr Wilson, at St Clements: both of whom I liked extremely... on Monday Afternoon I attended the Public Meeting for the Establishment of a Church Missionary Association, in aid of the *Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East*... In the Evening I heard an excellent Sermon by the Rev Edward Burn.

Yesterday Evening I heard Mr Wilson Preach at St Stephen's, and was much edified, and I hope, Instructed by his Sermon.'



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Find out more about Faith in the Town on our project blog - <https://faithinthetown.wordpress.com>

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