



FAITH
IN THE
TOWN

LAY RELIGION, URBANISATION
and INDUSTRIALISATION
in ENGLAND

1740~1830



KS3 / LESSON 3

– COMPETITION *and* CHOICE –

INTRODUCTION

As we have seen, despite the rapid changes brought by industrialisation, people continued to cling to the church. There was no lessening of belief and commitment, in fact, Christian faith might have been a great source of stability as people coped with a changing world. In this lesson commitment to Christian faith is visible in several sources. Even though these individuals face suffering and death, their faith seems to sustain them.

However, there are differences in churches and there are also lots of churches to choose from. The second part of this lesson shows people trying out new preachers or churches and reporting back. We can see Christians exercising choice. We can also see their deep engagement with aspects of Christian theology; they were not a passive flock.

An underlying question is about choice. Since the Toleration Act of 1688 (see **Notes for Teachers lesson 1** for information about the Toleration Act) allowed non-Anglican churches to have a visible public presence, ordinary people were free to choose to attend whichever church they preferred. As these sources show, some people took this choice very seriously. Did the industrial revolution increase choice and competition in religion as well as in society and economics?



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LEARNING OUTCOMES

Emerging

- Give two reasons as to how Christian faith seems to sustain people.
- Suggest two reasons why someone might be attracted to a particular church.

Expected

- Give a supported account of how Christian faith eases suffering.
- Give a supported view as to what makes the most difference to Christians when choosing a church.

Exceeding

- Suggest a link between increased choice and change in society and increased choice and change in Christianity.

RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED

- Diary of John Burnthwaite
Resources for Pupils, p.01.
- Three sources printed for groups
Resources for Pupils, pp.02–08.
- Letter from John Shaw
Resources for Pupils, p.09.





– COMPETITION *and* CHOICE –

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

1: Accounts of Christian Faith

To explore first-hand accounts of Christian faith, students will read one of three sources.

- a) Split the class into three groups (or 6 or 9). Each will read their source and complete the table underneath the source.

The sources are given on the following pages of the **Resources for Pupils**:

Diary of John Burnthwaite: **p.01**.

Letters from Catherine Read: **pp.03–04**.

Memorial from Stockport Sunday School: **pp.06–07**.

- b) Each group gives a brief summary about the role of Christian faith in these individuals' lives.
- c) Discuss as a class what seems to attract people to Christian belief, and how it supports people.

2: Choice

Starter: display these statements:

- **All churches are the same because they are all doing the same thing.**
- **Churches are different because there are different interpretations of Christian belief.**
- **Churches are different because preachers are different. They all have different styles of preaching.**
- **The congregation gives a church its distinctive character- no church is the same because no group of people is the same.**

- a) Ask groups to discuss and choose one statement that they think is the most accurate.

- b) Explain that as we will see, churches were very different in this period and there was a lot of diversity. We will see that Christians were very aware of these differences and that they took advantage of the choice on offer.

- c) List the words below. Which do students think would make the most difference in choosing a church?

- **The congregation is very welcoming.**
- **Family and friends worship here.**
- **An impressive or inspiring preacher.**
- **The branch (Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, nonconformist, etc).**
- **Particular interpretations of Christian belief.**

- d) Ask the class what they think might go in a love letter? We will read a letter from John Shaw to his fiancée Elizabeth Wikinson. The class might be surprised to hear what he talks about in this letter. Print Shaw's letter, found in **Resources for Pupils**, **p.09**, for groups.

- e) Ask groups to highlight all the church denominations mentioned. List these on the board [Methodist, Presbyterian ('Rational dissenter' is the description of Presbyterianism given by John), an 'independent society', Calvinist].

- f) Finish these sentence starters and complete the last statement:

The church John was raised in is called...

..... [Presbyterian]

The church Elizabeth belongs to is called...

..... [Methodist]

John would / would not join Elizabeth's church.

- g) Return to the list of reasons why people might choose a church. Discuss on what basis John would join a church.





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NOTES FOR TEACHERS

3: Competition

- a) For this section you will need the PDF Slide presentation **KS3, Lesson 3, Competition and Choice, Resources for Pupils, pp.10–23.**

Display the slides, talking through the questions.

Compare the images of the inside and outside of a Quaker meeting house and an Anglican church like York Minster on **Resources for Pupils, pp.11–14.** Quaker meeting houses were plain and simple. The Minster, on the other hand, is extremely large, ornate and impressive.

If you are short of time, print the slides into three sections and give a different source to three groups.

- b) Ask groups to suggest what each person is looking for when they try different churches.
- c) Can any students make a link between increased choice and change in society with this evidence of choice and change in Christianity?

4: Plenary

Return to the statements discussed earlier:

- **All churches are the same because they are all doing the same thing.**
 - **Churches are different because there are different interpretations of Christian belief.**
 - **Churches are different because preachers are different. They all have different styles of preaching.**
 - **The congregation gives a church its distinctive character – no church is the same because no group of people is the same.**
- a) Ask each group to state which statement they feel is the most accurate.
- b) Ask each group to state what people seem to be looking for when they try out new churches.

