

**The Heathen at Home and Overseas:  
The Middle Class and the Civilising Mission,  
Sheffield 1790-1843**

Alison A. Twells

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University of York  
Department of History  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a social and cultural history of the significance of missionary activity to the construction of middle class identity and cultural authority in the late-eighteenth and early -nineteenth centuries. It focuses on the relationships between a group of middle-class evangelicals in Sheffield and the various cultural groups on the receiving end of their mission: the working class and rural poor in Britain and Ireland; girls and women at a Jamaican Mission school; West African men, women and children in Britain, the Gambia and Sierra Leone; and peoples in communities of the South Pacific evangelised by the London Missionary Society. The thesis explores issues of the changing notions of, and relationships between, race and class in this period; the cultural authority of middle-class men and women; the relationship between evangelicalism and enlightenment 'histories of civilisation'; and the centrality of empire and the 'civilising mission' to middle-class formation and to the domestic cultural experience.

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## Abbreviations used in this thesis

### Societies

BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
CMS	Church Missionary Society
LMS	London Missionary Society
SBCP	Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society

### Archives

FLA	Friends' Library Archive
JM/SA	James Montgomery Collection, Sheffield Archives
JM/SU	James Montgomery Collection, Sheffield University Library
LMS/SOAS	London Missionary Society Archive, SOAS Library
MAR/JR	Mary-Anne Rawson Papers, John Rylands Library, Manchester
MAR/SA	Mary-Anne Rawson Papers, Sheffield Archives
SLSL	Sheffield Local Studies Library



## Introduction

Writing in her journal in 1827, Hannah Kilham compared the uncivilised state of the British poor with that of the heathen overseas. ‘The lower ranks in society’, she wrote:

would be, in many respects, more difficult subjects for instruction than many are in those so-called heathen lands, and they would want the same care even from the beginning in the attempt to civilize and Christianize them, if we might be permitted as instruments in such a cause.<sup>1</sup>

Kilham, a Quaker school-teacher from Sheffield, had some experience of ‘heathen lands.’ In 1823 she had led a missionary party to the Gambia, making the first of her three trips to West Africa for the purpose of setting up schools for African children and gaining knowledge of languages to enable the translation of the Scriptures. In 1822, she worked as a missionary in Ireland where, as representative of the British and Irish Ladies’ Society, she had assisted in attempts to relieve and reform the Irish Catholic poor. Kilham also had considerable experience of missionary philanthropy in England, in London’s East End, and previously in her home town of Sheffield where she had been a founder member of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor in 1803, the Sheffield Bible Society and the Aged Female Society in 1810, and the Girls’ Lancasterian School of Industry in 1813. Indeed, her comment on the uncivilised state of many Britons reflected her ambivalence about her own calling, her doubts as to whether she should follow her desires and return to Africa, or whether she should immerse

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Biller (ed.), *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1837), pp. 294-295.

herself in the less compelling but equally important missionary project at home. 'There is much to be done in England', she lamented in 1828, '... Many sit in heathen darkness even here.'<sup>2</sup>

England, and to a lesser degree Ireland, represented a site of uncertain heathenism for Kilham. Her representation of working-class Britons was not consistent. On some occasions it was they who provided her with hope and consolation when overseas subjects were seen to resist the Christian embrace. Yet from her experience in Africa, Kilham felt able to talk in terms of the similarities between the 'so-called' heathen overseas and the 'more difficult subjects' among the British, both in their depravity and their capacity to receive Christian truths. In her representation of the British working class as 'heathen', therefore, Hannah Kilham was contesting the increasingly popular belief that 'other' peoples, those who were non-British, non-Christian and usually black, had a lesser capacity for improvement than did white Europeans.

While blurring the meanings attached to whiteness and blackness, Hannah Kilham nonetheless saw both blacks and the white working class as sharing the appellation of 'heathen'. In contrast, through her pairing of 'Christian' and 'civilised', she represented evangelical members of the British middle class as the carriers of civilisation. Endowed with the cultural authority to nurture and teach their less civilised brothers and sisters, they were the providers of 'care' and 'instruction' and 'instruments' in the process of improvement.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 350-351.

These issues - the production of knowledge about, and relationships between, race and class, the process of 'civilisation', the agency of women and men, and the relationship of the 'civilising mission' to the identity and cultural authority of the British middle class - form the central concerns of this thesis. Focusing on a group of middle-class evangelicals in Sheffield in the early nineteenth century, the thesis investigates aspects of their relationships with the various cultural groups on the receiving end of their mission: the working class and rural poor in Britain; girls and women at a Jamaican Mission school; West African people in the Gambia and Sierra Leone; and peoples in communities of the South Pacific evangelised by the London Missionary Society.

This thesis takes as its starting point the belief that the overseas 'civilising mission' was central to the domestic cultural experience in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In this I draw upon a now well-established critique, developed in a number of different contexts over recent years, which suggests that 'British' history does not occupy a separate, distinct sphere, in dichotomous relationship to that of the 'empire', and that 'domestic' and 'colonial' histories need to be discussed as part of the same debate.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For earlier articulations of this argument, see: John M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), Introduction; C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (Harlow: Longman, 1989). For a more recent overview, see: Antoinette Burton, 'Rules of Thumb: British history and 'imperial culture' in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain', *Women's History Review*, vol 3, no 4 (1994), pp. 483-500.

Three broad areas within this body of work have been of particular importance for this thesis. Firstly, the debate within schools' history, sparked by the proposals in the late 1980s for a new National Curriculum, underlined the importance of the inclusion of the history of colonialism not only as an educational/cultural 'right' for Black children, but as a critique of the dominant representations of Britain's relationship with the empire. Responses to the exclusion of the study of colonialism and slavery from the euphemistically-titled unit 'Expansion, Trade and Industry, 1750-1900' in particular asserted the significance of empire not as a 'dimension' of British history but as central to Britain's social, cultural, economic and political formation.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, historians of women have investigated the connections between gender, race and ethnicity and, to a lesser degree, class. In this they were influenced not only by a feminist project to 'recover' women whose lives remained obscure within 'male-stream' history, but by the political critiques by black women of the failure of white feminism to address issues of racism and difference stemming

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<sup>4</sup> For the debate concerning 'British' history and the National Curriculum, see: Sylvia Collicott, *Connections. Haringey Local-National-World Links* (Haringey: Haringey Community Education Service in Association with the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Group, 1986); Julia Bush, *Moving On - Northamptonshire and the Wider World* (Northampton: Nene Publications, 1989); I. D. Grosvenor and R. L. Chapman, *Britain and India: An Uncommon Journey* (Sandwell: Sandwell Education Department, 1990); Alison Twells, *Colonialism, Slavery and the Industrial Revolution: the Empire in South Yorkshire* (Sheffield: South Yorkshire Development Education Centre, 1992). It was whilst researching this teaching resource that I first encountered Hannah Kilham, James Montgomery, Sandanee, Mahmadee and George Bennet, the subjects of Chapters Two, Four and Five below. For reflections on this debate, see: Shula Marks, 'History, the Nation and Empire: Sniping from the Periphery', *History Workshop Journal*, vol 29 (Spring 1990), pp. 111-119; Julia Bush, 'Moving On - and Looking Back. Teaching Colonial History', *History Workshop Journal*, vol 36 (Autumn 1993), pp. 183-194.

from the colonial legacy.<sup>5</sup> Clare Midgley's and Vron Ware's studies of nineteenth-century abolitionist women and Antoinette Burton's account of the interest in Indian women of British feminists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have explored the ways in which feminist and oppositional discourses are articulated in the context of colonialism. They have questioned assumptions of a 'sisterhood' of equals and looked instead at how white, middle-class women derived power from their participation in campaigns to alleviate the 'oppressions' of African, West Indian and Indian women.<sup>6</sup> At the same time Catherine Hall's work on British missionaries in Jamaica has emphasised their contribution, through their struggle to bring Christianity and 'civilisation' to newly-emancipated slaves, to the construction of a new relationship between British and colonised peoples. While undermining the language of 'separate species' which was to dominate racial discourse in the later nineteenth century, that relationship nevertheless contributed to a definition of 'blackness as both equal and not equal, [and] whiteness as superior, but with patronage, kindness and generosity to the fore.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See: bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto, 1982); Hazel V. Carby, 'White Women Listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood', in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (eds.), *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), pp. 212-235; Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', *Feminist Review*, no 17 (Autumn 1984), pp. 3-19.

<sup>6</sup> See: Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: the British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> See: Catherine Hall, 'Missionary Stories: gender and ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s', in *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), Chapter Nine, here p. 249; and 'White Visions, Black Lives: the Free Villages of Jamaica', *History Workshop*

Finally, understanding of the categories of 'metropolis' and 'periphery' and of the relationship between 'margin' and 'centre' has been influenced by a more explicitly theoretical body of knowledge which has come to be known as 'post-colonial studies' or 'colonial discourse' theory.<sup>8</sup> This has developed from two broad 'archives': the writings of people engaged in social movements - as political and cultural activists - against racism and colonialism;<sup>9</sup> and through the discussions and debates which arose largely from the publication in 1978 of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the text taken by many to be the starting point of 'post-colonial studies' in the West.<sup>10</sup> Said's focus on the various cultural forms, such as philology, lexicography, history, political and economic theory, and novel-

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*Journal*, vol 36 (Autumn 1993), pp. 100-132.

<sup>8</sup> Bill Schwarz has usefully defined post-colonial theory as that which 'takes for its object colonial texts or discourses, reading or deconstructing them in such a way as to make evident the racialized effected or justifications for colonialism perpetrated by the particular text in question. More particularly it attempts to highlight the external determinations lodged in the interior of metropolitan narratives, even when these determinations appear to be absent, marginal or displaced...' Bill Schwarz, 'Conquerors of Truth: reflections on Postcolonial Theory', in Bill Schwarz (ed.), *The Expansion of England. Race, ethnicity and cultural history*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 9-31, here pp. 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example: Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by C. Farrington, (Middlesex: Penguin [1961] 1976); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Touissant L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., [1938] 1989); A. Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance* (London: Pluto, [1982] 1987).

<sup>10</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978). For the significance of Said's work in the development of post-colonial studies, see for example: Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory. A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), Introduction. See also: Edward Said, 'Orientalism Reconsidered', in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen and Diana Loxley (eds.), *Literature, Politics and Theory. Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-1984* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 210-229; and Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993).

writing, through which the West constructed the Orient as 'Other', raised crucial questions concerning the relationship between 'power' and 'knowledge'. *Orientalism* provided a stimulus for the production of a new (and by no means homogenous) body of theoretical work which, variously influenced by Gramscian Marxism, the post-structuralism of Foucault, feminism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, has explored the processes of the production of knowledge about non-metropolitan cultures.<sup>11</sup>

For historians, Said's has proved to be a mixed legacy. On the one hand, a number of aspects of his approach have come in for severe criticism, particularly his representation of an apparently monolithic imperial culture, uncontested hegemony and the male colonial subject.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, some of the most

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<sup>11</sup> Key texts include: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak', in Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271-313 and Spivak, *In Other Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1988); Homi Bhabha, 'Of mimicry and men' and 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817', in Bhabha, *The location of culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-92 and 102-122; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review* 30 (Autumn 1988), pp. 65-88; Ranajit Guha, *Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Ranjit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Vols I-VII (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982-1992).

<sup>12</sup> For critiques of Said, see: Dennis Porter, 'Orientalism and its Problems', Williams and Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*, pp. 150-161; Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'', *ibid*, pp. 291-304; Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 36-44. For gender and orientalism, see: Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenberg, 'The Challenge of Orientalism', in *Economy and Society*, vol 14, no 2, (May 1985), pp. 174-192; Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), Chapter Two; Billie Melman, *Women's*

exciting recent work is clearly influenced by Said. For example, Mary Louise Pratt's exploration in *Imperial Eyes* of how travel writing 'produced "the rest of the world" for European readership' within a trajectory of European expansionism combines Said's focus on knowledge and power with an exploration of the complexities of encounter in the 'contact zone', including the impact of the 'periphery' on the metropolitan subject and the ability of object peoples to re-interpret or subvert those aspects of colonial discourse which directly touch their lives.<sup>13</sup> Nicholas Thomas also develops Said's insights concerning the ways in which academic knowledge is implicated in the cultural processes of colonialism, while criticising the globalising tendencies of much postcolonial, and especially literary, theory.<sup>14</sup>

In its focus on the 'civilising mission' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this thesis is shaped by these developments. Its concern is not with missionary activity in terms of its impact 'out there' - its success or otherwise in the 'mission field', its relationship with other cultures or to other agencies of

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*Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918. Sexuality, Religion and Work* (London: Macmillan, 1992); Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996), Chapter One. For a useful overview of the 'orientalism debate', see: John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), Chapters One and Two.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), Introduction, here p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994), especially Chapters One and Six.



colonial power - and indeed, such areas have been amply documented.<sup>15</sup> Rather, its focus is on the significance of the civilising mission within the domestic cultural context. It explores three broad concerns: the role of missionaries in the production of new knowledge about race and cultural difference in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; the relationship, in terms of ideas and practice, between overseas missions and those to the domestic working class; and the significance of the 'civilising mission' to the formation of middle-class networks and identities. These three areas are discussed a little more fully below.

Firstly, I argue in this thesis that missionaries played a vital role in the proliferation of knowledge about 'distant' cultures from the late eighteenth century.

Despatched to India, the West Indies, the South Pacific and West Africa from between 1793 and 1804, missionaries operated alongside a variety of players - including traders and colonial officials, travellers, explorers and natural scientists, emigrants writing home, black migrants to Britain, people involved in the campaign against the slave trade - in the accumulation of information about the

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<sup>15</sup> See: Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vols 3 and 4 (London: Spottiswoode, 1939 and 1941); Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin [1964] 1987); Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1959); F. Stuart Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries, 1789-1858: The Social Background, Motives, and Training of the British Protestant Missionaries to India* (Oxford: Sutton Courtney Press, 1984); Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, vol 1 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899); Richard Lovett, *History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, vol 1 (London: Henry Froude, 1899); Brian Stanley, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1992); Neil Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978); E. D. Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793-1837: The History of Serampore and its Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

world outside of Europe. This was a period which saw unprecedented access to 'distant peoples', as exploration was closely bound to the resurgence of British colonialism which included, most notably, the establishment of a penal colony in Australia, Permanent Settlement in Bengal and British advances in Madras Province, the settlement schemes in Sierra Leone, the Act of Union with Ireland and the taking from the Dutch of the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>16</sup>

The production of knowledge about 'other' peoples involved not only the collection of material, however, but the development of new models for its interpretation. By the 1790s a new dynamic theory of social change had become popular currency, informing the emerging specialised disciplines of political economy and social anthropology. Developed in the writings of the Scottish enlightenment *philosophes* of the mid-eighteenth century, this identified factors such as the mode of production, cultural institutions and social practices and values as indicators from which all societies could be located on a developmental continuum from 'savagery' to 'civilisation'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, Chapters Three and Four.

<sup>17</sup> See: Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Anand Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History* (London: Croom Helm, 1976); David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), Chapters Six and Seven; Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, [1945] 1968); Jane Rendall, (ed.), William Alexander's *History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, [1777] 1994), Introduction. For a discussion of the eighteenth-century origins of the idea of 'civilisation', see: Lucien Febvre, 'Civilisation: evolution of a word and a group of ideas', in Peter Burke (ed.), *A new kind of history from the writings of Febvre* (London: RKP, 1973), pp. 219-257. For the concept of civilisation within ethnography, see George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: the Free Press, 1987), Chapter

The 'four stages theory', as it has become known, was easily transposed onto the Biblical framework of the heathen and the Christian. At the same time, it enabled an understanding of such groups in terms of a *cultural* deficit, shifting the focus onto concerns of morality, idleness and industry, domestic cleanliness and order and the status of women alongside religious knowledge, belief and practice. Evangelical Christians believed that the inculcation of Christianity would necessarily lead to the abandonment of cultures of barbarism and savagery; for them, missionary intervention was the first step, a prerequisite for the process of civilisation.

Overseas missionaries played a vital role in the packaging for domestic consumption of a model of cultural and racial difference which emphasised the essential capacity for civilisation of all societies. In their missionary magazines, the missionary memoirs that became increasingly popular from the 1820s, and in their speeches at missionary society anniversaries and meetings throughout the country, missionaries rejected the monogenist assertions of the biological rather than cultural basis of difference which insisted upon the innate inferiority of 'primitive' groups. These ideas, which had been articulated in the mid-late eighteenth century in support of the slave trade, were again gaining in popularity in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>18</sup> Missionaries drew upon the notion of the family as a

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<sup>18</sup> As Nancy Stepan begins her study: 'as the battle against slavery was being won by abolitionists, the war against racism in European thought was being lost.' Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan, 1982), Chapters One and Two, here p. 1. For monogenist interpretations of racial and cultural difference from the mid-nineteenth century,

trope for human and social development over time, representing the objects of their mission as children and younger siblings, innocent, uncivilised, untutored and in need of the guidance and care provided by the elder members of God's family.<sup>19</sup> The dominance of the missionary model in the earlier nineteenth century saw the establishment of a different set of (unequal) social relations between blacks and whites.<sup>20</sup> Indeed the discourse of 'the poor negro', to use Catherine Hall's term, had important implications for the sanctioning of social hierarchy and for the construction of an 'English' and 'white' identity.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, this thesis seeks to establish the considerable overlap between domestic and overseas missions. The founders and supporters of the Baptist, London, Church and Wesleyan Missionary Societies were also committed to their domestic equivalents, the new societies formed during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries which were dedicated to the moral, domestic and religious reform of the British poor. Similarly, whether as Sunday school teachers, home

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see: Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), Chapters Six and Seven; Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: RKP, 1971); Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the family in nineteenth-century discourse on race, see Anne McLintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 36-39.

<sup>20</sup> See: Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, Chapter Two; Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, pp. 70-71; Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, Chapter Thirteen; and Catherine Hall, 'Missionary Stories: gender and ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s'.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, Introduction, p. 33.

visitors or itinerant preachers, the men and women destined for overseas mission stations were also acquainted with missionary philanthropy at home.<sup>22</sup> In the words of George Stocking, there was:

a close articulation, both experiential and ideological, between the domestic and the colonial spheres of otherness. Those who went out to confront (and to convert, to uplift, to exploit or to destroy) "Savages" overseas did so in the context of [their] domestic cultural experience.<sup>23</sup>

The overlap in personnel also extended to missionary practice, as evangelicals in Britain and overseas shared a common concern with the inculcation in their heathen subjects of 'civilised' values and cultural practices.

Despite the complexities of attitudes to various 'others', evident in different representations of peoples of the South Pacific, India and Africa and the poor in Britain, the underlying mechanisms of differentiation shared many themes and resources. The new understandings of poverty and the poor which informed domestic missionary practice were shaped by political economy, itself derived from the secular 'histories of civilisation' which were central to the incipient Christian anthropology overseas. Evangelical languages of both 'race' and 'class' drew on a language of heathenism, suggestive of a belief in the equality in sin and depravity of blacks and the white poor. Moreover, the mid-nineteenth century saw

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<sup>22</sup> See: Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries*; Susan Thorne, "The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable": Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial England', in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (London: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 238-262, here pp. 246-248. I am grateful to Susan Thorne for allowing me to read this article prior to publication.

<sup>23</sup> Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 219.

a 'racialising' of the 'dangerous classes' at home, which was evident, as Stocking's discussion reveals, in Frederick Engels' representations of the Manchester working class and (in particular) Irish immigrants as 'a race apart', and in Henry Mayhew's representation of London street people as 'a nomadic race', with little regard for civilised notions of sexual restraint, domestic order or regularity and industry at work.<sup>24</sup> 'Race' and 'class' were mutually constitutive rather than one preceding another,<sup>25</sup> part of a broader classificatory impulse which saw the differentiation of human beings along a number of spectrums: 'savage' and 'civilised', 'Christian' and 'heathen', feminine and masculine, black and white, and pauper and respectable poor.

Finally, I argue that the network and culture of the mission provided a central site for the construction of a broad middle-class culture and identity from the late-eighteenth century. In this I am engaging with the challenge issued over recent years to traditional narratives of class, in which the established chronology of middle-class formation in the period 1780-1850 and the primacy of the language of class itself have been contested. Most notably, Patrick Joyce has argued that historians have contributed to the marginalisation of other significant nineteenth-century 'social selves', such as the collectivities of 'the people' and 'the million', which were constructed through languages of likeness and similarity rather than

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<sup>24</sup> See: Thorne, "The Conversion of Englishmen...", p. 37; McLintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 52-56; Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 219.

<sup>25</sup> In this I disagree with Lorimer's emphasis on the simple transference of representations of class to the colonial context. See Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, p. 35.

of difference.<sup>26</sup> While sympathetic to the project to de-centralise class, I nonetheless have problems with this enterprise.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, I agree with Susan Thorne and David Mayfield that the revisionist search for ‘vocabularies’ and ‘explicit acknowledgements of class ... in consciousness’ is reliant upon a narrow, reductionist and overly-rational notion of the process of the acquisition and expression of class identity.<sup>28</sup> Rather than abandoning it as a foundational category of historical investigation, it seems to me that there remains much to be

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<sup>26</sup> See: Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: the Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); also, Amanda Vickery, ‘Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women’s history’, *The Historical Journal*, vol 36, no 2, (June 1993), pp. 383-414; Dror Wahrman, ‘National society, communal culture: an argument about the recent historiography of eighteenth-century Britain’, *Social History*, vol 17, no 1 (Jan 1992), pp. 43-72; Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> The theoretical shortfalls of the ‘deconstructionist’ approach, of which Joyce has become chief spokesperson, have been well-rehearsed. For example, David Harvey and Nancy Hartsock have both drawn attention to the implications of the ‘undermining of the subject’ for both the political agency and the process of writing the histories of marginalised groups, at a time when, in Hartsock’s words, it is only the ‘white, privileged men of the industrial West [who]... have already had their Enlightenment.’ See: David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity: an enquiry into the origins of cultural change*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Nancy Hartsock, ‘Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?’, in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990). For the debate concerning class and history, see: David Mayfield and Susan Thorne, ‘Social history and its discontents: Gareth Stedman Jones and the politics of language’, *Social History*, vol 17, no 2 (1992), pp. 165-188; Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, ‘Starting over: the present, the post-modern and the moment of social history’, *Social History*, vol 20, no 3 (1995), pp. 355-364. Issues of agency and of the significance of earlier (feminist) challenges to essentialism are addressed by Catherine Hall in her review of the work of Joan Scott and Denise Riley: C. Hall, ‘Politics, Post-structuralism and Feminist History’, *Gender & History*, vol 3, no 2 (Summer 1991), pp. 204-210.

<sup>28</sup> Mayfield and Thorne argue that this approach is rather more continuous with the older ‘social history’ model than its proponents allow. Mayfield and Thorne, ‘Social history and its discontents’.

done in the exploration of the complexities and subtleties of class as a cultural and emotional relationship, as rich in its contribution to both individual subjectivity and wider 'social selves' as other sites of identity formation.<sup>29</sup>

While many early overseas missionaries, like the scorned 'consecrated cobblers' of Serampore,<sup>30</sup> were labouring men and women, those who formed the missionary societies, who sat on committees, raised funds and wrote pamphlets, encouraged and selected men for the overseas field, and visited the poor in their neighbourhoods, were participant in the construction of a culture and identity which can be broadly termed 'middle class'. Their class experience was never homogenous, but during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries the emergence of shared discourses of enlightenment, progress and civilisation enabled a re-mapping of humankind through which, by virtue of their whiteness, their place in commercial society and the public world, their orderly homes and family structure, the middle class placed themselves at the apex of civilised life.

Middle-class self-representation as the agency of the improvement of other cultural groups was constructed through the social practice of mission, through the new institutions and systems of education and reform, and the new body of knowledge,

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<sup>29</sup> The most exciting work in this area is that of Carolyn Steedman. See: Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London: Virago, 1986); and *The Radical Soldier's Tale: John Pearman, 1819-1908*, (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> The phrase is from Sydney Smith, a founder of the *Edinburgh Review*, quoted in Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries*, p. 29.



'social science' or the 'science of the poor'.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the 'mission' lends itself to the notion of hegemony: organised around the belief in the privileged knowledge and cultural authority of the missionary, it can be seen, in Mary Louise Pratt's words, as a 'contact zone', a site for both the reform and the study of 'other' peoples, from which their 'otherness' was constructed and contested, and the 'social' sphere of cultural intervention produced.<sup>32</sup>

These themes are explored through a focus on a specific locale: the town of Sheffield. My intention is less to produce a 'local' history (though I do that) than to explore the meanings and workings of the missionary impulse in a specific context. In so doing, I draw upon the notion of the 'local', developed by John Smail, not as an 'exemplar' or an indication of 'parochial peculiarities', but 'as mode of analysis.'<sup>33</sup> Given the difficulties of general theories, whether about class culture and formation or the experience of colonial power, the locality becomes the place from which a group identity, formed in relation to specific (cultural and economic) relations of production, to various class and colonial others, and to

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<sup>31</sup> For cultural meanings of philanthropy, see Alan J. Kidd, 'Philanthropy and the "social history" paradigm', *Social History*, vol 21, no 2 (May 1996), pp. 180-192. For the practices involved in the 'science of the poor', see Eileen Janes Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996), Chapter One.

<sup>32</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> John Smail writes: 'class makes sense only when it is conceived as a culture, a culture in which a group's attitudes, practices, and very conceptions of their world were shaped (but not determined) by their conscious understanding of their place in the relations of production (relations that were themselves embedded in a cultural context).' John Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture. Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660-1780* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), here pp. 14 and 225.

other individuals and groups within a wider circuit or network, can be explored.<sup>34</sup>

The thesis opens, with Chapter One, in the 1790s. This chapter explores the influences of both evangelical theology and the new secular social theory of the Scottish enlightenment on the promotion of the 'civilising mission' as a social solution to the concerns which dominated the national scene during that decade: political radicalism at home, general social and economic crisis, and anxieties concerning empire and French expansionism. It looks at the particular appeal of new understandings of 'civilisation' and the practice of voluntary missionary activity for some individuals and families of the 'middling ranks', and their place in the construction of a coherent middle-class identity and culture at a national level.

Chapter Two traces the development of a missionary network in Sheffield in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. It explores the role of the missionary society in middle-class formation in the town, its significance as a site on which men and women could collaborate, despite their differences of wealth and status, denominational and political affiliation, and relationships to evangelicalism and enlightenment. It focuses on the visiting system and monitorial system of education to explore the social relationships of missionary practice and the significance of gender and domestic reform to the 'civilising mission'.

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<sup>34</sup> One of the most substantial (and deserved) criticisms of post-colonial studies has been its tendency to 'globalise', to lapse into the construction of a universal theory which assumes an identity of experience between both colonisers and different cultures among the colonised. See Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, especially Chapter Four.

Chapter Three explores a second crucial site in the construction of a middle-class missionary identity: the evangelical family. Focusing on two generations of the Read family of Wincobank Hall, prominent Sheffield Congregationalists and supporters of missions, this chapter discusses evangelical domestic life and childrearing practices, and the involvement of girls and women in the anti-slavery campaign and the domestic and overseas missionary movements. It explores the relationship of the familial to the 'social' and the 'global', and the meaning of the mission in shaping evangelical women's understanding of the domestic sphere.

The final two chapters focus on two overseas mission fields, simultaneously in the missionary gaze in Sheffield in the 1820s, to address the themes of spiritual equality and social subordination and the construction of a British missionary supervisory authority. Chapter Four explores the interest in Sheffield in two West African men who lived in the town as participants in an evangelical and linguistic experiment in the early 1820s and who returned to the Gambia as members of Hannah Kilham's first missionary party to West Africa in 1823. The chapter considers missionary anxieties concerning the success of African conversions, evident in the writing of James Montgomery and William Singleton, and explores Hannah Kilham's resolution, articulated in terms of an ongoing missionary supervision by British men and, crucially, women.

Chapter Five explores the infantilisation of colonial peoples and the establishment of a hierarchy of civilisation through George Bennet's visit to the South Pacific on behalf of the London Missionary Society in the 1820s. The chapter looks at the

public representations of his voyage: the letters, published memoirs, artefacts for museum display and the public memorial constructed in Sheffield Cemetery. It examines the significance of the relationships between the 'civilised' and the 'savage', 'Christian' Britain and the 'heathen' world, to the identity of Sheffield's middle class in the 1820s to 1840s.

The thesis concludes in the 1830s and 1840s, looking at the significance of missionary discourse in the practices of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, the statistical movement and the 1843 *Report* of the Children's Employment Commission.

## Chapter One

### The Civilising Mission and the Middle Class

1790-1803

Hannah Kilham's concern for the state of the domestic poor (see Introduction) echoed the writing of another philanthropic lady, the Evangelical Martha More who, following a visit to the Somerset village of Cheddar in 1789, confided in her journal that there was 'as much knowledge of Christ in the interior of Africa as there is to be met with in this wretched, miserable place.'<sup>1</sup> Martha (Patty) (1747-1819) and Hannah (1745-1833) More were pioneers of missionary philanthropic practice among the labouring poor in the 1780s and 1790s. Emphasising the central role of evangelical women in the promotion of domestic and moral reform, the sisters' schools and Female Friendly Societies in the Mendips provided both model and inspiration for subsequent missionary practice, including Hannah Kilham's own work with the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor in Sheffield, the British and Irish Ladies' Society in Ireland, and in the Gambia and Sierra Leone in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Kathryn Sutherland, 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism', in Kelvin Everest (ed.), *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), pp. 27-63, here p. 40.

The shared culture that allowed the Dissenting Hannah Kilham to draw on the work of the Anglican Hannah and Patty More was a phenomenon of the broad appeal of the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. During a second wave of revivalism in the 1780s and 1790s, Methodism had emerged as a mass popular movement.<sup>2</sup> The following years had seen the emergence of the Evangelical Clapham Sect within the Anglican Church and the rapid growth of evangelicalism within Old Dissent, particularly among Congregational and Baptist denominations, stimulated by the Methodist emphasis on the conversion experience, the importance of itinerancy and the crucial role of laymen and women in religious life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to A. D. Gilbert, Methodist membership expanded from 22,410 in 1767, to 46, 559 in 1786, 56,605 in 1791 and 77,402 in 1796. A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, chapel and social change 1740-1914* (London: Longman, 1976), pp. 3-22. See also: R. Currie, A. Gilbert and L. Horsley, *Church and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), Table A3, pp. 140-141. For the Methodist Revivals, see: Elie Halevy, *The Birth of Methodism in England* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1971); Leslie F. Church, *The Early Methodist People* (London: Epworth Press, 1948); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 411-440; Rupert Davies, *Methodism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp. 24-131; Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, Vol 1* (London: Epworth Press, 1965), especially pp. 37-79, 115-144, 190-203; John Walsh, 'Religious Societies: Methodist and Evangelical, 1738-1800', in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *Voluntary Religion* (Ecclesiastical History Society: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 279-302; Michael Watts, *The Dissenters, Vol 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 394-490.

<sup>3</sup> For the Clapham Sect, see: Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians: the Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 64-82, 83-122; Ernest M. Howse, *Saints in Politics: The 'Clapham Sect' and the Growth of Freedom* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953); Eileen Janes Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996), pp. 6-12. Congregationalists and Baptists enjoyed a similar growth in the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1750, Congregationalists numbered 15,000 and Particular Baptists 10,000, increasing to 26,000 and 17,000 by 1790 and 35,000 and 24,000 by 1800. The breakaway

The evangelical culture of the 1790s was a complex phenomenon, shaped by denominational antagonism as well as by a shared commitment to the promotion of 'real religion.' The concern to revitalise the Anglican Church from within was in part a response to Methodist popularity among the poor and, in the years following the French Revolution, reflected Anglican anxieties concerning 'irregularity', that is, the failure to conform to the legal and constitutional strictures of the Established Church. Dissent, where it existed, was accepted only under the limits imposed by the Clarendon Codes as modified by the Toleration Act. Itinerant preaching, outdoor assemblies and the breaches of parochial obligations were frowned upon, as was the apparent proximity of popular religion to the language of the 'Rights of Man'.<sup>4</sup>

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General Baptists also expanded, from 2,843 in 1750 to 3,403 by 1800. See Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp. 32-42.

<sup>4</sup> According to Gilbert, the national make-up of Wesleyan congregations between 1800-1837 included 62.7% artisans and only 2.2% manufacturers and merchants, and of Congregationalists and Baptists was 63% artisans and 5.4% manufacturers and merchants. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp. 63. For the relationship of Methodism to working-class cultural formation, see: Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 411-440; Halevy, *The Birth of Methodism in England*; Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Epworth Press, 1945); Leslie F. Church, *The Early Methodist People*; Davies and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol 1, especially pp. 37-79, 115-144 and 190-203; Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol 1, pp. 394-490; Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, pp. 3-22; Gilbert, 'Religion and political stability in early industrial England', in P. O'Brien and R. Quinault (eds.), *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (Cambridge 1993), pp. 79-99; also Gilbert, 'Methodism, Dissent and political stability in early industrial England', *Journal of Religious History*, vol 10, no 4 (1979), pp. 381-99; David Hempton, *The religion of the people: Methodism and popular religion, c. 1750-1900* (London: Routledge 1996), pp. 162-178; Deborah M. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985). For fears of irregularity generally, see: W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1972), Chapters One and Two; Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake*

Thus the 1790s saw a growing suspicion of Wesleyans among Anglicans and an Anglican withdrawal from the big interdenominational Sunday schools which had been formed during the previous decade.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, a general fear of 'irregularity' spread also within other denominations, inspiring the anxieties of respectable Wesleyans concerning the radical political allegiances of the New Connexion and the plebeian constituency of the Primitive Methodists.<sup>6</sup> Such Methodist 'irregularities' merely emphasised those features of Methodism that Wesleyans feared would be held against them by members of the Established Church.

At the same time, a concern with the *social* functions of religious belief - with the need to inculcate cohesion, morality, restraint and a belief in the divine necessity of inequality and social hierarchy - united people in a shared evangelical impulse which, in this respect at least, could transcend denominational boundaries.<sup>7</sup> This

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*and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Ward, *Religion and Society*, pp. 12-16 and 40-43.

<sup>6</sup> See: David M. Thompson, *Denominationalism and Dissent, 1795-1948: a question of identity*, (London: Friends of Dr. Williams Library, 1985). Doreen Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), interprets the foundation of denominational missionary societies and magazines as evidence of an increased denominational divide, pp. 20-22.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Hole has argued that while in the earlier part of the decade theological discussions concerning the French Revolution were conducted in what he describes as 'constitutional/philosophical' terms and framed by the events in England of 1688, by the mid-1790s the focus on *social* concerns initiated by Burke had assumed widespread currency. See: Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); also 'English sermons and tracts as media of debate', in Mark Philp, (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 18-37.



new missionary culture saw the formation of a number of interdenominational societies, including the London Missionary Society (1795) and the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), as well as other denominational missionary societies, the Baptist and Church Missionary Societies, formed in 1792 and 1799,<sup>8</sup> and societies concerned with the reform of the domestic poor: the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor (1796) and the Religious Tract Society (1799). It also saw the emergence of the monitorial school system.<sup>9</sup> While differences and conflicts continued - evident, for example, in Anglican insistence on the inclusion



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<sup>8</sup> For early overseas missions see: Charles Hole, *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East to the end of A. D. 1814* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1896); Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, vol 1 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899); Richard Lovett, *A History of London Missionary Society* (London: Henry Froude, 1899); Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* vol 3 (London: Epworth Press, 1983); G. G. Findlay and W. W. Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, vols 1 and 2, (London: Epworth Press, 1921-22); Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vols III and IV (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939); Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> See: Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 163-196; Margaret Simey, *Charitable Effort in Liverpool in the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1951), pp. 19-32; David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 69-133; Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For contrasting interpretations of the Sunday school movement, see: Thomas Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); Malcolm Dick, 'The Myth of the Working-Class Sunday School', *History of Education*, vol 9, no 1 (1980), pp. 27-41.

of the Catechism in the BFBS Bible - such societies nevertheless became important sites for collaboration.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter locates the civilising mission of the early nineteenth century in the new didactic literature and social practice which emerged in Britain in the 1790s. It serves to place missionary activity in Sheffield, the focus of subsequent chapters, in the context of the dominant *national* concerns of that decade: the panic instilled throughout the country as a result of the French Revolution and radical political activity; the impact of the social and economic crises, engendered by the French Wars and by the more fundamental dislocation brought about by the processes of industrialisation; and, on a global level, anxieties concerning Britain's overseas power following the loss of the American colonies and fears of French colonial expansion, 'mismanagement' in India and the expressions of the ideology of the 'rights of man' in Ireland and in Haiti at the end of the decade.

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<sup>10</sup> Bebbington's phrase, the 'evangelical consensus', is most (only?) applicable to the missionary aspect of the revival. Bebbington provides a lucid account of the theological change which enabled the emergence of the new missionary culture, and which involved the growing appeal of the Arminian belief in spiritual equality and the weakening of the Calvinist notion of predestination, traditionally associated with much of the Old Dissent, during the course of the eighteenth century. Compounded by the doctrine of Assurance, the belief in the possibility of knowing that one had accepted God's salvation by which adherents were freed from the Calvinist emphasis on continued struggle with the uncertainty of commitment, Arminianism made for a truly missionary practice. By the end of the century the new 'moderate Calvinism' enabled many Anglicans as well as most Congregationalists and Baptists within Old Dissent, to share with Methodists and General Baptists within the New Dissent a common core of beliefs which centred on conversion, of oneself and of others. In Bebbington's words, it was 'the line between those who had undergone the (conversion) experience and those who had not (which) was the sharpest in the world. It marked the boundary between a Christian and a pagan'. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 5.

The central concerns of this chapter lie with the formulation of an evangelical response to this sense of crisis, with the role of evangelical men and women in attempting to marshal new forces of order and authority, and with the relationship of this process to middle-class formation. It begins, in Part One, with an exploration of the evangelical emphasis on cultural and moral reform through a focus on Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tracts and the popularisation during the mid-late 1790s of the 'domestic mission' as the solution to the 'national' issues. While it was not new to the 1790s, moral reform and the civilising mission were newly articulated in this decade.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on evangelical notions of the significance of the family in social life and the newly-formulated discourse of political economy, the new missionary philanthropy focused on both the absence of religious knowledge and a wider cultural deficit, to be remedied through the

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<sup>11</sup> The development of societies committed to 'moral reform' had been stimulated by the Act of Toleration of 1689 which, allowing dissenters to worship but not to hold public office, had enabled the emergence of new public religious bodies. The most prominent of these were: the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (1698), the founders of the charity school movement and distributors of the Bible; the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, under whose auspices John Wesley travelled as a missionary to America in the 1730s; the various Societies for the Reformation of Manners; and the Religious Societies which, holding prayer meetings and engaged in the visiting of the sick and distribution of religious literature, could count among their number Wesley's own Methodist Society, formed in Oxford in the 1720s and transformed by his missionary tours of England and Wales over the next two decades. See: Elie Halevy, *The Birth of Methodism in England*; Michael Watts, *The Dissenters*, Vol 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 259-267; Edward J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance: Purity Movements in Britain since 1700* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977); F. W. B. Bullock, *Voluntary Religious Societies 1520-1799* (St Leonard's on Sea: Budd and Gillat, 1963); M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Puritanism in Action* (London: Frank Cass, 1964); Joanna Innes, 'Politics and Morals: The Reformation of Manners Movement in Later Eighteenth Century England', in E Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 57-118.

inculcation of the virtues of cleanliness, frugality, moral independence and domestic reform.

Part Two explores the contribution of the broader Scottish 'histories of civilisation' to the articulation of a global 'civilising mission'. Deriving from the writings of mid-century Scottish intellectuals, the 'histories of civilisation' constructed a dynamic model of social change which saw all societies passing through distinct stages of development reflecting a gradual global improvement from savagery to civilisation. By the 1790s this view of social change had not only come into common currency but had made important connections with the evangelical language of the 'Christian' and the 'heathen', providing a framework for the new overseas missionary expansion.

Finally, Part Three focuses on the relationship between this new missionary consciousness and the process of middle-class formation in Britain. While the evangelical revival was not confined to any one social group, the expression of the missionary impulse in the formation of new societies was central to construction of networks through which a broad middle-class culture began to take shape. Moreover, the identification of British working-class and black non-Europeans as the principal subjects of missionary practice was productive of new cultural relations which were themselves central to middle-class identity and cultural authority in the early nineteenth century.

## Part One: Evangelicalism and the Politics of Moral Reform

Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tracts are seen by various commentators as central to the loyalist backlash against the flood of Paineite and Jacobin literature which followed the publication of Part Two of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* in February 1792.<sup>12</sup> More was an ex-bluestocking and dramatist who converted to evangelicalism during the 1780s.<sup>13</sup> She received initial encouragement in her

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<sup>12</sup> For the Cheap Repository Tracts, see: Sutherland, 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism', in Everest (ed.), *Revolution in Writing*; Susan Pedersen, 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), pp. 84-113; Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 68-109, esp. 91-96. For the loyalist backlash more generally, see: Robert Hole, 'British counter-revolutionary propaganda in the 1790s', in Colin Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict, Subversion and Propaganda* (University of Exeter: Exeter Studies in History, 1983), pp. 53-69; H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism, 1789-1815', in H. T. Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 103-126; Clive Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution on British Politics and Society', in Ceri Crossley and Ian Small (eds.), *The French Revolution and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 31-62; Marilyn Butler (ed.), *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 1-18; Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-1793', *Historical Journal* vol 4 (1961) pp. 56-77; E. C. Black, *The Association*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963); and Donald E. Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93 and British Public Opinion', *Historical Journal* vol 9 (1966), pp.179-90.

<sup>13</sup> Prior to her conversion, Hannah More (1745-1833) was well-acquainted with literary, theatrical and political figures, including David Garrick and Dr Johnson, Edmund Burke and Horace Walpole. From the 1780s, she developed friendships with members of the evangelical elite, including Beilby Porteus, Henry Thornton, William Wilberforce and Zachary Macaulay, who later married Selina Mills, a young teacher at the school she and her five sisters had run in Bristol from the 1750s. Biographies of More include: Mary Alden Hopkins, *Hannah More and her Circle*, (New York: Longman, Greens and Co, 1947); M. G. Jones, *Hannah More*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952); Jeremy and Mary Collingwood, *Hannah More*, (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1990). Other writing by Hannah More includes: *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society* (1788); *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*

writing from Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, and the 114 tracts, which were turned out at the rate of three a month from 1795, included contributions from Henry Thornton, Zachary Macaulay, John Venn and other prominent evangelicals as well as More herself and her sisters, Sally and Patty.<sup>14</sup> Mainly short stories and ballads which sought to promote the virtues of temperance, industry, piety and loyalty, the tracts provide a focus for the exploration of the dynamics of missionary social reform in this decade.

More's first piece of loyalist propaganda, published in 1793, had addressed directly the question of working-class support for the ideas of Tom Paine.<sup>15</sup> *Village Politics* (1792), structured around a dialogue between Jack Anvil, a village blacksmith, and the mason Tom Hod, focuses on the half-baked pro-revolutionary sympathies acquired by Hod as a result of his reading of Paine. More uses humour to undermine the language of revolution. Hod's desire for a 'new constitution' is received as a medical complaint by the intelligent, informed, no-nonsense Anvil, while his notion of liberty is met with a perplexed 'What, has any one fetched a warrant for thee?.' Painite ideas of equality are dismissed for their basis in an

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(1790); *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799); and a novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, (1809). See: *The Works of Hannah More. A New Edition, with Additions and Corrections, in Eleven Volumes* (London: T. Cadell, 1830).

<sup>14</sup> Henry Thornton was treasurer of the Cheap Repository and Zachary Macaulay its agent. William Wilberforce offered a subscription of £1000, which was supplemented by the donations of other wealthy philanthropists. See Jones, *Hannah More*, pp. 134, 138 and 141.

<sup>15</sup> For the spread of Painite doctrines see Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), Chapters Five, Six and Seven, especially Chapter Six.

incorrect understanding of social relationships. Jack Anvil, telling Tom that he ‘quarrel(s) with Providence and not with government’, asserts that hierarchy is natural and ordained by God: ‘... the woman is below her husband, and the children are below their mother, and the servant is below his master’. Both workable and desirable, this is a system which ensures mutual responsibility and dependency between persons of different rank within a community; support for equality would, on the contrary, entail ‘everyman ... pull(ing) down every one that is above him, till they’re all as low as the lowest.’ The tract ends with Tom reassured by his wise friend, singing ‘O the roast beef of Old England!’ and declaring his willingness to fight for his country.<sup>16</sup>

A number of the Cheap Repository Tracts addressed similarly overtly political concerns.<sup>17</sup> More’s ‘History of Mr Fantom’, for example, contrasts the philosopher’s plans for ‘universal benevolence’ with the kindness and charity of Mr Trueman, his tax-paying, church-going, Bible-reading friend, in order to attack the rationalist ideology which formed the basis of French philosophical thought and

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<sup>16</sup> Hannah More, *Village Politics. Addressed to all the Mechanics, Journeymen, and Day Labourers, in Great Britain. By Will Chip, a Country Carpenter* (Canterbury, 1793), in Marilyn Butler (ed.), *Burke, Paine, Godwin and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 179-184.

<sup>17</sup> Other more ‘political’ tracts include ‘Turn the Carpet: or, the two Weavers in a dialogue between Dick and John’, in *The Works of Hannah More*, vol 1, pp. 16-18; ‘Will Chip’s True Rights of Man, in Opposition to the New Rights of Man: written for the Volunteers of Somersetshire, when there was an Alarm of Invasion on that Coast. By a Journeyman Carpenter’, *ibid*, pp. 70-80; ‘Patient Joe; or, the Newcastle Collier’, *ibid*, pp. 83-85; ‘The Riot; or, Half a Loaf is better than no Bread: in a Dialogue between Jack Anvil and Tom Hod’, *ibid*, pp. 86-89; also ‘The Loyal Sailor; or, no Mutineering’, vol 5.

the Painite responses to the Revolution in Britain. She details the impact of Fantom's 'selfishness' not only on his long-suffering wife, whose household, servants and children are neglected through her husband's preoccupations, but on William, the servant who, heavily influenced by Fantom's talk of the public good coming from private vices, ends up a drunk, a thief and in prison for murder.<sup>18</sup> As Hole has argued, More was here contributing to an established theological debate, supporting the critique by evangelicals and non-evangelicals within the Church of the idea of human perfectibility as promoted by members of rational dissent.<sup>19</sup> For members of the established Church, man was a necessarily fallen creature, unable through his necessary imperfection to provide a perfect system of government - a fact borne out by the French experience.

Most of the Cheap Repository tracts are less concerned to engage directly with political radicalism, however, than with the irreverent and irreligious nature of popular culture, particularly evident in what More saw as the 'vulgar and indecent

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<sup>18</sup> 'Mr Fantom; or, The History of the New-Fashioned Philosopher, and his Man William', *ibid*, vol 3, pp. 1-43.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Hole, 'English sermons and tracts as media of debate', p. 36. See also: Robert Hole, *Pulpits, politics and public order in England*, pp. 97-173, especially pp. 142-143 and 158-159; Victor Kiernan, 'Evangelicalism and the French Revolution', *Past and Present*, vol 1 (1952) pp. 44-56; James Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Nonconformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); John Seed, 'Gentleman Dissenters: the social and political meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s', *The Historical Journal*, vol 28, no 2 (1985), pp. 299-325; John Seed, 'The Role of Unitarianism in the Formation of Liberal Culture, 1775-1851' (University of Hull: unpublished PhD thesis, 1981).



penny books' which formed the bulk of popular reading material.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the extraordinary success of the tracts, measured in terms of astounding distribution figures of over two million by March 1796, has been explained in terms of More's skilful appropriation of the style of the popular chap-book and ballad.<sup>21</sup> In accordance with More's belief that 'Dry morality' would be of little use in the battle with this 'pleasant poison', the colourful titles were printed on rough paper complete with woodcuts, and were initially distributed through mainstream booksellers, hawkers and peddlers.<sup>22</sup>

In her endeavours to promote the virtues of temperance, industry, piety and loyalty, More used a formulaic structure, which sees the temptation of a usually poor protagonist who is then either rewarded for their strength of character or who

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<sup>20</sup> For chapbooks and popular literacy, see: Pedersen, 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon'; Victor Neuburg, *The Penny Histories: A Study of Chapbooks for Young Readers over Two Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) and *Popular Literature* (London: Woburn Press, 1977). Mitzi Myers sees the tracts as interconnecting several strands of fiction, including the religious narrative, the tale for youths, and the nineteenth-century 'social problem' novel. Mitzi Myers, 'Hannah More's Tracts for the Times. Social Fiction and Female Ideology', in Mary Anne Schofield and Cecelia Macheski (eds.), *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815* (London: Ohio University Press, 1986), pp. 264-284, here p. 267.

<sup>21</sup> 3,000 copies of the tracts were sold between 3 March and 18 April 1795, rising to 700,000 by July 1795, and over two million by March 1796. Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 75. Altick argues that, along with Paine, More's tracts were responsible for the creation of a new reading public in the 1790s (p. 71).

<sup>22</sup> See Jones, *Hannah More*, p. 139. As Olivia Smith has argued, the colourful titles promising action and adventure formed a different sort of loyalist propaganda to the alarmist publications which characterised much of the material put out by the Association. Smith, *The Politics of Language*, pp. 91-96.

falls into ruin. This is suggested by the subtitle to ‘The Story of Simple Sally: ... shewing how from being Sally of the Green she was first led to become Sinful Sally, and afterwards Drunken Sal; and how at last she came to a Melancholy, and almost hopeless end; being therein a warning to all young women both in town and country’.<sup>23</sup> ‘Black Giles the Poacher’, subtitled ‘Some Account of a Family who had rather live by their Wits than their Work’ ends with the death of Giles, a work-shy thief who turns in an honest man for poaching and steals apples from the garden of church-going Widow Brown, while ‘Tawny Rachel’, telling the story of Giles’ trickster wife who plays on people’s ignorance and superstitious fears in order to extract money and silver-ware, sees her despatched to Botany Bay.<sup>24</sup>

The tracts feature both sexes on each side of the moral divide, though it is women who have a particular capacity for raising the moral standard. Although as profligate, slovenly housekeepers women are responsible for the bad ways of children and men,<sup>25</sup> they can put their domestic skills to good use in the local

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<sup>23</sup> ‘The Story of Simple Sally: ... shewing how from being Sally of the Green she was first led to become Sinful Sally, and afterwards Drunken Sal; and how at last she came to a Melancholy, and almost hopeless end; being therein a warning to all young women both in town and country’. *The Works of Hannah More*, vol 5.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Black Giles the Poacher: Some Account of a Family who had rather live by their Wits than their Work’ and ‘Tawny Rachel; or, the Fortune-teller: with some Account of Dreams, Omens, and Conjurors’, *ibid*, vol 4, pp. 115-147 and pp. 148-163.

<sup>25</sup> See for example, ‘The Execution of Wild Robert, being a Warning to all Parents’, which ends with the following: ‘Ye parents, taught by this sad tale,/ Avoid the path she trod;/ And teach your sons in early years/ The fear and love of God.’ Quoted in Pedersen, ‘Hannah More meets Simple Simon’, p. 93. Eileen Yeo discusses More’s use of the image of the disorderly household to evoke the horrors of the French Revolution. Writing to her sister Martha in 1790, More told

community, becoming dispensers of good, morality and common sense, as did the inimitable Mrs Jones, first introduced in 'The Cottage Cook; or Mrs' Jones's Cheap Dishes; Shewing the way to do much good with little money'.<sup>26</sup> As has been suggested by Kathryn Sutherland, this was not merely a reflection of the evangelical emphasis on family life but formed a central part of eighteenth-century political economic discussion.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, as Gregory Claeys has argued, political economy and the wider Scottish 'histories of civilisation' from which it derived formed a 'third language' in the debate over the French Revolution.<sup>28</sup> These provided the framework for the central arguments against Paine and the republican theorists of the 1790s which, rather than simply asserting, as Burke had done, that 'natural rights' did not exist, maintained that republicanism was incompatible with the needs of the successful, commercial society which was necessarily founded on inequalities of property and privatised self interest.<sup>29</sup> For Adam Smith, women's

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a story of a female servant who, having failed to answer bells summoning her to attend to her (French) mistress and found sitting idly in the kitchen reading a pamphlet, had announced 'with "sang froid" that everyone was going to become equal and that she was preparing herself for equality ("nous allons tous devenir egaux, et je me prepare pour l'egalite")'. Hannah More to Martha More, 20 March 1790, quoted in Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Hannah More, 'The Cottage Cook; or Mrs' Jones's Cheap Dishes; Shewing the way to do much good with little money', *The Works of Hannah More*, Vol V. Mrs Jones also features in: 'A Cure for the Melancholy: showing the way to do much good with little money', *ibid*, vol III, pp. 273-292; and 'The Sunday School,' *ibid*, pp. 293-310; and its sequel, 'The History of Hester Wilmot', *ibid*, vol IV, pp. 42-73.

<sup>27</sup> Sutherland, 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism', p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> Gregory Claeys, 'The French Revolution Debate and British Political Thought', *History of Political Thought*, vol 11, no 1 (Spring 1990) pp. 59-80.

<sup>29</sup> In Claeys' words, 'appeals to such rights implied an economic programme which threatened the progress of that very commerce, and its accompanying

joint responsibilities for domestic consumption and the rearing of sympathetic male citizens placed them in a central role in the negotiation of the competing demands of self interest and civic duties which characterised commercial society, enabling both private consumption and the reformation of domestic manners which was deemed essential to the improvement of public and political life.<sup>30</sup>

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polished manners, which had made Britain perhaps the wealthiest if not quite the most polite nation in Europe by the end of the century.' He quotes from various critics, who asserted that 'Arcadian schemes of polity are only fit for Arcadian manners', and republicanism was 'calculated for infant society, for shepherds, fishermen, and huntsmen, where the riches of the state is scarce become an object of temptation, or an excitement to plunder'. See Claeys, 'The French Revolution Debate and British Political Thought', pp. 61 and 74. See also: J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 37-51; Biancamaria Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: the 'Edinburgh Review', 1802-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Jane Rendall, 'Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill', *The Historical Journal*, vol 25, no 1 (1982), pp. 43-69; Jane Rendall, "'The grand causes which combine to carry mankind forward": Wollstonecraft, History and Revolution', forthcoming, *Women's Writing*, (1998).

<sup>30</sup> See: D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (eds.), *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); Jane Rendall, 'Virtue and Commerce: Women in the making of Adam Smith's political economy', in Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus (eds.), *Women in Western Civilisation: Kant to Nietzsche* (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1987), pp. 44-77. For women's complex relationship to enlightenment thought, see: M. Hunt et al, (eds.) *Women and the Enlightenment*, (New York: Haworth Press, 1984); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Renate Bridenthal et al (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European Society*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), pp. 251-275; Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), Chapter One; Arthur Wilson, 'Treated Like Imbecile Children' (Diderot): the Enlightenment and the status of women', in Paul Fritz and Richard Morton, (eds), *Women in the Eighteenth Century*, (Toronto: Samuel Stevens Hakbert, 1976), pp. 89-104; Sylvana Tomaselli, 'The Enlightenment Debate on Women', *History Workshop Journal*, 19 (1985), pp. 101-124; and 'Reflections on the History of the Science of Woman', *History of Science*, 29 (1991), pp. 185-205; Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy*, (London: Methuen, 1984); Maurice Bloch and Jean H. Bloch, 'Women and the dialectics of nature in eighteenth-century French thought', in Carol P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (eds.), *Nature, Culture, Gender*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 25-41.

More's deployment of a 'battery of women-directed discourses' represents less a simple return to 'a womanly register', as Pedersen has suggested, than a successful bid to represent the politics of domestic reform as of national importance.<sup>31</sup> As has been argued by Gerald Newman and more recently by Kathryn Sutherland, it is necessary to 'make the significant distinction between political loyalty and cultural subversion.'<sup>32</sup> While undoubtedly part of the conservative political backlash against Painite and Jacobin propaganda, the tracts were able to capitalise on the terror of the threat of revolution experienced by many members of the middle and upper classes, to form an assault on both elite and popular cultures of the 1790s, and the distance and relationship between them.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, despite More's decision in 1796 to seek a wider distribution through charity schools, the army and navy, prisons, workhouses and factories, channels which undoubtedly

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<sup>31</sup> For the uses of Scottish philosophy by Hannah More, see Sutherland, 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism'. Certainly Hannah More was familiar with this body of work, both through her friendship with Josiah Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, author of 'On the Connection and Mutual Relation between Christian Morality, Good Government, and National Commerce' and her acquaintance with the eccentric James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, author of *the Origin and Progress of Language* (1773-1792), who had proposed to her in the 1780s. See Jones, *Hannah More*, p. 62.

<sup>32</sup> Sutherland, 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism', p. 52; Gerald Newman, 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: Suggestions toward a general interpretation', *Victorian Studies*, vol 18 (1975), pp. 385-418.

<sup>33</sup> Susan Pedersen sees More's activities as contesting the separation of popular and polite culture: 'Essentially collaborationist, even colonizing, the evangelical's model for moral reform put forward in the tracts is a world away from the late eighteenth-century reality of separate and largely autonomous cultures for the privileged and the poor and of negotiation and competition between the two on the basis of show, intimidation and the threat of violence'. Pederson, 'Hannah More meets Simple Simon', p. 108.

ensured that the tracts reached their desired audience,<sup>34</sup> their reception is impossible to gauge.<sup>35</sup> The popularity of the tracts with members of the upper and middle classes may suggest that their success is more easily measured in terms of their recruitment of the wealthy to 'the role of moral arbiters of popular culture.'<sup>36</sup> More's self-appointed role, through her female characters, as 'the compassionate yet corrective maternal instructor of new reading publics', affords a significant place to middle-class women's educative role and didactic writing within a broader cultural revolutionary project.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> According to Myers, they were also distributed in Ireland. See Myers, 'Hannah More's Tracts for the Times', p. 266. Porteus wrote to More concerning their distribution by missionaries overseas: 'I hear of the immortal publication from every part of the globe'. Bishop Porteus to Hannah More, January 1797, in Jones, *Hannah More*, p. 144.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Bailey has discussed the problems of interpretation involved in the apparent adoption by members of the working class of middle-class values and practices. See: P. Bailey, '"Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up? Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability,' *Journal of Social History* 12, no 3 (Spring 1979), 336-53; also Eileen and Stephen Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981), pp. 128-154.

<sup>36</sup> Pedersen, 'Hannah More meets Simple Simon', p. 110. Some were addressed to the middle class: for example, 'Stories for Persons of the Middle Ranks', *The Complete Works of Hannah More*, vol 3. Due to middle-class demand, more expensive copies were printed on better paper and sold in bound volumes.

<sup>37</sup> Myers, 'Hannah More's Tracts for the Times', pp. 268-269. For middle-class women and cultural revolution, see Gary Kelly's discussion of the writing of Helen Maria Williams, Mary Hays and Elizabeth Hamilton who, he argues, despite their different political loyalties, participated in a 'feminisation' of middle-class subjectivity and culture. Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). For a discussion of the notion of 'cultural revolution', see: Gary Kelly, 'Revolutionary and Romantic Feminism: Women, Writing and Cultural Revolution', in Keith Hanley and Raman Seddon (eds.), *Revolution and English Romanticism: Politics and Rhetoric*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, St Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 107-130. Nancy Armstrong has also discussed the role of the woman writer in the creation of a middle-class subjectivity and the significance of the domestic woman as an agent of civilisation.

Such relationships between rich and poor women were mirrored in More's philanthropic work. In their roles as Sunday and day school teachers, the Mores emphasised the political functions of their work. Their intention was to inculcate loyalty and obedience, to teach the poor to read the Bible and, quite emphatically, not to write.<sup>38</sup> The Female Friendly Societies and Benefit Clubs she and Martha established in Mendip villages focused on the moral and sexual reform of poor women. 'Good conduct' was encouraged through the provision of 'treats': pairs of stockings, five shillings and a bible were given to women who could claim virginity upon marriage, and a lying-in benefit was given to pregnant women who could offer proof of their married status, while children at Sunday school received clothing, food and anniversary prizes.<sup>39</sup>

By the late 1790s, Hannah More's concern with frugality, prudence, the suppression of vice and the encouragement of industry and self-discipline, the central components of domestic reform, was resonant in a range of texts and social

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Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>38</sup> 'They learn of weekdays such coarse material as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing... Principles, not opinions, are what I labour to give them', quoted in Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p. 138. For the threat of the reading public, see Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Chapter Two.

<sup>39</sup> Such relationships were central to the construction of new relationships of class. As Yeo has written, 'an expanding social role for affluent women did not necessarily lend to the enlargement of sisterhood between women of different social classes. It could as easily drive a more "scientific" wedge between rich and poor.' Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, pp. 11-15.

practices.<sup>40</sup> The Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, established in 1796 by William Wilberforce, Thomas Bernard and Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham, promoted the inculcation of self-help and independence on the part of the poor through the practice of domestic reform.<sup>41</sup> The monitorial system of education, established in England by Joseph Lancaster at his Borough Road school, saw the application of a 'narrower utilitarianism' to the education of working-class children, sharing with Jeremy Bentham's plans for his 'Panopticon' a broad concern for moral inspection and, in Yeo's words, 'systems that could mass-produce improvement'.<sup>42</sup> Texts such as Frederick Eden's *State of the Poor* (1797) and, most significantly, Thomas Malthus' controversial *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), contested the notion of Christian duty to the poor, emphasising instead the notion of 'moral restraint': the practice of delayed marriage and restricted sexual indulgence, by which the poor became responsible, through their

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<sup>40</sup> By now the Cheap Repository had come to an end, giving way to the Religious Tract Society in 1799. See Jones, *Hannah More*, p. 145.

<sup>41</sup> See: Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, pp. 28-29; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, pp. 175-177; Owen, *English Philanthropy*, pp. 105-109; J. R. Poynter, *Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834* (London: RKP, 1969), pp. 87-89 and 106-185; Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), pp. 75-132.

<sup>42</sup> See: Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, pp. 28-29. For the monitorial system, see: Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, pp. 92-97; J. M. Goldstrom, 'The content of education and socialisation of the working-class child, 1820-1860', in Phillip McCann (ed.), *Popular education and Socialization in the Nineteenth century* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 93-109, esp 94-99; Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960), pp. 17-163. For Bentham see: Elie Halevy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), esp pp. 82-85, pp. 204-248, and pp. 249-310; Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty: Toward a genealogy of liberal governance* (London: Routledge, 1991), Chapter Ten. The phrase 'narrow utilitarianism' is Simon's, p. 70.



own morals and domestic (mis)management, for their own happiness, comfort and indeed, survival.<sup>43</sup>

Evangelicalism and political economy were far from competing discourses. As David Bebbington has identified, both evangelical assurance and enlightenment empiricism shared the foundational belief that knowledge was derived from the senses; one could *know* not only of the integrity of one's conversion and commitment to Christianity but also of the validity of one's experience of the world. Moreover, the two discourses shared a fundamental belief in progress and improvement, expressed in the 'science of man' and in what Bebbington has termed Arminianism's 'optimism of grace.'<sup>44</sup> This compatibility was evident in individual lives and in the shared focus of utilitarian and evangelical projects.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Arguing against Adam Smith that, rather than increased national wealth leading to the greater happiness and comfort of the lower orders, the sexual drive and need for food was resulting in increased 'misery and vice', Malthus is considered by a number of historians to have played a key role in the 'demoralising' of political economy which resulted in an overhaul of eighteenth-century attitudes to poverty. See: Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty*, pp. 100-132; Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty*, Chapter Eight.

<sup>44</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 60. Carl Becker has also argued that there are fundamental similarities in the structures of enlightenment and religious narratives: the argument that, through the development of the 'science of man', one could better understand and so produce a happier society is founded on belief in progress and limitless improvement which suggests continuity rather than a break with the structures of religious thought. See Carl Becker, *Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932).

<sup>45</sup> As has been argued most persuasively by Boyd Hilton, the dominant mode of thought in the early nineteenth consisted of 'an amalgam of enlightenment rationalism and evangelical eschatology'. Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: the Influence of evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 3-70, here p. 3. Discussing William Wilberforce's daily measurement of the state of his soul, Eileen Yeo has argued the case for the

Donald Winch has argued for an appreciation of ‘the centrality of Malthus to the process by which Smith’s political economy, as well as other historical and anthropological insights connected with Smith’s Scottish contemporaries, became an integral part of Anglican thinking about society in the first third of the nineteenth century’.<sup>46</sup> As I shall demonstrate in Part Two of this chapter, this not only extended beyond Anglicanism to a more general evangelical social theory, but the predecessor of political economy - the Scottish ‘histories of civilisation’ - also provided a context for the second great focus of the evangelicalism of the 1790s: missionary activity overseas.

## **Part Two: Cultural Difference and the Civilising Mission**

While overseas missionary activity was stimulated by a Biblical imperative, the global civilising mission of the 1790s and early nineteenth century was also shaped by secular social theory of the Scottish enlightenment, particularly the ‘histories of civilisation’ that had engaged many of Adam Smith’s contemporaries.

The Scottish ‘conjectural histories’ had focused on the theorisation of the transition from ‘rudeness’ to ‘refinement’ which was related to Scotland’s development into

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compatibility with science of the ‘deeply rational... evangelical habit of mind... It methodically surveyed and interpreted evidence in the light of chosen goals, and harnessed means to ends’. Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy 1750-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 238.

a more complex, commercial society by the mid-eighteenth century. Stimulated by the changing political and economic situation which followed the Act of Union with England in 1707, the 'histories' were part of a broader intellectual movement concerned with the exploration of issues such as the relationships between property and social development, self-interest and civilisation, and the competing claims of wealth and virtue.<sup>47</sup> It is, however, in their theorisation of larger questions of social organisation and historical change that the Scottish *philosophes* provided both a framework for missionary practice and a crucial contribution to the development in Europe of the 'science of man'.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The Scottish *philosophes* were a group of men loosely connected by their academic status or place in intellectual circles. Significant individuals and key texts include: David Hume (1711-1776), *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) and the *History of England* (1754-62); Adam Smith (1723-1790), *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776); William Robertson (1721-1793), *History of Scotland* (1759) and *The History of America* (1777); Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767); Henry Homes, Lord Kames (1696-1782), *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774), and John Millar (1735-1801), *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771). See: David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), Chapters Six and Seven; Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968 (1945)); Istvan Holt and Michael Ignatieff, (eds.), *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Anand Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).

<sup>48</sup> In the words of Nicholas Phillipson, 'while it was their concern with the principles of propriety, virtue and citizenship that made Scotland a modern Athens in the enlightened world', it was 'their understanding of the principles of human nature, social organisation and historical change which... commended itself to posterity'. Nicholas Phillipson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', in Mikulas Teich and Roy Porter (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 19-40, here p. 40. For connections with the equivalent movement in France, see: Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, pp. 68-98.

In their efforts to explain social change in Scotland, the *philosophes* drew upon the accounts of travellers, navigational explorers and natural historians who were visiting in increasing numbers hitherto inaccessible cultures in 'remote' parts of the world. Such developments occurred in the context of colonial expansion. Despite the loss of the American colonies in 1776, the last quarter of the eighteenth century saw a vast expansion of the British empire as territories were acquired in north-east and south-east India, in New South Wales, the Cape of Good Hope and on the West African coast.<sup>49</sup> Written by traders and slavers in West Africa, travellers, soldiers, adventurers and settlers in America, and those soldiers, sailors and East India Company servants who formed the growing British presence in India, the eighteenth century had seen a vast increase in the publication of such texts, in collections of travel writing and in periodicals such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* and *London Magazine* as well as more specialist journals.<sup>50</sup>

This diverse range of material had sought to describe non-European cultures and in some cases, with markedly differing degrees of sophistication and analysis, sought to theorise cultural difference. In so doing, such accounts had contributed to the popularisation of (often internally contradictory) stereotypes of different cultural groups. Thus, the North American, under the scrutiny of Europeans for

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<sup>49</sup> See: C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (Harlow: Longman, 1989), pp. 1-15 and 75-216.

<sup>50</sup> See: P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1982), pp. 45-61, 67-97, 128-154 and 187-226.

over three hundred years, was seen both as a handsome, carefree and innocent 'noble savage', living in peaceful harmony with his environment, and a crafty, malicious barbarian, given to untold cruelty at times of war.<sup>51</sup> The people of West Africa, while the subject of literary representations of the 'noble savage', were generally viewed in a more denigratory light. Representations of them as ignorant, cruel and brutish were shaped not only by older associations of blackness with inferiority and inhumanity but by pro-slavery writing which tended towards polygenist interpretations of the origin of humankind.<sup>52</sup> Knowledge of peoples of India, and Asia generally, was of a much more recent nature, and combined an experience of what was seen as an opaque culture, characterised by inaccessible religious beliefs and experiencing stagnation and decline, with an increasing interest in the languages of India and comparative religion, influenced by Sir William Jones.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See: Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, pp. 187-226; Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, pp. 37-67.

<sup>52</sup> See: Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, pp. 227-257; Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), pp. 36-48. Mary Louise Pratt has discussed the impact of Carl Linnaeus' early classification of the world into the *Homo sapiens* and the *Homo monstrous* in *Systema Natura* (1749) on representations of African culture. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 16-85.

<sup>53</sup> See: Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, pp. 67-97 and 128-154. For Sir William Jones (1785-1792), and philology more generally, see: Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England 1780-1860* (London: Athlone Press, 1983), pp. 115-161; Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, pp. 73-77.

The Scottish *philosophes* fashioned such material into a comparative, dynamic theory of historical change which saw all societies passing through similar stages of development from savagery, barbarism to civilised society. This included not only a transition in the mode of production from hunting and gathering first to pastoral, then to settled agriculture and finally to commerce, but involved a general cultural change in social institutions, ideas of justice and property, and custom, culture and manners. In the words of William Robertson:

in every part of the earth, the progress of man hath been nearly the same; and we can trace him in his career from the rude simplicity of savage life, until he attains the industry, the arts, and the elegance of polished society.<sup>54</sup>

Of central importance to their theorisation was the status of women and the organisation of household and gender roles. As explained by William Alexander, women's status varied between the different stages of society, and was indicative of the general state of progress of a people:

were their history entirely silent on every other subject, and only mentioned the manner in which they treated their women, we would, from thence, be enabled to form a tolerable judgement of the barbarity, or culture of their manners.<sup>55</sup>

Women in hunting and gathering societies were necessarily subject to greater brutality than those in commercial society: 'To despise and degrade the female sex', wrote William Robertson in his *History of America*, 'is the characteristic of

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<sup>54</sup> William Robertson, *History of America*, quoted in Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress*, p. 273.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Sylvana Tomaselli, 'The Enlightenment Debate on Women', *History Workshop Journal*, vol 19 (1985), pp. 101-124, here p. 114.

the savage state in every part of the globe'.<sup>56</sup> Only in civilised commercial society, with each gender organised into its appropriate sphere, did women, in Millar's words, 'become neither the slaves, nor the idols of the other sex, but the friends and companions'.<sup>57</sup>

The early work of the Scottish theorists had retained a close focus on America, developing the argument first put forward by John Locke that American society represented the earlier stages of mankind's existence.<sup>58</sup> During the 1770s, however, the journeys of James Cook and Louis Antoine de Bougainville to the South Pacific brought a whole new world into view which, neither mentioned in classical literature nor tainted by the slave trade, wars or even any prior contact with Europeans, seemed to present an ideal site for study of man.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the publication of the journals of Cook and Bougainville and others in the 1770s led

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Jane Rendall, (ed.), Introduction to William Alexander's *History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, [1777] 1994), p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Locke's statement that 'in the beginning all the World was America' formed the basis for eighteenth-century thought. See Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, p. 192. The most significant work was William Robertson's *History of America* (1777), in which he condensed the work of French philosophers Buffon (*Histoire Naturelle*, 1749) and de Pauw (*Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains*, 1768) for the British public.

<sup>59</sup> Cook's first voyage, with Joseph Banks, had taken him to Tahiti, New Zealand and east coast of Australia between 1768-1771. On his second trip in 1772-1775, accompanied by the painter William Hodges and the two Forsters, he returned to Tahiti and New Zealand before going on to make the first visits by an Englishman to Easter Island, Marquesas, New Hebrides and New Caledonia. Cook's third trip, with James King and William Anderson, saw his death at Kealakekua Bay, Hawaii, in February 1779.

to a 'Pacific craze' in Britain and France which, with a new popularity of 'Tahitian' toys, jewellery, tattoos, 'polynesian' wallpaper, verandas for country houses and artificial South Sea lakes, saw the emergence of a 'Polynesian vogue' among the well-to-do. The South Pacific was further celebrated in paintings of the scene of Cook's death at Kealakekua Bay, Coleridge's *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), a pantomime entitled 'Omai, or a Trip around the World' was performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden in 1785, and activities such as those of a London prostitute names Charlotte Hayes, who organised sex shows based on voyeuristic descriptions of public sexual activity drawn from the journals of explorers and sailors.<sup>60</sup>

The writing of Cook and Banks betrayed a combination of primitivist understandings of Pacific culture, with a view, shaped by the Scottish intellectual

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<sup>60</sup> Although there had been earlier collections - Charles de Brosses' *Histoire des Navigations aux Terres Australes* (1756) in France, and the English version, John Callender's three volume *Terra Australis Cognita* (1766-68) - and the earlier voyages such as those by Commander John Byron (1764) and Captain Samuel Wallis (1767-8), it was James Cook's accounts, published by Hawkesworth in 1773 as *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere*, which caught the British popular imagination. Also published to some acclaim were Cook's *Voyages towards the South Pole* (1777), Georg Forster's *A Voyage round the World* (1777) and Johann Reinhold Forster's 'Observations made during a Voyage around the World' (1778). See: Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, pp. 258-298; Alan Morehead, *The Fatal Impact: An Account of the Invasion of the South Pacific, 1767-1840* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966), pp. 72-75; and Gavan Daws, *A Dream of Islands: Voyages of Self-Discovery in the South Seas* (London: W. W. Norton, 1980), pp. 11-12. See also, Harriet Guest 'Looking at Women: Forster's Observations in the South Pacific', (unpublished paper, 1996). I am grateful to Harriet Guest for allowing me to read this paper in its unpublished form.



tradition, of the people as akin to Europeans before the excesses of civilisation.<sup>61</sup> With their discussions of religious belief, political organisation, the prevalence of war and cultural practices such as infanticide and cannibalism, such writings provided a wealth of empirical material for analysis.<sup>62</sup> They focused on questions concerning the origins of man and his proximity to animals, the impact of the climate and environment on cultural difference, and the relationships of different languages. Such work not only enabled the construction of an agenda for enquiry which survived well into the nineteenth century but encouraged the incipient development of the more specialised disciplines of anthropology and philology.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The most famous of Cook's 'primitivist' passages concerns the happiness of native Australians: 'From what I have said of the natives of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon Earth, but in reality they are far happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in tranquillity which is not disturb'd by the inequality of condition: the earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all the things necessary for life, they covet not magnificent houses, household stuff &c...' James Cook, *Journal 1768-1771*, quoted in Marshall and Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, p. 273.

<sup>62</sup> Indeed, there were many direct connections between travellers/explorers and theorists back home: Banks, for example, provided empirical data for Lord Monboddo, used in his six volume *Origins and Progress of Language* (1773) and supplied Tahitian skulls to Blumenbach, the eminent early anthropologist who was in the process of revising Linnaean categories for the interpretation of humankind. See John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful knowledge and polite culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 149-156 and 172-176.

<sup>63</sup> For the development of anthropology, see: Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*; Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (University of California Press, 1969), pp. 216-224; George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, The Free Press, 1987), pp. 8-45; Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (London: RKP, 1969).

By the 1790s the 'four stages theory' was in popular currency. Practices concerning poverty and the poor in Britain, shaped by an understanding of British society as nearing the peak of civilisation, were accompanied by their global equivalents. Thus, as Joseph Lancaster developed his monitorial school in Southwark, South London, Andrew Bell was simultaneously devising a similar system for the children of mixed-race parents in Madras.<sup>64</sup> A little earlier, Jeremy Bentham's plan for the 'Pauper Panopticon' was matched by punitive regimes for convicts shipped to Australia.<sup>65</sup>

The main focus for schemes for improvement in this decade, however, concerned the settling, on a site on the Sierra Leone estuary, of poor blacks from London, later joined by black supporters of the British in the American War who had fled to Nova Scotia, by Jamaican Maroons and, in the early years of the nineteenth century, by 'liberated slaves'.<sup>66</sup> These various Sierra Leone schemes combined a

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<sup>64</sup> As Richardson has commented, Bell's system, developed in Madras to 'civilise' the mixed-race children of British soldiers and Indian mothers and promoted in his *Analysis of the Experiment in Education, Made at Egmore, Near Madras*, (1797), was soon transferred to the British context, whilst Lancaster's system, originating in his school in a poorer part of south London and discussed in his *Improvements in Education* (1803), was soon being transplanted in Asia, Africa and the West Indies under the auspices of the British and Foreign School Society. See Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>65</sup> See Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: A History of the Transportation of Convicts to Australia, 1787-1868* (London: Collins, 1986).

<sup>66</sup> The original idea had been suggested to Granville Sharp, organiser of the Committee for the Black Poor in London, by the amateur botanist Henry Smeathman. According to Christopher Fyfe, the 'black poor, consisted largely of American men who had fought on the British side during the War of Independence and who had fled to England. See: Christopher Fyfe, 'Freed slave colonies in West Africa', in John Flint (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa, Volume 5, from c 1790 to c 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 170-199;

money-making venture with faith in potential for promoting legitimate commerce, agricultural skills and, increasingly, Christianity. Further interest in West Africa came at the end of the decade, as a result of the travels in the Gambia of Mungo Park, representative of the African Association for Promoting the Discovery of Africa (formed in 1788), for the purpose of tracing the Niger river, promoting legitimate commerce and civilisation, and compiling ethnographical studies of towns and cities in the neighbourhood.<sup>67</sup> In Philip Curtin's words, interest in Africa was 'not... as it was, but as it might be'; open to the positive transformation of agriculture, trade, cultural and religion, the continent was seen as 'a *tabula rasa*, ready and waiting for the utopian inscription.'<sup>68</sup>

The campaign against slavery and the promotion of Christianity went hand-in-hand, as both legitimate commerce and religious reform were seen as prerequisites for moving West African societies from the position of barbarism. Many of the early members of the Anti-Slavery Society, including Wilberforce, Macaulay and Henry Thornton, were involved in the Sierra Leone schemes, becoming leading

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Christopher Fyfe, *A History Of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 14-57; Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, pp. 95-102, 105-119 and 123-139.

<sup>67</sup> See: Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, pp. 144-146; Christopher Hibbert, *Africa Explored: Europeans in the Dark Continent 1769-1889* (London: Allen Lane, 1982), pp. 53-78; Charles P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa, Vol I: to 1840* (London: Lutterworth Press, (1948) 1964); Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 69-85.

<sup>68</sup> Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, p. vi and p. 116.

supporters of the Church Missionary Society, which sent its first missionaries to the colony in 1804.<sup>69</sup>

It was in this context that general missionary activity expanded in the 1790s, as the four missionary bodies took responsibility for different parts of the globe. Thus, Thomas Coke's missionary voyage to the West Indies in 1786 saw the beginnings of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission.<sup>70</sup> In 1793 William Carey, a Baptist shoemaker from Northampton,<sup>71</sup> arrived in Calcutta, and two years later the first LMS missionary ship landed in Tahiti.<sup>72</sup> While travellers' accounts of Africa,

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<sup>69</sup> For the early abolition movement, see: Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolitionists, 1760-1810* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1975). For the relationship between abolition and early missions, see: Stiv Jakobsson, *'Am I Not a Man and a Brother? British Missions and the Abolition of the Slave Trade in West Africa and the West Indies 1786-1836* (Uppsala: Almquist and Wiksells, 1972), pp. 29-37, 41-81 and 118-130. David Brion Davis emphasises the origins of anti-slavery sentiment in aspects of both enlightenment and evangelical thought which served to undermine traditional religious and philosophical justifications of slavery. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin (1960) 1970), Part Three, pp. 319-517. For early CMS missions, see: Hole, *A History of the Church Missionary Society*; Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society. Its Environment, its Men and its Work*, vol 1 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), pp. 41-91. Eight members of the LMS, from London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, had arrived on a mission to the Fula in 1797. Generally however this mission was a disaster, and included deaths, disputes, a murder and a missionary-turned-slave trader. See: Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 75-76; Stock, *A History of the Church Missionary Society*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>70</sup> See: N. Allen Birtwhistle, 'Methodist Missions', in Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (eds.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol 3 (London: Epworth Press, 1983), pp. 1-19

<sup>71</sup> Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T. T. Clark, 1992); George Smith, *The Life of William Carey, Shoemaker and Missionary* (London: J. M. Dent, 1878).

<sup>72</sup> Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895*, vol 1 (London: Henry Froude, 1899); John Morrison, *The Fathers and Founders*

Polynesia and India suggested that different peoples occupied diverse positions on the scale of civilisation, they confirmed for the missionaries that while all peoples of the world were part of the same human family, they were all *fallen*, in differing degrees. For them, the positive qualities of civilised life were seen as the product not just of historical change but of the progress of Christianity and they incorporated into their practice the emphasis on cultural reform, emphasising agricultural development, domestic reform and the inculcation of manners alongside Biblical knowledge. For evangelicals, the language of the ‘civilised’ and the ‘savage’ was easily mapped onto that of the ‘Christian’ and the ‘heathen’, providing a framework for missionary practice. While central to the popularisation of the notion of an uncivilised heathen world, the figure of the undomesticated savage was also crucial to the recognition of ‘western civilisation’ and, as I will show in Part Three, to the place of the middle-class at the apex of civilised life.<sup>73</sup>

### **Part Three: Missionary philanthropy, public societies and the middle class**

Much of the recent debate concerning middle-class religious belonging has centred on the re-interpretation of middle-class cultural formation offered by Leonore

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*of the London Missionary Society* (London: Fisher and Son, 1844).

<sup>73</sup> See: Stuart Hall, ‘The West and the Rest’, in Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (eds.), *Formations of Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open University, 1992), p. 314.

Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes*.<sup>74</sup> In this richly-textured account of middle-class life, Davidoff and Hall show how membership of a church or chapel congregation provided not only security and spirituality, but a whole new social world of friendship, leisure opportunities, business alliances and potential marriage partners. Such a new cultural network was of especial importance to Dissenters, formally excluded from public positions until the repeal of the Test and Corporations Act in 1828.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the evangelical redefinition of status as determined by effort and piety, and the stronger emphasis on the family and gender roles, based on the notion of the essential difference of men and women and the naturalness of 'separate spheres', were central to middle-class claims to represent a higher level of civilisation. Morally earnest, sensitive and hard-working, middle-class males saw themselves as essentially different from the hunting, drinking, lascivious gentry and the irreligious and improvident working class. Likewise, middle-class women, characterised by their virtue and moral influence, were seen as distinct from the indulgence and immorality of both upper- and lower-class femininity.<sup>76</sup>

Critical of earlier, mainly Marxist, studies of middle-class formation, Davidoff and Hall discuss the complex intersection of religious belief, gender ideology and

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<sup>74</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

<sup>75</sup> For the impact upon Dissenters of aspects of the Test and Corporations Acts, see: Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and Radicalism*; Seed, 'Gentleman Dissenters'.

<sup>76</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, especially Chapter Two.

cultural practice which served to unify the disparate elements within the middle class and facilitate the construction of a shared middle-class identity based on a sense of cultural superiority and right to increased power and authority. Religious belonging, they argue, 'gave meaning to their lives and in the process challenged the existing apparatus of power', enabling the growth of middle-class values which were to become central to the dominant culture by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>77</sup>

Over recent years Davidoff and Hall's thesis has come under scrutiny from historians who have contested their emphasis on the distinctiveness of middle-class culture and the place therein of evangelicalism, their particular stress on 'separate spheres', and their very chronology of middle-class formation. Amanda Vickery, in an article focused mainly on the continued and, as she sees it, inappropriate usage by historians of women and the middle class of the notion of 'separate spheres,' maintains that Davidoff and Hall's argument is based on an acceptance of the outdated model of a 'rising' middle class which emerged somewhere between 1780-1850. The 'middling sorts', she argues, were in existence much earlier in the eighteenth century, as were texts and social practices stressing women's domestic virtues. Moreover, not only did the middle class not subscribe *en masse* to evangelical ideology, but evangelical beliefs and cultural practices were shared with members of the gentry, the urban artisanate and labouring

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73. See also Judith Newton, 'Family Fortunes: "New History" and "New Historicism"', *Radical History Review*, vol 43 (1989), pp. 5-22, for a sympathetic review of the aims of their work. For an earlier account of the significance of culture and religion in middle-class formation, see Harold Perkin, *Origins of Modern English Society* (London: Routledge, [1969] 1986), Chapters Six and Nine.

classes; they were no more the province of the middle class than any other social group.<sup>78</sup>

Davidoff and Hall's chronology of middle-class formation has also been problematised by Dror Wahrman in his criticism of what he sees as an over-simplified view of eighteenth-century society, evident both in the Thompsonian model of the 'patricians' and 'plebs', and in the argument that the latter decades saw the emergence of an exigent and homogenous middle class.<sup>79</sup> Wahrman's chronology of class formation emphasises both the existence of a 'middling sort' from the end of the seventeenth century and its continued existence until well into the nineteenth century as a network of disparate groups rather than a coherent 'middle class'. In the late eighteenth century, argues Wahrman, 'middle class' was used as an oppositional rhetoric by those who asserted their independence from what he identifies as the newly commercialised 'national' culture of the old elite. That is to say, the middle class as a social and economic category 'was as yet not so much as coherent *class*, as a coherent *idiom*'.<sup>80</sup> Davidoff and Hall, he claims,

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<sup>78</sup> See Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *The Historical Journal*, vol 36, no 2 (June 1993), pp. 383-414.

<sup>79</sup> Dror Wahrman, 'National society, communal culture: an argument about the recent historiography of eighteenth-century Britain', *Social History*, vol 17, no 1 (Jan 1992), pp. 43-72.

<sup>80</sup> Wahrman, 'National society, communal culture', p. 65. In Wahrman's view, middle-class formation occurred much later, around the period of the Great Reform Act of 1832. See his "'Middle-Class" Domesticity Goes Public: Gender, Class and Politics from Queen Caroline to Queen Victoria', *Journal of British History*, vol 32 (Oct 1993), pp. 396-432. Wahrman has developed these arguments in his *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).



'have fallen for the rhetoric of the "middle class" ideologues: they have mistaken sectional politics for a consensus, and a contested ideological claim for a comprehensive description of social reality.'<sup>81</sup>

An increasing number of studies detailing the life-styles of the 'middling sorts' and especially their participation in the development of a new commercialised urban culture in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain seems to lend support to Wahrman's critique, calling into question both the linearity and the beginning in the late eighteenth century of the ascent of the 'forever rising' middle class.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, although sharing certain common characteristics, such as the need to

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<sup>81</sup> Wahrman, 'National society, communal culture', p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> See: Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), pp. 3-16; Lawrence Stone, 'Social mobility in England, 1500-1700', *Past and Present*, vol 32 (1966), pp. 16-55; Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London: Hutchinson, 1982); Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society, 1680-1730* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982); Penelope J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 130-134; Peter Borsay, 'The English urban renaissance: the development of provincial urban culture, c. 1680-c.1760', *Social History*, vol 5, no 2 (1977), pp. 581-603; Peter Borsay, 'Culture, status and the English urban landscape', *History*, vol 67 (1982), pp. 1-12; Peter Borsay, '"All the Town is a Stage": urban ritual and ceremony 1660-1800', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), pp. 228-58; Roy Porter, 'Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England', in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820*, (Harlow: Longman, 1990), pp. 243-267; Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), especially pp. 204-212 and 225-296; J. Jefferson Looney, 'Cultural life in the provinces: Leeds and York, 1720-1820', in A. L. Beier et al (eds.), *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 483-510. For a useful overview, see Jonathan Barry, 'The Making of the Middle Class?', Review Article, *Past and Present*, no 145 (1994), pp. 194-208.

earn a living, their position as the owners of property and their freedom from manual labour, the middle ranks encompassed people in a wide range of occupations, including shopkeepers and tradesmen, merchants and bankers, professionals such as lawyers and doctors, and factory owners and entrepreneurs, suggestive of an absence of homogeneity and common identity.<sup>83</sup>

However, as has been argued by John Smail in his study of Halifax, the earlier and diverse origins in specific local contexts of the middle class does not preclude the emergence later in the eighteenth century of a broader middle-class culture. Even into the nineteenth century, Smail argues, there was no single middle class, but a variety of local class cultures which intersected to form broad networks at regional and national levels.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, as Davidoff and Hall set out to demonstrate, and as neither Vickery's nor Wahrman's arguments seem to me to preclude, the significance of evangelicalism for middle-class culture at the end of the eighteenth century lies in the reworking of the former by the latter in ways which had implications for a broader middle-class identity. Within such networks there were important sites upon which collaboration, between individuals and

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<sup>83</sup> See: P. J. Corfield, 'Class by Name and Number in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *History*, vol 72, no 234 (February 1987), pp. 38-61; John Seed, 'From "middling sort" to middle class in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England', in M. L. Bush (ed.), *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification* (London: Longman 1992), pp. 114-135; John Seed, 'Capital and class formation in early industrial England', *Social History* 18, 1, (January 1993), pp. 17-30.

<sup>84</sup> These defy fixed or simplistic categorisation, such as Wahrman's 'national' and 'provincial'. See John Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture. Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660-1780* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 3-18 and 191-236.

families from a variety of middling backgrounds, could occur. One such site was the voluntary society which, I suggest, played a crucial role in the formation of broader middle-class networks from the end of the eighteenth century.

The new array of voluntary societies emerging in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provided an important site for the shaping of a new cultural network out of the disparate 'middling sorts' of the earlier eighteenth century. These societies had different origins, and were variously concerned with the relief and moral reform of the poor, with missionary activity overseas, the development of medical provision, public order, education, with the diffusion of scientific knowledge and with their own improvement. Some, like the Sunday school movement at home and the overseas missionary movement, were specifically evangelical, emerging, as did the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, out of local chapel congregations. Other evangelical societies, such as the Anti-slavery movement (from 1788), the early London Missionary Society (1795), and the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) were interdenominational affairs, uniting Quakers, Anglicans and evangelical Nonconformists in political and moral campaigns. There were also the enlightenment societies: the Birmingham Lunar society, the Literary and Philosophical Societies which emerged in Derby, Manchester and Newcastle in the 1790s, the new Book Clubs and the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, initially associated with rational dissent but which were, by the early years of the nineteenth century, encompassing a new membership drawn from evangelicals within the new commercial and professional elites.

As R. J. Morris has shown in his study of early nineteenth-century Leeds, there was a considerable overlap of personnel within such societies, as evangelicals of different denominations mingled together, alongside Quakers and Unitarians, enabling the development of a shared identity between middle-class men of different wealth and status, and political and religious loyalties. Morris argues that their 'unity was based not on the nature of the activities but on the concern to assert group identity and authority' through their involvement in a range of 'causes', which might include the campaign against the East India monopoly, anti-slavery and the formation of the Botanical Gardens.<sup>85</sup>

The emergence of a network of voluntary societies has been theorised in terms of its intimate connection to the production of a new 'public sphere' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The work of Jurgen Habermas has been of importance here, identifying the voluntary association as one of a number of urban institutions - alongside the salons and coffee houses, concert halls and assemblies, and press and literary journals - which constituted a new public sphere,

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<sup>85</sup> Robert J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British middle class, Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 5; also Robert J. Morris, 'Voluntary societies and British urban elites, 1780-1850: An Analysis', *The Historical Journal*, vol 26, no 1 (1983), pp. 95-118; Theodore Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-Industrial Society, Bradford 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); John Seed, 'Theologies of Power: Unitarianism and the social relations of religious discourse, 1800-50', in R. J. Morris (ed.), *Class, Power and Social Structure in British Nineteenth-Century Towns* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), pp. 107-156.

emerging out of the institutions of private life and separate from politics and the state.<sup>86</sup>

Davidoff and Hall have explored the gendered nature of the construction of this 'public' world, pointing to the particular significance for middle-class men of the redefinition of civil society which saw the creation of 'new arenas of social power' and the construction of a new masculine ideal by which they came to see themselves as contributors to social progress through public activity.<sup>87</sup> The 'public', they argue, was dependent upon the privatised, domestic sphere:

Public men were constantly cared for and serviced by wives, daughters, sisters and female servants. The apparently autonomous individual man, celebrated in both political economy and evangelical religion, was almost always surrounded by family and kin who made possible his individual actions.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See: Jurgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article', *New German Critique*, 1964, pp.49-55, here p. 49; Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), especially Chapter Two. See also Geoff Eley, 'Re-thinking the Political: Social History and Political Culture in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain', *Archiv fur Sozialgeschichte*, vol 21 (1981), pp. 427-457. For a useful overview of some of the complexities of Habermas' thought, see: John Brewer, 'This, that and the other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', pp. 1-21 and Jonathan Barry, 'A Historical Postscript', pp. 220-237, in Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (eds.), *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995).

<sup>87</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 416-449.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p. 33.

'Public was not really public and private was not really private', they continue, '... (b)oth were ideological constructs with specific meaning which must be understood as products of a particular historical time.'<sup>89</sup>

The model of the 'public' and the 'private' is further problematised by the experience of middle-class women. Although women were usually excluded from the formal running of voluntary public societies, they were increasingly prominent both as subscribers and as activists. Indeed, the role of the lady visitor, popularised by Hannah More in the 1790s, had by the early years of the nineteenth

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, p 33. While they explore the constrictive nature of domestic ideology for women they emphasise the culturally constructed and inter-dependent nature of the public and the private, thus providing a critique of the traditional dependence of many feminist historians on a simplistic framework of separate spheres. See also: Michael Roper and John Tosh (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge 1991), Introduction. There is an extensive literature addressing gender and the public/private debate. See: Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Carole Pateman, 'Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy', Anne Phillips, ed, *Feminism and Equality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 103-126; Nancy Fraser, 'What's Critical About Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender', *New German Critique* vol 35 (Spring/Summer 1985), pp. 97-131; Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, 'The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding', *Signs*, vol 5, no 3 (1980), pp. 389-417; Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (London: Cornell University Press, 1988); Nancy A. Hewitt, 'Beyond the search for sisterhood: American women's history in the 1980s', *Social History*, vol 10, no 3 (1985), pp. 299-321; Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (Columbia University Press, 1988); Jane Rendall, 'Nineteenth Century Feminism and the Separation of the Spheres; Reflections on the Public/Private Dichotomy', in T. Andreason et al (eds), *Moving On: New Perspectives on the Women's Movement* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1991), pp. 17-37; Linda Kerber, 'Separate spheres, female worlds, woman's place: the rhetoric of women's history', *Journal of American History*, vol 75 (1988), pp. 9-39.

century become standard practice in a number of societies, ranging from the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, the Aged Female Society and the Bible Society.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, here I agree with Amanda Vickery who, criticising Davidoff and Hall, argues that far from ushering in a restriction on women's public role, there was 'an unprecedented expansion in the opportunities, ambitions and experiences of late Georgian and Victorian women', and that 'the broadcasting of the language of separate spheres' can be read as signalling 'a growing concern that many women were seen to be active outside the home rather than proof that they were so confined.'<sup>91</sup>

It may be more appropriate to write, as have Denise Riley and Eileen Yeo, of an emergent 'social' sphere in the late eighteenth century, defined by both gender and class and, as I intend to show, ethnicity. The concept of the 'social' developed by Riley sidesteps the debate concerning the 'public' and the 'private'. She talks of a 'blurring' of boundaries between the two spheres which was not only a result of women negotiating and extending their sphere through their public deployment of domestic skills but was part of the construction of the 'social' as a feminised

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<sup>90</sup> According to Prochaska, women comprised 13% of subscribers to the SBCP in 1798, 11% of the Religious Tract Society in 1799, 12% of the CMS in 1799, 15% of the BMS in 1800, and 12% of the BFBS in 1805, the figures rising steeply throughout first half of nineteenth century. Quoting from C. S. Dudley, Prochaska states that there were 350 female associations affiliated to the Bible Society by 1819. Frank K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), Chapter One.

<sup>91</sup> Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', p. 400.

arena, characterised by familial and domestic concerns.<sup>92</sup> As Eileen Yeo has argued, the 'social' was a space on which utilitarians and evangelicals converged, joining together to dismantle older intellectual paradigms, to construct new knowledges and to deploy domestic skills publicly in the pursuit of improvement.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, while Davidoff and Hall underestimate the extent of women's participation in the social world in the early years of the nineteenth century, their explanation remains accurate. Women were able to engage in a public deployment of their feminine qualities and to exploit the tension in evangelical theology which saw them as both spiritually equal and socially subordinate. Extending their domestic role as carers and educators of children and servants, middle-class women could become moral guardians, responsible for the regeneration of the nation's morals through their selfless commitment to home, family and the neighbouring poor.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The social is defined by Riley as 'the reiterated sum of progressive philanthropies, theories of class, of poverty, of degeneration, studies of the domestic lives of workers, their housing, hygiene, morality, mortality...' 'familial standards - health, education, hygiene, fertility, demography, chastity, fecundity...' Denise Riley, *'Am I That Name?' Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 49-50.

<sup>93</sup> Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*. In the words of Anita Levy, 'In so disseminating gender-based behavioural norms, nineteenth-century intellectuals ... establish[ed] a class of people whose women met certain standards of femininity that qualified them to care for other social and cultural groups whose women were improperly gendered.' Anita Levy, *Other Women: The Writing of Class, race and gender, 1832-1898* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 12.

<sup>94</sup> See: Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 108-148; Catherine Hall, 'The early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology', in Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 75-93; Judith Newton, 'Family Fortunes: "New History" and "New Historicism"', pp. 16-17.



Of crucial importance however, is the concept of 'difference': the process by which middle-class women as well as men became educators and moral reformers of the poor necessarily involved encroaching upon the space of others, and the representation of them as in need of their civilising influence and socialising care.

In Riley's words:

the new production of 'the social' offered a magnificent occasion for the rehabilitation of 'women'. In its very founding conceptions, it was feminised; in its detail, it provided the chances for some women to enter upon the work of restoring other, more damaged, women to a newly conceived sphere of grace.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, as the language of class became used to legitimate the reform of some people by others, so middle-class women could also expect to participate in the restoration and reform of working-class men.

## Conclusion

In the 1790s, Hannah Kilham's religious commitment placed her at some distance from Hannah More. Kilham, who returned to Sheffield in 1790 from the Chesterfield boarding school she had attended since the deaths of her parents in the mid-1780s, found herself becoming increasingly critical of what she saw as the shallow and fashionable circles in which she, living as part of her sister's family, was moving. Attracted by the seriousness of Methodist culture, her rejection of the episcopalian faith of her middle-class merchant family occurred in the midst of the

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<sup>95</sup> Riley, *'Am I That Name?'*, p. 48.

Great Yorkshire Revival which swept through Sheffield in the early 1790s, and she joined the Wesleyans in 1794. In 1797, Hannah seceded to the New Connexion which, led by Alexander Kilham, whom she married in 1798, had strong links with working-class radical politics in the town. By the early years of the nineteenth century, however, Kilham made a final denominational move, joining the Society of Friends in 1804. From here, she launched herself into voluntary public activity, becoming a key member in a range of societies, including the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, the Aged Female Society, the Lancasterian Girls School of Industry and the Bible Society. Along with her Anglican, Congregational, Baptists, Methodist and Unitarian colleagues, Kilham followed More's model, immersing herself in the promotion of domestic reform through educational and religious writing and visits to the homes of the poor.

The missionary society of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries attracted a membership drawn from the middle class. Spurred by the fears generated by the French Revolution and by unrest at home, evangelicals focused on the *social* functions of religious belonging, seeking to inculcate the values of domesticity, morality, industry and respect for the natural hierarchy of society. Drawing on the Scottish 'conjectural histories' of the mid-late eighteenth century, missionaries placed the traditional concept of 'moral reform' within a new framework of 'civilisation'. The objects of their mission - principally the working class at home and peoples in areas of the world which were already or were rapidly becoming part of the British Empire - were seen not only to lack religious

knowledge but to suffer from a wider cultural deficit, which was to be remedied through careful study and through the provision of education and domestic reform.

The significance of middle-class religious belonging in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries lies in the reworking of evangelical ideas and practice in the development of new notions of progress and of a 'social' and global arena of activity and mission. Such practice enabled the formation of new cultural networks within the middle class, facilitating the development of a 'social' sphere of activity. At the same time, the processes of study and reform contributed to the construction of new cultural relationships, in the 'othering' of those social groups on the receiving end of the missionary enterprise and in the articulation of a new identity for members of the middle class as the carriers of civilisation.

## Chapter Two

### **Languages of likeness and difference: missionary societies, civilisation and middle-class formation in Sheffield, 1790-1824**

The first twenty years of the nineteenth century saw the development of a dense network of public voluntary societies in Sheffield. The formation in 1803 of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor marked the beginning of this process, bringing together during the next few years men and women who were to work alongside each other in a range of public bodies, most notably the Society for Superseding the Necessity for Climbing Boys (1807), the Bible Society (1810), the Aged Female Society (1810), the Sunday School Union (1812), the Lancasterian Schools (1809 and 1814), National Schools (both 1814) and the denominational missionary societies: the Baptist and London Missionary Societies, formed in 1813, and the Church Missionary Society (1816). Between 1822-1832 a second wave of activity involving many of the same men and women saw the formation of the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Anti-Slavery Societies and those bastions of rational recreation, the Mechanics' Library and the Mechanics' Institute.

The men and women who formed the overlapping membership of these societies were drawn from Sheffield's growing manufacturing and professional classes.

They included among their number medical men, lawyers, journalists, clergymen and a handful of manufacturers and merchants from the developing silver-plate industry.<sup>1</sup> A significant minority of these were either already members of, or were becoming affiliated to, Sheffield's Unitarian community, and were involved in the formation between 1804-1806 of the Book Club and the Society for Promotion of Knowledge. A great many more were evangelical, members of either the Methodist or Congregational denominations, or supporters of the evangelical interest within the established Church.

This chapter explores the place of the missionary society in middle-class cultural formation in Sheffield. Part One begins with a discussion of the class and cultural composition of the town in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, going on to explore the contribution of the evangelical revival to an emergent network of voluntary societies. It focuses on the unifying function of the missionary society which provided the basis for new social networks for men and women of different wealth, status, religious and political affiliation within the 'middle class'. Part Two explores the social relationships involved in missionary practice. It focuses on two 'systems' of improvement, both of which drew upon the shared emphasis of evangelicalism and scientific philanthropy on domestic and moral reform and the

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike the development of bourgeois voluntary culture in Bradford as described by Theodore Koditschek, the emergence of Sheffield's middle-class network was less dependent upon the town's emergent capitalist bourgeoisie. While the involvement of the big industrialists developed with the coming of the 'steel giants' from mid-century onwards, public life in early-nineteenth-century Sheffield was dominated by smaller manufacturers and professional men. See Theodore Koditschek, *Class formation and urban-industrial society, Bradford, 1750-1850*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 252-319.

surveillance of the poor: the practice of home-visiting promoted by the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, the Aged Female Society and the Bible Society; and the monitorial system of education, which characterised both the Lancasterian and National Schools. Such missionary practice was central to the construction of new relationships of social class which placed working-class people on the receiving end of a middle-class civilising mission.

### **Part One: Voluntary societies and middle-class networks: a cultural map of Sheffield**

Class divisions have been de-emphasised in histories of Sheffield in this period, with historical accounts focusing on the homogenising influence of the organisation of labour within the cutlery industry. If one focuses instead on cultural formation, particularly the emergence of new public societies which, aiming to reform the poor, were sponsored by men and women from families who made their living both as larger manufacturers within the cutlery and the burgeoning silver-plate industries and within the professions, a different story of class formation emerges.

#### **Class and Culture in Sheffield**

In their representations of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Sheffield as ‘a city of assimilation’,<sup>2</sup> a town characterised by an ‘egalitarian political

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<sup>2</sup> Donald Read, *The English Provinces 1760-1960: A Study in Influence* (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), p. 35.

tradition' and 'even social structure',<sup>3</sup> historians have produced a story of class formation which suggests an absence of sharp distinction between different classes in the town. Such observations echo those of contemporaries of the early nineteenth century. Thomas Ramsay in his *A Picture of Sheffield* of 1824 noted that 'the intercourse between the different orders of society is general and unreserved',<sup>4</sup> while John Parker commented in 1830 that

there is not the marked line of difference between the rich men and the poor men which is becoming annually more observable in other places. The middle ranks are *nearer* both to the upper and the lower.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly Jelinger Symons, author of the 1843 *Report on the Trades of Sheffield*, discussed the unusual nature of social and economic relationships in the town. 'It is scarcely possible', he wrote, 'to conceive a state in which the relations of industry to capital are more anomalous or disjointed... it is not easy to draw the line in Sheffield between men and masters'.<sup>6</sup>

This apparent proximity of 'masters' and 'men' was the result of the organisation of Sheffield industry which, lacking the occupational diversity of other towns, was

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<sup>3</sup> Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Ramsay, *A Picture of Sheffield; or an historical and descriptive view of the town of Sheffield*, (Sheffield: George Ridge, 1824), p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> John Parker, *A Statement of the Population of the Town of Sheffield*, (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1830), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Jelinger Symons, *Report on the Trades of Sheffield and the Moral and Physical Condition of Young Persons Employed in Them*, Royal Commission of Enquiry into the employment of children in trades and manufactures not under the Factory Act (Sheffield: Leader, 1843), p. 3.

based on the tool and cutlery trade.<sup>7</sup> The production of goods such as table and spring knives, scissors, shears, files, edge tools, scythes and sickles, was characterised by the 'little mester' system which, based on small units of production in domestic and small-scale workshops, was noted for its flexibility. Men were not tied to one master but were usually employed by a number of different manufacturers. Frequently, they were able to buy tools of their own, rent room and power, and thus expand at low cost, often sub-contracting work to apprentices to become both employee and 'little mester' themselves.<sup>8</sup>

Dominated by masters and craftsmen and reflecting the geographical organisation of the town into a collection of small industrial villages, the popular culture of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Sheffield was localised and insular, focusing on the pub, the fair and other pastimes associated with 'pre-industrial' or rural-industrial society. Despite the improving efforts of Methodism and the

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<sup>7</sup> By 1841 the cutlery, saw and file trades employed 13,000 people - one eighth of the total population of Sheffield parish. Read, *The English Provinces*, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> See: Sidney Pollard, *A History of Labour in Sheffield*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1959), pp. 50-77; G. I. H. Lloyd, *The Cutlery Trades: An Historical essay in the Economics of Small-Scale Production* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913), pp. 171-208; Dennis Smith, *Conflict and Compromise: Class formation in English Society 1830-1914* (London: Routledge, 1982); Donald Read, *Press and People, 1790-1850: Opinion in Three English Cities* (London: Edward Arnold, 1961); Caroline O. Reid, 'Middle Class Values and Working Class Culture in Nineteenth century Sheffield: the Pursuit of Respectability', in Sidney Pollard and Colin Holmes (eds.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (Sheffield: South Yorkshire County Council, 1976), pp. 275-295.



development of an independent radicalism in the 1780s and 1790s,<sup>9</sup> plebeian culture retained its separation from, and resistance to, the transforming efforts of the municipal centre until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

While Sheffield's 'middle class' comprised a small social group in comparison to that of other industrialising towns,<sup>11</sup> the second half of the eighteenth century nonetheless saw the emergence of a culture of polite society, facilitated by improvements in communication and expansions in commerce and banking, as well as by local developments in the silver-plate industry which led to the growth of a

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<sup>9</sup> See: John L. Baxter and F. K. Donnelly, 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition, 1791-1820', in Pollard and Holmes, *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire*, pp. 90-117; John Stevenson, *Artisans and Democrats: Sheffield in the French Revolution, 1789-1897*, (Historical Association: Sheffield History Pamphlets, 1989); Gwyn. A. Williams, *Artisans and Sans-culottes; Popular Movements in France and Britain during the French Revolution* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), Chapter Four; John Baxter, 'Origin of the Social War: a history of the economic, political and cultural struggles of working people in South Yorkshire, 1750-1850', (University of Sheffield: unpublished PhD thesis, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Dennis Smith sees the small industrial village, along with the aristocratic estate, as providing the 'framework for consciousness and action' in South Yorkshire, enabling the development of a plebeian culture which was 'less penetrable and manipulable from above' than was that of Birmingham. Smith, *Conflict and Compromise*, pp. 31, 52-53. See also: R. E. Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century* (Sheffield: W. C. Leng, 1905); Pollard, *A History of Labour in Sheffield*; Mary Walton, *Sheffield: Its Story and its Achievements* (Otley: Amethyst Press, 1948); Caroline Reid, 'Middle-Class Values and Working-Class Culture in Nineteenth-Century Sheffield', (University of Sheffield: unpublished PhD thesis, 1976). See also Samuel Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains of the late Samuel Roberts* (London: Longman and Co., 1849), pp. 18-23, for an account of the 'pre-industrial' culture of Sheffield working people from the perspective of a middle-class Anglican.

<sup>11</sup> Smith states that the Birmingham middle class was twice as large in relation to the total population as that of Sheffield and explains the latter's marginality in terms of the continued power of local gentry and the strength of the working-class. Smith, *Conflict and Compromise*, p. 34

merchant-manufacturer interest in the town.<sup>12</sup> A theatre and assembly rooms opened in 1762 and a Book Club, subscription library and Music Society were formed in the 1770s.<sup>13</sup> The town's first two banks were opened in the early 1770s, the first bankers - Benjamin Roebuck and Thomas Broadbent - building new houses out at Meersbrook and Page Hall and thus beginning the movement of the middle classes to residences on the edge of town.<sup>14</sup> Joseph Gales' *Sheffield Register*, one of the new provincial middle-class pro-reform newspapers, came into print in 1787, overturning an early editorial policy of political neutrality to offer support for Tom Paine, Joseph Priestley and James Mackintosh, and the members of Sheffield's radical Society for Constitutional Information.<sup>15</sup> The 1780s and

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<sup>12</sup> Progress in the production of crucible steel (Huntsman) and silver plate (Bolsover) led to the development of silver-refining and thereby to the growth of larger manufacturer. Sheffield had over 20 such firms by 1800. See: Read, *Press and the People*, p. 14; *Sketchley's Sheffield Directory*, (Bristol 1777); J. Robinson, *A Directory of Sheffield*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1797).

<sup>13</sup> Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century*, Chapters Six and Seven; Walton, *Sheffield, Its Story and its Achievements*, pp. 124-142; Sarah E. Joynes, 'The Sheffield Library 1771-1907', *Library History: Journal of the Library History Group of the Library Association*, vol 2, no 3 (Spring 1971), pp. 91-116; E. D. Mackerness, *Somewhere Further North: A History of Music in Sheffield* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend, 1974), pp. 10-20.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Roebuck, a merchant and hardware manufacturer, opened the town's first bank in 1770, followed by Thomas Broadbent and the Shore family in 1774. The Sheffield and Rotherham Bank was opened by the Walker family in 1792. See: R. E. Leader, *The Early Sheffield Banks* (London: Blades, East and Blades, 1917).

<sup>15</sup> Prior to the *Sheffield Register*, the local readership had relied upon F. Lister's *Sheffield Weekly Journal* (1754) and William Ward's *Sheffield Public Advertiser* (1760-1793). For Gales, who also published the radical periodical, *The Patriot*, see: W. H. G. Armytage, 'The Editorial Experience of Joseph Gales, 1786-1794', *The North Carolina Historical Review*, vol 28, no 3 (July 1951), pp. 332-361; Read, *Press and People 1790-1850*, pp. 68-73; Stevenson, *Artisans and Democrats*, pp. 11-12.

1790s also saw the formation of a new wave of voluntary societies - schools and Sunday schools for the religious and moral education of the children of the poor, the establishment of a Benevolent Society (1784) and the Sheffield General Infirmary (1797) - supporters of which came from within religious and polite society.<sup>16</sup>

### **Voluntary Organisation and the Evangelical Revival**

Prior to the 1780s there was little voluntary activity on behalf of the education of the poor in Sheffield. The Boys' Charity School, established in 1706, had seen little development over the subsequent decades and, alongside the Free Writing School (1721) and the nonconformist Hollis charities of 1726, provided a scant education for a very small number of children.<sup>17</sup> The dramatic developments of the 1780s and 1790s, however, saw a surge of interest in the education of the poor. The Boys' Charity School received renewed support, and a range of new

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<sup>16</sup> For the formation by the Methodists of a Benevolent Society (1794) for all denominations, see *Sheffield Iris*, 26 September 1794. For Sheffield General Infirmary, see: Robert Ernest MD, *The Origin of the Sheffield General Infirmary* (Sheffield: C. and W. Thompson, 1824); John D. Leader, *1797-1897: Sheffield General Infirmary* (Sheffield: Infirmary Board, 1927); W. S. Porter, *Sheffield Royal Infirmary* (Oldham: J Allan Hanson and Son Ltd, 1922).

<sup>17</sup> The Boys' Charity School was established in 1706 by the Vicar of Sheffield, Mr Drake, as a home for ten poor boys, mainly orphans. For the Boys' Charity School and the Hollis charities, which continued to provide almshouses for poor widows, a scripture reader and a school-master responsible for the education of fifty boys and girls, see: Malcolm Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child: Elementary Education in Sheffield, 1560-1902* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 30-48; also *Boys' Charity School, Sheffield. Bi-Centenary, 1706-1906. History of the Institution* (Sheffield: Loxley Brothers, 1905).

institutions, including various Parish schools, Sunday schools, a Charity School for Girls and a Girls' Industrial School, were opened in the town.<sup>18</sup>

These developments were strongly influenced by the concern of many religious revivalists with issues of working-class discipline and morality. Edward Goodwin, curate of Attercliffe Church and pioneer of the Girls' Charity School of 1787, wrote in defence of the Sunday school movement in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, reassuring readers that Sunday schools produced children who were 'more faithful, honest, sober and steady, diligent and industrious'.<sup>19</sup> Lessons I and V from his *Poor Girls' Primer*, compiled for use at the Girls' Charity School, reveals the emphasis on preparing the girls for their entry into service:

Be Good.  
Be a good Girl.  
Be a good Girl, and God will love you.  
Be a good Girl, and God will love you, and bless you.  
...  
Learn to spin wool and linen.  
Learn to sew shirts and caps.  
Learn to knit hose.  
Learn to bake and brew and wash.

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<sup>18</sup> See: *A List of the Annual Subscribers to the Charity School for Poor Boys in Sheffield*, (Sheffield: W. Ward, 1788 and 1794; J. Gales, 1790; J. Northall, 1795 and 1797; T. Pierson, 1796 and 1800; J. Montgomery, 1798); *A List of the Benefactors and Annual Subscribers to the Charity School for Poor Girls in Sheffield*, (Sheffield: J. Gales, 1788-90; W. Ward, 1792-4; J. Northall, 1795; T. Pierson, 1796 and 1798; James Montgomery, 1797). For the Parish Schools of Woodhouse (1778), Attercliffe (1779), Norton (1787), Park (1789), Crookes (1791), Fulwood, Tinsley and Parson Cross (all 1793), Oughtibridge (1797), see Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child*, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child*, p. 51. Goodwin was also the author of 'To Parents, Masters and Poor Children' (1786). See also: *Sheffield Iris*, 18 March 1796, 29 May 1800 and 3 October 1800; Sheffield Girls Charity School Reports, 1788-1789.

Learn to clean rooms and pots and pans.<sup>20</sup>

The School of Industry of 1790, a largely Quaker concern stimulated by the activities in Brentford of the Anglican Sarah Trimmer, was non-denominational in its emphasis on the scriptures and on the promotion of morality and industry.<sup>21</sup>

The schools and Sunday schools opened by the Wesleyan Methodists were shaped by similar concerns, including the leaders' alarm at the interest of some members in radical politics.<sup>22</sup> Even the General Infirmary, supported by prominent Anglicans and Methodists, contained the provision of space for regular worship such that, in the words of James Wilkinson, Vicar of Sheffield, 'the turbulent, the profligate, the profane, the intemperate, the debauched, the drunkard, the indolent

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<sup>20</sup> Edward Goodwin, *The Poor Girl's Primer; for the Use of the Charity School in Sheffield* (Sheffield: W. Ward, 1787).

<sup>21</sup> See G. J. Eltringham, 'The Lancasterian Schools in Sheffield', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, 5, (1943), pp. 147-152. Also: *An Account of the Institution and Management of the School of Industry in Sheffield, for Poor Girls* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1790).

<sup>22</sup> When William Bramwell arrived at Norfolk Street Chapel in 1794 he claimed to find widespread interest in politics. See: Alexander Seed, *Norfolk Street Wesleyan Chapel, Sheffield* (London: Jarrold and Sons, n. d.), pp. 3-65 and 155-158. Certainly Methodism in Sheffield did have a strong relationship with political radicalism: according to Wickham, nine of the forty known members of Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information were Methodists and all had left the Wesleyans for Alexander Kilham's schismatic New Connexion in 1797, which distributed Paine's work. See: E. R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London: Lutterworth Press), pp. 57, 60. For the New Connexion and radicalism, see John Salt, 'Early Sheffield Sunday Schools and their Educational Importance', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, vol 9, part 3 (1967), p. 183; Seed, *Norfolk Street Wesleyan Chapel*, pp. 203-216; Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child*, pp. 50-55.

may return from a temporary residence in such a house of refuge, reformed in manners, peaceable, pious, humble, sober and industrious.’<sup>23</sup>

The religious revival in Sheffield had its origins in two waves of Methodist expansion in the town, firstly with the establishment of a small meeting house the year before John Wesley’s first visit of 1743 and, secondly, during the Great Methodist Revival which swept through northern manufacturing towns in the 1780s and 1790s.<sup>24</sup> The opening by Wesley of the new Norfolk Street Chapel in 1780 marked the beginning of a period of growth, evidenced in swelling congregations and a spate of chapel building in the town and in outlying areas, including the more opulent Carver Street chapel which attracted the Society’s more wealthy

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<sup>23</sup> James Wilkinson, *A Sermon Preached at St Paul’s Church upon the occasion of the opening of the General Infirmary* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1797), p. 9. The original committee of the Infirmary included the Methodist benefactor Thomas Holy and Anglicans Thomas Rawson, the Reverends James Wilkinson, George Smith and Alexander MacKenzie.

<sup>24</sup> James Bennet, grandfather of George (see pp. 83-86, below), had provided the first meeting house in Cheney Square in the town; this was destroyed by rioters in 1743, and replaced by another on Pinstone Lane. See: James Everett, *Historical Sketches of Wesleyan Methodism in Sheffield and the Vicinity* (Sheffield: James Montgomery, 1823); Seed, *Norfolk Street Wesleyan Chapel*, pp. 15-38; John Baxter, ‘The Great Yorkshire Revival 1792-1799: A Study of Mass Revival among the Methodists’, in Michael Hill (ed.), *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Great Britain*, vol 7 (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 46-76.

members from its opening in 1803.<sup>25</sup> Of the schismatic Methodist sects only the New Connexion enjoyed substantial support in the town.<sup>26</sup>

Methodist expansion had a profound influence on other denominations, most notably Sheffield's Congregationalists, whose presence in Yorkshire stretched back to the seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup> Although considerably smaller in number than the Methodists, the wealthier membership was able to raise subscriptions for the building of five new chapels between 1780 and 1805, and also to offer considerable support to the establishment of Rotherham Academy in 1795. Disputes over Calvinist doctrine had resulted in a number of secessions throughout the eighteenth century, resulting in the emergence of Queen Street Chapel, opened in 1784, as a centre of evangelical activity in the town.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Membership rose from 2-300 in 1771 to 630 in 1784, 746 in 1788, 1,820 in 1795 and 3,099 in 1796. See Wickham, *Church and People*, p. 57. The Wesleyans also built chapels in outlying areas, at Ranmoor (1783), Whiteley Wood (1789), Attercliffe (1803), Bridgehouses (1808), Manor (1818), Moorfield (1823), Owlerton (1825), Heeley (1826), Park (1831), Grimesthorpe (1833), Brunswick (1834) and Crookes (1836). By 1851 the Methodist sects combined formed the largest group of Sheffield church-goers. See: Wickham, *Church and People*, pp. 41-106; Clyde Binfield, 'Religion in Sheffield', in Clyde Binfield, Richard Childs, Roger Harper, David Hey, David Martin, Geoffrey Tweedale (eds.), *The History of Sheffield, 1843-1993, Vol II: Society*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 364-428.

<sup>26</sup> See Hamilton Crothers, *The Methodist New Connexion 1797-1897: A Centenary Review* (Sheffield: Sheffield Independent Press, 1897).

<sup>27</sup> See: James G. Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire: A Chapter of Modern Church History* (London: John Snow and Co., 1868), pp. 164-167.

<sup>28</sup> The oldest Congregational Chapel was the orthodox Calvinist Nether Chapel, built in 1714. Lee-Croft and Garden Street Chapels were built in 1780, Queen Street Chapel (following a secession from Nether Chapel) in 1784, Howard Street Chapel in 1790, and Zion Chapel at Attercliffe in 1805. See: *A Brief History of Queen Street Congregationalist Chapel* (Sheffield: Pawson and

Evangelicalism in Sheffield was by no means confined to Nonconformity. The appointment of Thomas Sutton as Vicar of the Parish in 1805 marked, in Clyde Binfield's words, 'the onset of seriousness' among Sheffield's Anglicans, ensuring the evangelical sympathies of all incoming clergy, including those appointed to the four new churches built under the 1818 Million Act.<sup>29</sup> Despite the building of the four new churches and subsequent extension to outlying districts in the late 1830s, however, Sheffield's Anglicans did not significantly increase their congregations until the second half of the century.<sup>30</sup> Yet while numerically weaker than the Nonconformists, the Church of England clergy and laymen and women made a

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Brailsford, 1933); Wickham, *Church and People*, Appendix V (a); Binfield, 'Religion in Sheffield', pp. 405-409. For Rotherham College, see: John Holland and James Everett, *Memoirs of the Life and Writing of James Montgomery*, 7 Vols, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855-56), vol 3, pp. 75-82; Miall, *Congregationalism in Yorkshire*, pp. 164-167.

<sup>29</sup> Binfield, 'Religion in Sheffield', p. 368. Prior to 1790 there were very few places of worship for Anglicans in Sheffield: two chapels of ease dating from the 1620s and 1630s, Shrewsbury Hospital Chapel (1673), St Paul's (1740) and St James' (1789). Vicars in our period included: Thomas Best at St James (1816-65), who replaced Thomas Radford (1788-1816); Alexander Mackenzie (1788-1816), Thomas Cotterill (1816-1865) and James Knight (1823-1863) at St Paul's; George Smith (1804-1817) and Matthew Preston (1817-1829) at All Saints, Ecclesall. At the four 'Million' Churches: Stephen Hurt Langston, St George's, 1825-1840; William Drayton Carter and John Livesey (incumbent from 1831) at St Phillip's; John Blackburn (1817-1852) at Christchurch Attercliffe; and Henry Farish, vicar of St Mary's from 1829-183. See: Wickham, *Church and People*, pp. 41-106; Reverend William Odom, *The Story of St Phillip's Church, Sheffield. A Centenary Record 1828-1928* (Sheffield: Townsend 1928); William Odom, *St Mary's Church, Sheffield. Its History, Clergy etc. A Centenary Record 1830-1930* (Sheffield: W. C. Leng, 1930); William Odom, *St Paul's Church, Sheffield. Its Ministers and Associations* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend, 1922); James Furniss, *St George's Church, Sheffield, 1825-1925* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend, 1925).

<sup>30</sup> Extension in the 1830s saw the building of churches at Sheffield Park (1838), Fulwood (1838), Crookes (1839) and Darnall (1839). See Wickham, *Church and People*, pp. 41-106; Binfield, 'Religion in Sheffield', pp. 367-383.



significant contribution to Sheffield's emergent identity as 'an extraordinarily evangelical town'.<sup>31</sup>

During the early years of the nineteenth century, the clergy and some of the most prominent members of Methodist, Congregational and Anglican congregations combined to form the leadership and supporters of voluntary societies in the town. Familiar names on committees and subscription lists include: Thomas Holy, the financier of Methodist expansion, and his wife Jane; the snuff manufacturer Henry Longden; and the journalists James Montgomery and John Holland. Clergy of the Church of England, such as Thomas Sutton, Thomas Best and Thomas Cotterill, were involved in a number of inter-denominational societies, along with laymen and women such as Rowland Hodgson and Samuel Roberts (see below), the manufacturer Henry Wilson, Ann and Eliza Harrison, benefactors from Weston Park, and Thomas Rawson, brewer. James Larom, minister of the town's small Baptist community,<sup>32</sup> and the Congregational ministers, James Dawson of Nether Chapel, Mark Docker of Garden Street and especially James Boden, a founder of the London Missionary Society and minister at Queen Street Congregational chapel

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<sup>31</sup> Wickham, *Church and People*, pp. 44.

<sup>32</sup> The Baptists, who used the Coalpit Lane Chapel from 1806 until the building of Townhead Street Chapel built in 1816, were relatively under-represented in Sheffield in comparison to other Yorkshire towns. This was despite the arrival in 1817 of the energetic James Larom as their minister, who joined in missionary prayer meetings with Independent ministers. See: Charles Larom, *Townhead: the History of the Baptist Chapel Assembling in Townhead Street, Sheffield* (Sheffield: Leader and Sons 1870), p. 19; Reverend C. E. Shipley, 'The Churches of the Sheffield District', in *Baptists of Yorkshire, Being the Centenary Memorial Volume of the Yorkshire Baptists Association* (Bradford: William Byles and Sons, 1912), pp. 249-253.

from 1796-1839, played a valuable role in the town's missionary culture, along with Congregational families such as the Reads, silver-refiners of Attercliffe, and the Leaders, newspaper proprietors.<sup>33</sup>

They were joined in their efforts by men and women of denominations traditionally hostile to evangelicalism. The Society of Friends had a small but long-established congregation in Sheffield, which had worshipped at Meetinghouse Lane since 1705. Their more prominent members included Daniel and Jane Doncaster, Hannah Kilham, Benjamin and Jane Colley, William Hargreaves and William Singleton.<sup>34</sup> Rather more weighty were the Unitarians of Upper Chapel, who included among their number many well-to-do men, including the Shores, bankers of Tapton, Samuel Lucas, who was cousin and business partner to John and Joseph Read (see chapter three below), and Ebenezer Rhodes and cutlery manufacturer

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<sup>33</sup> See for example, *Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815 and 1816); *The Sixth Report of the Bible Society for Sheffield and its vicinity*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1816); *Reports of the Female Friendly Society for the Relief of Aged Women*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1815, 1816, 1817); *Reports of the Girls Lancasterian School*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1817, 1818, 1819). See also: Reverend William Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies. Characteristics and Work of Notable Sheffield Men and Women* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend, 1926); Jabez Bunting, *Memoir of the late Thomas Holy Esq of Sheffield* (London: James Nicholls, 1832); Henry Longden, *The Life of Henry Longden, compiled from his own memoirs, from his diary and his letters* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, (1813) 1865); Holland and Everett, *Memoirs of James Montgomery*; William Hudson, *The Life of John Holland of Sheffield Park* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1874); Thomas Best, *Memoranda of the late Ann Harrison*, (Sheffield: George Ridge, 1860); Samuel Roberts, *Autobiography and select remains*.

<sup>34</sup> See: *Daniel Doncaster and Sons, Sheffield 1788-1928* (Sheffield: William Townsend, 1928); Sarah Biller (ed.), *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1837). See also: Wickham, *Church and People*, pp. 72, 109 and 279; Binfield, 'Religion in Sheffield', pp. 296-297.

Thomas Asline Ward, who were joint editors of the *Sheffield Independent* from 1820.<sup>35</sup>

### **Difference and Denomination: the 'Four Friends'**

The early formation of a public missionary culture in Sheffield has often been discussed in terms of the activities of a small group of men of different denominational backgrounds who, meeting at one another's houses from around 1804 to dine and discuss social issues, became significant figures in the formation of almost all voluntary societies to emerge in the town during the next few decades.<sup>36</sup> The 'Four Friends', as they were known, usually included: Samuel Roberts (1763-1848), a silver-plate manufacturer, and Rowland Hodgson (1774-1837), a gentleman of independent means, both of whom were Anglican; the Congregationalist George Bennet (1774-1837), with whom Roberts and Hodgson had become acquainted following their appointments as Overseers of the Poor in

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<sup>35</sup> The *Morning Telegraph's* 'Rambler' reflected on 23 March 1882 that the Unitarians of Upper Chapel: 'have given Sheffield more mayors and master cutlers than any other church or chapel in the town, and I believe that have also given Sheffield more magistrates and found them less to do', quoted in Binfield, 'Religion in Sheffield', p. 392-396. John Seed affirms the social status of many of Sheffield's Unitarians. See: John Seed, 'The Role of Unitarianism in the formation of liberal culture, 1775-1851: A Social History', (University of Hull: unpublished PhD thesis, 1981), pp. 80-82. See also: J. E. Manning, *A History of Upper Chapel, Sheffield* (Sheffield: Independent Press, 1900), pp. 70-100; Christopher J. Street, *T. A. Ward and Upper Chapel, Sheffield: The Sunday School Centenary Volume* (Sheffield: Upper Chapel Bookstall, 1910); Henry Hunt Piper, *A Sermon, with the devotional services delivered... on the occasion of the death of Samuel Shore Esq to which are added, biographical notes of the deceased* (London: R. Hunter, 1829).

<sup>36</sup> At these gatherings, they discussed current social issues and developed a ritual whereby the host paid a forfeit to the Aged Female Society if there were more dishes than just meat and pudding, and if dinner was not on the table within one hour. See Walton, *Sheffield, its Story and its Achievements*, p. 158.

1804; and James Montgomery (1771-1854), editor of the *Sheffield Iris* and who, brought up as a Moravian, frequented both Methodist and Congregational places of worship.<sup>37</sup> Occasionally the Unitarian cutlery manufacturer Thomas Asline Ward (1781-1871) has been included in this group.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the precise composition of the group is less important than the fact of their inter-denominationalism and diverse histories; that all of these men, Anglican, Nonconformist and Unitarian, were brought together in public missionary concerns.

James Montgomery had been the *most radical of the group* during the previous decade. The son of Moravian missionaries, he had spent his early years at Fulneck School, arriving in Sheffield in 1792 to take up employment on Joseph Gales' *Sheffield Register*.<sup>39</sup> A sympathiser with the ideals of the French Revolution, the Unitarian Gales fled to America in 1794 to escape persecution, while Montgomery was imprisoned in York and Doncaster gaols in 1795-96 for the publication of 'seditious' literature in the paper he had inherited.<sup>40</sup> Like many Dissenters,

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<sup>37</sup> See: Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies*, pp. 22-23, 77, 87 and 99-101; Leader, *Reminiscences of Old Sheffield: Its Streets and its People* (Sheffield: Leader and Sons, 1876), pp. 300-310; Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 79. See also: Samuel Roberts, 'The Four Friends: a fable for young people', in Roberts, *The Blind Man and his Son* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1816); Holland and Everett, *Memoirs of James Montgomery*, vol 3, p. 108 and vol 2 (frontspiece) for a picture of the 'four friends'.

<sup>38</sup> See Walton, *Sheffield, Its Story and its Achievements*, p. 158.

<sup>39</sup> See pp. 74, above.

<sup>40</sup> Montgomery's first imprisonment followed the sale by a hawker of a ballad printed by Gales: 'For if France be subdued, Europe's liberty ends/ Should she triumph the world will be free'. See *The Trial of James Montgomery for libel on*

Montgomery swiftly renounced his republican sympathies in the later 1790s, and from the early years of the nineteenth century he became nationally renowned for his poetry, much of which - including 'The West Indies', 'The World Before the Flood' and 'The Pelican Island', - was inspired by evangelical and missionary concerns.<sup>41</sup>

Ward, Bennet, Roberts and Hodgson occupied different positions from Montgomery in relation to radicalism and evangelicalism. Bennet, who had been a Volunteer with Ward during the French Wars, was the only one amongst them who had been born into Nonconformity. His grandfather, James Bennet, a master grinder, had provided the early Methodist meeting-houses on Cheney Square and Pinstone Lane in the 1740s, while his uncle, Edward Bennet, a wealthy sugar refiner, had become a founder member of the new Calvinist congregation at

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*the war by reprinting and republishing a song originally printed and published long before the war begun: at Doncaster sessions, January 22 1795* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1795). His second imprisonment resulted from his criticism of the manner in which a riot was dispersed in Sheffield, during which two men were shot by the authorities. See G. F. B. Hawksworth, 'The Central Congregational Church in Sheffield', (typed booklet, 1971), pp. 42-43.

<sup>41</sup> See: Helen C. Knight, *Life of James Montgomery* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1857); J. W. King, *James Montgomery: a Memoir, Political and Poetical* (London: Partridge and Co., 1858); John Kirk, *James Montgomery* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1861); Samuel Ellis, *Life, times and character of James Montgomery*, (London: Jackson, Walford and Hodder, 1864); Jabez Marrat, *James Montgomery: Christian poet and philanthropist* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1879); Harvey Fremont Beutner, 'With Fraternal Feeling Fired: the Life and Works of James Montgomery', (The Graduate School of the Northwestern University: unpublished PhD dissertation, 1967); J. Wigley, 'James Montgomery and the *Sheffield Iris*, 1792-1825: a study in the weakness of provincial radicalism', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, vol 10, No 3, (1975), pp. 173-181; Donald Read, *Press and People 1790-1850*, pp. 68-73. See chapter four, pp. 185-189, below.

Howard Street chapel in 1780. In 1800, following a period during which he had enjoyed the fortune he had inherited from his uncle, and when he 'associated chiefly with worldly minded persons (and) frequented places of public amusement', Bennet had become a serious Christian and member of Queen Street Congregational Chapel.<sup>42</sup>

Rowland Hodgson and Samuel Roberts were both Anglicans, the former the son of the vicar of Wingerworth, and the latter influenced in his sympathies with Nonconformity by his mother, who attended both Anglican and Methodist services and who had taken him as a child to hear George Whitefield on Sheffield Moor.<sup>43</sup> Thomas Asline Ward, an enthusiastic participant in the culture of polite society who did not share the anti-worldliness of the evangelicals, was in the early years of the century moving away from his Anglican upbringing and becoming a frequent attender at the Unitarian Upper Chapel, which he joined around 1808.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See: Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 301. See also: James Montgomery, 'Memoir of the late George Bennet Esq of Sheffield', *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* (February 1842), pp. 53-62; James Montgomery, *A Hundred Years Ago: a reminiscence of Sheffield. Being a sketch of the life of George Bennet, the missionary* (Sheffield: J. M. Jubb 1875); Edward Lister, *A Sketch of the life, labours and character of George Bennet, founder of the Sheffield Sunday School Union: being the substance of a paper read before the senior Bible classes of several of the Sabbath Schools in Sheffield* (Sheffield: J. Morton, 1863); Hawksworth, 'The Central Congregationalist Chapel in Sheffield', p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> See Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies*, pp. 99-101 for Hodgson, pp. 87 for Roberts; also, Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains*.

<sup>44</sup> See: Alexander B. Bell (ed.), *Peeps into the Past, being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward* (Sheffield: Leng and Co., 1909); Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies*, pp. 176-178; Leader, *Reminiscences*, pp. 340-342.

The first society to benefit from the energies of this group was the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor which, inspired by the national society of the same name established in 1796, had been formed by members of the Society of Friends in 1803. It soon acquired inter-denominational membership, partly as a result of publicity and support by James Montgomery in the *Sheffield Iris*.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Montgomery's decision to use the *Iris* both to publicise monthly meetings and to promote the ideals of the Society marked the beginning of an extremely valuable source of support for domestic missionary causes, which from 1807 was extended to the Society for Superseding the Necessity for Climbing Boys, in which he, Roberts, Bennet, Hodgson and Ward were all involved.<sup>46</sup> The Society followed the lead of its parent body in London, formed in 1803, in campaigning on behalf of the climbing boy, and in 1817 Samuel Roberts coordinated a petition to parliament, designed to prevent the employment as sweeps of boys of under seven years of age, to ensure that those boys who continued to be employed received regular clothing and a moral and religious education, and to promote the gradual replacement of climbing boys with a new sweeping machine.<sup>47</sup> Roberts,

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<sup>45</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 31 May 1804, 27 June 1805, 1 August 1805, 1 August 1807, 4 August 1807; *Reports of the Sheffield Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, 1812-1822, 1824-1826; Holland and Everett, *Memoirs of James Montgomery*, vol 6, p. 155.

<sup>46</sup> See for example, *Sheffield Iris*, 25 August 1807, 29 March 1808, 25 April 1808, 28 March 1809, 30 October 1809, 24 April 1810, 7 January 1812, 21 January 1812, 12 April 1814, 21 May 1815, 21 November 1815, 21 May 1816, 17 December 1816, 1 April 1817, 22 April 1817, 13 May 1817, 7 April 1818, 8 February 1820, 9 April 1822, 14 September 1824.

<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately the man employed to promote the machine concluded that it was easier to send boys up chimneys and left to set up his own business doing just that. See Samuel Roberts, *Chimney Sweepers' Boys: the resolutions and petition to parliament, respecting children employed by chimney sweepers as climbing boys*,

author of pamphlets in support of the cause, was among the contributors to Montgomery's edited collection, *The Chimney Sweepers' Friend and Climbing Boys' Album*, which was published in 1824.<sup>48</sup> He and Montgomery organised and attended the Society's annual Easter Monday Dinner for the boys from 1807 into the 1840s.<sup>49</sup>

The visit to Sheffield of Joseph Lancaster in February 1809 was publicised in the *Sheffield Iris*, which had already declared itself in support of the ideas of the monitorial system.<sup>50</sup> Montgomery and Ward participated in the subsequent meetings which resulted in the opening of the Boys' Lancasterian School in August 1809, and offered their support for the principle of female education and the opening of the Girls' Lancasterian School in 1814.<sup>51</sup> The Aged Female Society,

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*agreed upon at a public meeting of the inhabitants of Sheffield, held at the Cutler's Hall, on April 16 1817* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery and M. Smith, 1817).

<sup>48</sup> Samuel Roberts, *The Chimney-Sweepers' Boy: a poem* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery 1807); *Tales of the Poor; or, Infant Sufferings* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery 1813); *An Address to British females of every rank and station on the employment of climbing boys in sweeping chimneys* (Sheffield: Whittaker, 1834); Samuel Roberts, 'On the Employment of Climbing Boys', in James Montgomery (ed.), *The Chimney Sweepers' Friend and Climbing Boys' Album* (London: Longman and Co., 1824).

<sup>49</sup> See Holland and Everett, *Memoirs of James Montgomery*, vol 4, pp. 50-62 and vol 6, pp. 23-24.

<sup>50</sup> *Sheffield Iris*, 17 November 1807.

<sup>51</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 14 February 1809, 18 May 1813, 21 June 1814, 28 June 1814, 27 September 1814. The first school-master (until 1815) was Edward McCoy, brother-in-law of George Bennet. See: W. H. G. Armytage, 'Education in Sheffield, 1603-1955', *Sheffield and its Region*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Association for the Advancement of Social Science, 1956); Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child*, pp. 70-71.



formed in 1810 for the purpose of systematising the activities of various female friendly societies for elderly single women and widows that had been in operation since the end of the eighteenth century, saw Hodgson, Bennet, Roberts and Montgomery sharing the positions of chair, treasurer and secretary for many years.<sup>52</sup>

Montgomery, Ward and Bennet were also present at the formation of Sheffield's Bible Societies, attending both the meeting in 1810 which saw the formation of the Sheffield Auxiliary Bible Society and at which the Reverends John Owen and Joseph Hughes and Dr Steinkopff of the national British and Foreign Bible Society were present, and the gathering that assembled in the house of the Quaker John Hoyland in November 1812 to form the Sheffield Bible Association.<sup>53</sup> James Montgomery not only wrote the Annual Reports and presided over the annual

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<sup>52</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 24 April 1810; *Reports of the Female Friendly Society*, 1815, 1817, 1819, 1826 and 1827; Holland and Everett, *Memoirs of James Montgomery*, vol 2 p. 307 and vol 4, p. 256. The Aged Female Society was the recipient of a donation of profits from Mary Roberts' *The Royal Exile; or, Poetical Epistles of Mary Queen of Scots during her Captivity in England*, vols 1 and 2 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, Taylor and Hessey, 1822) which was dedicated to Hannah More and to which Samuel Roberts had contributed. For the earlier (Anglican) Female Benefit and Benevolent Society, set up in 1800, see: Bell, *Peeps into the Past*, pp. 8, 104, 160, 211 and 311; *Sheffield Iris*, 8 September 1803, 21 June 1804, 19 July 1804, 11 October 1804, 18 October 1805, 5 December 1805. For the Annuity Society for the Benefit of Widows and Aged Persons, see: *Sheffield Iris*, 21 March 1805, 18 December 1806, 15 September 1807 and for the Female Merciful Society, formed July 1807, see: *Sheffield Iris*, 14 June 1808, 23 May 1809.

<sup>53</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 30 January 1810, 6 February 1810, 13 February 1810, 20 February 1810; Holland and Everett, *Memoirs* vol 2, p. 306, vol 3, p. 150; Bell, *Peeps into the Past*, p. 167. For the BFBS, see Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter Two.

meeting of the Sheffield Auxiliary Bible Society for many years, but he and Hodgson undertook regular autumn missionary tours during which they addressed the members of societies around the country.<sup>54</sup>

Montgomery's and Bennet's greatest achievement, however, and for which they are lauded in Sheffield's local histories and in their obituaries, was the formation of the town's Sunday School Union. This originated in 1812, largely on their initiative, as a federation of seven Sunday schools associated with Congregational and Methodist churches in the town in 1812, expanding to encompass a total of 29 affiliated schools by 1816 and 48 by 1824.<sup>55</sup> Both men worked as Sunday school teachers, chaired meetings, wrote reports and addressed anniversary gatherings, and were generally involved in the supervision of the activities of the Union. Indeed, it was at the first anniversary of the Sunday School Union, chaired by

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<sup>54</sup> For example, in the autumn of 1827 they visited Barnard Castle, Darlington, Richmond and Newcastle, in 1829 they travelled to Redcar, Scarborough and Whitby and in 1831 they attended missionary meetings in the West Country. See Holland and Everett, *Memoirs*, vol 4, pp. 221-222 and 355-356; vol 5, pp. 33-4.

<sup>55</sup> According to John Salt, by 1816 the Sheffield Sunday School Union included 13,000 voluntary teachers, 6500 children and 29 affiliated schools; by 1824 there were 48 schools, with 2,039 teachers and 18,854 scholars. John Salt, 'Early Sheffield Sunday Schools and their Educational Importance', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, vol 9, no 3 (1966), pp. 179-184. See also: *Sheffield Iris*, 4 February 1812, 2 March 1813, 15 June 1813, 16 May 1815, 27 May 1815, 19 March 1816, 25 March 1817, 1 April 1817; *Reports of the Sheffield Sunday School Union*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1813-1817); *First Annual Report of the Committee of the Methodist Sunday School for Poor Children of all denominations in Sheffield and its vicinity* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery 1816); James Montgomery, *A Retrospect of the Origins, Proceedings and Effects of the Sheffield Sunday School Union* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1824); John Holland, *Memorials of the founders of the first Methodist Sunday Schools in Sheffield: being a paper read at the annual social tea meeting of the Red Hill Sunday School, December 28th 1869* (Sheffield: Harrison, 1870); H. G. Roberts, *Red Hill Sunday School Centenary* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend, n.d.), pp. 5-29.

George Bennet, that Montgomery made his first public address.<sup>56</sup> During the 1820s Montgomery used the occasion of the anniversary to read extracts from Bennet's letters sent from Tahiti and various other destinations on his tour with the LMS.<sup>57</sup>

While Bennet and Montgomery were active in the Sunday School Union, Hodgson and Ward supported the separate Sunday schools associated with the Anglican and Unitarian churches and chapels in the town. While suggestive of the extent to which supporters of the National School Society saw the need for a specifically Anglican education, such denominationalism can also be read as indicative of the extent to which many Christians were participant in a joint cultural project (a point to which I shall return in Part Two).<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the oft-cited departure of the Anglican optician William Parker, the first president of the Sunday School Union to join the Anglican Sunday School sponsored by the National School Society in 1814, highlights, among other things, the compatibility of the Lancasterian and National School Societies.<sup>59</sup> Certainly under Rowland Hodgson's chairmanship

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<sup>56</sup> See: Holland and Everett, *Memoirs of James Montgomery*, vol 3, pp. 12, 43 and 93.

<sup>57</sup> See Chapter Five, pp. 245-246, below.

<sup>58</sup> See notice for Anglican Sunday Schools, *Sheffield Iris*, 28 January 1812. The Anglican Sunday School was set up in 1814. See: *Sheffield Iris*, 9 August 1814; 23 May 1815. For the National Schools, opened in August 1813 (girls) and October 1813 (boys), see: *Sheffield Iris*, 21 June 1814, 28 June 1814; *Reports of the Sunday School Union; Seventh Annual Report of the Sheffield and District National Society* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1822).

<sup>59</sup> See *Sheffield Iris*, 11 and 18 May 1813 for Montgomery's argument that there need be no competition between the systems of Bell and Lancaster.

of the local National School Society, the Anglicans were able to join with the Sunday School Union for part of their annual anniversary celebrations and processions.<sup>60</sup>

A similar situation existed in respect of the denominational Missionary Societies, formed between 1813 and 1816. While Bennet offered a particular commitment to the West Riding Auxiliary Missionary Society and Hodgson to the Church Missionary Society, both men joined Montgomery in their more general support for the activities of the three local societies. Indeed, it is in relation to the missionary society that Montgomery can be seen as the epitome of inter-denominational man, his commitment to the general missionary principle, evident in his long-standing support of missionary progress in the pages of the *Iris*, culminating in invitations to write hymns for the jubilee celebrations of both the national BMS in 1842 and the CMS, at Exeter Hall, in 1848.<sup>61</sup> At the first

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<sup>60</sup> See *Sheffield Iris*, 28 May 1816. It has been suggested that there were not the same divisions that characterised relations between the National and Lancasterian School Societies in many towns. See: Armytage, 'Education in Sheffield, 1603-1955'; Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child*, p. 70.

<sup>61</sup> Montgomery had used the pages of the *Iris* to publicise missionary progress, and from the formation of the West Riding Auxiliary Society in 1813 reported missionary meetings and anniversaries, many of which he presided over as secretary or for which he wrote the annual reports. See: *Sheffield Iris*, 2 February 1804, 9 February 1804, 21 March 1805, 20 January 1806, 12 December 1809, 24 April 1810 for examples of Montgomery's publicising of sermons for overseas missions. Examples of his use of the *Sheffield Iris* to support missionary issues includes a short piece on Serampore Baptists, 1 February 1812; an article on Christianity in India, 13 April 1813; a petition concerning the East India Company charter, 11 May 1813; an article entitled 'Introduction of Christianity into the South Sea Islands', 4 January 1814; and an article in support of William Carey, 24 January 1815. For coverage of the formation and anniversaries of the Sheffield societies, see: *Sheffield Iris*, 5 October 1813, 15 February 1814, 21 June 1814, 18 April 1815, 18 May 1815, 7 May 1816, 18 March 1817, 1 April 1817, 3 May

Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Meeting in Sheffield in November 1813, Montgomery had reflected on such inter-denominationalism, speaking of the function of Bible and missionary work in the 'blending' of 'names and distinctions'. Despite differences, he argued, they were not 'discordant' but were, in Bible and missionary work, 'blended till they are lost, like the prismatic colours in a ray of pure and perfect light'.<sup>62</sup>

While not 'blending' distinction, as Montgomery suggests, the missionary society allowed for the accommodation of religious, political and cultural differences, and was central to the emergence of middle-class networks in early nineteenth century Sheffield. Beginning with the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor from 1804-5, through the formation of the domestic and overseas missionary societies in the first two decades of the century, and into the emergence of the Literary and Philosophical Society, Anti-Slavery Society, Mechanics' and Apprentices' Library and Mechanics' Institute of the 1820s and 1830s,<sup>63</sup> the missionary society operated

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1817, 13 May 1817, 31 March 1818. See also Holland and Everett, *Memoirs of James Montgomery*, vol 3, pp. 44, 47, 68, 93 and 117.

<sup>62</sup> As a token of such interdenominationalism, Montgomery had published an extract from Trimmer's *Oeconomy of Charity* to celebrate the opening of the Anglican Sunday School. See the *Sheffield Iris*, 9 August 1814.

<sup>63</sup> James Montgomery gave the opening speech on the formation of the Literary and Philosophical Society in December 1822. See: *Sheffield Iris*, 7 October 1823, 23 December 1823, 30 December 1823. He was vice-president in 1823, following Ward's vice-presidency of 1822, and both men continued to be active in the lecture programme of the Society. Ward was also a central figure in the opening of the Mechanics' Library. See: *Sheffield Independent*, 5 January 1828, 3 January 1829 and 26 December 1829. All except Bennet (who was in the South Pacific) were involved in the Anti-Slavery Society. For the Mechanics' Institute, see Conclusion, below.

operated as a site on which individuals of different denomination, wealth, status and political affiliation could collaborate.

The framework of the 'Four Friends' enables the exploration of such collaboration, and also of the processes through which the prominence of such men is bestowed upon them. For Montgomery, Bennet, Hodgson, Roberts and Ward, participation in voluntary activity was central to the construction of a civic role which saw their appointment to other positions of public authority: as Overseers of the Poor, town trustees and members of the committees of the highway boards, gas and water companies and committees of the General Infirmary and Dispensary, all of which were important to the administration of the town's affairs prior to incorporation,<sup>64</sup> and as participants in the new civic order as Liberal Dissenters replaced the old Tory and Anglican establishment in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>65</sup>

While described by Mary Walton as 'a mild and ladylike set, with their tea-parties, their verse-writing, their respectable domesticity', they were central to the construction of a new masculine, public sphere, their achievements celebrated in

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<sup>64</sup> Roberts, Hodgson and Ward were all town trustees. Ward was Master Cutler in 1816, a town collector from 1825, founder member and president of Sheffield Political Union and defeated election candidate in 1832, and West Riding magistrate from 1836.

<sup>65</sup> The Municipal Corporations Act (1835) was resisted in Sheffield until 1843. Prior to then the town was governed by manorial courts, the common Burgery, the capital Burgesses and the Cutler's Company and through systems of poor relief and highway administration. See: Read, *Press and People*, p. 19; Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City*, pp. 139-148; Richard J. Childs, 'Sheffield before 1843', Clyde Binfield et al (eds.), *The History of Sheffield*, vol 1, pp. 7-24.

appropriately public ways.<sup>66</sup> These included busts and paintings in the Cutler's Hall and Bluecoat School, statues and memorials in the town cemetery, and in the naming of roads, public buildings and even a 'Montgomery medal' at the newly-opened School of Design.<sup>67</sup> The 'Four Friends' remains nonetheless a problematic construction, relying on a Whiggish notion of a small group of influential men responsible for social change.<sup>68</sup> Part Two of this Chapter looks at the missionary society in terms of relationships and social practices, focusing especially on the involvement of women and the significance of languages of gender and civilisation.

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<sup>66</sup> Walton, *Sheffield. Its Story and its Achievements*, p. 161.

<sup>67</sup> Montgomery is commemorated by a stained-glass window in parish church, a bronze statue in the General Cemetery, and has a Wesleyan Chapel and Public Hall named after him. See Seed, *Norfolk Street Wesleyan Chapel*, pp. 111-117. For the Montgomery Medal, see Holland and Everett, *Memoirs Vol 7*, p. 215. A portrait of Roberts by W. Poole hung for many years in the Bluecoat School, Psalter Lane, which also housed a bust of him by Theophilus Smith. See Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies*, p. 101. A bust of Hodgson by Edwin Smith was also placed in the Bluecoat school. See Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies*, p. 87. A portrait by J. Jackson of George Bennet hung in the Cutler's Hall and a monument by Edwin Smith stands in Sheffield General Cemetery. See Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies*, p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> It remains a popular approach, nonetheless. See Michael J. Turner, *Reform and Respectability: the Making of a Middle-Class Liberalism in early Nineteenth-Century Manchester* (Manchester: the Chetham Society, 1995), Chapters One and Four. Turner looks at a small band of men, mainly Unitarian, who engaged in journalism, commerce, education, moral improvement and such like, thereby participating in a rise of middle-class consciousness.

## Part Two: Missionary practice: class, gender and civilisation

The public writings and the symbolic practices of missionary and philanthropic societies in early-nineteenth-century Britain were central to the production of new relations and representations of social class. Shaped by the concerns of evangelical political economy, these practices placed at their centre a concern with domesticity and the reconstruction of gender roles. In a speech at the Boys' Lancasterian School prior to the opening of the Girls' School in 1814, the Reverend Mather discussed the significance of girls' education as both the mainstay of society and signifier of civilisation:

... permit me to call the attention of this meeting to the advantages, which must result to Families, to Society and to the rising generation, from female education. Females were never designed by Providence either to draw the sword in the field of battle, to push the bayonet, or to storm the redoubt; but their stations are not less important. They stay at home: and while they do this, they stamp *their own character on the families* where they reside; and so great is Female Influence, that every society with which they are connected derives its character from them. Where the word of God is not known, Women are regarded as little better than beasts. And what are the Men in such places? - Are they not mere savages? But in those places where woman occupies the place which the Lord has allotted her, the Men are rational, affectionate and kind.<sup>69</sup>

Mather represents women's responsibility for the 'quality' and well-being of both children and men as a hallmark of progressive Christian civilisation, a signifier of British superiority to 'savage' races throughout the world. In this section, I explore the translation of these ideas into missionary practice, through a focus on the visiting system promoted by the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor

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<sup>69</sup> *Sheffield Iris*, 21 June 1814. See also Chapter One, Part One, above. Mather, minister at Howard Street Congregational Chapel, was the father of Dr Robert Cotton Mather, an oriental linguist and missionary in India for nearly forty years. See Leader, *Reminiscences*, pp. 236-237.



and the Aged Female Society and the provision of education for working-class girls and boys in the form of the new monitorial system.

### **The Visiting System: turning dwellings into homes**

The formation of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor in 1803 marked the beginning of a new wave of public missionary activity in Sheffield. Originally formed by local Quakers, many of whom had been involved with the management of the School of Industry during the 1790s, it began from around 1805 to acquire the support of respectable elements within the main Protestant denominations, bringing together a body of men and women who were to be central players in Sheffield's public life for the next few decades.

Following the national society of the same name, the SBCP opposed the 'indiscriminate charity' and 'promiscuous relief' seen to characterise eighteenth-century philanthropy, focusing instead on the inculcation of a 'moral and mental' change on the part of the poor.<sup>70</sup> The members of the Society were principally concerned with what they understood as a cycle of poverty, with the effects of human weakness and immorality in the exacerbation of poverty and the debilitating impact of poverty in preventing the possibility of, or desire for, improvement. As argued by Hannah Kilham, a founder member, the Society's 'great object' was 'to induce and to second the exertions of the poor on their own behalf', 'to incite in

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<sup>70</sup> See Chapter One, pp. 39-41, above.

them additional solicitude for the proper support of their own character.’<sup>71</sup> In the words of the 1813 *Report*:

To prevent evil, it has often been remarked, is both better and easier than to remove it. The sudden renovation of a destitute dwelling, or the clothing of an indigent family by gratuitous supplies, may indeed arrest the attention by the contrast it presents, and be admired and applauded as the fruit of compassion; but to meet the poor by kindness and encouragement before they are sunk into absolute indigence - by friendly attention, advice and assistance to stimulate and support their good intentions and endeavours, is a conduct which having its influence on the minds of the poor, as well as on their circumstances, will be far more beneficial in its effects, than that in which the agency of the individuals themselves is not called forth for the improvement of their condition.<sup>72</sup>

Poverty, it was believed, ‘blunted and almost destroyed... the energy and cheerfulness so necessary to industry and domestic economy’, and produced a ‘languor of dependency, ... which almost paralysed any effort to surmount such depression’.<sup>73</sup> It was the mind alone, that ‘seat of principle and spring of reason’, that could bring about a desire for change: ‘Our endeavours must be directed to their *minds*, to their *principles*. We must lead them, if possible, to think and feel for themselves wherein their best welfare consists...’<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Hannah Kilham, *Extract from an account of the Sheffield Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, Local Pamphlets 87, no 6, pp. 202-213, here p. 204, (Sheffield Local Studies Library, SLSL hereafter); Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 205.

<sup>72</sup> *Tenth Annual Report of the Sheffield Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1813), p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Sheffield Iris*, 18 May 1804; *Eleventh Annual Report of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1814), p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Eleventh Report*, 1814, p. 2

While food was distributed at times of extreme hardship,<sup>75</sup> the Society focused instead on encouraging responsibility and independence through the promotion of domestic reform. The principal agents within this process were lady visitors who, working to a carefully subdivided map of the town, sought to promote 'comfort and welfare' through the inculcation of 'industry, economy and order' in the domestic situations of poor women, through visiting them in their homes, in lodging houses, the workhouse and the debtor's prison, on a weekly basis.<sup>76</sup> As representatives of piety and morality, the visitors were to combat what they saw as the confusion, misery and unbelief of working-class homes, reminding the female inhabitants of the virtues of 'cleanliness, order, the care of their families and of the disadvantages of running into debt, or dealing with pawnbrokers.' Poor women were provided with loans of bedding and clothing, lime to whitewash their houses, equipment and materials for spinning and knitting and plentiful advice on domestic management. The Society established a Thrift Club, by which women were encouraged both to deposit weekly savings in order eventually to be able to

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<sup>75</sup> Policy concerning material relief became more strict over the first two decades of the nineteenth century. While the *Sheffield Iris* of 18 May 1804 reveals that relief in the form of medicine, food, money in sickness and linen was given as handouts, Hannah Kilham expressed her regret in 1812 that the Society was unable to help those too poor (and without food) to continue with their deposits. Kilham, 'Extract' (1812), p. 213. During the extreme hardship of 1817, the Society provided soup and weekly meals at the Cutler's Hall and a system whereby poor people could exchange 'tickets' for meat and potatoes, thus ensuring that any handouts were made proper use of. See: *Sheffield Iris*, 14 January 1817 and 7 October 1817.

<sup>76</sup> Women committee members from the School of Industry comprised the 1805 Committee for receiving deposits, which became the Committee of visitors by 1807. These were predominantly Quakers, and included Jane Doncaster, Mary Colley and Hannah Kilham (see Part One, pp. 82 and 87, above). See also the *Eleventh Report*, (1814), p. 3, and the *Sheffield Iris*, 1 January 1817 and 21 October 1817 for details concerning the organisation of the visiting system.

purchase subsidised household commodities such as rugs and blankets and to be in control of their finances through holding their own Deposit Books.<sup>77</sup> Hannah Kilham took the opportunity to distribute tracts that she had composed herself which addressed domestic and religious themes, in the hope that they might be displayed in the homes of the poor and thus act as additional stimuli to their improvement.<sup>78</sup>

Hannah Kilham saw herself and her colleagues as catalysts to improvement, enabling poor women to be transformed through her relationship with them, becoming receptive to middle-class notions of domestic and familial organisation and to the message of the Bible.<sup>79</sup> She expressed this relationship in her journal in 1815:

Oh! that we might, by affectionate conversations with them, and by lending them books in which are examples of piety, and the counsels of the pious, be happily instrumental in leading them to a State, in which the prospect of a happy futurity, and the consciousness of heavenly favour, could make even the wilderness to bloom and become beautiful, and the lowliest

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<sup>77</sup> *Sheffield Iris*, 27 July 1819.

<sup>78</sup> Hannah Kilham, *Family Maxims* (Sheffield: Bentham and Ray, 1817).

<sup>79</sup> Hannah Kilham sometimes enlisted the help of girls at her school when making her visiting errands. In her autobiography, Mary Howitt recalls an occasion when, as a twelve year old pupil at the Friends' School run by Kilham, she waited in a 'desolate' area of 'broken-up ground and half-built ruinous houses' while her teacher visited a 'haunt of squalor'. On one such occasion she saw the 1811 comet 'majestically careering' through the skies, no doubt, as Mora Dickson comments, fulfilling her teacher's instructions to 'keep her eyes fixed firmly on the heavens'. See: Margaret Howitt (ed.), *Mary Howitt, An Autobiography*, vol 1, (London: William Isbister, 1889), p. 86; Mora Dickson, *The Powerful Bond* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1980), p. 67.

habitations to be cheered and enlivened by the beams of an unfading sun...<sup>80</sup>

Her 'affectionate conversations' here combine middle-class women's maternal relationship to the poor, their responsibility for their nurturance and growth, with a more educative, reforming role.

In addition to exerting their moral influence, middle-class ladies were also committed to the process of 'strict investigation' which characterised the rationalist methods of the new 'science of the poor',<sup>81</sup> and which involved making enquiries concerning the circumstances of the household and questioning inhabitants about their employment and the religious education of their children. Hannah Kilham insisted upon the neutrality of such *empiricist methods*, arguing that philanthropists were 'disinterested participants', able to engage with impartiality in a process of seeing, exposing and knowing which would '[bring] the general state of poor families into view'. 'The first step towards bettering the condition of the poor', Kilham wrote:

is to know what that state really is, and this by persons who have judgement and feeling to improve their condition, and have the power to be instruments to its improvement. The state of the poor will be best known by seeing them in their own houses, and hearing from themselves the affecting detail of their sufferings and privations.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 116.

<sup>81</sup> Dorothy Thompson has aptly referred to this practice as 'charitable surveillance'. See: Dorothy Thompson, 'Women, Work and Politics in Nineteenth-Century England: The Problem of Authority', in Jane Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 57-81, here p. 73. See also: Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, pp. 28-29, and Chapter One of this thesis, pp. 40-41, above.

<sup>82</sup> Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 114.

Despite the emphasis on the importance of allowing the poor a degree of self-representation, the process of 'hearing from themselves' is in tension with the educative, leading role accorded to middle-class visitors. The production of knowledge about poverty has, therefore, a class dimension: it is the ladies who have the necessary 'judgement and feeling', the moral authority, with which to clearly see and accurately interpret their situation.

The annual *Reports* of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor catalogue 'success stories', celebrating the 'increased attention in the mothers of poor children to a decent and creditable manner of clothing their families' and the 'increased cleanliness in their dwellings, and decency in their appearance' observed over time.<sup>83</sup> 'A great change for the better is evident in the domestic habits of the humblest classes here', wrote the author of the 1821 Report:

a more general attention to cleanliness and domestic comfort is very obvious; and the visitors have the consolation to see much improvement in the care of infants and in the education of children.<sup>84</sup>

Despite such a focus on the stimulation of activity and independence, however, the agency accorded working-class women by the visiting system is intensely problematic. Success is represented in terms of a proximity to middle-class ideals of femininity. Only through adopting the domestic practices of middle-class lady visitors do working-class women have their agency restored.

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<sup>83</sup> *Tenth Report*, 1813, p. 2; *Eleventh Report*, 1814, p. 2; *Fourteenth Report*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>84</sup> *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1821), p. 7.

Both in terms of its approach to poverty and its concern with the study and surveillance of the poor, the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor provided a model for subsequent missionary societies.<sup>85</sup> The *Reports* of the Aged Female Society, established in 1810 for the relief of single women and widows of over sixty-five years of age, adopt a similar narrative, revealing its members' concern with 'detecting the profligate and unworthy',<sup>86</sup> and identifying those hard-working, pious women who would benefit from their attentions. In sketches of 'typical' lives, the *Reports* tell of women 'worn down with personal slavery and long suffering', unable to support themselves because of the inadequacies of their parents, which had forced them to become 'household slaves' and miss education due to their responsibility for younger siblings, or because of a poor choice of husband who, either due to misfortune or his improvidence and immorality, had been unable to protect his dependents from falling on hard times.<sup>87</sup> While the Society did provide material relief to elderly, pious women who were no longer able to work for a living, it saw its main duty as being 'to animate, support, and encourage' women to take responsibility for their well-being, helping to discourage

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<sup>85</sup> The activities of the Bible Society were mapped on to the subdivision of the town into manageable districts organised by the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, thus enabling the distribution of Bibles to families throughout Sheffield. See: *Sheffield Iris*, 15 March 1814; Sir Thomas Bernard, *Extract from an Account of the Juvenile Bible Society at Sheffield*, 1814, Local Pamphlets, vol 87, no 7 (SLSL).

<sup>86</sup> *Fifth Annual Report of the Female Friendly Society for the Relief of Aged Women* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1815), p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4. See also: *Seventh Report of the Female Friendly Society for the Relief of Aged Widows and Unmarried Women* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery and M. Smith, 1817); *Ninth Annual Report of the Female Friendly Society for the Relief of Widows and Single Women, above sixty-five years of age* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1819).

the passivity which was believed to have characterised their lives prior to their engagement with the visitors.<sup>88</sup>

Despite their delight at instances of personal transformation, however, it was never the intention of middle-class visitors that working-class women should become too much like themselves.<sup>89</sup> The authors of the *Ninth Report of the Aged Female Society* address this issue, reproducing a lengthy quotation from a speech given by Joseph Hughes at a Bible Society Meeting in London. Hughes dismissed as ‘impious and absurd’ attempts to challenge ‘that mysterious economy, which presents the offspring of the same Almighty Parent, in situations so unlike and unequal.’ He explained:

the difference between individual and individual may often be reduced, and the endeavour to reduce it on a plan both practicable and prudent, is at once indicative and productive of the sublimest virtues; on the part of the elevated it implies condescension and kindness; on the part of the depressed, it awakens the hope and the gratitude, which attach in some degree to human benefactors, but supremely regard the Almighty...<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The *Report* of 1817 emphasises the prior passivity of the women: ‘The objects of this charity are so poor that their misery can scarcely be affected by the changes in national affairs; - whether the tide of public prosperity ebbs and flows, they remain forlorn and obscure, like sea-weed, floating though fixed on the rock, at the bottom of the deep, too low to sink, too fast to be removed, till the hand of Time plucks them up by the roots and casts them on the shore of Eternity...’ *Seventh Report*, 1817, p. 3. See also letter by George Bennet, ‘A Townsman’, on Female Friendly Societies, *Sheffield Iris*, 24 October 1810.

<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Homi Bhabha’s concept of ‘mimicry’ - of colonial peoples being ‘almost the same, but not quite’ like their colonisers is also appropriate for understanding relationships of class. See H. Bhabha, ‘Of mimicry and man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse’, in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-92.

<sup>90</sup> *Ninth Report*, 1817, p. 6. Joseph Hughes was a founder of the British and Foreign Bible Society.



It is the *effort* to reduce the 'difference', the missionary relationship itself, that is most valuable, reflecting well upon the philanthropist and stimulating the poor to a desire for betterment, a respect for their social superiors and belief in the power of God. Indeed, philanthropy was not concerned with the elimination of poverty but, as Alan Kidd has written, 'was dependent upon the return "gift" expected from the recipient, that is, the status of being deserving.'<sup>91</sup> Philanthropy, in Hughes' words, enabled the 'conversion' of the 'apparent evil' of poverty into an 'occasion of infinite good', without disturbing the natural presence of the poor.

Thus, the visiting system of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor constructed the working-class household as a 'contact zone' in early nineteenth-century Sheffield - a site of social investigation and reform from which new class relationships and new knowledge about poverty and the poor were produced.<sup>92</sup> Central to this knowledge was a break with eighteenth-century conceptions of poverty. Following Malthus, the poor of the nineteenth century were 'not only to be docile, industrious and sober' but also

to be frugal in domestic economy, avoid pauperism at all costs, practice proper restraint from unconsidered marriage and improvident breeding, join a friendly society, and make regular deposits in a savings bank...<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Alan Kidd, 'Philanthropy and the "Social history paradigm"', *Social History*, vol 21, no 2 (May 1996), pp. 180-192, here p. 187.

<sup>92</sup> The phrase is Mary Louise Pratt's. See Introduction, pp. 17, above.

<sup>93</sup> Dean sees a shift from 'the old notion of "the poor" as a permanent mass which must be properly administered by the state to the notion of a particular condition of individuals and groups determined by bioeconomic forces and movements of population, subsistence and capital.' See Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty: towards a genealogy of liberal governance* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 84 and 137.

At the same time as exerting its 'benign and civilising influence' which enabled many women to be 'elevated above their former degraded condition', the Society was able to identify the 'indolent, vicious and profligate people', those unlikely to rise above the 'filth, extravagance or listlessness' of their condition.<sup>94</sup>

### **Schooling and civilisation: the monitorial system**

During the second decade of the nineteenth century the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor came to form a nexus in a network of new organisations dedicated to social reform. The visitors of the SBCP assumed the role of introducing 'their' poor to the General Infirmary and the new reforming bodies - the Bible Society, Sunday schools and the new monitorial schools which were in the process of being established in the town. The rationalism and concern for moral reform of the monitorial system complemented that of the visiting system. Credited to the simultaneous experiments of Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster in their respective schools in Madras and Southwark, the new method of educating the children of the poor was promoted by the Lancasterian Society (1808), reformed as the British and Foreign School Society in 1813, and the National School Society, established in 1811.

While there was more than an element of competition between the two societies, as the Anglican National Society was formed partly in response to fears that the

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<sup>94</sup> *Twentieth Annual Report of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, 1824, p. 4.

Nonconformists were seizing the initiative with respect to working-class education,<sup>95</sup> supporters of Bell and Lancaster developed a model of education which, as Richard Johnson has noted, shared a 'common language' of 'habit', 'order' and 'restraint' and an opposition to aspects of working-class culture.<sup>96</sup> Teaching, which occurred in one large room, was conducted by unpaid child monitors and a teacher who, at the front on a raised platform, was able to properly survey the orderly rows of children sitting on benches before him. Children were required to dress simply, to cut their hair short, to arrive at school looking neat and clean, to be still and quiet, and to attend a place of worship on the Sabbath.<sup>97</sup> They were given rewards for good behaviour, beating was avoided, and punishment ministered through the 'shame' of wearing placards around their necks.

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<sup>95</sup> Lancaster's approach was non-denominational, and children learned to read from selections from the Scriptures and early eighteenth-century catechism until the publication in 1820 of William Allen's *Scripture Lessons for Schools on the British System for Manual Instruction*. A teacher's manual, written by Bell, accompanied by Sarah Trimmer's work, *The Charity Spelling Book*, reconstructed into a series of cards and booklets, formed the basis of National School readers, providing children with a soundly Anglican education.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Johnson, 'Notes on the Schooling of the English Working Class', in Roger Dale, Geoff Esland and Madeleine MacDonald (eds.), *Schooling and Capitalism. A Sociological Reader* (London: RKP and the Open University Press, 1976), pp. 44-54. See also: J. M. Goldstrom, 'The content of education and the socialization of the working-class child 1830-1860', in Phillip McCann (ed.), *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 94-107; Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 93-98; Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education, 1780-1870* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960), pp 129-136 and 148-152.

<sup>97</sup> William Allen was overwhelmed by the image of children at Lancaster's school in Borough Road transformed to 'the most perfect order, and training to habits of subordination and usefulness, and learning the great truths of the gospel from the Bible'. Quoted in Harold M. Silver, *The Concept of Popular Education: a study of ideas and social movements in the early nineteenth century* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1965), p. 26.

While free at first, a fee of one shilling per quarter was imposed in many schools, on the assumption that little value was placed 'on that which costs nothing to obtain'.<sup>98</sup> Such methods, as stated in the fiteenth Report, were 'the most economical and yet at the same time the most effective'.<sup>99</sup>

As acknowledged by James Montgomery, the monitorial method achieved its initial success in Sheffield with the School of Industry that was attached to the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor.<sup>100</sup> It was following the invitation of Joseph Lancaster to the town in February 1809, however, that the town's philanthropists were galvanised into organising the subscription which resulted in the opening of the new Lancasterian Boys' School in August of that year.<sup>101</sup> Girls were taught at the new school from its opening, and a new Lancasterian School of Industry for Girls was opened in 1815.<sup>102</sup> The school catered for children of all denominations: according to a survey undertaken by Thomas Bernard on 10 October 1812, 220 of the children were Church of England, 150 were Methodist, 11 Calvinist, 19 'other', and 125 came from families which attended no place of worship.<sup>103</sup> While many Anglicans moved over to the two

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child*, p. 69.

<sup>99</sup> *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Sheffield Lancasterian School for Boys*, 1824, p.2. In the words of Elie Halevy, 'The radical theory of popular education is Malthusian in origin', quoted in Simon, *Studies in the History of Education*, p. 143.

<sup>100</sup> *Sheffield Iris*, 17 November 1807.

<sup>101</sup> For Lancaster's visit see the *Sheffield Iris*, 14 February 1809.

<sup>102</sup> See *Sheffield Iris*, 27 September 1814 and 3 January 1815.

<sup>103</sup> Sir Thomas Bernard, 'Extract from an Account of the Free School for Boys at Sheffield' (1812), Local Pamphlets, 87 no 5, pp. 173-84 (SLSL).

National Schools on their opening in 1814, relationships between the two societies in Sheffield were characterised by cordiality, a situation no doubt encouraged by the friendship between Montgomery and Rowland Hodgson, secretary of the National District Society. In the words of the 1818 *Report of the Boys' Lancasterian School*: 'We do not account these respectable institutions as opponents, but as fellow helpers in the same great cause of humanity and kindness'.<sup>104</sup>

'The cause of humanity' in relation to working-class schooling relied upon a recognition that Britain's position in the progress of civilisation was founded in part upon the labour and poverty of working people. This also necessitated that they participate to some limited degree in the wider culture as industrious, moral subjects. In their endeavour to 'diffuse a spirit of order, industry and enlightened loyalty amongst the labouring classes of society', the civilising aims of the monitorial system meant different things for girls and boys of the working class.<sup>105</sup> While both were taught some of the same lessons, including reading, writing and Scripture, and were required to attend worship on Sundays, there was a critical difference in the emphasis of their education.

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<sup>104</sup> *Ninth Report of the Sheffield Lancasterian School for Boys in Sheffield* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1818). While some, such as T. A. Ward, were irritated by the Anglicans' presumption in labelling themselves 'national' (see Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child*, pp. 70-71), educationalists in Sheffield tended to emphasise the similarities between the two approaches. See: *Sheffield Iris*, 18 May 1813; 21 June 1814; 28 June 1814.

<sup>105</sup> *Eighth Report of the Sheffield Lancasterian School for Boys*, (Sheffield: William Todd, 1817), p.2.

For boys, reflecting the increased anxieties concerning 'youthful depravity', attention focused on the inculcation of a sense of their 'civil duties', which included 'obedience to parents', 'respect to superiors', 'reverence to authorities' and 'honour to the king'.<sup>106</sup> For girls, the emphasis of their education was on the domestic skills of kitchen and house work, laundry and especially needlework. This reflected the belief, in Montgomery's words, that 'the peace of society depends so much upon the morals of the lower class of females'.<sup>107</sup> The domesticated working-class woman, it was believed, would ensure that her husband and sons wanted to spend their leisure hours at home rather than indulging in drink and vulgar recreations.<sup>108</sup> The Report of 1820 emphasised the 'omnipotence' of the female and the importance therefore that her influence be directed for the good of society:

If men require learning and training to fit them for the more active duties of life, how much more do they need instruction, to whom are committed the happiness and comfort of families, and the education and character of the next generation! As the influence of the female sex in any case must be great, and in some cases almost omnipotent, how essential that this influence should be directed by knowledge and religion!<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 1817, pp. 2 and 13. For 'youthful delinquency', see *Ninth Report*, (J. Montgomery 1818), *Eleventh Report* (J. Montgomery, 1820), *Fourteenth Report*, (W. Todd, 1823), *Fifteenth Report* (J. Montgomery, 1824) and *Sixteenth Report*, (J. Blackwell, 1825).

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Mercer, *Schooling the Poorer Child*, p. 69.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, *Sheffield Iris*, 18 May 1805: 'There is too much reason to apprehend, that a disorderly uncomfortable house is often the cause which prevents the Father of a family from spending his evening at home; and the baneful effects of a contrary practice have been miserably felt by numbers; whatever therefore can be done for the promotion of cleanliness and domestic economy is evidently worthy of attention.'

<sup>109</sup> *Fifth Annual Report of the Sheffield Girls' Lancasterian School*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1820), pp. 3-4.

Furthermore, as employees in middle-class households, they had a wider responsibility: 'As servants, they nurse our children, and have our property, our peace and our comfort in their hands'... <sup>110</sup> A 'lovely asylum for the protection of female virtue',<sup>111</sup> the Lancasterian system sought to prepare girls for their future roles as wives and mothers and for the less delicate tasks of servants in middle-class homes.<sup>112</sup>

Although, due to the pressures of finding employment, most girls stayed at the school for less than two years, the sponsors felt reassured that the two hundred who left annually were 'carrying knowledge, principle, order, religion, (and) happiness' into their own families and those where they were employed.<sup>113</sup> The annual *Reports* detail successes, celebrating the transformation of 'careless, inattentive, disobedient' girls into godly young women. 'A few months after admission', claimed the Report of 1821:

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>111</sup> *Eleventh Annual Report of the Sheffield Girls' Lancasterian School*, (Sheffield: J. Blackwell, 1826), p. 4

<sup>112</sup> See: Meg Gomersall, 'Ideas and realities: the education of working-class girls, 1800-1870', *History of Education*, vol 17, no 1, (1988), pp. 37-53; June Purvis, 'The double burden of class and gender in the schooling of working-class girls in England 1800-1870', in Len Barton and Stephen Walker (eds.), *Schools, Teachers and Teaching* (Lewes: Falmer Press, 1981), pp. 97-116; June Purvis, *Hard Lessons: The lives and education of working-class women in nineteenth century England*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 68-69; Anne Digby and P. Searby, *Children, Schools and Society in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 45-52; Joyce Goodman, 'Women and the management of the education of working-class girls 1800-18961', (Manchester University: unpublished PhD thesis, 1992), especially pp. 569-588.

<sup>113</sup> *Sixth Annual Report of the Sheffield Girls' Lancasterian School*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1821), p. 4

the manners of the very lowest order of children may be observed to undergo a decided improvement. They are more cleanly in their persons - more decent in their dress - and their minds appear raised to a degree further from the meanness and degradation into which they have been previously plunged.<sup>114</sup>

The beneficial impact on working-class home life was noted in the 1825 *Report*, which claimed credit for:

an increase in affection, prompt and universal obedience, unremitting attention to parental authority, and all those dispositions, feelings, and actions, which are calculated to heighten domestic felicity, and to render home what it ought to be - an earthly paradise.<sup>115</sup>

Boys too were seen to be displaying the successes of their education. The 1820 *Report* applauded the:

Many, many youths, of intelligent countenance and sober habits, [who] we now see in the town and neighbourhood, who have been educated here, who are filling up useful and respectable stations in the subordinated ranks of life, with credit and comfort to themselves and to their friends.<sup>116</sup>

Letters of gratitude, written to the committee by both parents and ex-pupils, were incorporated within the narrative of progress, a final vindication of the rightfulness of those who had campaigned for the extension of instruction to the working class.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Sheffield Lancasterian School for Boys*, 1825, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> *Eleventh Annual Report of the Sheffield Lancasterian School for Boys*, 1820, pp. 1-2

<sup>117</sup> These included a letter from the young Isaac Ironside, future Chartist leader of Sheffield council, who thanked the school 'for the favours I have received.' *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Sheffield Lancasterian School for Boys*, 1824, p. 1. See also *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Sheffield Lancasterian School for Boys*, 1823. Opposition to the education of the poor on principle was waning considerably by this period. See Carl F. Kaestle, "Between the Scylla of Brutal Ignorance and the Charybdis of a Literary Education": Elite Attitudes towards



Such theorising about the potential for social change following the conversion of the young was borne out in a romanticised account of the origins of the Sheffield Mechanics' and Apprentices' Library, opened in 1824. Plans for the library were stimulated by a letter from the father of an ex-pupil of the Lancasterian School, printed in the *Report* of 1823, which expressed the disappointment of his son at no longer having access to a library for the purpose of his self-improvement.<sup>118</sup> Local philanthropists, many of whom were members of the newly-founded Literary and Philosophical Society, flocked to his support and a committee orchestrated by Thomas Asline Ward opened the Library in April of the following year.

## Conclusion

Along with the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, the Lancasterian schools and Mechanics' and Apprentices' Library were central to middle-class efforts to re-make the working-class. With the Bible Society, Missionary Societies and Sunday schools, such societies differed in 'the mode rather than in the effect of their operations.'<sup>119</sup> Shaped by evangelical political economy, each emphasised

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Mass Schooling in Early Industrial England and America', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 177-191.

<sup>118</sup> *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Sheffield Lancasterian School for Boys*, 1823, pp. 3-4; *Sheffield Iris*, 30 August 1823.

<sup>119</sup> *Seventh Annual Report of Boys Lancasterian School*, (Sheffield: Montgomery, 1816), p. 1. The Sunday Schools especially reiterated emphasis on discipline, cleanliness and morality. See: *Red Hill Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Rules* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery 1815); *First Annual Report of the*

the process of domestication, both in the sense of encouraging the domestic skills of women and in 'taming' working men.

Despite the clarity of their aims, however, the success or otherwise of such societies is notoriously difficult to measure. Alongside the confident tone of the various Reports, there are many indications of difficulties. The Visitors' Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, for example, detail instances of indifference and resistance.<sup>120</sup> The monitorial schools, while more popular in Sheffield than in many towns, still failed to attract many hundreds of children whose parents, possibly affronted by the rules, expense and charity-like uniforms, preferred the education provided by local dame schools which, while more expensive, were often run by women from the neighbourhood.<sup>121</sup>

The *Reports* suggest an awareness that their successes were partial, that:

only like the scattered grains of corn promiscuously rising from a barren soil, or like the fruit transported from its native climate and forced

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*Committee of the Methodist Sunday School* (1816); Roberts, *Red Hill Sunday School Centenary*.

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, the *Twenty-First Report of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, 1824, p. 4, which regrets that 'some remain in filth, extravagance or listlessness.'

<sup>121</sup> Between 1809-1815 only 3,327 boys were admitted to the Lancasterian School, with just 531 were on the books in 1815. See the *Sixth Annual Report of the Boys Lancasterian School*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1815). For the National Schools figures were somewhat improved, with 5542 girls and boys admitted between 1815-1820, growing rapidly throughout the 1820s and 1830s. See: *Fifth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Sheffield National District Society*, (1820); Dennis Smith, *Conflict and Compromise*, p. 120; Thomas Laqueur, 'Working-class demand and the growth of English Elementary Education, 1750-1850', in Stone, *Schooling and Society*, pp. 192-205.

in its growth by artificial power... we do not expect perfection however we desire it.

Such images of cultivation imply, however, that the educators believed themselves to be 'sowing for a future harvest'.<sup>122</sup> For them, schooling and domestic reform were part of an inevitable march of progress which, by the early nineteenth century, had placed Britain near to the peak of civilisation. In the words of the first *Annual Report* of the Methodist Sunday school:

In every civilized nation of the world, whether antient (sic) or modern, the education of youth has been regarded as an object of the greatest importance. As men have emerged from barbarity, they have gradually risen to the invention of arts, a sense of propriety, and a love of social order; and with the discovery of science, parental and filial affection have acquired greater strength and tenderness, children have experienced more of their parents' care...<sup>123</sup>

The significance of such missionary societies lies more with their functions for middle-class cultural formation. Through their confrontation with popular culture and construction of a shared understanding of the process of civilisation, they facilitated self-definition and the creation of a shared culture and identity.

Through their overseas activities, missionaries were to enable the extension of domestic reform and the construction of a monitorial system on a global scale, such that civilisation was to be imparted not only to 'the shivering children of the north', but to 'the black, the brown, and the tawny offspring of the East and of the

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<sup>122</sup> *Ninth Annual Report of the Boys Lancasterian School*, (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1818) pp. 2-3

<sup>123</sup> *First Annual Report of the Committee of the Methodist Sunday School*, p. 1.

South'.<sup>124</sup> In the words of the *Ninth Report*: 'Then shall the plants and seeds of knowledge we are now endeavouring to rear, flourish in a purer moral climate, and rising in abundance from a more auspicious soil, shall cover the wide world with rich profusion...'<sup>125</sup> In Chapters Three, Four and Five, I explore aspects of the relationship between the global civilising mission and missionary philanthropy at home.

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<sup>124</sup> *Fifth Annual Report of the Boys' Lancasterian School*, p. 7

<sup>125</sup> *Ninth Annual Report of the Boys' Lancasterian School*, 1818, p. 3

## **Chapter Three**

### **Women, the family and missionary identities:**

#### **The Reads of Wincobank Hall**

Chapter Two looked at the significance of familial reform to missionary practice in Sheffield in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Chapter Three develops this focus on the home and domestic life, exploring the familial experience of middle-class missionary women.

As has been demonstrated by the work of Davidoff and Hall, the family occupied a privileged position at the very heart of evangelical culture. Seen as an extension on earth of the heavenly family, the family was represented as a natural unit, its hierarchies reflecting the laws of God and man. In the context of the political and economic uncertainties of the late eighteenth century, the home became seen as a haven in a hostile world, a site of morality and religious practice. Yet, as Davidoff and Hall emphasise, the family was not located in the 'private' sphere in an unproblematic way. It provided both a basis from which men could participate in the 'public' world of work and politics and a model whereby, through the philanthropic and educative activities of women, the goodness and morality of the well-ordered household could emanate outwards, regenerating both immediate

neighbourhoods and national culture.<sup>1</sup> As such, the family can be seen as a second site, alongside the public missionary society, in the construction of a missionary identity.

This chapter explores the relationship between the ‘social’ and the ‘global’ and the middle-class evangelical family. It focuses on the writings and missionary involvements of one Sheffield family: the Reads of Wincobank Hall. Joseph (1774-1837) and Elizabeth (1778-1865) Read were significant figures in the development of a missionary culture and identity in early nineteenth-century Sheffield. Both came from established Congregational families. Joseph Read’s father, Joseph Read senior, who had moved to Sheffield in the 1760s to found a gold and silver smelting works, had been a subscriber to Sheffield’s new Queen Street Congregational chapel and a supporter of Rotherham College in the 1780s and 1790s. These commitments he bequeathed to his two sons, Joseph and John, who inherited the family firm in 1802.<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Read’s father, Ebenezer Smith, had trained for the ministry in London, before returning to Chesterfield at the time of his father’s death to become a partner in the family’s successful iron foundry. He and his wife Eliza were members of Soresby Street Congregational Chapel, where many of their large family of twelve surviving children became Sunday school

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<sup>1</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1860* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), pp. 31-32, 108-109 and 321-356.

<sup>2</sup> R. E. Wilson, *Two Hundred Precious Metal Years: A History of the Sheffield Smelting Company Ltd, 1760-1960* (London: Ernest Benn, 1960), pp. 3-108.

teachers.<sup>3</sup> It was at Chesterfield chapel that Elizabeth conducted much of her courtship with Joseph Read.<sup>4</sup>

Following their marriage in 1800, the couple settled in Attercliffe, Sheffield's emerging industrial quarter, becoming members of the newly-established Zion chapel, the re-building of which Joseph Read supported through subscription.<sup>5</sup> Over the next few years they and their family - Mary-Anne, Eliza, Catharine, Sarah, Emily and Edmund, born between 1801 and 1815 - became involved in the formation and support of a range of societies. These which included the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, the Society for Superseding the Necessity for Climbing-Boys, the Aged Female Society, the Bible Society, the Girls' and Boys' Lancasterian Schools, the Sunday School Union and the West Riding branch of the London Missionary Society. During the 1820s and 1830s, Mary-Anne became a central figure in the Sheffield Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, a supporter of teetotalism and working-class education.

Part One of the chapter focuses on the home life of two generations of the Read family: the childhoods of Mary-Anne, her sisters and brother, and of Elizabeth

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Robinson, *The Smiths of Chesterfield: A History of the Griffin Foundry, Brampton 1775-1833* (Chesterfield: Thomas Brayshaw, 1957), pp. 1-18 and 45-52.

<sup>4</sup> See: Smith letters; Elizabeth Reads' Diaries (Mary-Anne Rawson Papers, Sheffield Archives, hereafter MAR/SA).

<sup>5</sup> See P. G. S. Hopwood, 'The gates of Zion: the story of a Church' (unpublished, no date), pp. 30-60 (Sheffield Local Studies Library, SLSL hereafter).

Rawson and Mary Wilson, the daughters of Mary-Anne and Eliza, born in 1828 and 1830. It explores the relationship of the 'familial' and the 'global' in the evangelical household, in particular the ways in which childrearing practices and domestic life were shaped by broader missionary concerns.

Part Two discusses the Read sisters' involvement in abolitionist, overseas missionary and domestic philanthropic practice in the 1820s-1840s to address issues concerning the relationship between missionary representations of 'other' peoples and women's acceptance and understanding of their 'domestic' role. It is my argument that for these women the 'domestic' was not equated with confinement or a smallness of sphere, but that philanthropic and missionary activity involved them in a world which was profoundly 'social'. Through taking responsibility for the improvement of other cultural groups, middle-class women participated in the construction of new relationships of, and knowledge about, race and class, which were central to the development of a broader middle-class cultural authority.

### **Part One: Happy English Children**

Despite their evangelical repudiation of aspects of 'the world', the 'social' and the 'global' were intrinsic to the Reads' domestic life. Mary-Anne, her sisters and brother acquired their missionary identities in childhood and in the familial setting, shaped by their parents' subscription to evangelical child-rearing methods and by



the material and cultural relationships of their domestic environment: the position of Wincobank Hall within a national evangelical culture, and locally amidst a cluster of working-class villages. As mothers themselves from the 1830s, Mary-Anne and Eliza sought to replicate for their own children the setting and dynamics of the evangelical family life of their childhood.

### **The Reads of Wincobank Hall**

As Mary-Anne Rawson recalled in her 'Memorials of James Montgomery', written in 1857, it was as a family that the Reads attended the first meetings of both the Sheffield Bible Society in 1812 and the Missionary Society in 1813, at which James Montgomery made his first missionary speech. Indeed, for the duration of the latter event, Joseph Read had rented rooms in the centre of town, so that his wife and daughters could hear all of the missionary speeches - including the Reverend John Campbell's tales of the conversion of the 'Hottentot' - and enjoy socialising with friends from around the region.<sup>6</sup> The children's introduction to evangelical society and practice had begun at an early age. Following in their mother's footsteps, all of the girls were teachers at the Zion Chapel Sunday school, and became enthusiastic members of the Sunday School Union from 1812.<sup>7</sup> This marked the beginning of a life-long practice: Emily, the younger

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<sup>6</sup> Mary-Anne Rawson, 'Memorials of James Montgomery, Consisting of portraits, letters with explanatory notes, personal recollections, and notices of some of this friends', (unpublished, 1857, James Montgomery Collection/Sheffield University, JM/SU hereafter).

<sup>7</sup> Joseph and Elizabeth Read worked alongside Maurice Phillips, the Classical Tutor at Rotherham College and first settled minister at Zion Chapel, in promoting the Sunday school. See: Elizabeth Read's Diaries; Letters from Catharine to Eliza Read, September 1813 and Joseph Smith to Joseph Read, 1 May 1814 (MAR/SA);

daughter, taught Sunday school children for over seventy years, from when she was just five years old until her death in 1883.

The Reads' childhood challenges the stereotype of the 'rigorous, ...cheerless and over regimented' system of evangelical childrearing described by Wyatt-Brown in his discussion of antebellum America.<sup>8</sup> Placing a firm emphasis on affection and encouragement as well as discipline, on fun and games and an education including but extending beyond religious reading and family worship, Elizabeth and Joseph Read's style of parenting was influenced both by Elizabeth's own experience of a close, intensely loving family life and, more broadly, by changing trends in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century attitudes to children.<sup>9</sup> As argued by Nancy Cott, the eighteenth century saw a move away from the belief in the need to impose external controls and use of excessive discipline in order to 'break the will' of the child, tending instead to favour the inculcation of internal constraints. The enlightenment idea of the malleability of the child's character gave rise to the belief that adult morality was shaped in childhood, that 'as the twig is bent, the

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Hopwood, 'The gates of Zion'.

<sup>8</sup> Bertrand Wyatt-Brown, 'Young Abolitionists and Missionaries', in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (eds.), *Anti-slavery, Religion and Reform* (Folkestone: William Dawson and Sons, 1980), pp. 183-203. For a discussion of 'religious terrorism' in England, see: Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984) p. 101; Paul Sangster, *Pity My Simplicity: the Evangelical Revival and the Religious Education of Children, 1738-1800*, (London: Epworth Press, 1963), pp. 31-39 and 75-81.

<sup>9</sup> See Smith letters (MAR/SA).

tree will incline.’<sup>10</sup> Thus, emphasis was placed, in Cott’s words, on ‘plentiful physical exercise and ... cultivation of social affections and moral faculties. Nature, sleep and play would "open the bud" and prepare the way for mental culture.’<sup>11</sup>

For evangelicals, the belief in the influence of external impressions was of considerable significance. On the one hand, children were believed to require special protection from ‘the world’ and its corrupting capacities.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, they were to be exposed to positive religious influences from a very young age. The *Evangelical Magazine*, in circulation since 1795, supported parents through its advice on family worship and parental strategies. An article entitled ‘Relative Duties’ in the edition for September 1810, for example, draws upon Biblical quotation to outline the duties of different family members. Citing the Pauline injunction in support of wives’ submission to their ‘own husbands, as unto the Lord’, the extract promotes a parental ‘nurturance’ towards their offspring, while insisting that children should ‘obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.’<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Nancy F. Cott, ‘Notes toward an interpretation of antebellum childrearing’, *The Psychohistory Review*, vol 4, no 4 (1978), pp. 4-20, here pp. 5. See also: J. H. Plumb, ‘The New World of Children in Eighteenth Century England’, *Past and Present*, vol 67 (May 1975), pp. 64-95; Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 343-348.

<sup>11</sup> Cott, ‘Notes toward an interpretation of antebellum childrearing’, p. 6

<sup>12</sup> See: Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, pp. 68-80; Michael Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 634-646.

<sup>13</sup> See ‘Relative Duties’, *Evangelical Magazine* (Supplement, 1810). Also: ‘On Family Worship’ (June 1800); ‘Thoughts on the Importance of Catechizing Youth’

Knowing how best to inculcate religious feeling in their children and how far to protect them from the world outside was, however, still very much in the process of negotiation and, for Joseph and Elizabeth Read, caused many anxieties. Most notably, their decision that their daughters should attend boarding school for a brief period towards the end of their schooling underwent a rapid revision when, in a letter to her mother, Mary-Anne, a pupil at Dinah Ball's school in Chelsea in 1816-17, flaunted her indulgence in card-playing, a visit to the theatre and attendance at an Anglican service, pastimes long frowned upon by evangelical Nonconformists. The response, penned by Mary-Anne's uncle, William Smith, in whom her mother had evidently confided, revealed Congregationalist hostility towards the established Church:

I think your Mama cannot feel altogether contented when she considers that her eldest daughter is giving her presence to that Worship which she herself does not judge it expedient to countenance. Do not smile, Mary Ann; you know these are not smiling subjects - but still may I enquire if you do not think that the Church people have some good qualities in their Composition? If not, do be on your guard.<sup>14</sup>

From then on, while the girls stayed for short spells with family friends around the country, only Edmund was educated away from home.<sup>15</sup> Miss Ball, Mary-Anne's respected teacher, was summoned to Wincobank, where she could take care of the education of the younger girls under their mother's watchful eye.

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(June 1800); 'Paternal Admonition' (December 1800); 'Encouragement to Pious Parents' (August 1802); 'Good Advice to a New Married Couple' (June 1805); 'Free Thoughts on the Propriety, Importance, and Advantages of Family Meetings' (December 1807); 'Visiting the Poor Recommended to Ladies' (December 1813).

<sup>14</sup> See William Smith to Mary-Anne, 10 March 1817 (MAR/SA).

<sup>15</sup> Edmund started a boarding school at Mansfield at seven years, finishing his education at Gainsborough.

Elizabeth Read took seriously her responsibility for the spiritual development of her children. For her, in Doreen Rosman's words, parenthood was 'a mission'.<sup>16</sup> Like other evangelical mothers, she fretted over the state of their souls, and prodded and encouraged their religious commitment. Letters written to her children on their birthdays encouraged them to examine their religious feelings and commitment. Writing to Mary Anne on her twelfth birthday in 1813, she emphasised Britain's privileged position in the world to remind her of the need to be open to religious influence:

You were born in a Christian land, you are privileged Sabbath after Sabbath to hear the glorious gospel from a faithful and affectionate servant of Jehovah; you have books put into your hands calculated to arouse your attention to your eternal concerns...<sup>17</sup>

When sixteen year-old Eliza became the first of her daughters to experience her conversion in 1819, Elizabeth Read was overwhelmed with relief and pleasure: 'That a child of mine should come forward, to avow herself on the Lord's side, and take a decided part in religion, is more delightful to me than I can express...'<sup>18</sup> In a letter written to Mary-Anne later in the year, she talked of the 'awful, yet endearing responsibility of that tender relation' between mother and child, of the knowledge that her love as a mother was not enough to secure their happiness and their 'eternal interests', and encouraged her elder daughter to follow her sister's example.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Read to Mary-Anne, 21 November 1813 (MAR/SA).

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Read to Eliza, 4 April 1819; 8 August 1819 (MAR/SA).

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Read to Mary-Anne, 22 November 1819. See also: Elizabeth Read to Mary-Anne 17 August 1813; 21 November 1813; 21 June 1819; 22 March

Elizabeth encouraged her children to practise benevolence, which was seen as an early sign of a future commitment as well as an important training in religious habits.<sup>20</sup> Gently cajoling the young Edmund into showing the enthusiasm of his sisters for benevolent practices, she praised his decision, as an eight year old, to become a missionary collector:

I hope you begin to feel sorry for those little children who live in countries where they never hear anything about God, and Jesus Christ; where they have no Sabbath-days, no Bibles, and their parents are so ignorant and so wicked that they teach them nothing but what is foolish and naughty.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, she insisted that he should contribute his own money, lest he might enjoy the pleasure of collecting more than he cared for the 'poor heathen children'. Elizabeth Read promoted the development of an evangelical masculine identity for her son, emphasising gentleness and creativity and concern for his sisters, and for which her husband was a good role model. As suggested by a poem entitled 'My Father' and written in 1816 by one of the elder girls, which celebrated a father's joy at birth of son and enjoyment of buying him a present of a wooden horse, teaching him ABC and hymns, sending him letters at school and

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1820; to Eliza 4 April 1820; to Edmund 23 February 1830 (MAR/SA).

<sup>20</sup> See: Elizabeth Read's Diaries, 1804-1806, 1813-1814; letters from Elizabeth Read to Mary-Anne, 8 February 1817; Eliza to Mary-Anne, 19 June 1815; Elizabeth Read to Mary-Anne, 8 February 1817, 12 April 1817 (MAR/SA). For the importance of benevolence in child-rearing, see: Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 329-256; Sangster, *Pity My Simplicity*, p. 79; Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 73-94.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Read to Edmund, 10 November 1823 (MAR/SA).

rejoicing at his home-coming, Joseph Read was lovingly involved in his children's lives.<sup>22</sup>

The family's move to Wincobank Hall in 1816-17 made an ideal context for the development of the Reads' evangelical household. The rambling house, built in the mid-eighteenth century, was in a beautiful setting, situated in 120 acres of woodland, orchard, vinery and pasture on the northern edge of Sheffield.<sup>23</sup> In 1817, the year in which Mrs Read had the family's globes repaired, her husband built a pulpit in the laundry room and, equipped with a Bible presented by George Bennet, invited students and tutors from Rotherham College to conduct religious services for local people.<sup>24</sup> During the same year, the elder girls established a Sunday school at the Hall and, as members of the Sheffield Juvenile Missionary Society and the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, began visiting the homes of the poor in their neighbourhood, taking gifts of pin-cushions and garden

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<sup>22</sup> The 'Family Miscellany', August 1816 (MAR/SA). Edmund had been born less than a year earlier. Nancy Cott suggests that the involvement of the father in childhood helped to reconcile the evident power of the mother, which achieved a particular expression during her children's infancy, with the hierarchical family model. See Cott, 'Notes toward an interpretation of antebellum childrearing', p. 8. For evangelical constructions of father- and motherhood, see Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 329-335.

<sup>23</sup> The natural beauty of its setting was celebrated by the Sheffield poet Ebenezer Elliott: 'On Norwood's flowers the dewdrops shine and shake;/ Up, sluggards, up! and drink the morning breeze/ The birds on cloud-left Osgathorpe awake;/ And Wincobank is waving all his trees/ O'er subject towns and farms, and villages,/ And gleaming streams, and woods and waterfalls,/ Up, climb the oak-crown'd summit!'. Ebenezer Elliott, 'The Ranter', in *The Splendid Village: Corn Law Rhymes; and other Poems* (Sheffield: J. Pearce, 1833), pp. 144-156, here p. 144.

<sup>24</sup> George Bennet to Joseph Read, 4 October 1817 (MAR/SA).

produce, distributing tracts and reading extracts from the Bible, collecting for missions and attempting to persuade their neighbours to send their children to Sunday school.<sup>25</sup> Surrounded by a cluster of villages, the Hall was ideally positioned to enable such an enterprise. Indeed, such developments raise interesting questions concerning the Reads' perception of their class status. While they retained and regularly returned to the house near the works at Royds Mill, the move from Attercliffe suggests a desire to emulate the gentry, in terms of the appropriation for evangelical purposes of the culture of the country estate.<sup>26</sup>

Extant material from the children's leisure pursuits and formal education reveals the priority given to evangelical concerns. The family magazines which the girls produced from 1817 provided the ideal forum for reflection upon their religious practice. Various titles the 'Wincobank Remembrancer', 'Family Repository' and 'Wincobank Repository', these contained humour, riddles and short moral tales, such as the story of Ned, the boy who wished he was a crow so that he would not have to suffer in the knowledge that God could read his thoughts; of Eleanor, the naughty girl who procrastinated; and of the dialogue between Matthew Hopeful, a recent convert and regular chapel-goer, and John

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<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Read wrote to inform Mary-Anne that 5 guineas each had been sent to the London, Baptist and Moravian Missionary Societies. See: Elizabeth Read to Mary-Anne, 8 February 1817; 22 March 1820 and 21 April 1821; also 'Account Book for Wincobank, 1817-1822' (MAR/SA). For the role of children in collecting for missions, see Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, Chapter Three.

<sup>26</sup> For the movement between industrial areas and the suburbs, see Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 364-369.



Goodenough, who failed to realise that it was not enough to dig his garden, weed his onions and lead a good and quiet life.<sup>27</sup>

Under the editorship of Eliza during 1818-1819 more space was given to reflecting on sermons. In her discussion of Joseph Gilbert's sermon of May 1819, based on Mark 13:36, 'Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping', Eliza mused over the different reasons for 'being asleep': the guilty soul, the good person not sufficiently devoted to God, and the many 'mere professors of religion', concluding with a vow to become more watchful in her own commitment. The substance of the Reverend G. C. Kidd's sermon, 'He that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully' (Corinthians 9:6) in November 1819 led the editor to assert the need to use her own time productively: 'Let us suppress every idle word', she wrote, '...Surely we may give up a little fireside chat in order that we may sing the louder in an eternal chorus'.<sup>28</sup>

A short contribution to the 'Family Repository' of April 1819 describes a visit to local cottages for the purpose of distributing tracts, encouraging Sunday school attendance and collecting donations to the Missionary Society. At one cottage, the authors report, a mother enthused about the positive effects of their Sunday school, which not only prevented her children from getting into bad company but ensured

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<sup>27</sup> The 'Wincobank Remembrancer', July 1819, September 1819; the 'Wincobank Repository', August 1819. Other extant editions from this period include the 'Family Miscellany', August and December 1816; the 'Family Repository', April 1819, March 1820 (MAR/SA).

<sup>28</sup> See the 'Wincobank Remembrancer', July 1819 and November 1819 (MAR/SA).

that they came back clean and enthusiastic about their lessons; Sunday schools, she exclaimed, were 'the best thing that ever happened to poor people.' In another, usually dirty abode, inhabited by subscribers to the Missionary society, the sisters record with delight their discovery that, as a result of the recent conversion of the husband, his wife had recognised the value of cleanliness and domestic order.<sup>29</sup> A sense of themselves as agents of improvement was thus articulated by the sisters from a very young age.

Miss Ball, the girls' much-respected teacher, encouraged her pupils to write on missionary themes. Indeed, her own pamphlet, *The Missionary Society, A Dialogue*, a conversation on the importance of missions between Harry, an agricultural labourer, his friend Tom and Mr Preachwell, an evangelical minister, was published in Sheffield in the early 1820s. The discussion is stimulated by Tom's encounter with some 'young ladies' asking for a donation to missions. As his desire to find out more about their cause unfolds, so the piece introduces the noble aims of the local missionary society in a language thought appropriate for the poor. Asking Mr Preachwell about *the heathens, the innocent but ignorant* Tom receives the following reply:

Oh! You cannot think, Tom, what a world we live in. Our own country is only like one ear of wheat to that whole field. There are eight hundred millions of people in the world, and more than half of these people are Heathens; that is, they worship false Gods... They live over almost the whole of Africa, one quarter of the Globe. They are spread over the

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<sup>29</sup> 'A Walk in the Country', in the 'Family Repository', April 1819 (MAR/SA).

greatest part of America, another quarter; and a great many large kingdoms of Asia, a third of the Globe, are full of Heathens.<sup>30</sup>

Preachwell continues to explain the horrors of heathen worship, and of cultural practices such as sati and infanticide and of the wonderful changes inspired by missionaries in India, the South Pacific, Africa and the West Indies. Tom and his friend respond positively, and the pamphlet ends with Harry's declaration to donate to the missionary society money he had been saving to spend at the fair. Such is the value of the missionary practice of young ladies, helping missions overseas while assisting in the reformation of the poor at home.

Mary-Anne's 'Missionary Atlas', a collection of maps drawn in 1819 depicting the state of missionary activity throughout the world, was a likely product of Miss Ball's teaching.<sup>31</sup> This was revised by Catharine in 1822 and presented to George Bennet on the eve of his journey to the South Pacific. Bennet liked Catharine's emphasis on the progress rather than the slowness of Christianisation, represented by her use of gold stars to highlight mission stations, and expressed his appreciation in verse:

The dark places of earth are *with cruelty fraught*,  
There horrid oppressions abound;  
And iniquity often for virtue is taught  
By heathens to heathens around.  
But God has declared that light shall arise  
to those in the shadows of death;  
That the Gospel a passage shall win throu' the skies  
Nor in vain be expended his breath...

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<sup>30</sup> Dinah Ball, *The Missionary Society, A Dialogue* (Sheffield: James Montgomery, no date).

<sup>31</sup> Mary-Anne's 'Missionary Atlas', 1819 (MAR/SA).

Heathenism was so widespread that people talked of searching in vain to find nations belonging to God. But, with her missionary map 'Miss Catharine' had:

repainted the globe;  
Cloth'd the stations of missions in Mantles of Gold,  
and the rest in obscurity's Robe.<sup>32</sup>

Sarah Read's 'Journal of a Voyage from Gravesend to Madeira', also supervised by Miss Ball, reveals the author's familiarity with the content and style of missionary writing in its careful attention to the morality and customs of the people, as well as geographical details of distances and directions, the wildlife and produce of specific islands.<sup>33</sup> Written in the form of a letter to a friend, the journal details her impressions of the 'barbaric' customs of the 'deep chocolate'-coloured people of Halifax Bay, who remove teeth and parts of fingers to ensure their children can suffer pain. She discusses the ornaments of feathers, flowers, beads and shells with which people in 'Otaheiti' adorn themselves; and refers to the indolence of the men, who allow women to feed them from spoons. Indeed, with such detail, it is likely that the 'Journal' was inspired by letters from Bennet on his travels, in which the family took great interest.<sup>34</sup>

A long-standing friend of the family, Bennet had been keen to involve members of the Read family in his missionary endeavours. He was grateful for the presents

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<sup>32</sup> See: Mary-Anne's 'Missionary Atlas', 1819; George Bennet to Catharine Read, 21 April 1820 (MAR/SA).

<sup>33</sup> Sarah Read, 'Journal of a voyage from Gravesend to Madeira, May 1819-April 1822' (MAR/SA).

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter Five, below.

sent by Elizabeth Read to be given to King Pomare of Tahiti and his family, and the flowers and peacock feathers that Edmund had collected from the garden at Wincobank, and which Bennet gave to a young Tahitian boy who was attending the mission school; the child, named John Williams after the LMS missionary, gave him shells to send home in return.<sup>35</sup> Bennet's letters to Edmund display a tone of avuncular interest, telling him of the coronation of the new King of Tahiti, himself a young boy of Edmund's age and a Christian, and encouraging the little boy's own reflections on his faith.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, childhood and children feature prominently in Bennet's account of his journey, the declining infanticide rates in particular used to suggest both missionary progress in the South Pacific and the peculiar privilege of the child in England. Writing to Edmund on the occasion of his imminent departure for his first boarding school at Mansfield, Bennet quoted a verse from the hymn by Ann Taylor Gilbert:

I thank the goodness and the grace  
Which on my birth have smiled  
And made me in these Christian days  
A happy English child.<sup>37</sup>

Writing to Joseph Read from India in 1826, Bennet praised his friend's daughters, reflecting upon the 'blessing' bestowed on girls by an English education: 'The poor creatures, the Ladies who have either been educated in these countries altogether or have only been sent to England for a few years of instruction are so vapid, so ignorant of anything worth knowing, so vain...', he wrote of English women in

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<sup>35</sup> George Bennet to Edmund Read, November 1822 (MAR/SA).

<sup>36</sup> Letters from George Bennet to Edmund Read, November 1822; to Mrs Read, April 1824 (MAR/SA).

<sup>37</sup> George Bennet to Edmund Read, 24 April 1826 (MAR/SA).

India, their 'frivolous pursuits' and 'mental as well as corporeal indolence' far inferior to the active, useful femininity of evangelical Christians.<sup>38</sup>

The issue of the privilege of the English child is addressed by Sarah in poetry written during the anti-slavery campaign of the mid-1820s. One untitled poem is structured around a conversation between a mother and her young son who, having seen a notice for an anti-slavery meeting pinned to the church-yard gate, is full of questions concerning slaves and slavery. Following her explanations about the horrors of the Middle Passage and life on West Indian plantations, the mother appeals to her child's ability to empathise, comparing his daily freedoms with the work, poor conditions and punishments experienced by slaves:

When you returned from school on Thursday night  
You said you did not feel inclined to play,  
How in your garden did you take delight  
As you were wearied from the sultry day;  
And yet you'd had no labour to perform,  
Nor any exercise to make you warm.<sup>39</sup>

Horrified by this new knowledge and assured in his capacity for moral influence, the child resolves to persuade his father to abandon slave-grown sugar: 'I think that I can do some little good... I know he'll do it - if he thinks it right'.

Two more extant poems of Sarah's, written during the anti-slavery campaigns of the 1820s, re-affirm her faith in the power of British missionaries to effect global change. 'A Tale of Woe' tells the story of the suffering of a young boy, snatched

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<sup>38</sup> George Bennet to Joseph Read, 27 April 1826 (MAR/SA).

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Read, untitled (MAR/SA).

at fourteen from an idyllic African landscape and forced onto a slave ship bound for the Americas. It is a story in which white men have 'black' hearts, are unable to see the grief and pain of their captured African brothers, and in which black men do not yet know of the 'friend on high' who cares for the slave and can answer their prayers for mercy. 'The Recaptured Negro' takes a similar format, featuring a male narrator who reflects on his happy life in Africa from a slave ship, expressing his own pain through his thoughts of his mother's broken heart. Represented as a vulnerable human being, expressing his desire for freedom through memories of domestic happiness, the enslaved man is constructed in the image of the evangelical ideal of the sensitive, feeling male, the poem concluding with his liberation by the efforts of a British anti-slavery vessel and 'recapture' by a missionary who promises him freedom through Christian education.<sup>40</sup>

By their early adulthood, a sense of themselves as missionaries was placed at the centre of consciousness and practice of these young women. Emerging differences of denominational loyalty, most notable in Sarah's and Emily's decision to attend the local Parish church, were negotiated by their missionary identities.<sup>41</sup> The

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<sup>40</sup> Sarah Read, 'A Tale of Woe' and 'The Recaptured Negro', 1820s (MAR/SA). Mrs Read also encouraged Edmund to write anti-slavery poems, promising him a book as a reward. His first verse ended with the lines: 'Not more than half do reach the native land,/And they so weak that they can hardly stand.' There is no evidence of any further poetic contribution from Edmund. Edmund to Elizabeth Read, no date (MAR/SA).

<sup>41</sup> Sarah to Eliza, 25 October 1827 (MAR/SA). In 1823 the family had bought a pew at the newly re-pewed Ecclesfield Church. I can find no discussion of any controversy concerning this event, despite Sarah and Emily's concerns about their mother's response to their Anglican sympathies. While Mary-Anne's interest in the Plymouth Brethren during the 1830s elicited a concerned response from Catharine, lamenting that they did not 'think more alike', Mrs Read was unperturbed,

1820s saw their involvement in a range of local evangelical bodies, including the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, the Campaign for Superseding the Necessity for Climbing-Boys, the Sunday School Union, the Bible and Missionary Societies and the Anti-Slavery Society, as well as their subscriptions to national societies, including the Tract Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the London Missionary Society. A family magazine of August 1826 is suggestive of both the breadth of interest and degree to which the girls' social lives were structured around missionary pursuits. Written for their Aunt in Devon, the magazine informs that 'three of the blooming daughters of Joseph Read' had been present on the occasion of the consecration of Attercliffe Church in July; and that Sarah and Emily, who had attended the Bible Society meeting at Chesterfield in August, were organising a bazaar for the Ladies' Hibernian School Society and were sending profits made from the sale of honey from their own bees to the Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews.<sup>42</sup>

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assuming that her elder daughter's involvement with a forthcoming teetotal festival would divert her interest. See: Catharine to Mary-Anne, November 20 1841; Mrs Read to Eliza, 11 December 1837 (MAR/SA). While, as Michael Watts has suggested, the Plymouth Brethren's rejection of ceremony and worldliness offered 'a spiritual haven to Nonconformists disillusioned with the respectability of Dissent', it seems that Mary-Anne's choice of place of worship was occasioned by a less spiritual cause. During the late 1830s and early 1840s, she suffered from illness and exhaustion, and preferred the quietness of the Brethren's Room to the noise and heat of the missionary meeting. See: Mary-Anne's 'Journal', 1840-42 (MAR/SA); Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol 2, pp. 612-613. It is difficult to account for these shifts away from Congregationalism except by assuming a greater fluidity in religious identity.

<sup>42</sup> The 'Wincobank Gazette', 14 August 1826 (MAR/SA).



By the mid-1820s Wincobank Hall had become established as an important domestic and familial centre within a national network of evangelical Nonconformity. It offered respite to friends and acquaintances in need of a stop-over on missionary tours of the north of England or on long journeys back to London and the south, to those invited to speak on the occasion of a missionary meeting or a Sunday school anniversary, or to weary missionaries experiencing the disorientation and exhaustion which often accompanied the return to England.<sup>43</sup> As is revealed by Mary-Anne's 'Treasury of Pen and Pencil Memorials of Absent Friends', visitors to the family home between 1824 and 1828 included many prominent evangelicals, including Ann and Joseph Gilbert, Josiah Condor, John Angell James, Thomas Raffles and William Ellis, the latter recently returned from the South Pacific.<sup>44</sup> Such networks ensured that when Mary-Anne and Eliza moved to Nottingham following their marriages to William Rawson and William Wilson in 1828 and 1829, they were able to settle quickly into evangelical circles.<sup>45</sup> Again in the late 1830s, when Eliza, her husband William Wilson and

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<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Catharine to Mary-Anne, 22 September 1831, in which she mentions a Mr Curzon who she had met at the BMS anniversary in Nottingham. Feeling that he seemed in need of 'care, kindness and comfort', she suggests that Mary-Anne might like to invite him back to Wincobank following the Sheffield anniversary the following month (MAR/SA).

<sup>44</sup> Mary-Anne Rawson, 'Treasury of Pen and Pencil Memorials of Absent Friends, 1824-1828, (unpublished, JM/SU).

<sup>45</sup> For Mary-Anne's and Eliza's activities in Nottingham, see: Catharine to Mrs Read, September 1831; Catharine to Mary-Anne, September 1831; Emily to Joseph Read, 11 November 1832; Mrs Read to Edmund, 13 October 1838 (MAR/SA).

their eight children moved to Torquay, their lives followed a now familiar pattern.<sup>46</sup>

### **Lizzie and Mary**

The correspondence between Lizzie Rawson and Mary Wilson, Mary-Anne's and Eliza's daughters, born in 1828 and 1830, illustrates the extent to which the lives of the next generation were structured by missionary concerns. Lizzie was brought up at Wincobank, where Mary-Anne had returned following the death of William Rawson in July 1829,<sup>47</sup> and where she spent her childhood immersed in her mother's anti-slavery, teetotal and domestic philanthropic concerns of the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>48</sup> Mary spent her formative years in Torquay, where the family had moved in the late 1830s on account of her mother's poor health. This was a truly evangelical household. Indeed, in a journal written during a month-long visit to her sister's home in the early 1840s, Mary-Anne celebrated what she saw as the model Christian family. William Wilson was involved in the building of a local chapel,

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<sup>46</sup> Rosman has described 'English evangelicalism' as 'a federation of country houses... (and) godly families'. Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture*, p. 14. When Mrs Read visited in the autumn of 1847 for the occasion of the opening of the new chapel by John Angell James, she was thrilled at the network her daughter had helped to construct and wrote of her enjoyment at becoming acquainted with a new community of so many 'good ministers and private Christians'. See Elizabeth Read's Diary, 1844-1850 (MAR/SA).

<sup>47</sup> The family was plagued by tuberculosis, which caused the death of Sarah in June 1829, William Rawson in July of the same year, Eliza in 1853 and Lizzie in 1862.

<sup>48</sup> During 1836-37, at the time of Joseph Read's bankruptcy and subsequent death, the family was forced to sell the house and to return to The Mills. Mary-Anne, however, was able to buy back the house in 1837, and she, her daughter, mother and sisters Catharine and Emily lived at the Hall for the rest of their lives. See Crisis Letters (MAR/SA).

a British and Foreign School and new cemetery, while the fragile Eliza regularly hosted the missionary working party, and their children - Sarah, Mary, Cecil, Henry Joseph, Rebekah, Kitty and Gertrude - eagerly participated in a round of missionary events, attending a bazaar and tea-party, a prayer meeting, and running their own missionary shop during the duration of their aunt's visit.<sup>49</sup>

Alongside chat about fabric for pinafores, commiserations over the death of a pet rabbit, and competition over height and skipping, Lizzie Rawson sends her cousin the 1838 *Appeal for Slaves*, partly written by her mother on behalf of the Sheffield Ladies' Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery and tells her that she is to receive Charlotte Elizabeth's short stories for her birthday.<sup>50</sup> She writes to Mary of an exhibition and lecture she had attended at Brightside on the Niagara Falls, where the lecturer and his companions had dressed up as Indians, beating a drum and dancing.<sup>51</sup> She reminded her of an article concerning Robert and Mary Moffatt, missionaries in Africa whom both girls had met, expressing her relief that his party had reached their Kuruman mission station in safety, and on another occasion informed her cousin of the deposed Rajah of Satarra, whose case they were following.<sup>52</sup> The Sunday school processions at Wincobank are described with pride, and Lizzie's later letters, sealed with teetotal stickers declaring 'Intoxicating drink' to be 'the cause of 9/10 of the crime of the country',

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<sup>49</sup> Mary-Anne's Journal, Torquay, no date (MAR/SA).

<sup>50</sup> Lizzie Rawson to Mary Wilson, February 1838; December 1839 (MAR/SA).

<sup>51</sup> Lizzie Rawson to Mary Wilson, 26 July 1843 (MAR/SA).

<sup>52</sup> Lizzie Rawson to Mary Wilson, May 1844; June 1848 (MAR/SA).

include reports of lectures and Teetotal Teas and on one occasion she berates her cousin for her adoption of the new tune for the 'Teetotal Joyful'.<sup>53</sup>

There is a lightness in the girls' approach to their religious and missionary commitment. This is most apparent in the regular leg-pulling in their correspondence regarding Lizzie's 'imagination and fancies and ravings' about George Thompson, 'precious Mr T', the anti-slavery campaigner and free-trader and good friend of her mother. Lizzie sent her cousin articles written by Thompson, providing snippets of news, memories of days spent in the Peak District or in London with his family, and a description of some slippers she had made for him.<sup>54</sup> Her descriptions of Thompson's visits to Wincobank are pure melodrama: 'I thought I heard something like a cab coming', she wrote in February 1845:

so I listened with all my ears, and I heard it stop (Oh! how my heart beat). It drove into the yard. I heard Matthew come into the house... and Mr Thompson was behind! "Well my dear" he said in the kindest tone possible. Mary! It was such a joy - it is two years and four months since I last saw

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<sup>53</sup> Also: that 'Teetotallers aim at the production of that smiling scene, a land without a Drunkard...' See Lizzie Rawson to Mary Wilson, 17 August 1843, 10 February 1848 and 7 March 1848 (MAR/SA).

<sup>54</sup> See: Lizzie Rawson to Mary Wilson, 7 January 1841, 12 February 1845, 4 February 1848, 10 February 1848. George Thompson (1804-1878), son of a Wesleyan bank clerk from Liverpool, was a radical abolitionist and member of the Agency Committee, lecturer on temperance and the Corn Laws. During 1839-40 he was agent for the Aborigines Protection Society and from 1840 for the British India Society. It was during his visit to India in 1843 that he became acquainted with the Rajah of Satarra, a prince who claimed to be a reforming landlord and who was making a claim against the British. According to C. Duncan Rice, Thompson was 'a superlative orator with somewhat vulgar good looks' who inspired an especially intense following among women. See C. Duncan Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists, 1833-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

him - but I think he is not in the least degree altered, except perhaps nicer and kinder!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!<sup>55</sup>

Less earnest and self-critical than their mothers and aunts, Lizzie and Mary do not experience their faith as something they have continually to strive for; religion for them is much more of a 'smiling subject'.<sup>56</sup>

Lizzie's letters to Mary suggest a continuation of the importance of the mission in their lives, but there is a slightly different tone from the correspondence of the previous generation. There is a suggestion of a changing language of racial difference when Lizzie tells of her amusement at one of the newspapers 'either by mistake, or for a jest' referring to Thompson's friend Tagore as 'the great Baboon', a play on 'Baboo'.<sup>57</sup> She reports also of her shock at the language of a woman she had met at Derwent, a Miss Hunter who was a 'Puseyite... [who] seems not to see anything wrong in the Roman Catholic Church... [but] hates children and niggers!!!!'<sup>58</sup> In Lizzie's 'Aurora Borealis', an autograph book put

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<sup>55</sup> Lizzie Rawson to Mary Wilson, 12 February 1845 (MAR/SA).

<sup>56</sup> This lightness enabled Lizzie to poke fun at her pious aunt Emily. Writing to Mary on 12 January 1838, the nine-year old Lizzie told her cousin that she had been making bookmarks inscribed with 'Pity the Slave' and 'God is Love': 'I was going to make "Search the Scriptures"', she writes, 'but I cannot get it in, so have put "Search the Bible instead" - and this despite aunt Emily's disapproving retort that she might as well have put 'search the floor' or 'search for a pin' as get it wrong. Emily adopted the role of religious guide for Elizabeth, writing to her to encourage her to examine her soul and reflect upon her religious commitment. See: Lizzie Rawson to Mary Eliza Wilson, 12 January 1838; Emily Read to Elizabeth Rawson, October 1 1842, December 24 1845, December 24 1849, December 24 1851 (MAR/SA).

<sup>57</sup> Lizzie Rawson to Mary Wilson, 26 July 1843 (MAR/SA).

<sup>58</sup> Lizzie Rawson to Mary Wilson, 7 January 1841 (MAR/SA).

together in the late 1840s, her friend Rachel Howard contributed a 'Recipe for Irish Stew.' The middle verse reads as follows:

Put idleness in  
To Priestcraft akin,  
Of fancied Injustice a Measure,  
Chop liberty small  
And from mansion and hall  
Then add murdered landlords at pleasure...<sup>59</sup>

Written in the midst of the Famine, the poem stereotypes the Irish in terms of 'blarney', 'chatter' and 'passion', idleness, popery and violence, suggesting not only the centrality of Ireland to the 'imperial gaze' in this decade, but also a changing context which exhibited a harsher language and easier denigration of 'other' peoples.<sup>60</sup>

In a letter to Mary in 1843, her uncle Edmund tells her an imaginative story of some American Indians, 'savage barbarians' who having been at Wincobank, were moving southwards. These were, he wrote, 'absurd creatures', their absurdity underlined by their choice of a woman as their chief:

I think that when persons ape what they neither are nor can be, it is best, as far as possible, to treat them with silent contempt - I should have more respect for the Squaw Chief, were she to lay aside her feathered head dress

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<sup>59</sup> 'Recipe for Irish Stew', by 'RH', in Lizzie Rawson, 'Aurora Borealis', 1849 (MAR/SA).

<sup>60</sup> See: Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978); Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: RKP, 1971); Catherine Hall, 'Missionary Stories: gender and ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s', in C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), Chapter Nine.

and leopard skin robes to look after the Pots and Pans and other domestic concerns...<sup>61</sup>

Edmund's letter illustrates not only the common-sense equation of feminine domesticity with civilisation, discussed in Chapter Two, but the centrality of 'race' and 'otherness' to the lives of evangelical children. In Part Two, I discuss the range of missionary activities at Wincobank, exploring the significance of the missionary relationship to the construction of the cultural authority of middle-class women.

## **Part Two: Women's Missionary Practice and Cultural Authority**

Recent writing on cultural formation in the nineteenth-century has emphasised the significance of languages of 'likeness', of similarities and unities, in the construction of identity.<sup>62</sup> For missionary men and women, the notion of a 'common humanity', understood in terms of shared origins and common potential for improvement, was central to their belief and practice. At the same time, however, their claims to likeness were undercut by representations of the relationship between themselves and those cultural groups on the receiving end of their mission in terms of inequality and difference. As I discuss below, the

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<sup>61</sup> Edmund Read to Mary Wilson, 19 December 1843 (MAR/SA).

<sup>62</sup> See Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See also Introduction, pp. 14-15, above.

engagement by the Read sisters with missionary discourse had significant implications for the construction of a specifically female cultural authority.

### **Anti-slavery and the overseas mission**

During the 1820s the issue of the abolition of the slave trade again became a major pre-occupation of evangelical Christians. The new wave of anti-slavery activity to sweep the nation in 1823-24 involved a new generation of activists, working alongside experienced campaigners such as William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Zachary Macaulay and others who had been prominent in the campaigns against the slave trade of the 1780s and 1790s. The campaign of 1823-1833 saw a focus on, firstly, the amelioration and eventual abolition of slavery and, from 1830-31, its immediate and absolute abolition. This was to be achieved through the creation of a network of local societies which would put pressure on Parliament. After the partial success of 1833 the campaign subsided, to be roused again in the campaign against apprenticeship of 1837-38.<sup>63</sup>

Elizabeth and Joseph Read had been present at the opening meeting of the Sheffield Anti-Slavery Society which, affiliated to the parent society in London, was formed in 1824. Also involved were men and women with whom they had a

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<sup>63</sup> See: Roger Anstey, 'The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', in Bolt and Drescher, *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform*, pp. 19-42; Howard Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery, 1832-1870* (London: Longman, 1972); Edith F. Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience. Slave Emancipation and the Abolition Movement in Britain* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), Chapter Three; Seymour Drescher, 'Public Opinion and the Destruction of British Colonial Slavery', in James Walvin (ed.), *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 22-48.



long acquaintance, including James Montgomery, Samuel Roberts and his daughter Mary, Rowland Hodgson, Hannah Kilham and Thomas Asline Ward.<sup>64</sup> Within a year of the formation of the Sheffield society, however, Elizabeth and Mary-Anne Read had become founder members of the Sheffield Female Anti-Slavery Society, formed in July 1825. This was for Mary-Anne the beginnings of an involvement which was to preoccupy her into her ninth decade. It was, at the same time, the beginnings of the transformation of anti-slavery into a popular movement.<sup>65</sup>

Taking their lead from the female society in Birmingham, whose extra-parliamentary campaigning provided a model for societies in towns throughout Britain, the women, as Clare Midgley has argued, formed the most visible activists in their neighbourhoods.<sup>66</sup> Mapping their anti-slavery activities onto a system of district visiting established by the women's committees of philanthropic and Bible

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<sup>64</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 24 August 1824; 24 January 1826; 'Minute Book of the Auxiliary Society for the relief of Negro Slaves', 1825 (Mary-Anne Rawson Papers, John Rylands Library, hereafter MAR/JR); N. B. Lewis, 'The abolitionist movement in Sheffield, 1822-1833' reprinted from *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol 18, no 2 (July 1934).

<sup>65</sup> For the importance of women's activity to anti-slavery see: Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870*, (London: Routledge, 1992); Louis and Rosamund Billington, "'A Burning Zeal for Righteousness": Women in the British Anti-Slavery Movement, 1820-1860', in Jane Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different? Women's Politics in Britain, 1800-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 82-111; Alex Tyrrell, "'Woman's Mission" and Pressure Group Politics in Britain (1825-60)', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol 63 (1980), pp. 194-230.

<sup>66</sup> See *Report of the Sheffield Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society* (Sheffield: J. Blackwell, 1827). According to Midgley, many of the 39 ladies' associations and 73 auxiliaries in existence by 1832 were inspired and assisted by the Birmingham women. Some (including Sheffield) borrowed from the Birmingham constitution, as well as from their supplies of tracts and pamphlets. See Midgley, *Women against Slavery*, pp. 45-47.

societies, Mary-Anne and her colleagues engaged in an energetic round of fund-raising, tract- and pamphlet-distribution, and house-to-house canvassing in support of the 1826 campaign for abstention from slave-grown produce. While the 'men's' society flagged in the late 1820s, the women continued to campaign and to write. Indeed, the revival of the national campaign from 1831 was due in part to the ease with which the newly-formed Agency Committee was able to draw upon women's campaigning structures in order to create a mass movement which extended beyond its traditional constituency. In the words of George Thompson, friend of Mary-Anne and whose lecture tour on behalf of the Agency Committee in July 1832 saw the reformation of the Sheffield Anti-Slavery Society under the chairmanship of James Montgomery, women were central to the success of the movement: 'where they existed, they did everything... in a word, they formed the cement of the whole Antislavery building - without their aid we never should have been united.'<sup>67</sup>

Many of the women who joined the ladies' societies were inspired by the activities of male abolitionists. As illustrated by the 'Negro's Album of the Sheffield Anti-Slavery Society', the production of which in 1828 involved both societies, and Mary-Anne's 1832 publication, *The Bow in the Cloud*, men and women shared a number of common concerns. Writers of both genders focused on the particular oppression of women under a system of slavery which was seen to oppose the laws of nature in the destruction of familial relationships, with the salvation of the slave

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Midgley, *Women against Slavery*, p. 44. For George Thompson, see Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists 1833-1861*, and pp. 140-141, above.

through Christian missions, and with the particular role accorded to the British in the progress to abolition.<sup>68</sup> An inscription on the first page of the 'Negro's Album of the Sheffield Anti-Slavery Society' illustrates this latter theme, showing two slaves, kneeling, chained and praying, giving thanks as a slave master dropping his whip on sight of Britannia, 'that Goddess-like Woman', complete with halo and exuding a white light.<sup>69</sup>

There were, however, important differences between the male and female societies. Most significantly, the members of the Ladies' Society were often very critical of what they saw as the narrow focus and limited aims of the mainstream movement, expressed in their support for 'immediate abolition', the argument for which had first been articulated by the Leicester Quaker and abolitionist Elizabeth Heyrick in 1824. While the Sheffield men resisted Samuel Roberts' attempts to radicalise them, the ladies distributed Heyrick's pamphlet in the town.<sup>70</sup> In order

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<sup>68</sup> See for example: Samuel Roberts, 'The Piccaninny's Petition'; George Thompson, 'Negro Slavery', and Anon, 'The Negro Mother's Appeal' in 'The Negro's Album of the Sheffield Anti-Slavery Society' (unpublished, 1828, MAR/JR); and Mrs Gilbert, 'Oppression', Mrs Howitt, 'The Negro Mother' and William Knibb, 'Death of a Female Slave', in Mary-Anne Rawson, *The Bow in the Cloud; Or, the Negro's Memorial* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1834).

<sup>69</sup> For the significance of such representations of Britain in the construction of a white abolitionist discourse, see: Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 249-271; Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 58-79.

<sup>70</sup> See Midgley, *Women against Slavery*, pp. 107-108. Mary-Anne's support for the immediatist position, along with her support for total abstinence and the abolition of the death penalty, led James Montgomery in later life to despair at what he termed her 'extreme notions' and 'ultra views'. See Mary-Anne Rawson, 'Memorials of James Montgomery' (JM/SU).

to pre-empt male criticism of their independent stance, the ladies invoked the notion of female spiritual equality:

We ought to obey God rather than man. Confidence here is not at variance with humanity. On principles like these, the simple need not fear to confront the sage; nor a *female* society to take their stand against the united wisdom of the world.<sup>71</sup>

Compelled by their duty as Christian women, the ladies justified their opposition to the gradual amelioration of the conditions of the enslaved. Slavery was to them a moral and religious issue, and therefore required the attentions of women to bring it to an immediate end: 'No views of policy, no regard to worldly interest, must here interfere.'<sup>72</sup>

In their contestation of the reluctance of many men to support immediate abolition, the Sheffield ladies argued that the gradualist position came unsettlingly close to undermining the fundamental abolitionist belief in the humanity of the slave. In the 1827 *Report*, the women posed a rhetorical question concerning the nature of racial difference:

Is it that there exists in the breast of the Negro, a problem, which no principle of our nature can resolve; that there exists in him a propensity, which savage beasts, and fiercer man, have never before manifested; that human nature in his breast is in direct opposition to human nature elsewhere...<sup>73</sup>

Writing in 1830, they welcomed the enslaved to God's family:

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<sup>71</sup> *Report of the Sheffield Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society*, 1827, p. 10.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 1827, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 1827, p. 4

Thy veins, when pierced have flowed with the same crimson tide as our own; thou hast been born and died like a man. Who shall deny thee to be formed by the Creator, and saved by the Redeemer of our common race?...<sup>74</sup>

Taking care to reassure the reader that abolition would not result in widespread disregard for the law or the handing over of firearms to slaves, the authors proceed to dismiss common objections to abolition, such as the concern for the planters and the economic need for slave-grown produce, through an appeal to the greater authority of God:

We know not how such reasons shall meet with the eye of Him who has numbered every hair on the head of these poor negroes, and who sees with no distinction those swarthy natives of a torrid zone, and the loftier forms of their fair-skinned and base oppressors.<sup>75</sup>

Here the women betray their belief in a sense of racial hierarchy: while membership of one human family ensured the absence of distinction in the eyes of God, white people were nonetheless identified as superior, even if their 'loftiness' was endowed by the educational and cultural advantages of European society.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Report of the Sheffield Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society* (Sheffield: J. Blackwell, 1830). See also *An Appeal of the Friends of the Negro to the British People on behalf of the slaves in their colonies*, (Sheffield: J. Blackwell, 1830), p. 1. 'God', they assert, 'hath made of one blood all nations that dwell on the face of the earth; there is no respect of persons with Him; the God of the white man is the God of the negro...'

<sup>75</sup> *Report*, 1827, p. 10.

<sup>76</sup> See: Catherine Hall, '"From Greenland's Icy Mountain... to Afric's Golden Sand": Ethnicity, Race and Nation in Mid-Nineteenth Century England', *Gender & History*, vol 5, no 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 212-230; 'Missionary Stories: gender and ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s', in *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 205-254.

In *An Appeal to the Christian Women of Sheffield*, written to publicise the formation of the Sheffield Ladies' Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery in 1837, Mary-Anne Rawson elaborated upon the notion of women's duty to oppose the immorality of slavery. Discussing the continued suffering of women under the apprenticeship system, she implored with 'Christian daughters, wives and mothers' to sympathise with black women who were at once 'sisters in one blessed Faith' and passive victims of slavery, those who, 'in their helplessness and their woe ...stretched out their supplicant hand towards Britain':

*"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Oh! if we were bound with them, how should we wish others to feel and act for us? If our parents, brothers, sisters, husbands and children, were bound with them, could we turn away from the discussion of the subject, as a political question in which we had no interest? Yet mark the words, "As bound with them". Here we take our stand, and regard it as a decidedly religious question.*<sup>77</sup>

'Plead(ing) on behalf of those victims of oppression who cannot plead for themselves', white women were given a voice through their ability to sympathise with suffering members of a common humanity.<sup>78</sup> In concerning themselves with the immorality of slavery they were simultaneously restrained from encroaching upon the male 'public' world - in Mary-Anne's words, were 'happily excluded from the great theatre of public business' - and at the same time assured that their

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<sup>77</sup> *Appeal to the Christian Women of Sheffield from the Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery*, (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1837), p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> The *Ladies' Petition*, 1838. The *Appeal* formed the basis both of a small pamphlet, 1000 copies of which were distributed, and the Ladies petition, which gained 25,000 signatures. See *Report of the Sheffield Ladies' Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery* (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1839).

deployment of moral influence would have far-reaching social implications, leading to the 'envelop(ing)... in a moral atmosphere' of the 'whole earth'.<sup>79</sup>

The moral influence made possible by female involvement in abolition was reinforced by missionary activity in the West Indies. For Mary-Anne Rawson, anti-slavery and missions had since her childhood been seen as fundamentally part of the same project. In the mid-1820s, she was acquainted with the missionary endeavours of two Sheffield townspeople, the Quaker Hannah Kilham, who made three trips to West Africa between 1822-1832, and the Reads' family friend, George Bennet.<sup>80</sup> Her interest in West Indian missions had been stimulated in 1825 when, in response to the exclusion of women from the public celebrations which surrounded James Montgomery's retirement from the *Sheffield Iris*, she had organised a fund to support the establishment of a Moravian mission station in Tobago, the island on which Montgomery's missionary mother had died.<sup>81</sup>

On its formation in 1825, the Sheffield Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society had declared as its first resolution 'the amelioration of the condition of the oppressed Children of Africa, and especially of slaves in our West India colonies.'<sup>82</sup> William Knibb,

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<sup>79</sup> *Appeal*, 1837, pp. 9 and 11.

<sup>80</sup> See Chapters Four and Five below.

<sup>81</sup> Mary-Anne Rawson, 'Memorials of James Montgomery' (JM/SU).

<sup>82</sup> *Report of the Sheffield Female Anti-Slavery Society* (Sheffield: Blackwell, 1826), p. 1. See also C. Duncan Rice, 'The Missionary Context of the British Anti-Slavery Movement', in Walvin (ed.), *Slavery and British Society*, pp. 150-163.

in Britain on his popular tour in support of the Jamaican missionaries' campaign against slavery in 1832-33, had contributed to *The Bow in the Cloud*.<sup>83</sup> It was not until the 1830s, however, with the formation of the new Ladies' Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery, that Mary-Anne became directly involved with overseas missions. This society had been formed in the context of a new campaign against apprenticeship, spearheaded by the Birmingham-based 'Central Negro Emancipation Committee' which had been founded by the Quaker abolitionist, Joseph Sturge. It was on Sturge's suggestion that Mary-Anne agreed to co-ordinate sponsorship in Britain of the Thompson Normal School, at Kettering, Jamaica.

Visiting Jamaica in 1837 for the purpose of amassing information concerning the abuses of the apprenticeship system, Joseph Sturge had become acquainted with the plans of Baptist missionaries for the establishment of 'free villages', new settlements in which freed black people could live and work. Kettering was one such village settlement, named after the English town which had been the birthplace of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 (and which was Knibb's home town). Others were given names such as Sturge Town, Wilberforce and Buxton in respect of prominent British anti-slavery activists.<sup>84</sup> The Thompson

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<sup>83</sup> Catharine Read, however, had hoped that Burchell might contribute to Mary-Anne's volume instead - as she thought him 'a more interesting man than Mr Knibb.' Catharine Read to Mary-Anne Rawson, early 1830s, no date (MAR/SA). Eliza had met Knibb and Carey whilst at Bridlington in 1832. See: Eliza Wilson to Elizabeth Read, 6 September 1832; Eliza Wilson to Mary-Anne Rawson, August 1832.

<sup>84</sup> See: Catherine Hall, 'White Visions, Black Lives: the Free Villages of Jamaica', *History Workshop Journal*, 36 (Autumn 1993), pp. 100-132; Hall, 'Missionary Stories'. Mary-Anne would have been well-acquainted with an earlier African experiment in 'free villages' which her fellow Sheffield missionary Hannah



Normal School, established in 1840 by William and Mrs Knibb for the purpose of training Jamaican women as teachers, had been made known to Mary-Anne by Sturge's sister, Sophia, with whom she corresponded during his visit.<sup>85</sup>

The 'free villages' have been described by Catherine Hall as 'missionary utopias': organised around a mission school and chapel and evangelical notions of family and gender roles, they represented 'the perfect society... a more ordered England in the Caribbean'.<sup>86</sup> The teachers saw it as their task both to provide a religious education and to reform the girls; in the words of Mrs Knibb, they strove to 'break them of the listless, indolent, untidy habits which they are too often allowed to indulge in at home.'<sup>87</sup> Such attempts to reconstruct black femininity in the image of the British middle-class ideal created a significant role for white women within the civilising mission. For this particular enterprise, two English women were sent to Kettering as teachers, while the ladies in Sheffield organised fund-raising bazaars and collections of materials for needlework and books for rewards for pupils at the school as well as organising the national subscription which by 1840

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Kilham became involved with in the mid-1820s. See Chapter Four, pp. 197-209, below.

<sup>85</sup> See letters from Sophia Sturge to Mary-Anne Rawson, including extracts of letters from Baptist missionaries, 1838, no date (MAR/JR).

<sup>86</sup> Hall, 'Missionary Stories', p. 243.

<sup>87</sup> Mary-Anne Rawson, *The Thompson Normal School, Jamaica* (Sheffield: Leader, 1845) (MAR/SA).

saw money coming in from ladies' associations in towns throughout England and Scotland.<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, the problems of the Normal Department were understood in terms of the reluctance of parents to adopt Christian values and 'enter into the enlightened views of the conductors', thus ensuring that the girls were inadequately prepared for school and, in some cases, too old to learn new habits. There were, however, other factors which contributed to its failure, including some confusion caused by the Knibbs' apparent suggestion that they no longer required fund-raising from Britain, and the tendency of female teachers sent from Britain to marry missionaries and move away. As costs were high Mr and Mrs Knibb intended to employ their own daughters, recently brought out of the mission school at Walthamstow. Interestingly, Mary-Anne was opposed to this, feeling that the girls should not be employed without remuneration. Most importantly, it was the lack of enthusiasm on the part of many Jamaicans that led to the final demise of the school. Not only were parents reluctant to keep their daughters at school but, according to the Circular of 1845, of the six women trained only two were working as teachers.<sup>89</sup> Such indifference provides a rare insight into the complexities of the missionary relationship.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Rawson, *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Rawson, *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> For the complexities of the relationship between black and white evangelicals, see Moira Ferguson (ed.), *The Hart Sisters: Early African Caribbean Writers, Evangelicals and Radicals* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), Introduction.

## Domestic Philanthropy

The tensions between spiritual equality and cultural reform which are apparent in the relationship between white women abolitionists and missionaries and the black women on the receiving end of their mission were both rehearsed and replicated in the domestic philanthropic practices in which most anti-slavery campaigners were also involved.<sup>91</sup> As discussed above, domestic missionary work was an integral part of the home life of the Read sisters. During the 1830s their neighbourhood visiting and Sunday school teaching became part of a broader missionary project based at Wincobank, which included the Ladies' Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery (1837), the Wincobank Total Abstinence Society (1840) and the opening of a day school, sponsored by the British and Foreign Schools Society, from 1841. The family's teetotalism had been inspired by William Lloyd Garrison who, having dinner at Wincobank in 1840, had persuaded them to sign the pledge in what became known as the 'protest against the decanters'.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Patricia Hollis has argued that abolition failed to develop a working-class constituency precisely because working people were both antagonised by the neglect of the 'slavery' of the field labourer and factory worker in Britain and heedful that abolition was located within a broader middle-class sense of mission which had serious implications for the poor. See Patricia Hollis, 'Anti-slavery and British working-class radicalism in the years of reform', in Bolt and Drescher, *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform*, pp. 294-315.

<sup>92</sup> See Mary-Anne Rawson, 'Memorials of James Montgomery' (JM/SU). Generally, however, teetotalism, which replaced temperance as the dominant strand within the movement from the mid-late 1830s, attracted a more working-class membership. For temperance and teetotalism, see: Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), Chapters Five, Six and Eight; Lilian Lewis Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), Chapters One to Three.

These domestic missionary endeavours reflected the dominant concern within philanthropic and educational practice with the reconstruction of working-class familial and gender relationships. In their Sunday and day schools, the women focused on the production of working-class girls as good wives and loyal servants and the construction of a temperate working-class masculinity. They taught Bible-reading, writing and arithmetic to all children, and the girls also learned skills in needlework and knitting. All children were required to develop an attendance to punctuality, polite table manners, a cleanliness of person and simplicity of dress, which for girls included the abandonment of ribbons and curls. It was hoped that such values would have an impact on their parents, who were required to provide plates, mugs, knives and forks, as well as contributing copybooks and pinafores, which had to be washed weekly, and making a payment of 2d each week, with reductions if two or more children attended from same family.<sup>93</sup>

Parents were invited to the opening celebration of the school, for which Ann Gilbert had composed a hymn which emphasised the social aims of the teachers:

We trust that children yet unborn  
May learn his paths to tread,  
And ignorance and vice forlorn,

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<sup>93</sup> See: R. E. Wilson, 'The Story of Wincobank School and Chapel' (unpublished, 1955, MAR/SA); Joyce Goodman, 'Women and the management of the education of working-class girls 1800-61', (University of Manchester, unpublished PhD thesis, 1992). Goodman argues that middle-class women educators sought both to maintain class differences and 'reproduce the "private" relationships of the home in the (semi) public setting' of the school (p. 663). For the education of working-class girls, see also Meg Gomersall, 'Ideals and realities: the education of working-class girls, 1800-1870', *History of Education*, vol 17, no 1 (1988), pp. 37-53; June Purvis, *Hard Lessons: the Education of Working-Class Girls in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989).

No more their poison spread.<sup>94</sup>

They were also invited to the subsequent anniversaries, at which orderly lines of children, the little girls neatly dressed in white and carrying bouquets of flowers, celebrated the transformation of village children, and to the Teetotal Teas and Festivals, at which they tucked into dinners of roast beef and plum pudding after listening to speeches by reformed drinkers and singing George Thompson's 'Teetotal Joyful'.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, Mary-Anne's decision to begin an evening class for local men, in the hope that the desire for an education would keep them away from the local pub and the 'slavery of wine and ale', might be taken as indicative of the self-assurance of middle-class philanthropic women. A verse adorning the school-room wall proclaimed their vision of acceptable masculinity, reiterating the message of the 'Joyful':

Smoking, feasting, fretting,  
Brandy, beer and betting,  
Will kill the strongest man alive.  
But water, air and diet,  
Domestic peace and quiet,  
Will make the weakest man to thrive.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ann Gilbert, 'For the Parents', Wincobank School, 13 April 1841, printed sheet (MAR/SA).

<sup>95</sup> See: Wincobank Total Abstinence Society, printed sheet, 1840; Elizabeth Rawson to Mary Eliza Wilson, 12 January 1838; 17 April 1841; 31 May 1842; 17 April 1843; 17 August 1843; 16 November 1843; 31 May 1844 (MAR/SA). See also Caroline Reid, 'Temperance, teetotalism and local culture: the early temperance movement in Sheffield', *Northern History*, vol 13 (1977), pp. 248-264.

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in Norma Taylor, 'The Life of Mary-Anne Rawson', (Sheffield University: unpublished BA dissertation, 1972), p. 12.

In a most evocative image of her desire to 'domesticate' working-class males, Mary-Anne Rawson demonstrated the use of ale-glasses for the growing of hyacinths.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the carefully constructed anniversary processions, correspondence between the Read sisters nonetheless reveals the frustrations of their domestic mission. Letters and accounts books from the early years at Wincobank reveal the not infrequent dismissal of young women for 'immoral conduct' and the disappointment that even those girls exhibiting religious commitment and appropriate feminine behaviour were apparently fit only for work as servants. Writing to her mother in the 1820s, Sarah Read talked about servants being good for the 'mechanical part' of Sunday school teaching but not fit to 'impart religious knowledge to children', while in a letter to Mary-Anne in 1830 Eliza warned her against letting her young daughter spend too much time with servants. Such sentiments were echoed by Catharine who, discussing in a letter to Mary-Anne the merits of an ex-Sunday school pupil named Sarah Taylor, declared that while she was a 'nice girl ...(who) showed some anxiety about her soul' and, like her

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<sup>97</sup> Mary-Anne's view of the feminine/feminising hyacinth was related to her nephew Henry, whom she informed of her disapproval that he had named his hyacinth 'the Great Conqueror'! She had named her own after her 'favourite ladies' in British history and suggested that he might like to research 'the Lady Rachel' (Russell), the subject of a painting at Oakhill, Torquay, sitting 'by Russell's side under the judgement seat', 'the Lady Jane' (Grey) after 'a learned and gentle woman who challenged a popish priest' and 'the Lady Griseld', the Patient Griseld celebrated by Chaucer, the perfect wife, daughter, sister and mother who had no published account of her life. Mary-Anne Rawson to Henry Joseph Wilson, 3 December 1845 (MAR/SA).

parents, was 'always superior' to those she associated with, she was nevertheless unfit to take charge of young children, to be more than a servant.<sup>98</sup>

The unsteadiness of the character of working-class women is the focus of a letter written by Catharine Read to her 'Sunday school flock' whilst staying in Torquay with her sister in 1842. Composed in response to news from Emily at Wincobank, Catharine reprimands the girls for their 'light, trifling, frivolous behaviour', and especially their 'bold way of behaving to some of the boys and young men in the neighbourhood'. Reminding them of the sorry situations of other 'unsteady, wicked young women' who 'once laughed and trifled and indulged in giddy behaviour just as you are now doing', she invokes images of poverty, pregnancy and the workhouse, the 'wretchedness', 'sin and misery' that are the inevitable consequences of the 'downhill course', the 'road which leads to hell'.<sup>99</sup>

Catharine continues with a reference to a piece of writing by 'a lady elsewhere', possibly local to Torquay, who was like herself a teacher of what she liked to call her 'willing class': a class of Sunday school pupils who attended through their own commitment to Christ. Faced with the indifference of some of her pupils, however, the writer informed them that their behaviour was so poor that God

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<sup>98</sup> See: Account Book for Wincobank, 1817-1822; Sarah Read to Elizabeth Read, no date; Elizabeth Read to Mary-Anne, 11 February 1828; Eliza Wilson to Mary-Anne Rawson, 22 July 1830; Catharine Read to Mary-Anne, December 1845. Mrs Read also had difficulty with the boys. See: Elizabeth Read to Mary Anne, 11 December 1826; Mrs Read's Diary, 1844-1850 (MAR/SA).

<sup>99</sup> Catharine Read to her Sunday school girls, 5 April 1842 (MAR/SA).

himself must be tempted to turn away from them. 'Then let them go', he might say:

let them try if they can find another friend like me to pity them, to lead them, to prepare them a mansion forever - Let them go - I will turn to the heathen in India. I will turn to the poor wandering in the dark villages - I will call them and their hearts...<sup>100</sup>

But of course this would not happen. While it was the case, in her view, that there are peoples in the world, such as the heathen in India, more in need of his mercy and forgiveness than British girls in Sunday school, he continues to love and forgive their indifference.

While Catharine concludes that the girls should be grateful to be in receipt of such love, and should express their gratitude appropriately, her acknowledgement of the temptation to turn instead to the heathen overseas is illuminating. The slippage between the 'domestic' and the 'colonial', in this case between Britain and India, is suggestive both of the instability of the missionary gaze and of the identification of 'class' and 'race' as mutually constitutive categories within the reforming impulse. Sometimes, as in this extract, it is the poor at home who are more resistant to the civilising process, and more wicked, given that Christianity is so much more readily available to them. In such a context, the movement to establish 'free villages' in Jamaica becomes so very exciting. As Catherine Hall has written, 'the encounter with the heathen "other"' provided an 'intensity, laced with ambivalence, to the work, which may have been hard to maintain in the mean

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.



streets' of British towns.<sup>101</sup> For the Read sisters, devoid of any personal experience of the overseas mission, it was easier to express their frustrations regarding the disinterest of the domestic poor. In their view, whereas the heathenism of African slaves was enforced by slavery, the British poor wilfully and wickedly ignored attempts to lead them to a better life.<sup>102</sup>

### Women's Authority and the 'Domestic' Sphere

The relationship between public identities and domestic and familial life is central to Mary-Anne Rawson's 'Memorials of James Montgomery', written in 1857. In this volume, Mary-Anne draws upon sketches, photographs, letters and her own personal reminiscences of Montgomery in order to contest the emphasis of recently-published biographies of Montgomery's life.<sup>103</sup> The particular subject of her discontent is John Holland's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery*, published in seven volumes in 1854-56.<sup>104</sup> Rawson's fear that

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<sup>101</sup> Catherine Hall, 'Missionary Stories', p. 219.

<sup>102</sup> For Mary-Anne a crucial signifier of the willingness of the poor to be improved lay in their subscriptions to missionary and anti-slavery causes. Thus, the 1827 *Report of the Sheffield Female Anti-Slavery Society* celebrated the fact that many among 'the humbler class' of Sheffield townspeople had supported the sugar boycott (p. 1). The 1839 *Report of the Sheffield Ladies' Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery* also reveals that working-class support was canvassed for the Petition - and signatures only appended once 'the subject had been fully explained to them' (pp. 9-10).

<sup>103</sup> Rawson, 'Memorials of James Montgomery' (JM/SU).

<sup>104</sup> John Holland and James Everett, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery; including Selections from his Correspondence, Remains in Prose and Verse, and Conversations on Various Subjects*, Vols 1-7 (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1854-6). This work was edited by both Holland and Everett, but was generally believed to be largely the work of Holland. See William Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies. Characteristics and Work of Notable Sheffield Men*

Holland was, despite their long acquaintance,<sup>105</sup> an inappropriate biographer of Montgomery, of insufficient Christian feeling to appreciate his subject's character fully, was for her borne out in his representation of Montgomery's life, particularly his failure to locate his public role - his pioneering involvement in the formation of Sheffield's civic culture and his place within a national literary culture - within a familial and missionary context.<sup>106</sup>

Mary-Anne Rawson rejected the dominant representation of Montgomery's life. This narrative traced the rise to fame of a young man of lowly origins who, after being told he was not suited to a life in the ministry, had left Fulneck Moravian school firstly to become a grocer's boy in a nearby village and then clerk and

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*and Women* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend, 1926), pp. 9-12.

<sup>105</sup> Holland (1794-1871) and Montgomery had been acquaintances since working together in Sheffield Sunday School Union: Holland was appointed secretary in 1813 and, like Montgomery, was a teacher at Red Hill Sunday School. In his capacity as editor of the *Sheffield Iris* Montgomery had published some pieces of Holland's writing. Holland also contributed to Montgomery's edited collection *The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend and Climbing Boys Album* (London: Longman, 1824). Holland had taken over editorship of the *Iris* on the occasion of Montgomery's retirement in 1825. After a brief spell as editor of the *Newcastle Courant*, he moved back to Sheffield to take over the more conservative *Sheffield Mercury*, which he edited from 1832-1848. See William Hudson, *Life of John Holland of Sheffield Park*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1864).

<sup>106</sup> Rawson believed that Holland was self-appointed in his role as biographer, and that Montgomery was unhappy with this arrangement. She saw him as insincere in what she described as his 'woo-ing', with flowers, sonnets and scented notes, of Sarah Gales, with whom Montgomery had lived for over fifty years, in order to gain access to the poet's papers. She was also angered that Holland's work amounted to so many volumes, feeling that it was too costly for many ordinary Christians to purchase, despite their deep affection for Montgomery. See: Rawson, 'Memorials of James Montgomery' (JM/SU); E. D. Mackerness, 'Mary-Anne Rawson and the memorials of James Montgomery', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, vol 8 (1962), pp. 218-228.

book-keeper for Joseph Gales at the office of the *Sheffield Register* from 1792, beginning to publish poems which were to lead to national acclaim.<sup>107</sup> Instead, Rawson frames her account with a representation of Montgomery as a missionary. Discussing a letter he sent to her family in 1814 informing them of the visit to Zion Independent Chapel, Attercliffe, of a Moravian minister from Fulneck and a missionary recently returned from Labrador, Rawson writes: 'it seems quite in character that this should be the first, and his letter on sending Testaments to China, the last of his notes to us; for he possessed pre-eminently a missionary spirit.' Her interest is in Montgomery as the child of missionary parents, fulfilling the promise of his 'missionary spirit' despite the disappointment of Fulneck and the aberration of his early detour into radical politics.<sup>108</sup>

Remembering Montgomery in this way allows Rawson to celebrate both her own missionary childhood and that of her daughter Elizabeth.<sup>109</sup> Avoiding a linear

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<sup>107</sup> See: Helen C. Knight, *Life of James Montgomery* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1857); J. W. King, *James Montgomery: A Memoir, Poetical and Political* (London: Partridge and Co., 1858); John Kirk, *James Montgomery* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1861); Samuel Ellis, *Life, times and character of James Montgomery* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1864).

<sup>108</sup> Although keen to emphasize Montgomery's long-standing connection with her family, which stretched back to the 1790s when her uncle and father provided bail following his imprisonment in York gaol for 'libel', Rawson is also keen to play down this period, to represent as an aberration Montgomery's acquaintance with radical politics. See Chapter Two, pp. 84-85, above.

<sup>109</sup> Rawson's use of this 'private' memoir both to contest current biographies and to highlight aspects of her own life is of interest in terms of women's strategies for self-representation and public writing. For a discussion of domesticity and women's writing, see Mary Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity: Middle-class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Women's Autobiographies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). For anxieties regarding women's public self-representation, see Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender*

narrative style, she moves backwards and forwards between reminiscences of Montgomery and events of significance within her own life. She recalls the excitement generated by Montgomery's first public speech, his 'coming out publicly as an evangelical Christian', on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Sunday School Union at Nether chapel in 1813, and her attendance at a meeting of the West Riding branch of the London Missionary Society, held in Sheffield, at which she enjoyed tales of the conversion of the 'Hottentot' by a returned missionary as well as hearing Montgomery's first missionary speech.

Her memories of childhood picnics at Matlock Bath with her parents, Montgomery and George Bennet bring into focus later visits at significant times in her adult life, as a young wife or with her baby daughter Elizabeth, months after the death of her husband. Her memories of the annual climbing-boys' dinner at which Montgomery often presided remind her of the compassion of her daughter Elizabeth, who befriended a young climbing-girl at one such event. Montgomery's commitment to Moravian missions enables her to state her own disapproval of their apparent complicity in the slave trade, while her acknowledgement that Montgomery sometimes despaired at what he called her 'extreme notions (and) ultra views' -her support of total abstinence, immediate abolition and the ending of the death penalty - allow her to express her own, quite different opinions. Her pleasure at hearing

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*and Ideology in Eighteenth-century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 207-209. For the relationship between biography and autobiography, see Liz Stanley, *The auto/biographical I: The theory and practice of feminist auto/biography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

Montgomery's hymn, 'A Children's Temple Here We Build', written for the opening of Wincobank day-school in 1841, reminds her of his participation in the celebrations of that day, and one of his many visits to Wincobank, whether on the occasion of a missionary meeting, Sunday school anniversary or to call at the house to take tea after a walk in Wincobank woods. In his participation in the social and religious life of her family, Montgomery was a member of an extended family of evangelical writers and lay-persons, who took Wincobank Hall as their 'family' home.

Placing Montgomery's story within her own domestic context, Mary-Anne's 'Memorials' can be read as a corrective to the marginalisation both of the 'domestic sphere' and of women within mainstream biography, and an affirmation of her belief in the importance of the evangelical family to the making of 'true' missionaries and 'public' men. At the same time, however, Mary-Anne ensured that her views remained private. Despite indications in earlier drafts that she intended to publish the 'Memoirs', they remained unpublished, the final version beginning with the disclaimer that the volume was not a biography but was written principally for the 'amusement' of herself and her daughter Elizabeth. Whether the process that led to this decision involved a reluctant acknowledgement that Holland's narrative was now dominant, or was, in its denial of the need for a public, published biography, an affirmation of the significance of the domestic, is impossible to know. The result was that Mary-Anne Rawson failed to make public her belief in the profoundly social nature of the missionary family.

## Conclusion

In 1839 Mary-Anne Rawson incurred the disapproval of male and female anti-slavery activists in Sheffield when, following the neglect of the men's society to organise public events and invite speakers from the Central Negro Emancipation Committee, she went ahead and organised them herself. In the events that followed, six Anglican ladies resigned and the men's committee expressed its disapproval. In response the ladies announced that they found such 'interference' on the part of the men 'uncalled for', stating that they represented 'an entirely independent society'.<sup>110</sup> Such open acts of defiance were, however, unusual for Rawson. There are in her papers very few instances of contestation regarding women's role. On occasions where she felt aggrieved by the procedures of the men, such as on their decision to hang Montgomery's portrait - the commissioning of which she had suggested - in the dark and secluded rooms of the Literary and Philosophical Society, she made her protest known.<sup>111</sup> When women were excluded from the public celebrations concerning Montgomery's retirement in 1825, Rawson merely acknowledged the fact, busying herself with organising the Fund for the founding of the Montgomery mission station on Tobago - a suitably

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<sup>110</sup> MAR/JR. As Clare Midgley has argued, 'women's outspoken criticism of the male leadership of the campaign, and quarrels over matters of anti-slavery principle with their brother societies, involved a public questioning of male authority, an assertion of independence, and a recognition that their views were not adequately represented by men.' Midgley, *Women against Slavery*, p. 116. For the contribution of anti-slavery to early feminist politics, see Clare Midgley, 'Anti-Slavery and Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Gender & History*, vol 5, no 3 (Autumn 1993), pp. 343-362.

<sup>111</sup> Rawson, 'Memorials of James Montgomery' (MAR/SA).

feminine activity.<sup>112</sup> Even in 1840, when the exclusion of women at the Anti-Slavery Convention had resulted in bitter disputes between American and British delegates Rawson, despite her friendship with Lloyd Garrison and with some of the American women, expressed the view that 'both parties have made the question respecting women's rights of too great importance.'<sup>113</sup>

Mary-Anne Rawson's lack of concern for the 'woman question' derived from the absence of a feeling of grievance concerning women's sphere. For her, a middle-class missionary woman, public missionary activity was an intrinsic part of her daily life, integral to a domesticity which, inclusive of the duties of childrearing, the education and management of servants, abolitionism, neighbourhood visiting and overseas missions, was profoundly implicated with 'social' concerns. To be a missionary was both domestic and global, simultaneously involving the very intimate and very distant concerns of boycotting sugar at home and building schools in Jamaica, of reforming the sexual morality of working-class girls in Britain and educating Hindu women in India, and of creating the appropriate domestic environment for the production of happy Christian children throughout the world.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Midgley, *Women against Slavery*, p. 165. Rawson, who had showed no interest in local campaigns for women's suffrage from the early 1840s, reflected dispassionately on the incident on the occasion of William Lloyd Garrison's fleeting visit to Wincobank in 1877, merely making passing reference to Garrison and Sturge having been 'vexed' at one another. Mary-Anne Rawson to Henry Joseph and Charlotte Wilson, July 1887. See: Tyrrell, "'Woman's Mission' and Pressure Group Politics"; Kathryn Kish Sklar, "'Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation": American and British Women at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, London, 1840', *Pacific Historical Review* (1990), pp. 453-499.

Represented by the evangelical reworking of gender roles as the bringers of salvation and morality, women such as the Read sisters were empowered by their missionary identities. Insistent upon their capacity for improvement, they also represented their missionary subjects as in need of their civilising, socialising care. As teachers and supervisors they sallied forth as 'social mothers' to other class and ethnic groups, the carriers of a superior Christian civilisation which would begin with reform in the home. While a strategic move in relation to the ideology of 'separate spheres', enabling women to manipulate and enlarge their sphere of action, this can also be seen to suggest an understanding of the 'domestic sphere' not in terms of smallness of space, confinement and separateness from the world, but as integral to the 'social', to the construction of middle-class 'social selves', and beyond that to a wider re-ordering of the world and relationships of race and class.

Chapters Four and Five explore further aspects of the the missionary relationship through a focus on the voyage to West Africa of the Reads' acquaintance, Hannah Kilham, and the visit to the South Pacific of their family friend, George Bennet.



## Chapter Four

### 'A State of Infancy':

#### West Africa, racial difference and missionary identities

#### in the 1820s and 1830s

In Chapter Three I explored aspects of the relationship between British women abolitionists and philanthropists and the people on the receiving end of their mission. Chapter Four addresses similar themes, of spiritual equality and social subordination, languages of likeness and difference, and the construction through a language of 'family' of a supervisory authority for British men and women. It does so through a focus on the writings of three Sheffield missionaries, Hannah Kilham, William Singleton and James Montgomery, all of whom had a general interest in African education and who *also were involved in the religious education* of two West African men, Sandanee and Mahmadee, who lived in Sheffield in the early 1820s and returned to the Gambia in 1823 with Kilham's first missionary party.

West Africa, and Sierra Leone in particular, had been a major focus of British missionary interest since the end of the 1790s. The Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, formed in 1799, took Sierra Leone as its first mission field,

sending its first missionaries to the colony in 1804 and 1806.<sup>1</sup> Despite the problems associated with the early settlement schemes, Sierra Leone continued to offer missionaries a prospect of tremendous possibility.<sup>2</sup> From 1816 the combined efforts of Edward Bickersteth, secretary of the CMS and who visited the colony in that year, and the newly-appointed governor Charles MacCarthy, saw the establishment of 'free villages', new communities organised around a church and mission school, for the settlement of 'liberated Africans', those men and women 'recaptured' by British interception of slave trading vessels off the West African coast.<sup>3</sup>

With their hopes for African improvement, missionaries, like many travellers and ethnographers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, understood African 'backwardness' as an essentially cultural phenomenon. For them, while

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest CMS missionaries - Melchior Renner, Peter Hartwig, Leopold Butscher, Johann Prasse and Gustavus Nylander - were all Germans, trained at the Berlin Institute. Germans had been used by the SPCK in the eighteenth century and, due to the inability of the CMS to either recruit or train missionaries, they continued with this tradition. See Eugene Stock, *A History of the Church Missionary Society. Its Environment, its Men and its Work*, vol 1 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> For Sierra Leone in the late eighteenth century, see: Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 13-104; Christopher Fyfe, 'Freed slave colonies in West Africa', in John Flint (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol 5, from c 1790 to c 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 170-199, here p. 174; Charles Pelham Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa, Vol I: to 1840* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964); Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: the Religious Impact* (London: C. Hurst, 1983), pp. 53-80. See also Chapter One, pp. 50-51.

<sup>3</sup> For Bickersteth's account of Sierra Leone, see the *Missionary Register*, February 1817 pp. 50-57; March 1817, pp. 98-112; April 1817, pp. 159-170; May 1817, pp. 206-212; June 1817, pp. 241-252.

Africa was undoubtedly barbaric, its barbarism was not an immutable fact, essentially connected to the nature of its people. Rather, it was a barbarism founded on primitive social practices and organisation, such as the custom of polygamy, an insufficient division of labour and, crucially, the slave trade. In this, missionaries contested the polygenist argument which, gaining ‘scientific’ backing in the late eighteenth century, had emphasised the physical and therefore unchangeable nature of Africa’s lack of civilisation. Indeed, missionaries can be seen to have played a significant role in the shift to a more dynamic model for understanding African difference which came to dominate social theory during the early nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter is concerned with a tension in missionary writing which focused on the integrity of African conversion. While African people were seen as capable of improvement through Christian education, missionaries revealed considerable anxiety concerning the quality of conversion and the prevalence of ‘backsliding’. Part One focuses on the story of Sandanee and Mahmadee, the two West African men who were persuaded by Hannah Kilham to participate in her language project in return for a Christian education and who, whilst seeming to ‘progress’ under the care of their English benefactors, subsequently rejected the mission once they returned to the Gambia. Discussing missionary interpretations of their failure, I focus on the writing of James Montgomery to explore the appeal of theories of

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<sup>4</sup> See Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p. 388.

racial difference which were informed by the monogenist emphasis on the essential unity and potential for equality of humankind.

Part Two focuses on the work and writing of Hannah Kilham in the Gambia in 1823-24 and Sierra Leone in 1826-7 and 1830-32. Kilham shared missionary concern with the establishment of schools and domestic reform, and had a particular interest in the issue of mother-tongue teaching, believing that erstwhile missionary failures could be remedied through the translation of the Scriptures into West African languages. This section explores Kilham's missionary solution to the dilemma of African conversion. Unshaken by failures such as those of Sandanee and Mahmadee, Kilham proposed a continuation of the relationship which saw British missionaries as supervisors and teachers of their African 'children' and charges. Such issues, which were pertinent to missionaries in Sheffield, and in Britain generally, made important connections with middle-class self-representation of themselves as carriers of civilisation, and with missionary philanthropy in the domestic context.

### **Part One: Sandanee and Mahmadee**

Sandanee and Mahmadee came into the missionary gaze as a result of their acquaintance with Hannah Kilham, whom they first met on the banks of the River Thames in February 1820. The two men, who were both enslaved and the property of a merchant at Goree, were working as sailors and currently at anchor in

London. Kilham was temporarily residing with her friend Luke Howard in Tottenham and had gone down to the Thames for the purpose of meeting native West African speakers who might be willing to assist with a language project that she was in the process of developing. During the next few years they became a focus of attention for Quaker educationalists in London and Sheffield, and a symbol of missionary desires and anxieties.

### **Men who have minds to be instructed**

Hannah Kilham had been writing books for mission schools in Sierra Leone since 1817 and, increasingly aware of issues of translation, was hoping to learn West African languages in order to begin the processes of 'reducing' them to a written form.<sup>5</sup> Her plan was to set up a school of African languages in Britain which would enable the translation of the Scriptures and train West African men and women as missionaries who would then return to evangelise their own peoples.<sup>6</sup>

At the 1819 Yearly Meeting, Kilham espoused her ideas at informal meetings of Friends, leading to the formation of the Committee for African Instruction which was to promote the issues on her behalf.<sup>7</sup> Within the main body of the Society of

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<sup>5</sup> Hannah Kilham to Edward Bickersteth, 6 August 1817, quoted in Mora Dickson, *The Powerful Bond* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1980), pp. 99-100.

<sup>6</sup> In this latter aim, Kilham was inspired by William Allen's sponsorship of four West African youths who attended Joseph Lancaster's Borough Road Training School from 1811-1814 before returning home as missionaries. See Ormerod Greenwood, 'Hannah Kilham's Plan', reprint from *The Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion*, vol 4, vol 1, part 1 (1962), pp. 11-20, here p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> The Committee for African Instruction, which included William Allen, Luke Howard and others, can be seen to represent the emergence of an early evangelical

Friends, however, Kilham and her supporters encountered much hostility from members who saw her not as a teacher and a linguist but as a missionary tinged with Methodist enthusiasm.<sup>8</sup> Traditionally hostile to missionary activity, Quakers saw the emphasis on the written text of the Bible and the notion of heathen darkness as at odds with the notions of the inner light and the divine gift of ministry.

In her *Address to Friends, on a Proposal made by a Member of our Society to instruct some African Negroes*, put to the Committee for African Instruction in February 1820, Kilham sought to address Quaker antagonism, offering an assurance to Friends that she accepted the ‘sound and charitable principle... that the heathen to whom the outer knowledge of the gospel has *not reached*, do not necessarily perish for want of it’. Drawing attention to the operations of the slave

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wing within the Society of Friends. Indeed, Plough Court, the home of Allen prior to his move to Stoke Newington in the 1820s, is seen by Greenwood as a ‘powerhouse’ of the evangelical revival. It was this group which produced the *Friends’ Monthly Magazine*, in circulation from 1830, which contained much discussion of missionary issues and included occasional articles by the monogenist anthropologist, Dr Prichard. The Committee expanded in the 1820s to become the first mixed-sex committee within the Society of Friends, including a number of women (Sarah and Anna Bradshaw, Rebecca Christy, Jane Forster, Elizabeth Pryor, Anna and Elizabeth Sanderson) who were responsible for many of the preparations for Kilham’s first trip. See Ormerod Greenwood, *Quaker Encounters, Vol 2, Vines on the Mountain* (York: William Sessions, 1977), p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> Luke Howard talks of the ‘frigid indifference’ that Kilham’s proposals evoked. Howard was critical of Quaker hesitation in the missionary field: ‘While other Christians have been rough-hammering the heathen abroad, and the ignorant and sensual at home, and thus making converts *in their way*, it has been *our* proper business, to be filing and polishing those who were already of the household of faith’. *The Yorkshireman: A Religious and Literary Journal, by a Friend* (March 1833), p. 274. For Kilham’s earlier affiliation to the Methodists, see Chapter One, pp. 65-66, above.

trade, she argued that slavery had produced obstacles, a 'mental darkness', which prevented Africans from seeing their inner light. 'Will any feeling mind', she asked:

therefore deny that the outward knowledge is profitable in addition to the inward? The protection of the natives of Africa from the rapacious hands of the slave-merchants belongs now to the government; and here, so far as regards the *persons* of the Africans, the case at present rests; but viewing it in a far higher relation, considering that these are *men*, who have *minds* to be instructed, and *souls*, for whose sake as for our own the blessed redeemer came into the world... have we, in the Society of Friends, yet done for them all that is in our powers to do?<sup>9</sup>

Insisting that she was an educator rather than a missionary, Kilham proposed to travel to West Africa for the purpose of finding suitable men to participate in her scheme. Even within the Committee, however, there was much hesitation about the suitability of a woman travelling alone. While a suitable male was canvassed, Kilham was persuaded to turn her attentions to the education of West African men closer to home.

Sandanee and Mahmadee, who were 'willing and apparently intelligent', were from Goree and the Banks of the Gambia respectively. They both spoke the language now known in Senegal as Jolof and in the Gambia as Wolof; Sandanee also spoke

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<sup>9</sup> Anon, *Address to Friends, on a proposal made by a member of our Society to instruct some African Negroes, with a view to the future translation of the Scriptures, or some portions of them, in the languages of Africa* (1820, Friends' Library Archive, hereafter FLA). As Greenwood has suggested, Kilham's plan to educate Africans in Britain seems to have been a spirited endeavour 'to reconcile Quaker theory with missionary practice', 'Hannah Kilham's Plan', p. 14, and *Vines on the Mountains*, p. 99.

Mandingo.<sup>10</sup> In return for teaching her the rudiments of their languages, the two men were to be given a Christian education. From March to June 1820 they lived at the Howards' home where they were taught by Kilham and Richard Smith. They could often be seen accompanying their benefactors to the houses of Friends in London and also attended the Ackworth Meeting with Luke Howard in the summer of 1820.<sup>11</sup> In June 1820 they moved to Sheffield to the home of William Singleton, a Quaker schoolmaster.<sup>12</sup>

Singleton and Kilham found ample evidence that the men were capable of improvement. Hannah Kilham's initial impressions emphasised their suitability for a Christian experiment:

Sandanee and Mahmadee (such are their African names) have hitherto discovered much docility, and their conduct and manners have been as agreeable as could have been expected. They evince a capacity fully

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<sup>10</sup> Kilham variously refers to Wolof as Wolof, Waloof and Jaloof. For discussion of the Wolof and Mandingo peoples, see Harry A. Gailey Jr., *A History of the Gambia* (London: RKP, 1964), pp. 10-13.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Smith's Journal (FLA), pp. 110.

<sup>12</sup> Singleton (1770-1832), like Kilham, was initially a member of the Methodist New Connexion, coming to Quakerism as an adult. He taught for a while at Ackworth school, but left as he disagreed with the system of punishment, and set up his own boarding school at Broomhall, Sheffield. Although he spoke in the Friends' Meeting from 1816, there was much disapproval of his ministry from Friends who disliked his missionary tendencies. He eventually left the Society in 1824. See William Singleton, *The Result of seven years mission among friends of Balby monthly meeting* (Sheffield: H. A. Bacon, 1823). Sandanee and Mahmadee remained in his care from June 1820 until Singleton's departure for the Gambia in December of that year, and again following his return in July 1821 until the summer of 1822.



adequate to such learning as is proposed for them; nor are they, it is believed, without some impressions of Divine good.<sup>13</sup>

A letter written by Singleton to the Committee in November 1821 was similarly laden with the language of progress. During the previous eighteen months the two men had learned to read and write, in English and, when Hannah Kilham was present, in Jolof; Singleton enclosed a transcription, from Wolof to English, from Sandanee's reading of Revelations X 1-6. They had also learned the parts of speech, some geography, arithmetic and the Scriptures, as well as some farming operations which they put to use on a local farm. William Singleton was optimistic that the two men would repay the care and expense that the Friends had bestowed upon them, concluding that Sandanee had the makings of a good teacher while Mahmadee, although 'firmer' in his 'integrity', was slower and would therefore make a good elementary school assistant.<sup>14</sup> 'It was only through such

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<sup>13</sup> See *Circular to Subscribers of the Committee for African Instruction*, 1820, in Luke Howard, *The Yorkshireman* (1832), p. 163. Although most references to them emphasise the prevailing optimism of their missionary tutors, there is evidence that there existed some ambivalence concerning Sandanee's and Mahmadee's potential from very early on. Singleton's granddaughter, Jane Benson, in a book based partly on her family history, commented that the men 'were not always an agreeable addition to the family'. While her mother remembered Mahmadee as 'a gentle, thoughtful boy', Sandanee was not so: rather, Singleton's family thought that his earlier life 'must have been something wild, judging by the strange impulses that seized him at times, and the impossibility of teaching him "manners"'. Jane Benson, *From the Lune to the Neva, Sixty Years Ago* (London: Samuel Harris, 1879), p. 78. Also Thomas Hodgkin, a Quaker with an interest in Native Americans, was pessimistic: 'Though the Committee appears well satisfied with the progress which Hannah Kilham's pupils have made, yet from the little which I have myself seen of them and from the account given respecting them, I fear they are not calculated to perform a very active part among their countrymen.' Quoted in Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, p. 125.

<sup>14</sup> William Singleton to the Committee, 20 November 1821, in *Report of the Committee managing a Fund Raised by some Friends, for the purpose of promoting African Instruction: with an account of a visit to the Gambia and Sierra Leone* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1822), p. 10.

commitment', he wrote, and not 'by leaving them *free in a state of degrading ignorance and helpless barbarism*', that Africa would be improved.<sup>15</sup>

A further 'sign' of the two men's apparent capacity for improvement - and one which was most enduring in the minds of their Sheffield benefactors - came in the form of a dream that Sandanee had related to Singleton in 1820. Sandanee's dream was apocalyptic: it involved stars and fire, people, both black and white, many of them emerging out of graves, a Bible and a man so tall his face could not be seen. While Sandanee was shaken by the dream, Singleton was overawed. For him, it was a 'tremendous drama', reminiscent of the Day of Judgement, a dream which came directly out of the Bible. For Singleton, and also James Montgomery (discussed below), to whom the dream was also relayed, Sandanee's absorption of the Scriptures represented the very best he had ever read of 'the writings of uninspired man', seeming to prove that Africans had a capacity not only for education but for the attainment of a Christian spirituality.<sup>16</sup> Due to his delight with their progress, Singleton decided to go to the Gambia in 1821, funded largely by himself, for the purpose of negotiating with West African leaders the possibility of bringing more young men, 'selected from the higher grade of natives', to Britain to engage in similar projects.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> James Montgomery, 'Sandanee's Dream', *The Amulet*, 1829. See pp. 192-195, below.

Singleton's *Account of a Visit to the Gambia and Sierra Leone*, written in the ethnographic tradition, provides a commentary on many aspects of West African life, from the climate, countryside, types of crops and methods of growing corn, and employment patterns, systems of trading and markets, to the physical and cultural differences between different groups of people.<sup>17</sup> His particular concern was with the impact of conversion, with whether Africans educated in England would regress to their 'former habits' once they had returned home. The habits that particularly worried him were those of idolatry, drunkenness and involvement in the slave trade, which he saw as characteristic of the Mandingo, and the vices of dishonesty and thieving, shared by Jaloof and Mandingo alike.<sup>18</sup> He was much encouraged by his acquaintance with Dongo Karry, a converted Muslim, and by his experience of children in schools.<sup>19</sup> However, although the resident Europeans with whom Singleton associated occasionally contradicted his attempts at cultural classification, he tended to find - much to his disappointment - that they were wary of the possibility of introducing a lasting civilisation among Africans.<sup>20</sup> 'All concur', he wrote, 'in this declaration of John Billyaud':

That African youths, who have been taken and educated in England or elsewhere, have, on their return, (unless continued under the care of Europeans,) uniformly returned to the customs of their fathers; and some

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<sup>17</sup> *Report of a Committee... with an Account of a Visit to the Gambia and Sierra Leone*, 1822.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> For example, John Dodds, a merchant with whom Singleton lodged on the Gambia, 'spoke very highly of the Jaloofs, as affectionate, mild, peaceable and patient.' See also conversations with George Fox and Samuel Thorpe. *Ibid*, pp. 43, 49 and 53.

instances have occurred, in which increased ability has been a means of enabling individuals to be increasingly wicked.<sup>21</sup>

The African people quizzed by Singleton on this subject were less diffident. On one occasion, during his six-week excursion to Sierra Leone in March-May 1821, Singleton questioned a Krooman called John, who was acting as his guide in Kissy Town. The conversation is recorded as follows:

‘Do any people [in Sierra Leone] know Sabby book’ [the Bible]?

‘No’.

‘Do they know there is a God?’

‘Yes.’

‘How do they know that without book?’

‘Ah! they know it very well without book. God make way for them to know: he tell the father; put it here (pointing to his head); the father tell the son; so they know, they keep it here...’<sup>22</sup>

This exchange both confirmed Singleton’s feelings concerning the essential similarity of Africans and Europeans and underlined his anxiety. While John was in no doubt as to the value of his oral tradition, for Singleton it was not equal to knowledge gained from the Bible.

The King of Combo was also subject to Singleton’s inquisition. Visiting him with Charles Grant, a merchant friend, and John Morgan, the Methodist missionary who had recently arrived in the Gambia, Singleton was initially unimpressed with this local dignitary, who not only kept the party waiting for an hour as he nursed an infant but also, to the Englishman’s distaste, merely pulled his more regal clothing over the ‘sullied pang and the worsted cap’ that he had apparently been

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 39-41. Billyaud was a French merchant.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51

wearing for some time. Despite the difficulty in interpretation, Singleton tried to ask the King how African people recognised morality, how they *felt* on doing 'right' or 'wrong': 'To explain', he wrote, 'I said, "when I do right my heart sits down easy; (an expression learned of a native); when wrong, it is troubled"'. The King suggested that he understood this perfectly, indicating that his heart was troubled as he really wanted to be getting on with tasks more important than being interrogated by Englishmen: 'That is what *I* know, and that is what makes me want to go now and make Ju-le'.<sup>23</sup> While the response of the King confirmed that he did understand what Singleton took to be 'Christian' concepts, his willingness to prioritise other things left the missionary feeling decidedly uneasy.

Despite his hesitations, Singleton's trip had provided him with many positive experiences, not least the agreement of the Alicali of Bakau and the King of Combo that a mission station could be opened on Cape St Mary.<sup>24</sup> This, combined with the pronouncements of William Impey, with whom Sandanee and Mahmadee had stayed during Singleton's absence, that 'their minds appeared steadily devoted' to the improvement of their countrymen, led to the decision by the Friends to allow Hannah Kilham to travel to West Africa and to include Sandanee and Mahmadee in her first missionary party.<sup>25</sup> During the previous year

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*. See also: Greenwood, 'Hannah Kilham's Plan', p. 21; J. M. Gray, *A History of the Gambia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), pp. 311 and 315.

<sup>25</sup> According to Impey, a Colchester school master, during the autumn and winter of 1822-23, they had 'conducted themselves with seriousness and propriety, regularly attending meetings for worship.' See the *Report of the Committee on*

Richard Smith, a Quaker land-surveyor from Staffordshire who had experience of missions to native Americans, had volunteered himself for the mission. Whilst in Ireland in 1822 as representative of the British and Irish Ladies' Society, Kilham had met Ann Thompson, a Quaker from Cooladine, who had persuaded her brother John to accompany them and therefore enable the two women to travel to West Africa.<sup>26</sup>

While Sandanee and Mahmadee were obedient and promising students in England, once back among their own people the two men started to show considerable ambivalence towards the missionary enterprise. Arriving in the Gambia in January 1823, the group took up residence in Bakau in a house given to them by the governor, Charles MacCarthy. While Mahmadee remained with Richard Smith and John Thompson, working as an interpreter and procurer of invitations to visit local dignitaries, Sandanee moved with Kilham and Ann Thompson to Bathurst, a town eight miles inland, due to the scarcity speakers of Wolof in the vicinity of Bakau. The first problems came with Mahmadee who, wishing to be given a school of his own and, with Kilham and Smith believing him to be unequal to the task, developed what Smith described as a 'malignant disposition', rather hastily leaving to marry and move away rather than to honour his contract to work with the group for a further three years. The group tried to represent the incident in a positive

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*African Instruction* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1823), quoted in *The Yorkshireman* (1832), p. 166.

<sup>26</sup> See: *Reports of the British and Irish Ladies' Society* (1823-1828); Dickson, *The Powerful Bond*, pp. 129-130 and 138-139. The BILS had been established to promote domestic reform among the Irish poor at a time of great scarcity and poverty.

light, believing that he may be 'useful in his station' and 'may probably... be of considerable service in conveying instruction in different ways to his countrymen', and hoping that their assistance in the building and furnishing of his new house would enable Mahmadee and his wife to become 'a model to [their] neighbours'.<sup>27</sup>

Sandanee, the most promising of the two men, was an even greater disappointment. While he ran a successful evening school for the recaptured slaves known as the King's Boys, his behaviour became increasingly unacceptable to Kilham and Thompson. According to the Report of 1825, he had 'not evinced a stability of conduct equal to his talent for conducting a native school, which, upon trial at Bathurst, was found to be considerable.'<sup>28</sup> He became given to violence and started stealing and drinking heavily. On one occasion he wrecked a room, giving it 'the appearance of a Tavern', and on another he threw an iron at Richard Smith; in July he was gaoled for drunken and riotous behaviour. With much regret, the party decided to abandon their hopes for him, and turned him over to John Morgan, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary in the same locality.<sup>29</sup> Sandanee's

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<sup>27</sup> *Circular from the Committee on African Instruction to the Subscribers*, (London: Darton and Harvey, 1825), quoted in *The Yorkshireman* (January 1832), pp. 208.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 235.

<sup>29</sup> See: Richard Smith's Journal (FLA); 'Memoranda respecting the late Richard Smith, Friends' missionary to the Gambia, with some extracts from his Journal', *The Yorkshireman* (June 1833), pp. 377-384; D. Crosfield, 'Richard Smith and his Journal', *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, vol 14, no 3 (1917), pp. 110-116. John Morgan, a Methodist missionary who had arrived in the colony just days after William Singleton in February 1821, had struggled to establish mission stations at Tendebe and Mandinari, and had finally opened a

conduct was explained by the missionaries simply in terms of his 'getting among his former acquaintances'; that, on arrival back home, he did not have the strength of character and deep-felt conviction to resist being led astray.<sup>30</sup>

Such obvious disaffection points to a mismatch between missionary hopes for the two men and the West Africans' experiences and expectations, and raises some important questions concerning the authority of missionary interpretations. It is possible to surmise that the mission had, from the very outset, held some attraction for the two men not for its Christian education but as a possible route to freedom. Indeed, the Committee did purchase Sandanee's and Mahmadee's freedom prior to their setting sail for the Gambia in 1823, binding them to three years indenture as interpreters and teachers.

The 'evidence' of improvement cited by the missionaries is also *problematic*. Sandanee's dream, for example, interpreted by the missionaries as revealing the true state of his Christian commitment, can be seen to be shaped by African cultural practices - particularly the conversion attempts of Muslims during Africa's 'Islamic revolution' - as much as by knowledge acquired in England.<sup>31</sup> Indeed,

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school for boys at Bathurst itself. See: J. M. Gray, *A History of the Gambia*, pp. 313-315, 337. In his *Reminiscences of the founding of a Christian mission on the Gambia* (London: Wesleyan Mission House, 1864), Morgan makes no reference to Sandanee and Mahmadee.

<sup>30</sup> *Circular* (1825), quoted in *The Yorkshireman* (January 1833), p. 235.

<sup>31</sup> As John Morgan's *Reminiscences* reveal, the discussion and interpretation of dreams was an established aspect of the relationship between Muslim missionaries and their potential converts. Writing of his experiences, Morgan, referring to himself in the third person, comments that: 'as he afterwards learned,



it can be read as a 'gift' from the West African to Singleton, telling him that he had understood not only the structures of story-telling in the Bible, but what he thought his missionary teachers wanted from him.<sup>32</sup> In missionary writing however, the focus continued to shift backwards and forwards between the parading of conversions and worrying about their quality - whether, in the words of a contributor to the *Missionary Register* of July 1830, their conversions were resting on 'insecure foundations.'<sup>33</sup> This was a central theme in James Montgomery's writing, and in his interest in Sandanee and Mahmadee, as I will now discuss.

### **Montgomery's Dream**

The issue of the capacity for improvement of the heathen was at the heart of James Montgomery's interest in Sandanee's dream. For him the dream represented proof of what he had hoped for from the onset of his missionary career, that heathens could become Christian, and that this conversion was both profound and enduring.

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his patience was exercised by listening to long and impressive statements of dreams and visions. However, it was not all labour lost, as it helped the missionary to understand their jargon.' See: Morgan, *Reminiscences*, pp. 6-7. Unlike Mahmadee, Sandanee was not a Muslim, and may well have been acquainted with attempts to secure the conversion of his people. See also: J. F. Ade Ajayi and B. O. Oluruntimehin, 'West Africa in the anti-slave trade era', in John E. Flint (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol 5 from c 1790 to c 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 200-221.

<sup>32</sup> I would like to thank Joe Bristow for an illuminating discussion on ways of reading Sandanee's dream.

<sup>33</sup> *Missionary Register* (July 1831), p. 310. Examples such as this one can be found in any edition of this magazine.

Some of Montgomery's most popular poetry, his later hymns and biographical writing, explored this theme.

*The West Indies*, the volume which established Montgomery's reputation as a poet, dealt with issues of global Christianity. The poem is panoramic, its four parts drawing upon a variety of sources, including Park's *Travels*, Winterbottom's *Account of the native Africans in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone* and Clarkson's *History of Abolition*, to discuss European exploration, the idyllic African life prior to the arrival of the slave traders, the origins and evils of the trade and the blessings brought by missionaries and abolitionists.<sup>34</sup> Central to *The West Indies* is an assertion of the essential humanity - regardless of lack of access to education and Christian religion - of the slave:

Is he not *Man*, though knowledge never shed  
Her quickening beams on his neglected head?  
Is he not *Man*, though sweet religion's voice  
Ne'er bade the mourner in his God's rejoice?  
Is *he* not Man, by sin and suffering tried?  
Is *he* not Man, for whom the Saviour died?  
Berie the Negroe's powers: - In headlong will.  
Christian! thy brother thou shalt prove him still;  
Berie his virtues; since his wrongs began,  
His follies and his crimes have stampt him Man.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See James Montgomery, *The West Indies, and other Poems* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1814, 4th edition), pp. 1-79. See also the more expensive engraved edition, *The Abolition of the Slave Trade, a poem in four parts*, (London: R. Bowyer, 1814). For a comment on sources, see *The Poetical Works of James Montgomery, collected by himself, in four volumes*, vol 1 (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1841), pp. 133, 154-8 and 61.

<sup>35</sup> Montgomery, *The West Indies*, pp. 22-23.

As has been argued by Beutner, the poem can be read as drawing not only on Montgomery's evangelicalism and that of his missionary parents,<sup>36</sup> but on his Quaker cellmates at York, the Unitarians and radicals with whom he associated in Sheffield, the literary influence of Milton, Behn and Cowper as well as the writings of travellers and explorers, all of whom contribute to the central message: that 'NATURE FREE/Proclaims that MAN was born for Liberty'<sup>37</sup>.

The poem continues to celebrate the work of missionaries in effecting the transformation of barbarians into increasingly civilised peoples:

No more to Demon-Gods, in hideous forms,  
He pray'd for earthquakes, pestilence and storms,  
In secret agony devour'd the earth,  
And, while he spar'd his mother, curs'd his birth...  
No longer burning with unholy fires,  
He wallow'd in the dust of base desires;  
Ennobling virtue fix'd his hopes above,  
Enlarg'd his heart, and sanctified his love:  
With humble steps the paths of peace he trod,  
A happy pilgrim, for he walk'd with God.<sup>38</sup>

Having already triumphed in the West Indies, Christianity's imminent success in Africa would replace the 'tempestuous years' during which young men were drawn to Islam in vengeance for the pain of slavery. In the new 'Sabbath dawn', Africa's

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<sup>36</sup> Beutner quotes the following exhortation from Montgomery's parents: 'Bless our congregations gathered from Negroes, Greenlanders, Indians, Hottentots and Esquimaux. Keep them as the apple of thine eye.' *Memoirs*, vol I, p. 23. See: Harvey Fremont Beutner, 'With Fraternal Feeling Fired. The Life and Work of James Montgomery' (University of Illinois: unpublished PhD thesis, 1967), pp. 130-143, here p. 133.

<sup>37</sup> Montgomery, 'The West Indies', in *The Poetical Works of James Montgomery*, vol 1, p. 139. See Beutner, 'With Fraternal Feeling Fired', pp. 133-134.

<sup>38</sup> Montgomery, *The West Indies*, pp. 54-55.

new Christian subjects are becalmed, of mature faith and open to the 'healing arts' and 'fraternal bonds' of western civilisation.<sup>39</sup>

Missionary success is explored in Montgomery's later poetry. His famous *Greenland*, written in 1819, combines an interest in Icelandic and Scandinavian lore and Romantic descriptions of the scenery with the story of Moravian success in affecting 'a moral revolution' on the island, 'reclaiming them, almost universally, from idolatry and barbarism'.<sup>40</sup> *The Pelican Island* (1827), the last of Montgomery's long poems, was inspired by a description in Captain Flinders's *Narrative of a Voyage to Terra Australis* of an island off the coast of Australia, hitherto inaccessible to man, and which had been the home of pelicans for many generations. The poem traces the island through time, passing through millenia of natural beauty, the pelicans only appearing in the fourth canto. Eventually, primitive man emerges:

Sunk in loathsome degradation,  
A naked, fierce, ungovernable savage,  
Companion to the brutes, himself more brutal

Montgomery details scenes of murder, cannibalism, infanticide and of the oppression of women, 'the powerless slave of man,' on this 'one Barbarian continent, where man himself could scarcely soar above the Pelican.'<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64

<sup>40</sup> James Montgomery, *Greenland and other Poems* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1819), 2nd edition, pp. 1-146, here p. vi.

<sup>41</sup> James Montgomery, *The Pelican Island and other Poems* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1828), pp. 1-67, here pp. 95 and 165. As has been claimed by Montgomery's biographer, John Kirk, this poem supports a 'theory of advancement from savagery to civilisation and religion'. Kirk, *James*

The certainties of the missionary enterprise are the subject of Montgomery's shorter poems and much of his other work. 'To my Friend George Bennet of Sheffield', for example, celebrates Bennet's journey with the London Missionary Society to the South Pacific.<sup>42</sup> Here 'recently established' Christianity is lifting society to a higher level of civilisation, teaching:

... To savage hordes celestial truth,  
To infant tongues, thy mother's speech,  
Ennobling arts to youth,  
Till warriors fling their arms aside,  
O'er bloodless fields the plough to glide.<sup>43</sup>

'A Cry from South Africa', written in 1828 in support of an appeal for assistance from Reverend Barnabas Shaw of Cape Town in the building of a chapel for slaves, celebrates the desire among enslaved peoples not only for freedom, but for the 'dearer claim' of Christianity, as 'outcast children come to light/ From darkness...'<sup>44</sup>

His hymns celebrate the 'omnipotent reign' of God, who embraces all nations to ensure that 'the kingdom's of the world were the kingdoms of his Son'. 'A Spirit of the living God', written for a Methodist Missionary Meeting at Salem Chapel, Leeds, in June 1823, celebrates the missionary impulse:

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*Montgomery*, quoted in Beutner, p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> See Chapter Five, below.

<sup>43</sup> James Montgomery, 'To my Friend George Bennet of Sheffield, *The Poetical Works of James Montgomery, collected by himself*, vol 4 (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1855-1856), pp. 184-187, here p. 185.

<sup>44</sup> James Montgomery, 'A Cry from South Africa', in *ibid*, pp. 181-183, here p. 182.

Baptize the nations; far and nigh  
The triumph of the Cross record;  
The name of Jesus glorify,  
Till every kindred call him Lord.<sup>45</sup>

His most famous hymns, 'Angels from the realms of glory' and 'Hail to the Lord's Anointed', the latter written for a missionary meeting in Liverpool in 1822, both make reference to the universality of the Christian message, and its relevance for 'all nations.'<sup>46</sup>

Montgomery's introductory essay to *The Life of David Brainerd*, missionary to the American Indian, espouses missionary sentiments. Discussing Brainerd's successful missionary activity among the 'Red Man', Montgomery writes:

among the myriads on myriads of these lofty barbarians, not a few, from time to time, were brought out of darkness into light... its converts were not only transformed in their minds and affections, but, in every respect in their external condition, their personal manners, and social habits were ameliorated: they were literally civilized in proportion as the were Christianized.<sup>47</sup>

These themes were developed in Bennet and Tyermans' *Missionary Voyages Around the World*, edited by Montgomery, in which the mission is represented as an essential catalyst in the progress from savagery to civilisation.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See *Hymns for Anti-Slavery Meetings* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1838).

<sup>46</sup> See *The Methodist Hymn Book* (London: Methodist Publishing House, 1933), pp. 119 and 245.

<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the American Indians* Introductory Essay by James Montgomery (Glasgow: William Collins, 1829), pp. iv-xlx, here pp. xx-xxi.

<sup>48</sup> James Montgomery (ed.), *Journal of Voyages and Travels by the Reverend Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, Esquire, deputed from the London Missionary Society to visit their various stations in the South Seas, China, India etc, between the years 1821 and 1829*, 2 vols (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis,

Alongside his assertions of missionary certainties, there is, however, in Montgomery's writing a strong sense of the problematic nature of the enterprise and a recognition of the scale of the task in hand. Missionaries *really are* to confront 'savage' and 'barbarian' hordes.<sup>49</sup> In 'A Voyage around the World', the comfort and civilisation of Britain is highlighted only by the contrast of 'jealous China, dire Japan', by the 'haunts of violence and wiles' that characterise the Pacific, or the 'horrors' of India.<sup>50</sup> In 'Perils by the Heathen', Montgomery expresses his horror at the murder in 1825 of the Reverend William Threlfall, a Wesleyan missionary, and two African converts, Jacob Links and Johannes Jagger, at the hands of 'Bushmen' as they lost their way in South-West Africa:

Not by the lion's paw, the serpent's tooth,  
By sudden sun-stroke, or by slow decay,  
War, famine, plague - meek messengers of truth! -  
Wert thou arrested on thy pilgrim-way.<sup>51</sup>

Their deaths would have been so much easier to accept had they been the result of natural, rather than 'savage' causes. Images of the 'savage wilderness' and the 'wings of darkness' call into question complacent celebrations which see Christianity as enthusiastically embraced by the ignorant, heathen world.

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1831). See Chapter Five, Part One.

<sup>49</sup> James Montgomery, 'A Theme for a Poet', *Poetical Works*, vol 3, pp. 200-204; 'To My Friend George Bennet of Sheffield', *Poetical Works*, vol 4, pp. 184-187.

<sup>50</sup> Montgomery, 'A Voyage Round the World', in *ibid*, pp. 117-125.

<sup>51</sup> Montgomery, 'Perils by the Heathen', in *ibid*, pp. 359-362, here p. 360.

The problem of whether one really can know of the integrity of a former heathen's commitment to Christianity was a further preoccupation for Montgomery. He confronts this issue in *Abdallah and Sabat*, a poem written in 1821, which tells the story of a betrayal by Sabat of his friend Abdallah, a Christian convert, and Sabat's subsequent repentance and years of penance spent roaming the eastern world in remorse and sorrow at his previous sins.<sup>52</sup> The issue of Sabat's integrity is particularly acute as the convert is a former Muslim. While his martyred friend was a real and not a nominal Christian, there is some doubt concerning Sabat's capacity to deceive; whether, despite his words, he was still burning with 'Mahomet's own reckless rage': 'Was Sabat then subdued by love or fear? And who shall vouch that he was not sincere?' Montgomery poses the possibility that we may never know the truth, before concluding the poem with the reassurance that, as the two men meet at the 'Judgement-seat', God will know, and will then decide whether they are to 'part forever, - or to part no more.'<sup>53</sup>

In the context of his writing, the appeal to Montgomery of evidence for the improvement of Sandanee and Mahmadee becomes evident. It was Sandanee's dream, however, which particularly caught his imagination, becoming the focus of an essay in *The Amulet* in 1829 and providing illustration for his argument in a paper entitled 'On the Phrenology of the Hindoos and Negroes' read before

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<sup>52</sup> James Montgomery, 'Abdallah and Sabat', *Poetical Works*, vol 3, pp. 164-170. This was based on Claudius Buchanan's *Christian Researches in India* which were recounted in the *Christian Observer* of February 1818.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 167 and 170.



Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society in February 1827.<sup>54</sup> Phrenology, a popular science in Britain from the 1820s, asserted that the power of specific mental organs was reflected in their size in the brain and that the potential of an individual could thus be subject to diagnosis by external craniological examination. As Roger Cooter has argued, the appeal of such a science to the middle classes lay in its elevation of the head and of rationality in a bodily and cultural hierarchy.<sup>55</sup>

While Montgomery accepted the claims of phrenologists that an individual's character could be measured by external cranial examination, he criticised the use of the science to support a view of human nature as static and essentially given. This, he argued, could not account for historical change, such as the 'degeneration' of the Hindus, a previously powerful 'race' of 'men of mighty bone and intellect', who had become 'puny', 'distinguished by deplorable mental and bodily imbecility' by the nineteenth century, or the recent evidence pointing to

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<sup>54</sup> Montgomery, 'Sandanee's Dream', *The Amulet*, 1829; and 'On the Phrenology of the Hindoos and Negroes, showing, that the actual character of nations, as well as of individuals, may be modified by moral, political, and other circumstances, in direct contradiction to their cerebral developments.' In *An Essay on the Phrenology of the Hindoos and Negroes, by James Montgomery. Together with Strictures thereon by Corden Thompson* (London: E. Lloyd and Co., 1827), copy in Local Pamphlets, vol 20, no 9 (SLSL).

<sup>55</sup> See Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organisation of Consent in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 113.

'improvement' among Africans turning to Christianity.<sup>56</sup> If the African had just been discovered, he wrote:

even a skilful phrenologist might be tempted to pronounce it the head of some nondescript animal, approaching to humanity, but far inferior, not to the European only, but to any other species of genuine man.<sup>57</sup>

However, 'Negroes' abroad *had* improved and even those exhibiting a 'grotesque crania', seen by phrenologists to represent under-developed mental faculties, were capable of such improvement.<sup>58</sup> Sandanee's dream, demonstrating his ability to absorb the Scriptures, was one such piece of evidence.

James Montgomery's objection, therefore, was not to phrenology per se, but to a specific use of it whereby:

like Hindooism, a system of castes, ... every tribe of mankind, by a fatality of organisation, were doomed to be, through all changes of society, savage,

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<sup>56</sup> Montgomery claimed that the Hindus had degenerated as a result of both aggression directed against India through centuries of war, and also their religion, which fostered a lack of combativeness; ie not something natural to them as a 'race'. See Montgomery, 'On the Phrenology of the Hindoos and Negroes', p. 13.

<sup>57</sup> Montgomery, 'On the Phrenology of the Hindoos and Negroes', p. 25.

<sup>58</sup> Corden Thompson, 'lecturer on Physiology, and on the Nature and the Treatment of Diseases, at Sheffield School of Anatomy and Medicine', contested Montgomery's interpretation, arguing that phrenology was based on fact and nature. 'Whatever instruction be imparted to a poor idiot, with a defective forehead, or, if the language please, with an unhappily modelled and grotesque skull, he will not be found as capable of improvement as another whose cranium is better and differently formed.' See Corden Thompson, 'Strictures on Mr Montgomery's essay on the phrenology of the Hindoos and Negroes', in *An Essay on the Phrenology of the Hindoos and Negroes, by James Montgomery. Together with Strictures thereon by Corden Thompson*. Thompson was particularly annoyed that Montgomery had published his piece in the local newspaper at the time of Spurzheim's visit to Sheffield in January 1829. See: Ian Inkster, 'A Phase in Middle Class Culture: Phrenology in Sheffield, 1824-1850', in *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, vol 10, no 4 (1977), pp. 273-179; also a two-page defence of phrenology, *Sheffield Independent*, 31 January 1829.

semi-barbarian, or civilised, the same as their fathers had been in one or another of those stages.<sup>59</sup>

This, he maintained, was at odds not only with Christianity but with ‘the records of history, the testimony of living-experience, and the whole result of man’s knowledge of himself and his species.’ ‘Let then’, he wrote:

phrenology be established (if it can be) by plain and positive facts, and the Christian need not tremble for his religion, nor the philanthropist for his hope of the ultimate Civilisation of every class of the human race, whatever be their present darkness of mind, depravity of manners, or preposterous developments of skull.<sup>60</sup>

A life-long supporter of missions, Montgomery had much invested in a world-view which offered an explanation of the current cultural, religious and intellectual superiority of many Britons while also retaining a focus on the essential humanity and capacity for improvement of all peoples. Sandanee’s dream can be read as the product of the imaginations and desires of Montgomery, and played an important role in the affirmation of the foundations of the missionary enterprise.

## **Part Two: States of infancy**

Unlike Montgomery, and many writers in the missionary press, Hannah Kilham’s Quaker belief that God was present in everyone allowed her to express few doubts regarding Africa’s capacity for receiving and benefiting from a Christian education. Her unswerving optimism may be partially explained by her need to

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<sup>59</sup> Montgomery, ‘On the Phrenology of the Hindoos and Negroes’, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

persuade the Society of Friends of the desirability of her plan, both in terms of questioning their rigid separation of educational and missionary work and in allowing a woman to participate in so 'dangerous' a scheme. At the same time, however, Kilham's faith was maintained through an analysis of African education which allowed for instances of failure, such as those of Sandanee and Mahmadee and of subsequent native converts. Drawing on a soundly monogenist yet longer-term approach to African development, Kilham contributed to a remaking of the missionary relationship whereby British men and women became the teachers and supervisors of their African 'children'.

### **Africa's capacity for improvement**

The argument outlined by Hannah Kilham in her 1820 *Address to Friends*, in which she emphasised the significance of the slave trade in preventing progress in Africa, provided the basis for her subsequent interpretation of African education.<sup>61</sup> While she acknowledged the significance of factors such as climate and polygamy in obstructing African development,<sup>62</sup> Kilham argued that the impact of slavery was of such magnitude that it was impossible to even conceive of Africa's potential. Slavery had inhibited individuals and damaged relationships

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<sup>61</sup> Discussed on pp. 174-175, above.

<sup>62</sup> Her letters detail examples of violence against women: a woman beaten by her husband, a wife of the King of Barra who died after having her legs broken on his order. 'All these things remind me of the easy complacency with which I had heard some people in England talk of leaving the uncivilised part of the world to themselves, saying, that they were very happy as they were, and much more INNOCENT than was imagined. On the contrary, all that we see, or hear, calls aloud for help of those who have been favoured with the blessings of a Christian education, and the advantages of civilised and improved society.' *Missionary Register* (July 1824), p. 301.

between different cultural groups; it had produced a society which, prohibited in its development of 'useful arts', was locked into barbarism. 'It is very unfair and a great aggravation to the cruelty,' she wrote in a letter to the *Missionary Register* in 1823, 'to reflect on the victims of it, as LACKING ABILITY for any other station than that which they have been suffered to fill.'<sup>63</sup>

Africa's capacity for improvement was apparent to Kilham from her first visit to the Gambia and Sierra Leone between December 1823 and June 1824. Settling at Bathurst, she and her companion Ann Thompson had opened schools for Wolof-speaking boys and girls while the men of the party, John Thompson and Richard Smith, had become engaged in agricultural work around Bakau. Against a backdrop of a barbarian society,<sup>64</sup> Kilham praised the children at her school for their progress in learning the Wolof language.<sup>65</sup> Her short excursion to Sierra Leone in February 1824, the original object of her missionary desires, provided further evidence. Kilham's *Letters*, printed in the *Missionary Register*, detail individual success stories, such as the little boy at the 'free village' of Leopold, who learned to read the testament in six months, and the six year old girl at Charlotte who could read the account of the sick and palsy restored after only

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<sup>63</sup> *Missionary Register* (September 1824), p. 395.

<sup>64</sup> See for example Kilham's account of the Wolof dance which so disgusted her. *Missionary Register* (July 1824), p. 297; and her accounts of the low status of women, above.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p. 299

fifteen months' instruction.<sup>66</sup> 'All that we see, or hear,' Kilham wrote, 'calls aloud for the help of those who have been favoured with the blessings of a Christian education, and the advantages of civilised and improved society.'<sup>67</sup> Writing to William Allen from Gloucester, one of the free villages, Kilham declared that there was 'no inferiority in the African mind... Those disadvantages, which they, in common with other civilised nations, have suffered, have with them been cruelly increased...'<sup>68</sup>

Hannah Kilham reflected on the limited experience which contributed to the poor opinion of Africans held by many people at home. 'In England', she wrote:

people see only a few of those who have been slaves, or mostly beggars, and too often judge from such specimens of Africans in general... [C]ould the incredulous as to African capacity have seen... the bright, intelligent countenances of many of the children... they would certainly doubt no longer as to the capability of instruction among the Africans. But what judgement would even be formed of the English nation were only the most unfavourable specimens presented to view?<sup>69</sup>

Her subsequent trips to Sierra Leone, in 1827-28 and 1830-32, involved working closely with Wesleyan missionaries in schools in the 'free villages' as well as opening her own school at Charlotte in 1830, and served to reinforce her earlier

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<sup>66</sup> *Missionary Register* (September 1824), p. 395. These were later published separately as *Extracts from the Letters of Hannah Kilham from Sierra Leone* (Lindfield: C. Greene, 1831).

<sup>67</sup> *Missionary Register* (July 1824), p. 301.

<sup>68</sup> Hannah Kilham to William Allen, 8 March 1824, *Second Report of the Committee on African Instruction* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1824), Appendix, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, pp. 221-222.

expectations.<sup>70</sup> 'With regard to intelligence', Kilham concluded, 'we do not find the black girls in any degree behind the mulatto, or white children, so far as we have had the opportunity to judge'.<sup>71</sup>

Central to Hannah Kilham's understanding of Africa's potential was her critique of contemporary methods of religious education. Kilham believed that it was only through learning the Scriptures in their own languages that people could really understand their message. In her *Report on a Recent Visit to Sierra Leone*, published after her return to England in 1828, she contested the practice of presenting children with English texts without any translation. It was, she argued, as ineffectual as giving Latin or French to an English child; the words were 'mere sound', and produced a 'barbarous broken form' of English and, 'although many learn in time to *read* and *spell*, those who are thus circumstanced cannot be expected to *understand* what they read'.<sup>72</sup> Such an approach, she wrote in her journal, led to:

the mere repetition of prayers, and attention to certain outward forms... a false rest, wherein the mind is left untouched and cold, the tempers and dispositions wayward and uncontrolled by that renewing influence which can alone introduce harmony, and order, and true love...<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Hannah Kilham, *Report of a Recent Visit to Sierra Leone, to the Committee for African Instruction, and other Friends concerned in promoting its object*. 1828. This was reproduced in the *Missionary Register* (June 1828), pp. 280-286.

<sup>71</sup> Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 241.

<sup>72</sup> Kilham, *Report on a Recent Visit to Sierra Leone*, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 207

Evangelical attention to 'feeling' and inner transformation demanded a more rigorous practice. Writing to Joseph Rowntree in July 1829, she criticised missionary disregard for native languages: 'O how long have the attempts of missionaries been baffled, whilst they have wished to force the English language upon the people, despising their own as not worth cultivation.'<sup>74</sup>

In her promotion of mother-tongue teaching, Kilham was operating within an established missionary tradition. The evangelical linking of issues of language and religious understanding had an early precedent in the practice of the Charity School movement which, coordinated by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had grappled with the issue of mother-tongue teaching in its concern to eradicate pauperism and popery throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.<sup>75</sup> Many overseas missionaries, familiar with domestic missions, had drawn upon this tradition, their emphasis on mother-tongue teaching in some cases leading them into conflict with the parent missionary societies. Most famously, William Carey, Baptist missionary to India from 1793, whom Kilham met whilst visiting her friend Elizabeth Rowntree at

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<sup>74</sup> Hannah Kilham to Joseph Rowntree, July 1829 (FLA).

<sup>75</sup> As Jones has shown, the SPCK produced an uneven practice. In Ireland, emphasis was placed upon the English language and teaching in Irish was only employed with adults who had no understanding of English. In its work in Scotland the SPCK acknowledged the value of teaching in Gaelic after 1766 when, in recognition that children were not understanding the Bible even though they were fluent in English, it was decided to teach in both English and Erse in places where Erse was spoken. In Wales the policy was different again, as Welsh-speaking SPCK teachers supported the Welsh language not only as a short-cut to the Scriptures but as a source of pride in itself. See M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement. A Study of Puritanism in Action* (London: Frank Cass, 1964).



Scarborough in 1827,<sup>76</sup> translated the Bible into more than forty Indian languages and dialects.<sup>77</sup> In Africa, the earliest transcriptions to be published in English were undertaken by Edward Brunton of the Edinburgh Missionary Society on his return from work among the Susu in 1801. Over the next decade Melchior Renner of the first CMS party translated *Morning and Evening Prayer* into the Susu language, while his colleague Gustavus Nylander had prepared several Bullom translations, including that of the *Gospel of St Matthew*.<sup>78</sup>

Kilham's first two books for use in Africa, *Ta-Re Waloof, Ta-re boo Juk-a: First Lessons in Jaloof*, published in 1820, and *African Lessons* (1823) both emerged out of her work with Sandanee and Mahmadee.<sup>79</sup> The books began with a few 'leading words', a basic vocabulary of objects, parts of the body and religious terms, such as 'heaven' and 'ALLA, The Supreme being, God', and progressed to sentences and finally to parts of the Scriptures. These were written both in

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<sup>76</sup> In the words of Elizabeth Rowntree, 'The conversation was truly delightful:... when Swan or Carey spoke, India was the theme; when Hannah Kilham spoke, we were conveyed in a moment to Africa.' Letter from Elizabeth Rowntree to John Rowntree, 4 September 1828, John S. Rowntree (ed.), *The Family Memoir of Joseph Rowntree* (Birmingham 1868).

<sup>77</sup> See George Smith, *The Life of William Carey* (London: J. M. Dent, 1878).

<sup>78</sup> Writing to the *Missionary Register* in December 1817, Nylander told of the success of using Bullom transcriptions of hymns, which were sung under a shady tree at Yongroo to about fifty hearers. *Missionary Register* (December 1817), pp. 527-28.

<sup>79</sup> Her first transcription, entitled *A Short Vocabulary in the Language of the Senecan Nation, and in English*, drew upon a longstanding Quaker interest in the languages of native Americans. For Quaker missionary practice and mother-tongue teaching among the Seneca, see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 160, 186, 220-228, 314-315.

English and a phonetically 'reduced' version of Wolof. The Wolof transcription 'E-al-la de wo-too a-doo-na', for example, was accompanied on the facing page by the English translation, 'God takes care of all the world.'<sup>80</sup> *African Lessons* also contained moral tales, questions and answers on the scriptures and 'family advices'.<sup>81</sup> That these were reproductions of her earlier publications for use with the British poor indicates Kilham's belief that Christian truths had a universal meaning and that people undergo the same process in order to acquire them.<sup>82</sup> Kilham's *Specimens of African Languages spoken in the Colony of Sierra Leone*, the result of her labours in the villages of Sierra Leone in 1827-28, contains lessons in thirty African languages.<sup>83</sup>

In the new system of schooling, organised according to the principles of the 'British' or monitorial system, students were to follow the tutor's voice in learning

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<sup>80</sup> *Ta-Re Waloof, Ta-re boo Juk-a: First Lessons in Jaloof* (Coventry: George Stockwell, 1820). P. E. H. Hair has described Kilham's work a 'a worthy pioneering effort in an untracked field', while A. Werner has praised her for 'rendering important services to the cause of philological science'. See: P. E. H. Hair, quoted in Greenwood, 'Hannah Kilham's Plan', p.73; A. Werner, 'English Contributions to the Study of African Languages', *Journal of the African Society*, vol 29, no 117 (October 1930), p. 78.

<sup>81</sup> *African Lessons: Wolof and English* (London: William Phillips, 1823)

<sup>82</sup> See for example: Hannah Kilham, *Scriptures Selections on Attributes of the Divine Being... Designed Chiefly for the Instruction of Young Persons* (Sheffield: William Todd, 1813); *Questions on the Principles of the Christian Religion to be answered from the Scriptures, adapted for schools and for private instruction* (Sheffield Bentham, 1817); *Family Maxims* (Sheffield: Bentham and Ray, 1818).

<sup>83</sup> Hannah Kilham, *Specimens of African Languages spoken in the Colony of Sierra Leone* (Printed for the Society of Friends Committee for the Promotion of African Instruction, 1828).

the alphabet, writing and reading the Scriptures.<sup>84</sup> In the process of learning their own languages, they thus became familiar with the English language. Indeed, for Kilham the learning of the mother tongue was merely the beginning of a process of change. While native languages were seen as ‘worth cultivation’, she saw it as ultimately desirable that Africans should learn English.<sup>85</sup> Kilham had made this distinction clear in her horrified response to the insistence of the Alicali of Bakau that, while supportive of the rights of others to send their children to the mission school, he had no intention that his own children should be taught in English: ‘He taught them Arabic at home’, she wrote, ‘and others at Birkow did the same for their children; and he thought their learning Arabic was sufficient!... OTHERS MIGHT DO AS THEY LIKED.’<sup>86</sup>

Hannah Kilham’s contention that ‘the estimable treasure of the Scriptures’ could be made accessible, through mother-tongue teaching, ‘to all the tribes of our

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<sup>84</sup> See: ‘Proposed System of School Instruction’, *Missionary Register* (July 1824), pp. 301-303.

<sup>85</sup> Hannah Kilham, letter to Joseph Rowntree, July 1829 (FLA). The process of reducing African languages to written form was itself seen as civilising. In the words of Luke Howard: ‘It is a fact, not generally enough known or regarded, that of the numerous languages and dialects of Africa, spoken by a population of probably thirty millions, scarcely any have yet been reduced to writing. We may hence, in some degree, account for the degrading ignorance which prevails among the inhabitants of that extensive continent.’ In *The Yorkshireman* (1832), p. 163.

<sup>86</sup> *Missionary Register* (July 1824), p. 297. While evidently convinced of the superiority of English, Kilham’s work preceded the hierarchical classification of languages which, later in the nineteenth century, allowed Clara Lucas Balfour, in her biography of Kilham, to make the judgement that these were ‘languages that, for the most part, were restricted to the expression of physical wants or passions, from which she could learn nothing that could delight or interest.’ Clara Lucas Balfour, *A Sketch of the Life of Hannah Kilham* (London: W. and F. G. Cash, 1854), p. 26.

African brethren who are or may be within our reach' went to the heart of contemporary debates concerning Africa's capacity for improvement.<sup>87</sup> Engaging with fears that Sierra Leone had not yet 'exhibited all those encouraging marks of advancement, either in civil or religious knowledge, which have been anxiously desired', Kilham merely emphasised the need for a continuing education:

I am fully convinced that it is not any inferiority in the African mind or natural capacity that has kept them in so depressed a state in the scale of society; but the lack of those advantages, which are, in the usual order of Providence, made use of for the advancement and improvement of human beings... I do not think that even here (Sierra Leone), Africans have had a fair trial of what they might be, had they had the same advantages in education, and circumstances connected, which Europeans have been favoured with.

'By opening up the doors for intelligible communication with the people, through the native languages', she wrote, '... it will soon be discovered that Africans have the power to cultivate, and the disposition to improve, that would well repay the Christian labours of their European brethren.'<sup>88</sup>

### **Children and younger siblings**

Hannah Kilham's vision for West Africa saw Africans themselves taking responsibility for evangelising among their countrymen and women. Educated at mission schools in their own languages, and employed as native teachers in village schools, converted Africans would 'promote by friendly Christian communication, the instruction, the civilisation, and the evangelising of the people on this

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<sup>87</sup> Hannah Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa to Christian Instruction, through the native languages* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1830), p. 28

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1, 3 and 6

continent.’<sup>89</sup> Kilham remained a forceful exponent of such ‘native agency,’ despite her lamentations that ‘native teachers require so much oversight’ and ensured a ‘low quality’ of educational provision if left to run schools by themselves.<sup>90</sup> In reference to widespread missionary anxiety concerning the nature of African conversion, Kilham qualified her fear as to ‘whether the natives engaged as assistants in translation would themselves become sincere Christians’ with the assertion that a Christian education remained worthwhile even if converts were to engage in ‘subsequent misconduct’.<sup>91</sup> For her, failures were an inevitable part of the progress of Christianisation in a part of the world which had been so impeded by the slave trade. Far from suggesting that Africans could not be educated, they merely pointed to a longer process of civilisation, which required continued supervision by Europeans.

Kilham drew on a familial metaphor to articulate this relationship between Britain and West Africa: ‘Our great duty towards Africa’, she wrote:

is to strengthen the hands of the people *to promote each other’s good*... It is the Africans themselves that must be the Travellers, and Instructors, and Improvers of Africa. Let the Europeans aid them with Christian kindness, as senior brethren would the younger and feebler members of their Father’s family.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 471.

<sup>90</sup> Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa*, p. 8; Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 389.

<sup>91</sup> Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa*, p. 9.

<sup>92</sup> Kilham, *Report on a Recent Visit to Sierra Leone*, p. 19.

Through care and education by people such as herself, African people were to achieve parity with the British who, 'blessed and protected' by God, were endowed with the moral authority to supervise the Christianisation of the rest of the world. Writing in 1831, she expressed the complexity of this relationship:

As superintendents and directors, we should ever bear in mind that we are fellow-probationers with the dear children, ... all other distinctions seem lost in the contemplation of this.<sup>93</sup>

While criticising representations of African people as inferior, Hannah Kilham drew on languages of superintendence and parenthood which undercut her insistence on spiritual equality. Sierra Leone, she claimed, was in 'a state of infancy', and therefore required the guidance of British men and women. Thus, while she left her own school at Charlotte under the care of black teachers as she travelled around the colony, she arranged for frequent visits from Freetown, 'leaving the way for an European, should one be disposed to take the charge.'<sup>94</sup>

Such a relationship between Britain and West Africa ensured an important role for British women within missionary practice. Whilst it was increasingly common for women to accompany their husbands as missionary wives, there remained some resistance to a female presence in the colonies. Kilham had long engaged with this issue, arguing in her writing for the benefits to male missionaries of female companions. The high death rate among Europeans in West Africa, she claimed, was due less to the climate than to the absence of domestic comfort:

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<sup>93</sup> Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 440

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 467.

This lack arises from the state of a comparatively new settlement, where in many families there is no female superintendent, no good cook or house-servant, nor anyone to take a general oversight of domestic concerns, so that health is badly supported, and the sick greatly neglected as to diet and judicious, attentive nursing...<sup>95</sup>

For her, women were at the centre of the missionary enterprise, both in West Africa and back in England. Indeed, when in 1830 she made an unsuccessful attempt to revive her earlier plan to bring African students to England to be educated, her initial proposal for 24 'well-chosen' young men, who were to be housed near London and placed under the supervision of a master, housekeeper and servant, was revised a few months later to involve twelve 12-13 year old girls. Under her care, they could be taught reading, writing, Scripture and domestic skills and so 'contribute to the advancement of the Female character on the coast of Africa'.<sup>96</sup>

Indeed, reflecting her emphasis on the importance of imparting domestic reform to West African women, Kilham drew on a language of domesticity to highlight both Africa's potential and its difference. Pleased to discover on her arrival in Sierra Leone that many of the 'liberated Africans' were living in nice stone cottages, built by themselves, with piazzas and gardens at the rear, she was also impressed with the ease with which missionary wives taught domestic reform, thus enabling African girls to become 'clever cooks, house-maids and laundresses'.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 217.

<sup>96</sup> Letters from Hannah Kilham to John Capper, Committee of the Friends for Anti-Slavery Concerns, 2 September 1830; to the Committee of Friends on Anti-Slavery Concerns, 12 April 1830 (FLA).

<sup>97</sup> *Missionary Register* (September 1824), p. 397; (July 1824), p. 299.

The 'African FEMALE', she wrote, might 'in time be led to regard with desire and admiration... [the] domestic order, decency, quietness, [and] cleanliness' of Christian family life.<sup>98</sup>

At the same time, the comparisons in her writing between domestic situations in West Africa, Ireland and England underline Africa's position at a lower level of civilisation. In the Gambia in 1824 she compared African 'huts', 'so close, and dirty and comfortless - so unlike what we could desire to see as human habitations' with cabins in Ireland, concluding that 'degraded as are the poor peasantry of Ireland, they are in some respects much better prepared for improvement than the Jolas are.'<sup>99</sup> On another occasion, Kilham wrote that:

I long to see the people here put in the way of forming better dwellings, many of the *poorer* Irish cabins I have seen are like little palaces in comparison with some of these African huts.<sup>100</sup>

This description of Irish homes has little bearing on her experience of them; rather, it serves to emphasise Africa's uncivilised state.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, Kilham constructs a hierarchy of civilisation through a language of domesticity: while the British middle class live in 'homes' and working class in 'dwellings', the Irish poor inhabit 'dwellings' and 'cabins' and West Africans, 'huts'. It is the mission of the middle class British woman to transform huts into homes.

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<sup>98</sup> *Missionary Register* (September 1824), pp. 394-95.

<sup>99</sup> Biller, *Memoir of Hannah Kilham*, pp. 240 and 190.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 183

<sup>101</sup> See *Reports of the British and Irish Ladies Society* (1822-1829).



Hannah Kilham was critical of what she saw as:

the custom with Europeans in this colony to dwell on 'the faults and defects of the Africans around them, instead of affectionately, patiently and steadily, as influenced by the love of Jesus, teaching day by day such as are ignorant, or out of the way, and praying in humility for heavenly help to bring them to a better mind.

The tendency to represent Africans as inferior not only went against missionary experience, but reflected badly on the British themselves. 'The habit of treating them in our intercourse, as having little or no hope of improvement, is', she continued, 'much calculated to excite a Pharisaic spirit, which contents itself in the thought of being "not as other men", ...not so heedless, dull, untractable and full of deficiencies.'<sup>102</sup> Yet despite her insistence that the British *were* 'as other men', we are left in no doubt as to their superiority, whether in terms of their language or domestic situations, their command of 'useful knowledge' or Christian belief and practice.

## Conclusion

Biographers of Hannah Kilham have represented the story of Sandanee and Mahmadee as a disaster. Sarah Biller's comment that 'it was thought that neither the lessons prepared in the native languages nor the use of them would prove of much avail without European superintendence' was echoed by Ormerod Greenwood in his suggestion that the failure of the two men was 'a proof that African teachers could not simply be instructed and then sent home and left to

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<sup>102</sup> Biller, *Memoirs of the late Hannah Kilham*, p. 400.

their own devices.’<sup>103</sup> While disappointing to the missionaries, the failure of Sandanee and Mahmadee and of other converts posed no more than a momentary threat to arguments for Africa’s capacity for improvement. Through Hannah Kilham’s writing and practice, the Sierra Leone experiment was recouped and placed within a framework which saw Africa as improvable and potentially equal but requiring the ongoing supervisory care of British men and women.

While undermining the ‘separate spheres’ position on racial difference, this argument was at the same time crucial for the construction of an unequal relationship between Britain and West Africa. British men and women, while not representing a separate and superior race, were positioned as teachers and supervisors, parents and elder siblings of African Christians, as crucial agents in the civilising process. This was of importance not only to their work as missionaries *out there* in the ‘mission field’ but, as suggested by James Montgomery’s concerns about the future of philanthropy, for their identities within Britain. Indeed Hannah Kilham’s excitement at West Africa’s potential for the fulfilment of missionary aspirations can be read as a comment on the wider significance of missions for British middle-class men and, especially, women. As she wrote in *The Claims of West Africa to Christian Instruction*: ‘What a field does Sierra Leone present!’<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p. 169; Greenwood, ‘Hannah Kilham’s Plan’, p. 62

<sup>104</sup> Kilham, *The Claims of West Africa*, p. 7.

## Chapter Five

### **‘A Christian and civilized land’:**

#### **Missions, the South Pacific and the British middle class in the 1820s-1840s**

Chapter Five explores issues of the infantilisation of colonial peoples, this time in the context of missionary activity in the South Pacific in the 1820s. The chapter focuses on George Bennet’s missionary voyage between 1821 and 1829 which took him on a supervisory tour of London Missionary Society mission stations in the South Pacific, New Zealand and Australia, travelling home via South-East Asia, India, Mauritius, Madagascar and Capetown. Drawing on accounts by Bennet and his colleague Daniel Tyerman, the chapter explores the significance of stadial theories of civilisation and cultural difference for both missionary practice in the South Pacific and evangelical and middle-class identity in Sheffield.

The South Pacific was the oldest and, by the 1820s, the most established area of London Missionary Society (LMS) activity. Between 1797, the year the first contingent arrived in Tahiti, and the arrival of a new group, which included the missionary heroes of the early Victorian era, William Ellis and John Williams, in 1817, mission stations had been established on the four major islands of Tahiti and Eimeo (known by the British as the Georgian or Windward Islands) and Huahine

and Raiatea (known as the Society or Leeward Islands).<sup>1</sup> Christian progress, celebrated in the pages of the *Evangelical Magazine*, had ensured that the South Pacific had become a main focus of the missionary gaze, inspiring the expansion of the LMS to India, Ceylon, Africa, the West Indies and New Brunswick, as well as the formation of supportive auxiliary missionary societies throughout Britain. The purpose of Bennet and Tyerman's visit, however, was supervisory. Conflict had broken out both between individual missionaries and between them and the parent body, as they expressed their anger at the meagre salary and supplies and what some understood as the general patronising air of the directors.<sup>2</sup> Arriving in Tahiti in September 1821, the two men spent over two-and-a-half years in the area, leaving for New Zealand in May 1824.

My particular concern in this chapter is the representation for public consumption of Bennet and Tyerman's experiences. Part One will focus on the representation of the South Pacific in the two-volume *Voyages and Travels around the World*, based on the writing of Bennet and Tyerman and edited in 1831 by James Montgomery.<sup>3</sup> This volume sought to contest two competing discourses of racial

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<sup>1</sup> For the formation and early activity of the LMS, see: Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895* (London: Henry Froude, 1899); Neil Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> See Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>3</sup> James Montgomery (ed.), *Journal of Voyages and Travels by the Reverend Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, Esquire, deputed from the London Missionary Society to visit their various stations in the South Seas, China, India etc, between the years 1821 and 1829*, 2 Vols (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1831).

and cultural difference in popular currency in the early nineteenth century: the celebratory account of the 'noble savage', popularised by the publication of the journals of Captain Cook and other navigational explorers of the 1770s; and arguments for the essential inferiority of 'primitive' peoples which, gaining popularity in the 1820s and 1830s, undermined missionary claims for the capacity for civilisation of non-Western peoples. Contributing to a 'remaking' of popular images of the Pacific, Montgomery developed themes which had informed the first missionary accounts of the area in the 1790s: the brutality of Polynesian cultural practices and the disorder of their domestic and public lives; the improving impact of Christian religious belief and practice on familial and civil relationships; and the crucial role of missionary intervention in facilitating the transition towards civilised society.

The second part of the chapter will focus on the evangelical community in Sheffield with which Bennet maintained a close relationship during his travels. His letters were widely circulated within this network of family, friends and well-wishers, extracts reaching a wider audience through the pages of the *Sheffield Iris* and through speeches delivered to children present at Sunday School Union anniversaries. The 'spoils of gospel' which Bennet sent home - artefacts such as weapons, dress, utensils and idols - became central to the development of the ethnographical collection of Sheffield's Literary and Philosophical Society museum. It is my argument that missionary representations of the relationship between the 'civilised' and the 'savage', between 'Christian' Britain and the

'heathen' world were central to the construction of middle-class self-definition and cultural authority in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

### **Part One: Remaking the South Pacific: missionary stories**

The *Voyages and Travels* engaged with popular non- and anti-missionary discourses on race, civilisation and improvement which were in circulation in the 1820s and 1830s. Condensing into one voice extracts from journals and letters written by George Bennet and Daniel Tyerman during their travels, and narratives produced by Bennet on his return to Britain, the volume drew upon missionary discourse and notions of civilisation to present a case for the positive impact of evangelical Christianity in the South Pacific.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Between the 'noble' and eternal savage: missionary discourse and cultural change**

Prior to the missionary writing of the late eighteenth century, knowledge of the South Pacific had derived from the publicity surrounding the voyages of James Cook and other navigational explorers and scientists of the 1760s and 1770s. The popular representation constructed from their accounts was that of the 'noble savage', of peoples characterised by a harmonious relationship to their

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<sup>4</sup> See George Bennet to James Montgomery, 2 December 1830 (James Montgomery Papers/Sheffield Archives, hereafter JM/SA). A pack sent to Montgomery after his return contained pieces detailing his 'New Zealand deliverance' (see pp. 235-236 below), the killing of a cow at Eimeo, the Tahitian Parliament, and Captain Pollard's shipwreck.

environment, by a beautiful and dignified physical form, and a culture uncorrupted by both the greed and commercialism and restrictive sexual morality of Western civilisation.<sup>5</sup> Such writing had inspired a ‘polynesian vogue’ in Britain in the late-eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

While James Cook appeared in missionary accounts, for evangelical Christians the Pacific islands were far from paradise.<sup>7</sup> For them, while the Fall had resulted in sin and degradation on a global scale, the people of the South Seas represented the most morally depraved of humankind. In his first sermon to the newly-formed London Missionary Society in September 1795, Thomas Haweis had contested the notion of the ‘noble savage’ through contrasting the natural beauty of the islands with the moral and spiritual degradation of the people: the ‘new world’ which ‘hath lately opened before our eyes’ contained people in:

lands, which seem to realise the fabled Gardens of the Hesperides, - where the fragrant groves which cover them from the sultry beams of the day, afford them food and clothing; whilst the sea offers continual plenty in its inexhaustible stores; and the day passes in ease and affluence, and the night in music and dancing. But amidst these enchanting scenes, savage nature still feasts on the flesh of its prisoners, appeases its Gods with human

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<sup>5</sup> For the ‘noble savage’, see: Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 8-95; Alan Morehead, *The Fatal Impact. An Account of the Invasion of the South Pacific 1767-1840* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966), pp. 3-52; Nigel Rigby, ‘A Sea of Islands: Tropes of Travel and Adventure in the Pacific’ (University of Kent: unpublished PhD thesis, 1995), Introduction and Chapter Three.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter One, pp. 47-48 above.

<sup>7</sup> William Ellis, for example, refers to his reading of ‘Captain Cook’s Voyages’ as a child. See John Eimeo Ellis (ed.), *Life of William Ellis* (London: John Murray 1873), p. 8.

sacrifices - whole societies of men and women live promiscuously, and murder every infant born among them.<sup>8</sup>

The focus on the practices of idolatry, human sacrifice, cannibalism and infanticide, placed against the backdrop of an idyllic Tahitian landscape, became a convention of missionary writing in the pages of the *Evangelical Magazine* and in the increasing numbers of missionary memoirs published from the early nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Writing *A Tour through Hawaii* in the late 1820s, a forerunner to his highly-acclaimed *Polynesian Researches* (1831), William Ellis highlighted the inaccuracies of the popular belief, generated by Cook et al, that the Pacific islands:

were a sort of elysium, where the highly favoured inhabitants, free from the toil and care, the want and disappointment, which was the happiness of civilised communities, dwelt in what they called a state of nature, and spent their lives in unrestrained gratification and enjoyment.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Smith, *European Vision*, p. 107. Haweis had previously published an article in the *Evangelical Magazine* of July 1795 in which he argued that a number of factors, including the climate and availability of food, the accessibility of Polynesian languages, the existence of a monarchical as opposed to despotic government, and the receptiveness of the people made the South Pacific a good choice for missionary activity.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Smith notes how missionaries tended to reinterpret passages from the writings of Cook and others which revealed brutal and barbaric practices. Artists also played an important role in the denigration of the 'noble savage'. Webber's 'Human Sacrifice at Tahiti', for example, first published in accounts of Cook's voyages, became a popular missionary image with a few crucial changes. Tahitian depravity was represented in the smaller squat stature and darker complexions of the people, contrasted with suggestions of 'nobility' in the original. See Smith, *European Vision*, p. 245.

<sup>10</sup> William Ellis, *Narrative of a Tour through Hawaii, or Owhyee; with observations on the Natural History of the Sandwich Islands and remarks on the manners, customs, traditions, history and language of their inhabitants* (London: H. Fisher, Son and P. Jackson, 1827), second edition, p. 2. See also *Polynesian Researches, during a residence of nearly eight years in the Society and Sandwich Islands* (London: H. Fisher, Son and P. Jackson, 1831).



Missionaries who had lived among the people, learned their language and observed their customs, could form ‘more just and accurate conclusions’ on account of their altogether deeper knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Sharing the emphasis of enlightenment discourse on observation and experience as the basis of true knowledge, Ellis asserts the privileged knowledge gained from the missionary encounter.

*Voyages and Travels*, edited by James Montgomery, was part of this tradition. Following Ellis, Montgomery was particularly concerned to contest the revival of the notion of the ‘noble savage’ in a recently-published book by Otto von Kotzebue, a Russian naval captain who had visited Tahiti and the Sandwich Islands during a navigational exploration of the Pacific in the 1820s. Kotzebue provided a damning account of the influence of Europeans who, he believed, were having a corrupting influence on a previously unspoiled Polynesian culture through the introduction of commerce, competition and unfamiliar diseases. He extended his criticism to missionaries. ‘A religion like this’, he wrote:

which forbids every innocent pleasure and cramps or annihilates every mental power, is a libel on the divine founder of Christianity... (I)t has given birth to ignorance, hypocrisy and a hatred of all other modes of faith, which was once foreign to the open and benevolent character of the Tahitians.<sup>12</sup>

Pacific peoples, characterised by their gaiety and unrepressed attitudes to sexuality, were being spoiled by the forcible introduction of a debased Christianity.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p.4

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Morehead, *The Fatal Impact*, p. 87. Bennet, who was unimpressed on meeting Kotzebue in March 1824, made notes in the margins of the LMS copy of the *Voyages and Travels*: ‘false’, ‘what ignorance’, ‘what horrid lies’. See: Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, p. 171; George Bennet to Ormond, 1824 (London Missionary Society Archive/SOAS Library, hereafter LMS/SOAS).

James Montgomery directly engaged with Kotzebue's claims.<sup>13</sup> He disputed the Russian's assessment of the missionary impact, warning against the confusion of the 'state of nature' of the Pacific islanders with a 'state of innocence'. Kotzebue, he maintained, was one of a number of visitors to the Pacific who had been seduced by the emphasis in Polynesian culture on pleasure and who were consequently unable to see the brutalities of such cultures. Criticising the naive emphasis on the 'primitive simplicity of these happy islanders', Montgomery claimed to reveal their 'real condition': the despotism, infanticide, murder and cannibalism which amounted, in his view, not to noble savagery but to '*a state of nature fallen FROM innocence*'.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, Montgomery was anxious to refute the increasingly popular argument that peoples of the Pacific and 'primitive' peoples generally were naturally inferior and could not be improved. This had found a recent

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<sup>13</sup> The inclusion in the title of the phrase 'round the world' in the second (1840) and third (1841) editions was intended to make a direct link with Kotzebue's volume. This brought Bennet into conflict with the LMS director, William Hankey, who felt that it was not sufficiently religious ('many paltry whalers have gone round the world.'). George Bennet to James Montgomery, 31 March 1821 (LMS/SOAS). Bennet got his way on this occasion and, agitated by further changes to the text, promptly changed the dedication from the Directors to the King. See: James Montgomery (ed.), *Voyages and Travels round the World, by the Reverend Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, Esquire, deputed from the London Missionary Society to visit their various stations on the South Sea Islands, Australia, China, India, Madagascar and South Africa between the years 1821 and 1829, compiled from original documents by James Montgomery*, 2nd edition, corrected (London: John Snow, 1840).

<sup>14</sup> Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Introduction. See also William Ellis, *A Vindication of the South Seas Missions from the misrepresentation of Otto von Kotzebue, Captain in the Russian Navy*, (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1831), for a fuller engagement with Kotzebue's argument.

manifestation in the *Quarterly Review* which, supported by a letter allegedly written by a Hawaiian chief named Boki accusing the missionaries of corruption, had used Kotzebue's evidence to make a case just as abhorrent to the missionaries, that Pacific peoples remained unchanged by Christianity because they lacked a capacity for civilisation. The fullest response came from William Ellis, an ex-tutor of Boki, who in addition to arguing that Kotzebue's experience of Tahiti was limited, used his knowledge of the structures of Hawaiian language to assert that the letter from Boki was a forgery. He claimed that there were certain phrases - such as 'take an opportunity' and 'head' of a nation - that would not be used by a Hawaiian, and that the author had used letters not present in Polynesian languages, such as 'c' and 'y', when he referred to himself variously as Boki, Boke, Bockey.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike those who had 'loved' the Tahitians 'for their licentiousness' and had consequently given little thought to the brutalities of Pacific cultures, George Bennet and Daniel Tyerman claimed to have, through four years' experience on the islands, a thorough knowledge not only of the true degradation of Pacific peoples, but of their capacity for improvement. The central narrative of *Voyages and Travels* focuses on the improvement of Tahiti and the surrounding islands, telling the story of the adoption by the people of Christian religious and cultural practices. Montgomery opens the volume with an extract from 'The Star in the East' by Josiah Condor, which celebrates the 'moral miracle' of Tahiti:

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<sup>15</sup> See: Ellis, *A Vindication*, p. 161; J. Ellis, *Life of William Ellis*, pp. 125 and 134-135; George Bennet to James Montgomery, 16 March 1831 (JM/SA); George Bennet to William Ellis, 23 December 1830 (JM/SA).

On his startled ear,  
What unaccustomed sounds from those shores,  
Charming the lone Pacific? Not the shouts  
Of war, nor maddening songs of Bacchanals;  
But, from the rude marae, the full-toned Psalm  
Of Christian praise. A Moral miracle!  
Tahiti now enjoys the gladdening smile  
Of Sabbaths. Savage dialects, unheard  
At Babel, or at Jewish Pentecost,  
Now first articulate divinest sounds,  
And swell the universal Amen.<sup>16</sup>

Carefully condensing Bennet's and Tyerman's accounts, *Voyages and Travels* presents a picture of the wonderful possibilities opened up by the missionary enterprise.

### **A Moral Miracle**

Drawing on Bennet's and Tyerman's reports to the LMS, the *Voyages and Travels* documents the growth in Christian religious practice in the islands of the Pacific. The authors detail the swelling congregations at the newly-constructed chapels and schools, the increasing numbers of people opting for Christian burials, marriages and baptisms for their children and the popularity of special meetings organised for the instruction of children, women, married couples and candidates for baptism. Bennet and Tyerman celebrate the formation of new missionary prayer meetings and charitable societies, and record meetings with people who displayed a considerable ability and willingness to answer questions on various points of the

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<sup>16</sup> Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, p. xvi

Scriptures, and to discuss the positive changes in their lives as a result of their conversions to Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

Conversion to Christianity involved cultural change, including the renunciation of previously held religious beliefs and their associated 'abominations' and practices, such as infanticide, human sacrifice, promiscuity and homosexuality. Idolatry, the worship of wooden and stone idols and sometimes involving human sacrifice, was viewed by the missionaries as the ultimate barbaric practice.<sup>18</sup> Its official abolition in 1816, occasioned by the conversion of King Pomare II, was seen by missionaries as a key event.<sup>19</sup> Bennet and Tyerman were both appalled and fascinated by the people's belief in the power of idols, and made numerous visits to maraes, the recently-abandoned sites of worship, from where they collected idols to be sent to the LMS museum in London, and participated in ceremonies at which others were destroyed. Indeed, *Voyages and Travels* abounds with stories

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<sup>17</sup> In November 1822, for example, 700 people attended the monthly missionary prayer meeting in Raiatea, whereas 1000 were present at a sermon in Huahine. Some among the natives were volunteering to work as missionaries among their own people. See Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 1, p. 519 and p. 204; also pp. 147, 172-173, 201-202, 310 and 335-357; Vol 2, pp. 5 and 515.

<sup>18</sup> Following a description of a sacrifice at Hawaii, Bennet and Tyerman write: 'These are traits of man in what is called his state of nature, which many, who ought to know better, imagine to be a state of innocence, and talk, why poetically no doubt, of the primitive simplicity of these happy islanders.' They are 'as ignorant of the real condition of the heathen as they are of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the unregenerated human heart, whether actually pagan or nominally Christian.' Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 1, pp. 437-438.

<sup>19</sup> The abolition of idolatry was one of a number of reforms whereby the Tahitian king aimed to 'prove' his Christian commitment. Others include the translation, with the missionary Mr Nott, of the Gospel of St Luke, and the renunciation of the despotic and war-mongering behaviour.

of the missionaries, in scenes symbolising Christian triumph, pushing the huge and grotesque structures over cliff-tops and into the sea.<sup>20</sup>

Descriptions of the widespread practice of infanticide, further evidence of the terrible human consequences of heathen belief and practice, are also placed alongside celebrations of their renunciation. On their first Sabbath in Tahiti, Henry Nott had informed them that three quarters of all babies born on the island were murdered at birth, usually by one or another of their parents or by someone employed to do the task.<sup>21</sup> Such was the scale of the practice that Bennet and Tyerman reported the low numbers of people in the 10-20 years age range -a trend which was reversing since the arrival of missionaries. Thus, at a sermon at Huahine, Bennet and Tyerman expressed their delight at the 1000 or so people present, reflecting that many of the 400 children would not be alive were it not for Christian influence.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the expressed regret of hitherto heathen women who had practised infanticide, including the wives, daughters and attendants of

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<sup>20</sup> After Pomare's conversion his idols were burned or given to the LMS as 'spoils of gospel.' *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 85; also p. 74, 96, 113, 124, 163-64, 181, 265, 277, 285, 458 and 529.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, pp. 71-72. Bennet and Tyerman provide various explanations, including the belief among the women that child-birth and breastfeeding resulted in the loss of their sexual attractiveness, the anxiety that children of 'unequal matches' would undermine the lineage of the aristocracy, and the belief that children were hindrance, especially for nomadic peoples such as the Aerois. See Vol 1, pp. 196.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, pp. 172-173

chiefs, was seen as a crucial signifier of the positive impact of Christianity in the promotion of the ideals of a civilised society.<sup>23</sup>

The inculcation of civilised family relationships, measured in terms of the care provided for children, the desirability of monogamy and a reformed marriage,<sup>24</sup> or the domestication and greater status of women, was central to missionary practice. The apparently low status of women was, to Bennet and Tyerman, evident in their exclusion from idolatrous ceremonies and the ritual murder of those who transgressed this taboo, their prohibition from eating certain foods at feasts, customs surrounding childbirth, and the 'chaotic' nature of Polynesian sexual relationships, celebrated by eighteenth-century travellers.<sup>25</sup> All were

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 542.

<sup>24</sup> The missionaries claimed to see changes in the attitude to marriage, whereby people became increasingly concerned to acquire a greater knowledge of characters and minds. See *ibid*, Vol 2, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Indeed, this issue has continued to be a site of contested interpretation among twentieth-century historians. For Gavan Daws, for example, the behaviour of white sailors is represented as amusing instances of a sort of transhistorical 'laddishness', a 'boys-will-be-boys' analysis of men cooped up on a ship for months without women, who slept on the floor because they had used the nails for their hammocks to barter for sex, of an Irishman aboard Wallis' ship who rushed on shore and had sex in public with the first woman he saw: 'to be sure', writes Daws, '(he) was doing no more than planting his own explorer's flag.' Daws, *A Dream of Islands*, p. 3. Other historians have more successfully problematised this relationship, raising questions about the relationships between sexuality, gender, colonialism and power. Marshall Sahlins, for example, has questioned dominant representations of women's passivity. See Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (London: University of Chicago, 1985), pp. 1-31. More recently Nigel Rigby has argued that, by the time of Cook's arrival, sex was seen as a strategy for re-establishing a balance of power, part of the negotiation by Tahitians with white explorers. Nigel Rigby, 'A Sea of Islands', p. 5.

interpreted as evidence of the savagery of the people.<sup>26</sup> Thus, paying a visit to the recently-widowed Tarouarii, the daughter-in-law of King Mahine, Bennet and Tyerman were greatly disturbed that this 'great lady, on whom the hopes of the nation are placed' should be found awaiting the birth of her child in a small shed separate from the main house. In accordance with custom, this allowed her to plunge into the sea immediately after the baby was born. They took consolation, however, from the fact that the disappointment on the birth of a female child was not so great as it once would have been, and that the mother allowed the child to be dressed by a missionary wife in the English fashion, such that it might 'conform as nearly as possible to the manners and customs of the nation which had sent them spiritual fathers and instructors in righteousness'.<sup>27</sup>

The missionaries registered their surprise on discovering that women as well as men could propose marriage, and that the marriage of a woman of higher rank to a lower class man did not affect her status (walking on the public causeway, they wrote, 'she goes first, and he, without ever imagining himself degraded, treads in her steps'). Yet while they encountered practices such as these which seemed to contradict their analysis of female disempowerment, their notion of women as

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<sup>26</sup> See Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 1, pp. 76-77, 332 and 463. For the missionaries, such sexual relationships were necessarily oppressive to women, symbolising their use and exploitation by animal-like men. For example, Bennet and Tyerman condemned the practice of young women being 'given' by their families to the King - described as 'to be trained and fattened, like a calf for the slaughter' - until he tired of them. p. 332.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 358.



fragile, moral, virtuous creatures, exploited by men, remained unchallenged.<sup>28</sup> Thus, it was only when her identity as a domestic woman was secure that the missionaries celebrated the warrior status of Queen Tiramano who, despite being ill with a haemorrhage, had led her people in a heroic march against idolatry armed with a musket. A Christian soldier, she was both 'a Deborah' and 'a Mary in the house, sitting at Jesus' feet'.<sup>29</sup>

In promoting marriage and monogamy, and a redefined masculinity and femininity, the missionaries' aim was reconstruction in their own image. Men, discouraged from tattooing their bodies, from idleness and conflict, were encouraged to be sober, frugal and hard-working, and were to learn 'useful arts' such as carpentry, with which they could make sofas, beds and other comfortable furniture for their homes.<sup>30</sup> Women, seen as naturally domestic creatures, were taught needlework and domestic management and encouraged to adopt western styles of dress. According to Bennet and Tyerman, '(m)odesty, cleanliness and neatness' were

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 204; also Vol 1, p. 143 and Vol 2, p. 5. For evidence concerning missionaries' relationships with native women, and their cruelty to their wives, see Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, pp. 154-157.

<sup>29</sup> Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 2, p. 293.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, pp. 221 and 301. Interestingly, tattooing - 'this barbarous species of embroidery' - became a symbol of resistance. Bennet and Tyerman report that a 'number of headstrong young men' had tattooed their bodies as 'a symbol of their disaffection with the better order of things, and a signal for revolt against the existing government.' See: Vol 1, p. 219 and 239. See also Harriet Guest, 'Curiously Marked: Tattooing, Masculinity and Nationality in Eighteenth century British Perceptions of the South Pacific', in John Barrell (ed.), *Painting and the Politics of Culture. New Essays in British Art, 1700-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 101-134.

increasingly 'characterising their deportment, their persons, and their apparel.'<sup>31</sup> Families moved into new settlements of plastered and windowed dwellings with separate living and sleeping accommodation and furnished with newly-introduced commodities. They were encouraged to sleep at night rather than during the day and to eat in moderation and at regular intervals.<sup>32</sup> Women's dress, and comfortable houses with western commodities, were central to a new sense of progress. In the words of Mahamene, a native of Raiatea: 'Look at the chandeliers over our heads; look at our wives; how becomingly they appear in their gowns and bonnets.'<sup>33</sup>

Such domestic reform was seen to foster values of orderly living which would emanate outwards, having a reforming impact on the rest of the society. At Huahine, a previously itinerant people had abandoned their former homes to their pigs and since their occupation of 'humble, but neat dwellings' near to the bay had become changed in their characters and manners:

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<sup>31</sup> See Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 1, p. 66, 70 and 145; Vol 2, p. 4. An exchange between Christian Tahitian women who accompanied Bennet and Tyerman to the Sandwich Islands, and Hawaiian women wearing little clothing, reveals the significance of dress to Christian conceptions of womanhood: 'we will not acknowledge you as women', threatened the Tahitians, 'if you do not dress more decently.' Vol I, p. 370-373.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, pp. 132 and 218.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid* Vol 1, p. 512. Jean and John Comaroff have talked about missionary reconstructions of the 'black body' through dress, grooming and comportment. They see such 'bodywork' as part of a more general attempt to construct 'free individuals' and introduce European commodities. See Jean and John Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), p. 41.

While these village erections are thus coming forward, a new form of society is growing up with them... The gospel may be said to have first taught them the calm, enduring, and endearing sweets of home, which their vagabond forefathers, and many of themselves, hardly knew to exist, till the religion of Him who had not where to lay his head, taught them how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, instead of roving like fishes, or littering like swine.<sup>34</sup>

Earlier forms of entertainment, such as 'licentious' dancing, cock-fighting and other cruel sports were, it was claimed, abandoned and feast times, previously characterised by 'surfeiting, drunkenness, debauchery, quarrelling and murder', became pleasant occasions, partly due to the civilising presence of women who were newly participant in such events.<sup>35</sup> A public festival at Raiatea in December 1823 was quite a spectacle, with 241 sofas and over a hundred tables, an awning of cloth, much food, and people dressed in their best clothes, including women wearing bonnets. Dinner was followed by addresses, during which aspects of the new life, the 'feasting, their improved dress, their purer enjoyments, their more courteous behaviour, the cleanliness of their persons, and the delicacy of their language in conversation' were compared with 'their former gluttony, nakedness, riot, brutality, filthy customs and obscene talk'.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 1, pp. 201-3. For an account of Bunaauia, where 'provident and well-regulated modes of living' had apparently replaced the 'grossness, confusion and filthiness' of earlier domestic arrangements, see Vol 1, p. 164.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 94 (Eimeo) and p. 348 (Borabora).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 533; also p. 147.

## Agency and Cultural Change

Pacific culture was changing, but whether it was changing in the manner intended by the missionaries, and certainly for the reasons they desired, raises many questions. As anthropologists such as Jean and John Comaroff and Nicholas Thomas have argued, the missionary relationship, and that between the mission and cultural/colonial power, was by no means unproblematic. Conflict existed within evangelicalism and between missionaries and other agents of colonisation. The agency of the people on the receiving end of the missionary enterprise meant that while missionaries were successful in infusing cultures with new signs and commodities, they had little control over the interpretation of their message, which was shaped by the indigenous cultural experience.<sup>37</sup>

The complexity of the relationship between missionary and missionised *can be seen* in the figure of Pomare II, the Tahitian 'king' who, along with his household - his wife, Queen Taaroa Vahine, their baby son Teariitaria, his ten-year old daughter Aimata, by a former spouse, and Taaroamaiturai, the Queen's sister - came to represent Bennet and Tyerman's hopes for Tahiti. On their first meeting the missionaries were impressed with this well-dressed gathering, the members of which listened attentively as the King overcame the pain of his illness to converse with them on the subject of Christian progress, and listened with interest as the missionaries relayed the influence of George III on the public education system at

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<sup>37</sup> See: Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1991) specially pp. 6-13; Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994).

home.<sup>38</sup> Although the six-foot king, with his tattooed hands, beard, and tied back long hair, was very evidently a Tahitian, and had not rid himself of all 'debasement habits', he had 'more of a personal dignity than could be expected from one who had been so lately a rude and fierce barbarian.'<sup>39</sup> They learned from Nott that he spent his evenings teaching his attendants to read the Scriptures and that he was involved in translation work.<sup>40</sup> Later meetings with Vahine confirmed that she too was 'a truly pious and intelligent woman'.<sup>41</sup> Adopting a model of cultural change as emanating outwards and downwards from the royal household, Bennet and Tyerman countered the belief that Pomare and Vahine were 'insignificant barbarians invested with a little brief authority.'<sup>42</sup> People everywhere, including kings, queens and chiefs from nearby islands, followed their example: 'the mighty moral change', Bennet wrote, 'commenced from the King himself.'<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> He died shortly afterwards, in November 1821. See Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels* Vol 1, pp. 61-63.

<sup>39</sup> Although he had prohibited the manufacture of spirits on the island and was by and large abstemious, he did enjoy his drink whenever ships arrived with quantities for sale. *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 102.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, pp. 66 and 79. Also, while noted for his earlier cruelty, he was now subduing conflictual groups. See Vol 1, pp. 75, 81 and 102.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 200

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 209.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 85. For changing concepts of the English royal family in this period, see Linda Colley, 'The apotheosis of George III: loyalty, royalty and the British nation, 1760-1820', *Past and Present*, vol 102 (February 1984), pp. 94-129; and *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1992), Chapter Five.

This was a very different account of Pomare from those provided by other missionaries, many of whom had immense difficulty with the king's apparent reluctance to break free from 'sinful habits' and who consequently doubted his true commitment to Christianity.<sup>44</sup> At the king's death in 1822, Crook wept with grief while also feeling that it might be 'a public benefit': 'the King's conduct', he wrote, 'has been the greatest check to the civilisation of the people.'<sup>45</sup> Such interpretations were corroborated by non-missionary observers. The Russian navigator Baron von Bellinghausen witnessed Pomare sending secret notes to passing whalers, requesting rum and wine. Vahine also asked for a bottle of rum for herself, complaining that her husband had consumed a whole bottle.<sup>46</sup> Not only were Tahitian people capable of selectively representing themselves to missionaries, but those missionaries already in the field, needing Bennet and Tyerman to emphasise their successes to a critical LMS board, were clearly conveying to the deputation their most positive experiences of cultural change.

Writing his history of the LMS in the late 1890s, Richard Lovett expressed his criticism of the missionaries' lack of awareness concerning the 'outward

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<sup>44</sup> His main 'habits' seem to have been drinking and despotism, though Daws claims he continued having sexual relationships with young men. See Daws, *A Dream of Islands*, p. 36. For the Pacific and male homosexuality, see Rigby, 'A Sea of Islands', Chapter Five.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Richard Lovett, *The History of the LMS*, pp. 228-230.

<sup>46</sup> In Morehead, *The Fatal Impact*, p. 85. Morehead also uses the example of Charles Darwin, who wrote of an occasion when out walking in the mountains with two Tahitian guides in 1835: 'I took with me a flask of spirits which they could not resolve to refuse; but as often as they drank a little, they put their fingers before their mouths and uttered the word, "missionary"'. Quoted in Morehead, *The Fatal Impact*, p. 87.

observances' of religious practice which were not matched by a change of heart. 'Having been eye-witness of such astounding transformations', he writes, '[they] possibly did not allow sufficiently for the innate depravity of the human heart, and for the abiding demoralisation due to generations of heathenism.'<sup>47</sup> For him, the period from 1825 is disappointing. After the death of Pomare II, hopes were pinned on his little son who, as the four-year old Pomare III, became the first king to experience a Christian coronation. Whilst a student at the missionary school on Eimeo, however, the young king died, and the throne passed to Aimata, the King's daughter who, in Lovett's words, reflecting later nineteenth-century emphasis on the hereditary nature of inferiority and moral failure, was influenced by the 'evil lives' of her mother and aunts and soon began 'to manifest many of the worst qualities of the vicious ancestry from which she sprang.'<sup>48</sup> Questioning the King's motivation for turning to Christianity, Lovett suggests that a combination of a general decline in the belief in the power of idolatry, the role of missionaries and bounty hunters in assisting him to extend his rule and the relative wealth of the missionaries and whites generally were of greater significance than spiritual motives.<sup>49</sup> Extending his critique to ordinary Tahitians, Lovett concluded that '(t)he natives who became Christian teachers were often the merest babes in Christ.'<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Lovett, *The History of the LMS*, p. 290

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 291.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 181.

<sup>50</sup> Here Lovett drew on evidence from the missionaries, citing a letter from Henry of February 1825: 'The best native teachers that any of these Windward or Leeward Islands can as yet produce are very defective, and little more than fit to

In his private correspondence with the LMS George Bennet was more willing to acknowledge some of the anxieties of conversion, particularly the persistence of idolatry and sexual misconduct, and Pomare's continued taste for alcohol. The dominant narrative of *Voyages and Travels*, however, is one of improvement, with examples of cultural change interpreted and packaged as evidence that the people of the South Pacific demonstrated a capacity for civilisation. To Bennet and Tyerman, '(f)rom the King, through all inferior gradations of society', Polynesians were a 'surprisingly teachable' people, who were quick to express their piety and their sorrow at their earlier sins. Indeed, they were worthy of comparison to those other objects of the civilising mission, the working class at home. Following a successful meeting at Borabora in February 1822, during which they had questioned native converts about aspects of the scriptures, Bennet and Tyerman wrote that:

As to original capacity, we cannot doubt that the reclaimed Savages, who are receiving instruction of every kind as little children, need not to be ashamed to measure their standard with that of the bulk of mankind in civilised countries.<sup>51</sup>

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clear away the rubbish in the places to which they are sent, and prepare the way for more effective labourers.' Another letter from Blossom (September 1827) makes a similar point: 'I cannot help feeling that there is very little real religion among the people. The brethren have had a meeting, and some of them are very desirous of taking new ground. It is not for me to say whether it be right or wrong. But we should not think it right in a farmer to take more ground when he has already more than he can cultivate and keep in good order. And I would defy any man to say that there is a station or congregation in the islands fit to be left to themselves.' *Ibid*, pp. 292-4.

<sup>51</sup> Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 1, p. 335.



'In mental capacity and discernment', they wrote, 'they are nothing behind our own countrymen, so far as their talents or their taste have yet been put to proof.'<sup>52</sup>

### **Hierarchies of civilisation**

Although all peoples were believed to be part of the same human family, 'primitive' people were represented by Bennet and Tyerman as the younger members, the children awaiting instruction.<sup>53</sup> The missionaries articulated different degrees of infantilisation among the people. The inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands, New Zealand and Australia were seen by them as more childlike and uncivilised than Tahitians, a state explained in terms of their lesser contact with Christianity. Although there had been an American missionary presence in Hawaii for some years,<sup>54</sup> the people had been less successfully won over to Christian cultural practices and exhibited, in the opinion of Bennet and Tyerman, a much greater 'ignorance, vice and wretchedness' than was to be found in Tahiti and the Society Islands.<sup>55</sup> They practised infanticide and other abominations,

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 555

<sup>53</sup> Of the people at Eimeo they wrote: 'so eager and yet so patient are these babes for the sincere milk of the word'. *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 172-173. On another occasion, Bennet and Tyerman talked of living happily 'amidst a people, lately savages, now Christians - Christians in their infant state. On an island inhabited by children, we should not have felt more at ease.' *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 132. Tahitians were likened in sleep to children and, similarly unconstrained, they 'follow simple instinct in whatever they do.' *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 245.

<sup>54</sup> See Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 412.

including prostitution, and flew flags over their homes which, initially taken to be of a sacred nature, were later discovered to be advertising dram shops. They displayed 'a disgusting scantiness of dress', lived in 'wretched native hovels', slept for much of the day, played cards and were 'gross feeders', scrapping over their food.<sup>56</sup> 'They are slow learners', wrote Bennet and Tyerman, 'and will be, till Christianity, with its civilising influence, gains possession of their minds by purifying their affections.'<sup>57</sup>

Bennet's and Tyerman's abhorrence of Hawaiians even extended to members of the royal family, whom they felt to be inferior in 'manners and intelligence' to ordinary, Christian Tahitians. On their first meeting, the two men were shocked to discover the queens, two of whom were over six feet tall, covered in flowers and ferns, with two or three of their front teeth 'barbarously dismantled.'<sup>58</sup> They showed no shame, eating without using a knife, fork or spoon, combing their hair in public, and on one occasion were caught enjoying being pushed around in a wheelbarrow by 'two stout men'. They later went off to fetch bundles of rushes from the swamps to cover their floors. The women, wrote Bennet and Tyerman, were 'as unashamed of their honest labour, in this instance, as of degrading amusement in the other.'<sup>59</sup> While the Tahitian women were engaged in sewing

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, pp. 380-383, 412 and 419.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 422

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 392

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, pp. 412-413 and 469-471.

and other useful activities, the queens and their attendants merely lounged around in 'idle luxury'.

The king and his chiefs were similarly idle, spending their days 'loitering and looking about with vacant eyes, or humming a low, dull, monotonous air without melody, as though they know not what to do with themselves.'<sup>60</sup> They displayed irreverence whilst attending the chapel. At one service the king had 'lain full length on a bench, resting his head on one attendant whilst being fanned by another', while the ladies 'sat and lolled in a group... from time to time handing a pipe about themselves.'<sup>61</sup> On the occasion of one of Ellis' sermons, the chiefs had again 'flung themselves upon their backs, on the floor, lolling or dozing with utter indifference'; at the end of the service, the king had marched out 'swinging his stick about with an air of barbarian dignity.'<sup>62</sup> 'Indolence', Bennet and Tyerman declared, was a 'national sin of the people.'<sup>63</sup>

It seemed to Bennet and Tyerman that the further they travelled, the more savage their encounters became. At their next port of call - a Methodist mission station at Whaarongoa Bay, New Zealand - they endured the most harrowing experience of their journey as they found themselves in a confrontational situation with a

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 2, p. 411

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 453.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 417. Bennet and Tyerman were annoyed that the king took his time to convert and refused to adjourn his accession anniversary in deference to the Sabbath. Vol 1, p. 441.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 1, p. 451.

group of Maori and believed that they were to be killed and used for a cannibal feast. The conflict had begun when, amidst a peaceable discussion, the cook of their ship had discovered that clothing and kitchen equipment had been stolen, and had confronted the chiefs:

Tremendous were the howlings and screechings of the barbarians, while they stamped and brandished their weapons, consisting principally of clubs and spears... (A Chief) brought his huge tattooed (sic) visage near to Mr Bennet's, screaming, in tones the most odious and horrifying, 'tangata New Zealandi, tangata Kakino? (man of New Zealand a bad man?). Happily Mr Bennet understood the question...

The horror of the situation, and the savagery of the hosts, was emphasised by Montgomery's inclusion of the question of a small, terrified child, the son of Lancelot Threlkeld, missionary from Raiatea who was travelling with them to New South Wales: 'Father! Father! When they have killed us, - will it - will it hurt us when they eat us?'<sup>64</sup>

While the Maori were 'savage and filthy', their appearance, manners and violence evidence that they occupied a considerably lower level of civilisation than did the South Sea Islanders, they became 'magnificent barbarians' as Bennet and Tyerman reached Sydney and encountered the 'abject natives' of New Holland.<sup>65</sup> Australia's blacks, in the missionaries' estimation, were dirty, idle, slovenly, practitioners of infanticide and superstition, and given to drink, violence and

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 2, pp. 133-136.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 2, pp. 130 and 174.

cruelty to their wives; 'the lowest class of human beings', they were less civilised than even the 'Hottentot'.<sup>66</sup>

Such a reference to the South African Khoi evokes a sense both of the degradation of native Australians and of their capacity for improvement, for while the humanity of the 'Hottentot' had been questioned by white Europeans they were, the missionaries believed, now in the process of conversion to Christianity:

The Hottentot and the Negro have proved themselves men, not only by exemplifying all the vices of our common nature, but by becoming partakers of all its virtues; and, that the day of visitation will come to the black outcasts of New Holland also, we dare not doubt.<sup>67</sup>

Bennet and Tyerman were appalled at the attitudes of the civilised settler population who, refusing to believe in the humanity of blacks, supported their murder: 'The white settlers have generally speaking not the least feeling of humanity towards the blacks', Bennet wrote to James Montgomery, 'but would rejoice and have them killed off a thousand times sooner than have them instructed and civilised'.<sup>68</sup> 'Degraded as they are', wrote Tyerman in a letter to LMS director George Burder, 'they still have souls... as vigorous as our own.'<sup>69</sup> An expression of their faith in the potential for change, the deputation supported the

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 2, pp. 141-182.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, Vol 2, p. 148.

<sup>68</sup> George Bennet to James Montgomery, 25 December 1824 (JM/SA).

<sup>69</sup> Daniel Tyerman to George Burder, 8 February 1825 (LMS/SOAS).

proposal of Lancelot Threlkeld to establish a mission to the aborigines near Sydney.<sup>70</sup>

The missionary model of cultural difference received further confirmation in Australia, where the presence of the 'worst class of white men' - those English and Irish convicts, described by Bennet and Tyerman as 'repulsive' and 'miserable', with the 'looks of fallen beings' - inspired them to reflect upon the simplicity and innocence of Pacific peoples.<sup>71</sup> It was the presence of such whites that added to the degradation of native Australians: 'Those are the most degraded who are

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<sup>70</sup> Threlkeld, an ex-actor with the Royal Circus and Royalty Theatre, had earned himself some notoriety in missionary circles for his unanimous decision when, as an LMS missionary in Raiatea, when he had through some 'quirk of nautical reckoning' decided to change the day of the Sabbath. Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, p. 40. Travelling with Bennet and Tyerman to Australia following the death of his wife, he had intended to return to England but, quickly re-marrying, had put himself forward for an Australian mission to be established at Reid's Mistake, 40-50 miles north of Sydney. See: George Bennet and Daniel Tyerman to William Hankey, 30 October 1824; George Bennet and Daniel Tyerman to George Burder, 12 November 1824; Address to Mr Threlkeld, 24 February 1825; Lancelot Threlkeld to the LMS, 2 February 1825, 23 April 1825, 24 May 1825, 15 September 1825, 10 October 1825, 21 June 1826, 11 September 1826 (LMS/SOAS).

<sup>71</sup> 'Among the South Sea Islanders we had no fear for our persons or our property, by day or night. Here we are surrounded with thieves and violent men of the worst character, and must look well to ourselves and our locks for security.' Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 2, p. 143; for a visit to a factory for female convicts, see pp. 148-150. According to Robert Hughes, black Australians had a very negative image of the Irish, to the extent of refusing gifts of cloaks sown from blankets because they thought them 'Irish cloaks': 'our natives commonly attach some idea of inferiority to what is Irish and Ireland' (Journal of James Gunther, 1837). See Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: A History of the Transportation of Convicts to Australia, 1787-1868* (London: Collins, 1986) p. 279.

brought into contact with their civilised invaders!<sup>72</sup> It was Christianity which was to be the catalyst to improvement, and hope was present in the children attending the Paramatta Sunday school, who wept for their parents' sins.<sup>73</sup>

*Voyages and Travels* is an important intervention in the debate concerning cultural difference, and one firmly located in a new genre of missionary writing, the most popular of which was William Ellis' *Polynesian Researches*. In it, James Montgomery marshalled the evidence from the pens of Bennet and Tyerman to present a strong argument for the cultural basis of human difference and the role of the missionary and Christian instruction in propelling people closer to civilisation. While asserting the capacity for improvement of all peoples, however, Bennet and Tyerman emphasised hierarchy, both in terms of the differing degrees of savagery and, of course, in the location of white middle-class Europeans at the top of the scale of civilisation. It was they who had the ability to teach and to nurture, the supervisory authority necessary to enable others to reach adulthood. In Part Two I explore the functions of Bennet's letters and 'spoils of gospel' sent to Sheffield in affirming this self-positioning on the part of the English middle class.

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<sup>72</sup> George Bennet and Daniel Tyerman to Governor Brisbane, 11 October 1824 (LMS/SOAS).

<sup>73</sup> Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 2, p. 167.

## Part Two: Civilisation and Progress

Knowledge of Bennet's experience in the South Pacific reached his home community in Sheffield in advance of publication of the *Voyages and Travels* in 1831. Letters written to James Montgomery, Rowland Hodgson, the Read family and Bennet's nephew, Edward McCoy, provided his friends with reassurance as to his well-being and, along with the 'spoils of gospel' - artefacts such as shells, weapons, clothing and idols - which started to arrive in Sheffield from 1824, served both to educate the general populace concerning missionary progress and provide an affirmation of missionary identity and beyond that the civilising potential of the British middle class.

### 'These recent heathens'

George Bennet's closest friends had been intimately involved in the preparations for his departure. James Montgomery, in his capacity as editor of the *Sheffield Iris*, had publicised his friend's impending trip and had solicited donations - of Sheffield hardware, such as edge tools, cutlery, Britannia metal and saws, scissors, razors, fish-hooks, earthenware, cooking utensils, paper for tracts and children's books, and looking glasses, linen and bed furniture - which were to be sent with the missionaries. These artefacts, the public were informed, were in particular demand in the South Pacific and would serve as appropriate gifts for Bennet to bestow on potential converts and friends.<sup>74</sup> His friends Joseph and Elizabeth Read had held a farewell party at their Wincobank home, presenting Bennet with a

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<sup>74</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 14 November 1820 and 6 March 1821.



scarlet portfolio for use on his travels and a collection of missionary maps, drawn by fifteen-year-old Catharine.<sup>75</sup> The family maintained contact with Bennet during his travels. The girls wrote of their news from Wincobank, while Elizabeth forwarded him presents to give to Pomare and his wife and the young Edmund sent flowers and peacock feathers, picked from the garden at Wincobank.<sup>76</sup>

Bennet's letters sought to involve his friends in his missionary enterprise. He discussed his domestic arrangements and the state of his health, and provided lengthy descriptions of the landscape and scenery, of the 'delightful fatigues of climbing mountains, tracking streams and viewing the Ruins of Idolatrous temples' and of his adventures at sea. Bennet delighted in sending snippets of enjoyable experiences, particularly if they concerned a subject close to the heart of the recipient.<sup>77</sup> To Elizabeth Read, for example, he wrote of the joys of taking his Scripture class, telling her that she too, as a Sunday school teacher, would enjoy 'sitting cross-legged upon a little native stool in the native houses and conversing with them and questioning them from their Catechism or from the sacred

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<sup>75</sup> See Chapter Three, pp. 131-132, above.

<sup>76</sup> See: George Bennet to Elizabeth Read, November 1822; no date; 13 April 1824; George Bennet to Edmund Read, November 1822 (Mary-Anne Rawson Papers/Sheffield Archives, hereafter MAR/SA). See Chapter Three, pp. 132-133, above. Daniel Tyerman complained that the abundance of gifts from Sheffield put Bennet and himself in an unequal relationship, particularly as it seems that Bennet refused to let him participate in their distribution; as a result, Tyerman felt obliged to give away his clothes. See Daniel Tyerman to Rowland Hill, 3 October 1823 (LMS/SOAS).

<sup>77</sup> See: George Bennet to Rowland Hodgson, 14 January 1822; to James Montgomery 22 January 1822 and 17 April 1823 (JM/SA); to Edmund Read, 14 November 1822; and to Catharine and Eliza Read, 30 September 1823 (MAR/SA).

Scriptures...'<sup>78</sup> Writing again to Elizabeth in April 1824, Bennet asked her to tell the young Edmund that the new King Pomare looked like Edward VI, in his pretty crown with crimson silk and satin, and gold lace coronet with pearls and a cross,<sup>79</sup> while to Catharine he wrote of his decision to present the scarlet portfolio given to him at his farewell party to Pomare III on the occasion of his coronation, with the intention that it be used by the child-king to carry the Bible and a copy of the new laws of the land at all future processions.<sup>80</sup>

The events related in Bennet's letters were incorporated into a narrative of progress. In his personal correspondence he was able to be more relaxed than in his official reports. Knowing that such information would be in the safe hands of his trusted friends, he occasionally wrote amused accounts of what he perceived to be the 'cultural confusion' occasioned by the introduction of western commodities. Discussing the superior, more respectable dress of Tahitian women in comparison with the scantily-clad inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands, Bennet told Elizabeth Read of the attitude to English clothing of some of the men: 'Some dress very oddly at first we could not help smiling', he wrote, proceeding to tell a tale of a chief who had attended a feast held for the deputies wearing a mat around his loins, an English black-coat buttoned up with the collar half-way up his

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<sup>78</sup> See George Bennet to Elizabeth Read, 29 September 1823 (MAR/SA).

<sup>79</sup> See George Bennet to Elizabeth Read, 13 April 1824 (MAR/SA). Missionaries were very involved in the ceremony. Mrs Crook made the coronation robes and Mr Crook and Mr Nott addressed the people on the coronation and the laws of land. See Montgomery, *Voyages and Travels*, Vol 2, p. 90.

<sup>80</sup> See George Bennet to Catharine Read, 30 September 1823 (MAR/SA).

back, a frilled shirt open on top and reaching down to his thighs, and nothing on his legs and feet. On another occasion he had enquired about a gown he had given to a woman, who informed him that her husband was wearing it - the arms and body tied round his waist, the skirt hanging down his legs. Such cultural hybridity, the missionary assumed, represented the first steps towards the civilisation of 'these recent heathens'.<sup>81</sup>

While greeted with enthusiasm by their recipients, Bennet's letters were infrequent, reliant on a passing whaler or returning missionary for their passage home. They were usually written to a specific friend or relative, but were copied and circulated, in accordance with Bennet's wishes, ensuring that news reached friends and acquaintances in other parts of the country.<sup>82</sup> Extracts from the letters found their way, under Montgomery's guidance, into the pages of the *Sheffield Iris*, where they served a quite different function, assisting in his concern to educate the general public as to the value of overseas missions.

Montgomery's 'local news' column had long reported missionary miscellany, publicising both meetings and activities at home and evidence of progress overseas. These had included the work of the Serampore Baptists in the expansion of Christianity in India, the campaign in support of missionary petitions against their

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<sup>81</sup> See George Bennet to Elizabeth Read, no date (MAR/SA).

<sup>82</sup> Due to his proximity to the Missionary Rooms, MCoy usually assumed the role of coordinator in this process, sending letters on to Montgomery and Hodgson and notifying them of missionaries and/or ships due to leave for Bennet's destination.

exclusion from the East India Company's protection in 1813, the conversion of Pomare in 1814 and the role of Moravian missionaries in the transformation of Native Americans from 'barbarism' to Christianity. He had also publicised the guest appearances of returned missionaries, such as CMS secretary Edward Bickersteth, who attended both the CMS and BMS anniversaries in Sheffield after his return from Sierra Leone.<sup>83</sup> Montgomery placed missionary activity within a framework which was both historical and progressive, as evidence of the gradual movement of 'primitive' peoples towards 'civilisation.' In the 1820s, his reporting was inevitably shaped by his anti-slavery commitments. Thus, when in July 1824 he gave over two columns of the *Iris* to mourn the deaths of the Queen and King of the Sandwich Islands, who were visiting London, they were represented by Montgomery as model Christian converts: 'Let those who talk of Blacks not being fit to be intrusted with freedom, study the character and conduct of the King of the Sandwich Islands.'<sup>84</sup>

In November 1824, the *Iris* printed extracts from two letters recently received from Bennet, written from Eimeo and Huahine in January and May of that year, which celebrated the coronation of the young King Pomare, the increasing numbers of converts and the general missionary success.<sup>85</sup> In May of the following year,

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<sup>83</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 13 April 1813; 20 April 1813; 21 June 1814; 24 January 1815; 31 March 1818; 2 June 1818; 22 September 1818; 13 July 1819.

<sup>84</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 13 and 20 July 1824. Interestingly, the royal company had been accompanied by Boki, the Hawaiian chief referred to on page 219, above.

<sup>85</sup> See *Sheffield Iris*, 30 November 1824.

Montgomery printed a poem written by Bennet and sent to Elizabeth Read, expressing his sorrow on leaving Tahiti and his joy at 'what God has done' for the islanders who were now under the 'universal sway' of the gospel:

Then, dear delightful scenes, farewell!  
Tahiti's shores adieu!  
Through life 'twere happiness to tell  
What God has done for you.

Once hell and sin were here combin'd  
And satan reign'd alone  
But Jesu's Gospel, now we find,  
Hath hurl'd him from his throne.<sup>86</sup>

Placed alongside this was Bennet's sensational account of his 'perils' among the 'cannibals' of New Zealand, a story of near-death at the hands of the Maori, who had murdered and eaten the captain and a crew of an earlier vessel unlucky to have sailed into the same harbour. Descriptions of 'savages' with 'faces, already hideous from their *tatauings*, (and) rendered even more so by their anger', brandishing axes and spears and 'raising warsongs, accompanied by the most horrid gesticulation' contrasted to startling effect with the gentle, subdued, Christian island of Tahiti.<sup>87</sup>

Bennet's letters also became a resource for Montgomery's speeches at the anniversaries of the Sheffield Sunday School Union. In 1826 he drew on Bennet's account of the prevalence of infanticide in the Pacific to inform a few thousand

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<sup>86</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 24 May 1825; 'Farewell to Tahiti', George Bennet to Elizabeth Read, 13 April 1824 (MAR/SA)

<sup>87</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 24 May 1825; pp. 235-26, above.

local children of the 'oppression' of children in heathen cultures.<sup>88</sup> While forming part of a regular evangelical diet which undoubtedly aimed to instil a sense of gratitude at being 'happy English children', this also points to one use of the language of heathenism in the domestic missionary context.

### **Displays of civilisation**

The second main body of material sent home by George Bennet consisted of ethnographic, geological and natural history specimens collected on his travels. A description of a meeting between Bennet and Tyerman and some 'visitors' included in *Voyages and Travels* suggests the 'great variety of merchandise' that this might include:

... native cloth, pearl shells, fishing hooks (very ingenious and beautiful contrivances), lines, cordage made of various materials, mats, bags, nets, calabashes for water vessels ... umitis (large wooden dishes), penus (stone hammers), stools, spears, bows and arrows etc etc.<sup>89</sup>

Intended 'to tempt us to barter', in this case in exchange for knives, forks, scissors and other imported goods, such artefacts were for the missionaries much more than merely items of exchange. Asking Montgomery and Hodgson to select pieces for themselves and their mutual friends as tokens of friendship and remembrance, Bennet's intention was for the cases sent to Sheffield in 1824 to be bestowed not only for friendship and 'the good cause', but 'for the interests of Science'.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> There were 48 schools, 8,854 scholars and 2039 teachers in the Sunday School Union at this time. See *Sheffield Iris*, 10 May 1826.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Sheffield City Museums, 'George Bennet' (printed booklet, no date), p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> See: letters from George Bennet to James Montgomery, 10 August 1823; 26 January 1824; 17 May 1824 (JM/SA).

Although he assumed that a selection would be made for the Rotherham College Museum, during 1823 the interests of science in Sheffield had become best represented by another institution, the newly-formed Literary and Philosophical Society. Montgomery, elected president of the Society in 1824, decided to commit some of Bennet's material to its newly opened museum.<sup>91</sup>

Sharing the enlightenment language of progress, evangelical men formed a central constituent of the new wave of scientific societies to sweep the nation in the early 1820s, joining those manufacturer-merchants and medical men, many of them Unitarian, whose commitments to science stretched back into the late eighteenth century.<sup>92</sup> The Lit and Phil claimed, as stated by Montgomery in his opening address, to promote 'the diffusion of liberal knowledge amongst all classes', enabling 'every man of the least taste or refinement, or elevation of mind' to become acquainted with 'the progress of society'.<sup>93</sup> The Society's membership, however, was solidly middle-class. Including surgeons, school masters, solicitors,

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<sup>91</sup> Bennet was pleased with this arrangement. He also requested that material be sent to his friends John Clapham at Leeds, who was active in the Sunday School Union and later an intermediary with the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society; the Reverend M. Alliott at Nottingham, a conchologist; and Joseph Gilbert at Hull. See George Bennet to James Montgomery, 15 May 1826 (JM/SA). Other material was sent to the LMS museum. See: George Bennet to John Arundell, 21 May 1823 and 29 September 1823 (LMS/SOAS).

<sup>92</sup> Early societies in Sheffield included the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge (1804) and the Book Society (1806).

<sup>93</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 17 December 1822, 24 December 1822.

journalists and a handful of manufacturers, it provided a site for the construction of a shared culture within the urban elite.<sup>94</sup>

Alongside the Experimental Science and Natural History collections, Bennet's 'spoils of gospel' formed the beginnings of the museum's Ethnographic collection. In 1824, his 'two boxes of Curiosities from Otaheite, consisting of War Instruments, Dresses, Musical Instruments' were received by the Society. A further donation of geological specimens, collections of shells, birds and ethnographic material - including cloth, jewellery, domestic utensils, weapons of war and idols - was made to the museum in 1831, after Bennet's return to Britain.<sup>95</sup> At around the same time the museum acquired other donations, including a poem written in the ancient language of Ceylon on the leaf of the Talipot tree, two casts of the heads of New Zealand chiefs, a lioness, two leopards and a tiger, mother of pearl from Botany Bay and the skeleton head of a hippo

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<sup>94</sup> For the role of such societies in forging a common middle-class identity in the early nineteenth century, see: Ian Inkster, 'Marginal Men: Aspects of the social role of the medical community in Sheffield 1790-1850', in John Woodward and David Richards (eds.), *Health Care and Popular Medicine in Nineteenth Century England. Essays in the Social History of Medicine* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1977), pp. 128-163; Ian Inkster, 'Aspects of the history of science and science culture in Britain, 1780-1850', in Ian Inkster and Jack Morrell (eds.), *Metropolis and Province: Science in British Culture, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1983); Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>95</sup> Letter from Edward Mcoy to James Montgomery, 10 May 1824 (JM/SA). Bennet also sent material to Literary and Philosophical Society museums at Leeds and Whitby and to the museum at Saffron Waldon. Sheffield material became part of Sheffield City Museum collections, and some was sent to the British Museum in the late nineteenth century. See Sheffield City Museums, 'George Bennet'.



from South America.<sup>96</sup> Writing in 1885, local historian J. D. Leader remembered visiting as a child the ‘sombre apartment beneath the Music Hall’ and seeing a stuffed fawn and tiger, a long case of minerals and fossils and the head of a New Zealander, with long black hair, behind the President’s chair.<sup>97</sup>

Bennet’s artefacts were committed to the museum for the purpose of display. While in the 1820s and 1830s this display was aimed at a limited audience as the museum was not yet a public institution, its emphasis on the historical development from primitive to civilised society pre-empted the taxonomic organisation of later museums.<sup>98</sup> As described in the *Literary and Philosophical Society Annual Report* of 1842, they were:

memorials of a state of society gone by in the South Sea Islands, where society had previously not changed a feature of its aspects for ages beyond the memory of man, having been apparently incapable either of improvement or degradation.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> See: *Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society Annual Reports* (Sheffield: William Todd, 1825), p. 11; (Sheffield : J. Blackwell, 1826), pp. 12-13; (Sheffield: George Ridge, 1827), p. 11; (Sheffield: George Ridge, 1832), p. 5; (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1833).

<sup>97</sup> *Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society Annual Report* (Sheffield: Leader and Sons, 1886), p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> See: Brian Durrans, ‘The future of the other: changing cultures on display in ethnographic museums’, Robert Lumley (ed.), *The Museum Time-Machine: Putting cultures on display* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 144 and 169; Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 7-38; Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum. History, theory, politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), Chapter Seven.

<sup>99</sup> *Annual Report of the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society* (Sheffield: George Ridge, 1841), p. 7.

As Ludmilla Jordanova has argued, the very practice of display - the taxonomies involved, the process of comparing, contrasting and labelling specimens - is central to the construction of the categories through which narratives of human progress are made. They also served as reminders of the means of acquisition, in this case eliciting admiration for missionary enterprises and the progressive civilised culture which had produced them.<sup>100</sup> In the words of the 1842 *Report*, their value lay not in any intrinsic worth but in 'the associations awakened by their presence, in a Christian and civilised land'.

While neither museums nor missions simplistically served single interests, such notions of progress and civilisation worked to bring together members of the new middle class - in this case men such as those in Sheffield's Literary and Philosophical Society - who held very different religious and political affiliations, and who were positioned differently in relation to discourses of evangelicalism and enlightenment. Enabling the development of a shared culture within the middle class, however, this civilising mission was nonetheless based upon differences which, while in the process of redefinition in this period, can be best understood in terms of the categories of class and race.

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<sup>100</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museum', in Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1989), pp. 22-40, here p. 32. See also: Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992); and D. J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (eds.), *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. xii.

## Conclusion

In Sheffield General Cemetery there stands a weathered and disintegrating memorial to George Bennet (1775-1841). Constructed in 1842, some months after his death, the memorial was funded by public subscription organised by James Montgomery and other members of Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society. Through biblical inscription and biographical detail, the memorial celebrates Bennet's missionary status. The north face carries a quotation from Bennet himself, claiming to be able to testify to the superiority of Christianity over other forms of religion on the basis of his 'having made an honest comparison of multitudes of persons of nearly all climes, colours and characters':

That having searched the world around,  
And search'd from Britain to Japan,  
I still have no religion found,  
So just to God, so true to man.

The carving on the south side of the monument is most striking. Here Bennet is depicted in a scene of missionary triumph, standing against a background of palm trees and cactii, his right arm resting on a globe, with a Bible in his hand and broken idol at his feet.

Designed as a celebration of missionary activity throughout the world, the memorial is one of a number of means through which a particular knowledge of primitive cultures and their relationship to Britain was constructed. The South Pacific, represented in terms of a romantic landscape and the depraved, morally degraded state of its people, as symbolised by the broken heathen idol, is a missionary success story, its people converted by the hard work of LMS

missionaries during the past sixty years. This symbolism has a resonance closer to home. George Bennet, an authoritative, civilised figure, and through him Sheffield's progressive circles, are crucial agents in the process by which Christian and civilised practices are bestowed upon the heathen world. Bennet's obituary ends with an adaptation of a quotation from the Bible: "Let there be light", and even upon them shall "be light".<sup>101</sup> This 'them', although in the process of being civilised by Christian belief and practice, remained significantly different from the 'us' of the already enlightened, already civilised British middle class.

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<sup>101</sup> Quoted in *Annual Report*, 1841, p. 8.

## Conclusion

### Class, domesticity and the civilising mission in the 1830s and 1840s.

The first three decades of the nineteenth century saw the development of a vibrant missionary culture in Sheffield. Many of the men and women who joined the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor from 1804 subsequently became involved in a range of organisations committed to the reform of the domestic working class, extending their support to the auxiliary missionary societies for the conversion of the heathen overseas. The individuals and families who flocked to these societies were from the middle class. Alongside their differences, of denomination, wealth and status, and political affiliation, many middle-class men and women shared a common commitment to the notion of the civilising mission which, reworked through the discourses of evangelicalism and enlightenment in the late eighteenth century, had placed them at the apex of civilised life. The missionary society itself provided a point of convergence for disparate elements within the 'middling ranks' to unite in pursuit of a common notion of social progress, enabling the construction of extended middle-class networks at local, regional and national levels and making a vital contribution to the formation of a *new 'social' sphere in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries*. While participation for men could provide leverage to other positions of power and status, both within the local community and beyond, notions of the domesticity implicit within the civilising mission and the proximity of the 'domestic' and the

'social' had meant that women too were empowered by their missionary commitments, able to deploy publicly their domestic concern with influence, education and maternal supervision.

By the 1830s and 1840s many of the values and practices associated with missionary discourse had become central to a dominant, mainstream middle-class culture. I want to conclude this thesis with an exploration of the significance of aspects of the 'civilising mission' for two social movements of the 1830s and early 1840s. Firstly, I will discuss the enthusiasm and urgency which surrounded the opening of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute in 1832. Specifically targeting working men, this development was prompted by the national agitation of 1830-31 which had surrounded the campaign in support of the Reform Bill. While containing an implicit acknowledgement that the earlier missionary philanthropic emphasis on women and children was not extensive enough, the Mechanics' Institute, at the same time, retained a crucial focus on the relationship between 'civilisation' and the 'domestic' in its promotion of the 'domestication' of both the working-class male and, more broadly, of popular culture.

Secondly, I will focus on two reports published in 1843: George Calvert Holland's *Vital Statistics of Sheffield* and Jelinger Symons' *Report on the Trades of Sheffield and the Moral and Physical Condition of Young Persons Employed in Them*, to examine the ways in which newly-enfranchised liberal reformers of the 1830s and

1840s drew upon aspects of missionary discourse.<sup>1</sup> Again, my particular concern is with the proximity of the home to the sphere of the social in the promotion of a new solution to England's ills: state intervention in the workplace and the provision of education for working-class children. Finally, I will reflect upon some of the central themes of the thesis, making some concluding comments concerning the relationship of the domestic and the social, the hierarchy of savagery and civilisation, and the process of middle-class formation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

### **Part One: Domesticating Men: the Mechanics' Library and Institute**

The Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, which opened in 1832, was represented by its middle-class benefactors as the poor man's equivalent of the Literary and Philosophical Society, which had been formed in Sheffield ten years' earlier. Following the establishment of Mechanics' Institutes nationally during the 1820s, the Sheffield organisation aimed to provide a broad educational programme which would enable:

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<sup>1</sup> George Calvert Holland, *Vital Statistics of Sheffield* (London: Robert Tyas, 1843); Jelinger Symons, *Report on the Trades of Sheffield and the Moral and Physical Condition of Young Persons Employed in Them*, Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Employment of Children in the Trades and Manufactures not under the Factory Act (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1843).

the instruction of its members, at a cheap rate, in the principles of the arts and manufactures in which they are employed, and in the various branches of science and useful knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

The management committee had planned to run lectures and weekly classes in a range of subjects, including reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and composition, drawing, geography, Latin, French, Natural and Experimental Philosophy, and 'History and Chronology'. In practice, however, such aims were limited by the excessive demand for classes in basic literacy, although the committee was successful in running a varied lecture programme, which saw scientific contributions such as G. C. Holland's lecture on 'Functions of Life', Arnold Knight on 'Digestion' and Charles Morton's discussion of 'Botany' accompanied by social and literary themes, including James Montgomery's 'The Life and Writings of Dante', Charles Favel on 'The Social Conditions of the Working Class' and others addressing issues such as 'Political Economy' and 'The Pernicious effects of Spirit Drinking.'<sup>3</sup> The Institute also established a museum, a laboratory and a library of its own.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See the *Sheffield Iris*, 9 October 1832, on 'The Utility of Mechanics Institutes', for Montgomery's argument for all to have access to knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> See: *Annual Reports of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute* (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1833; T. Scott, 1834, 1836, 1839; J. Pearce, 1835; Saxton and Chaloner, 1837; William Saxton, 1838; and E. Smith, 1842).

<sup>4</sup> For the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, see: J. Taylor, 'A Nineteenth Century Experiment in Adult Education: the Sheffield Mechanics' Library and the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute', *Adult Education* (Dec 1838), pp. 151-160; John Salt, 'The Creation of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute: Social Pressures and Educational Advance in an Industrial Town', *Vocational Aspect*, vol 18, no 40 (Summer 1966), pp. 143-150; Ian Inkster, 'Science Instruction for Youth in the Industrial Revolution: the Informal Network in Sheffield', *The Vocational Aspect*, vol 25 (1973), pp. 91-98; Ian Inkster, 'Science and the Mechanics' Institutes, 1820-1850: the case of Sheffield', *Annals of Science*, vol 32 (1975), pp. 451-474. For Mechanics' Institutes generally, see: Mabel Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes of*



Such provision was represented as a progressive development, reflecting a greater tendency to value the working man as a social being, for his contribution to domestic and social life and not merely for his labour. The author of a letter written in 1831 to Dr Arnold Knight, and published in the *Sheffield Courant*, expressed this feeling:

A man sets up a factory and wants hands; I beseech you, Sir, to observe the very expressions that are used, for they are all significant. What he wants of his fellow creatures is the loan of their hands; of their heads and hearts he thinks nothing.<sup>5</sup>

Just as James Montgomery had seen potential in the Lit and Phil for the production of 'philosophers, artists and poets equal to those of Greece', so T. A. Ward, keen to raise 'the lowest of mankind into the open air and open daylight of science', reminded those present at the opening meeting of the Institute that James Watt had himself been a mechanic.<sup>6</sup>

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*Lancashire and Yorkshire before 1851* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1957); Thomas Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1962), pp. 112-133; Harold Silver, *The Concept of Popular Education: a study of ideas and social movements in the early nineteenth century* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1965), pp. 210-226; J. F. C. Harrison, *Learning and Living, 1790-1960: A Study in the History of the English Adult Education Movement* (London: RKP, 1961), pp. 57-89.

<sup>5</sup> Letter published in the *Sheffield Courant*, 11 November 1831, quoted in J. Taylor, 'A Nineteenth-Century Experiment in Adult Education', p. 152. Knight was a founder of Sheffield Medical School in 1828 and prominent in both the Literary and Philosophical Society and in the management of the Mechanics' Institute. See William Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies. Characteristics and Work of Notable Sheffield Men and Women* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend, 1926), pp. 125-126.

<sup>6</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 17 and 24 December 1822; *Sheffield Independent*, 20 October 1832; 'Minutes of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, 1832-1836', vol 1, 29 August 1832 and 6 May 1833 (Sheffield Archives, hereafter SA). For the Literary and Philosophical Society, see: William Smith Porter, *Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society: A Centenary Retrospect 1822-1922* (Sheffield: J. W. Northend Ltd, 1922); and Chapter Five of this thesis, pp. 246-252.

Like the Mechanics' and Apprentices Library before it, the Institute was of humble origins, emerging from an appeal to local gentlemen by a number of working men for an institute to meet their educational requirements. But while, unlike the Library, some working men were admitted to its governing committee, the Institute was dominated nonetheless by some of the town's 'leading inhabitants', including James Montgomery, Thomas Asline Ward, the Unitarians Nathaniel Phillips and Thomas Allin, Anglican Thomas Smith and local physicians, G. C. Holland, Arnold Knight and Charles Favel, all of whom were members of the Literary and Philosophical Society.<sup>7</sup> Despite this overlap in membership, however, the preoccupations of the Institute with the ignorance, vice and the threat of the working-class and the desire to produce a competent and industrious workforce were more akin to those of the established voluntary bodies for the education and reform of the poor - the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor and the Bible Society and Lancasterian Schools - than to the Literary and Philosophical Society.

At the earliest discussions of the plans for the Mechanics' Institute, Arnold Knight had warned that, in times of hardship, the working man could too easily be led into crime or politics. In such circumstances, he wrote, he was:

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<sup>7</sup> For the incidence of overlap between members of the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Mechanics' and Apprentices' Library and the Mechanics' Institute, see: Caroline O. Reid, 'Middle-Class Values and Working-Class Culture in Nineteenth-Century Sheffield' (University of Sheffield: Unpublished PhD thesis, 1976), Chapter Nineteen; and A. E. Marshall, 'The Sheffield Mechanics' Institute: A Study in Educational History and Interpretation' (Sheffield City Polytechnic: unpublished MA dissertation, 1981), Chapter Three. See also 'Minutes of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, 1832-1836', vol 1, and *Annual Reports*, 1833-1843.

a savage, and reckless of consequences, with a settled conviction that whatever change may take place, to him at least it must be for the better, he is ever ready to engage in any wild or lawless enterprise.<sup>8</sup>

In the early 1830s such concerns had been given a new political urgency. Although Sheffield had seen close co-operation between the working and middle classes in the campaign for reform, after the passing of the Reform Act in 1832 the town's radical working men formed their own Political Union.<sup>9</sup> On the occasion of the opening of the Institute, the Reverend Thomas Allin had spoken of his hope that 'solid and useful instruction' would not only divert them from 'sensual and vicious pleasures', but would make 'the minds of men gentle, generous, amiable, and pliant to government'.<sup>10</sup> Opposing those still voicing their hostility to the principle of general working-class education, Allin emphasised the compatibility of Christianity with science and knowledge. Christianity, he argued, was central to human progress precisely because it enabled 'wisdom, by which the power of man is increased, his empire enlarged, his manners refined and his condition ameliorated...'<sup>11</sup> George Wilkinson, a manufacturer and teacher at the Mechanics'

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<sup>8</sup> *Sheffield Iris*, 30 December 1823.

<sup>9</sup> John Salt has argued that the decision to open the Mechanics' Institute at this time, after so many years' discussion, was partly borne out of the fear of working-class agitation on the part of the middle-class radicals within the Sheffield Political Union, of which Thomas Asline Ward was president. See Salt, 'The Creation of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute'. For the Sheffield Political Union and radicalism, see also: Sidney Pollard, *A History of Labour in Sheffield* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1959), pp. 40-49.

<sup>10</sup> Reverend Thomas Allin, *Mechanics' Institute defended on Christian Principles, delivered at the opening of Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, January 14 1833* (Sheffield: T. Scott, 1833).

<sup>11</sup> Allin, *Mechanics' Institutes defended on Christian Principles*, p. 10. 'A Christian ought to be the most enlightened individual...' Allin wrote, 'So far from encouraging barrenness of mind and brutality of manners - frowning on the

Institute, was also quoted in the 1833 Report for his lucid opposition to the argument that education would lead to subordination. Drawing on imagery from local trades, he asserted that:

as well it might be said that the best tempered and best polished steel instruments are more dangerous than those of a grosser kind - the effect must certainly depend upon the use that is made of them.<sup>12</sup>

In the words of Samuel Bailey, the 'Hallamshire Bentham', an education which 'consisted in understanding the true character, the true bearing and the true quality of things,' was to have a stabilising effect upon society: 'the more people had of such knowledge, the stronger must be their attachment to institutions which are calculated for their good'.<sup>13</sup>

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refinements of civilized life - and stunting both body and spirit to the scantiest measure of present enjoyment, [Christianity] stands forward as the guardian angel of knowledge and happiness.' *Annual Report*, 1833. pp. 11-12. p. 14. The opposing view had been put forward by Samuel Roberts, who spoke of his dread of assemblies a 'large numbers of young men' and worried about diverting them from their work and care for their families: 'The present times are awfully portentous, and I cannot but fear that the poorer classes are, as in all tumults, likely to be both the instruments and the victims of the violent and the designing... It is not *learning* that will preserve them. It will require *true Christian principles*...' Roberts declared himself 'Against *all* knowledge, to be inculcated by *all* means, on *all* classes'. See Samuel Roberts, *England's Crisis; A Letter to the Members of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, and the Workmen in General. Respectfully dedicated to British Legislators*. (Sheffield: George Ridge, 1832). Indeed, it was from such a critique that the Church of England Instruction Society was formed in 1839. See Holland, *Vital Statistics*, p. 231.

<sup>12</sup> *Annual Report*, 1833, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Sheffield Mercury*, 21 October 1832, quoted in Salt, 'The Creation of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute', p. 330. Bailey, named the 'Hallamshire Bentham' by the *Edinburgh Review*, was a merchant and essayist who wrote on themes including political economy, public opinion, education and reform. He was a founder and president of the Literary and Philosophical Society and an unsuccessful Parliamentary candidate in 1832. See Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies*, pp. 1-3.

Middle-class anxieties are evident in a range of practices, including the general exclusion of working men from the management of the Institute, and the requirement for a membership proposal to be agreed by a 'friend' who could vouch for their respectability.<sup>14</sup> During the 1830s, the Institute continued to assert its disapproval of radical politics, despite (or because of) struggles within the organisation and placed notices in the *Sheffield Iris* in 1839 to inform the public of its lack of association with the newly-formed Working Men's Association, which had taken a room in the same building.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the desire to maintain a careful distance between the Mechanics' Institute and the Literary and Philosophical Society was expressed in 1839 in the refusal of membership to the latter of Ebenezer Elliott, the moral-force Chartist and Corn Law Rhymer, whose poetry not only espoused domestic reform and rational recreation but who was himself a lecturer to the Mechanics' Institute and its vice-president.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This requirement was abandoned in 1836. See: *Rules of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institution* (Sheffield: Joseph Hawksorth Bramley, 1833); *Rules of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute as altered and amended* (Sheffield: T. Scott, 1834, 1835, 1836).

<sup>15</sup> See the *Sheffield Iris*, 5 June 1838. In 1839 the Institute renewed its commitment to a ban on political discussion at meetings. See: 'Minutes of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute', vol 2, 5 November 1839; Caroline Reid, 'Middle-Class Values and Working-Class Culture', Chapter Sixteen.

<sup>16</sup> See Porter, *Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society*, pp. 32-33. Elliott was President in 1839 and 1842. See *Annual Reports* (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1839; and E. Smith, 1832). He received sponsorship from a number of eminent writers, including Robert Southey, Bulwer Lytton and Richard Carlyle. Much of his poetry celebrated the themes of working-class male respectability and domesticity. See, for example, this verse from 'The Home of Taste':

You seek the home of taste, and find  
The proud mechanic there,  
Rich as a King, and less a slave,  
Throned in his elbow-chair;  
Or on his sofa reading Locke,

As suggested by Shapin and Barnes, the curricula of the Mechanics' Institute reflected the belief of reformers that a moral and scientific education could induce a fundamental change in the working class. This change, they argue, involved not only the imparting of a specific (Christian, rational, scientific) knowledge, but the construction of a 'moral and intellectual framework' which would enable the development of an internal stability of mind.<sup>17</sup> Governed by thought and rationality and characterised by its capacity for profundity and to make complex connections between information and ideas, the thought patterns of the middle-class mind were conceptualised in terms of a polarity with those of the working class, which were seen as reliant on the senses and dealing with information in a superficial and fragmented way.<sup>18</sup> Education for the masses, therefore, needed to

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Beside his open door.

See: John Watkins, *Life, Poetry and Letters of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-law Rhymers, with an abstract of his Politics* (London: John Mortimer, 1850).

<sup>17</sup> See Steven Shapin and Barry Barnes, 'Science, nature and control: interpreting Mechanics' Institutes', in Roger Dale, Geoff Esland and Madeleine MacDonald (eds.), *Schooling and Capitalism: A Sociological Reader* (London: RKP and the Open University Press, 1976), pp. 55-65. William Atkins, whose letter requesting his son's continued access to knowledge had resulted in the formation of the Mechanics' Library, had written of the benefits in similar terms: 'it would be a great means of informing his judgement, and giving a solidity to his outward conduct, exclusive of a great and blessed effect which very probably might be made upon his mind.' *Report of the Boys Lancasterian School* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1823), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> 'The minds of the working class', Shapin and Barnes argue, 'were assumed to be occupied "by objects of sense", so much so that "when they seek for recreation, they do it in a sensual way..." By characterising the thought patterns of the lower orders as fragmented and governed by transient impressions, their perceived immorality, insolence, sensuality and political volatility could be 'explained'. As they grasped no abstract moral and intellectual principles, they were at the mercy of whatever passing desire, whim or fancy arose from within or was impressed on them from without. Since they had no stable moral and intellectual framework with which to evaluate actions, any political rabble-rouser could simply sweep them along. Bad influences simply impressed themselves upon

be different from that on offer to the elite, with an emphasis on simplified scientific facts which would lead them to a reverence for God, and on exposing them to positive influences which would provide encouragement to be good husbands and conscientious workers. As noted by Shapin and Barnes, this was informed by an assumption of a hierarchy of culturally-appropriate knowledge which extended to missionary practice overseas. Thomas Chalmers' belief, with reference to missionary education in India, that it was better to 'let down English knowledge and philosophy to the capacity and station of the Hindoos' than to attempt to 'raise the Hindoos to the level of English knowledge and philosophy', was reproduced in educational provision for the working class.<sup>19</sup>

The policy on restricted reading material adopted by both the Mechanics' Library and the Institute reflected most starkly middle-class anxieties and conceptions of the processes of learning and socialisation. The ban on any books 'suspected of containing principles subversive to the Christian religion' adopted by the Library in 1823 was continued in both institutions throughout the 1830s, amidst much debate.<sup>20</sup> Samuel Ellis, speaking at the annual meeting of the Mechanics' Library

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their minds. Good influences would presumably impress themselves equally easily, but were distressingly uncommon in their environment.' Shapin and Barnes, 'Science, nature and control', pp. 56 and 57-58. Here they quote from Andrew Thomson, the *Scotsman*, 8 June 1825.

<sup>19</sup> Shapin and Barnes, 'Science, nature and culture', p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> According to Louis James, the novels of Bulwer Lytton, Washington Irving, Thackeray and Samuel Warren were allowed in the library, while those of Walter Scott were amongst those banned. See Louis James, *Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850: A Study of the Literature Produced for the Working Classes in Early Victorian Urban England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 5.

in July 1845, defended the continuation of the ban because of its effects in producing a lazy, passive mind and drug-like state. It inspired a 'sickly sentimentalism' and destroyed genuine sensibility:

What are we to say of works which fritter away the distinctions between right and wrong, and deceive the unwary into paths of vice, by surrounding them with the hall-marks of virtue?... works which treat with contempt those admirable qualities - industry, frugality, and prudence; while they squander their praises on extravagance, carelessness and folly? ... works which alienate the heart from domestic and retired duties - which convert every quiet home into a prison-house, and make the best of parents appear either ridiculous or tyrannical.<sup>21</sup>

Aiming to counteract the pernicious influence of the circulating library, the Mechanics' Library housed a growing collection of scientific, biographical and religious texts. This included: editions of the *Westminster Review*, *The Youth's Instructor* and the *Missionary Register*; many scientific books, with titles such as *Watson's Chemical Essays*, *Wood's Algebra* and *Inquiry into the Powers of Wind and Water*; and a number of travel and missionary volumes, including Cook's *Voyages*, *Missionary Voyages to Otaheite*, *Campbell's Travels in Africa*, Buchanan's *Asiatic Researches*, and William Robertson's *History of America*. It also included a number of books by local authors, such as James Montgomery's *Poems on the Slave Trade* and *Life of David Brainerd*, Ebenezer Rhodes' *Peakland Scenery*, and *Hallamshire* by Joseph Hunter, the Sheffield-born antiquarian. This collection, charting the civilising impact of religious knowledge on 'primitive'

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Ellis, *Novel-reading Intellectually and Morally Injurious* (Sheffield: T. Scott, 1845).



cultures, identified local men - some of whom were benefactors of the institution - as key contributors to Britain's progress.<sup>22</sup>

The belief that such a policy would 'elevate the moral feelings and not pervert them' was not shared by all of the membership. In 1839, Isaac Ironside, Michael Beale and other radical members of the Library - that 'junta of infidels' who had allowed Shakespeare and various texts with 'socialist' leanings to find their ways onto the shelves - had defected to the Owenite Hall of Science.<sup>23</sup> The appeal for Ironside of the Hall of Science's programme of rational instruction combined with an extensive social calendar of festivals, balls, soirees and weekly dancing classes lay with its autonomy; it was 'under the patronage of no-one'.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever their meaning for their working-class participants, both the Mechanics' and Apprentices' Library and Mechanics' Institute were, for their middle-class

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<sup>22</sup> See: *Sheffield Iris*, 23 December 1823, 20 December 1823 and 6 January 1824. For an account of books and donations from local philanthropists, including the Shores, the Reads and Thomas Sutton, see: *Sheffield Iris*, 9 March 1824. The above list is drawn from the *Catalogue of Books of the Sheffield Mechanics' and Apprentices Library* (Sheffield: T. Scott, 1845).

<sup>23</sup> *Sheffield Mercury*, 6 and 13 July 1839.

<sup>24</sup> Ironside, an accountant, had been a member of the Sheffield Political Union, and then the Chartist movement, and was to become the celebrated Chartist leader of Sheffield Council from 1849. See: John Salt, 'The Sheffield Hall of Science', *Vocational Aspect* vol 12, no 25 (1960), pp. 133-138; and 'Isaac Ironside 1808-1870: The motives of a radical educationalist', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol 19 (1971), pp. 183-201. See Simon, *Studies in the History of Education*, for a discussion of workers' preference for the Halls of Science over the Mechanics' Institutes, pp. 215-222; and Edward Royle, 'Mechanics' Institutes and the Working Classes, 1840-1860', the *Historical Journal*, vol 14, (1971), pp. 305-321, for the proximity of Mechanics' Institutes and Halls of Science.

benefactors, part of a wider agenda of cultural transformation. Charles Favel, lecturing in 1836 on *The Value and Importance of Mechanics' Institutions*, emphasised their potential for leading an assault on popular culture. Working men, he maintained, went to the pub not only because of the availability of alcohol, but 'to meet with fellow men and listen to their conversation.'<sup>25</sup> The Mechanics' Institute, he argued, should be made more social, with the introduction of a greater variety of lecture topics and the opening of a coffee and newsroom where men could come to indulge their desire for political knowledge without making recourse to radical organisations. Favel and his colleagues saw the Institute as providing protection for working men against pernicious political influences. 'It is at this moment', he wrote, 'that the Institute offers to throw her shield over them, by which the poisoned arrows flying all around will be repelled.'<sup>26</sup>

The protection provided by the Mechanics' Institute involved the promotion of rational recreation and the encouragement of domestic duties. In addition to advocating the pleasures of *drawing, of music, and of reading* at home, the Institute began from the late 1830s to hold soirees, tea parties, and exhibitions of art and nature.<sup>27</sup> Favel's suggestions for the promotion of working-class use of the Botanical Gardens and the opening of more parks in urban areas were

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Favel, *The Value and Importance of Mechanics' Institutions. An Address, delivered on Monday evening, the 29th of May, 1836, before the managers, members and friends of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute* (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1836), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Favel, *The Value and Importance of Mechanics' Institutes*, p. 7

<sup>27</sup> See *Annual Reports*, 1833-1842.

supported by Arnold Knight in his controversial lecture on intemperance of 1836. Comparing popular attitudes to alcohol in Britain and on the continent, Knight had drawn on domestic imagery:

When a man is walking with his wife and family, listening to delightful music in the midst of the beauties of both art and nature, he cannot, at the same time, be getting drunk by himself in a dram shop.<sup>28</sup>

Paul Rodgers, a paid secretary at the Institute, argued in a lecture of 1840 that domestic and rational recreation were the practices of a civilised society:

We want not treadmills for the stultification of rational faculties - we want not new fields for transportation scenes - we want not gallowses for the prevention of contrition and repentance. What we want, is rational recreation, and rational and scientific and moral education for the people.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, Rodgers represented some of the problems of the Mechanics' Institute precisely in terms of its distance from peoples' homes and localities: more institutes needed to be opened, he argued, and to be 'brought nearer to the peoples' condition and to their homes'.<sup>30</sup> Rodgers' desire for government support for such a scheme, and his focus on the home and locality of the working class,

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<sup>28</sup> Arnold Knight, *On the causes which have contributed to produce a greater degree of intemperance in the habits of the people of England than prevails on the continent*. Knight's favourable comments on the integration of religion into everyday life in Catholic countries (he was himself a Roman Catholic) and its positive consequences for morality stimulated an angry response from Ann Gilbert of Nottingham, writing under the pseudonym of 'A Rustic Rambler', and R. M. Beverley, Congregationalist minister from Hull. See A Rustic Rambler and R. M. Beverley, Esq, *Letters on the Subject of Dr Knight's Lecture* (Sheffield: R. Leader, 1836). Knight's original address is attached as an appendix.

<sup>29</sup> Rodgers, *A Lecture on the ...Sheffield Mechanics' Institution*, p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Rodgers drew upon the example of Methodism, which he believed to have been successful among the working class because of the enthusiasm with which its leaders approached homes and neighbourhoods. Paul Rodgers, *A Lecture on the Origin, Progress and results of the Sheffield mechanics' Institution: delivered at Surrey Street Chapel, 25 May 1840* (Sheffield: J. H. Greaves, 1840), p. 14.

made important connections with a broader movement for social reform in the 1830s and 1840s.

## **Part Two: Vital Statistics**

George Calvert Holland's *Vital Statistics of Sheffield*, published in 1843, further illustrates the widening arena in which aspects of missionary discourse were expressed in the 1830s and 1840s. Holland, who had become physician to the General Infirmary in Sheffield in 1832, was a member of the Literary and Philosophical Society and the first president of the Mechanics' Institute during 1832-33.<sup>31</sup> His study was shaped by the concerns of the statistical movement which, in Mary Poovey's words, was part of a new network of 'theories and technologies' which 'constituted the conditions of possibility for the formation both of the social domain and of the professional, bureaucratised apparatuses of inspection, regulation, and enforcement that we call the modern state.'<sup>32</sup>

The cholera epidemic of 1832 had seen the increasing prominence of doctors in the movement for social reform, most notably James Kay-Shuttleworth, whose

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<sup>31</sup> Holland, (1801-1865), who had studied at the universities of Edinburgh and Paris, returned to his home town of Sheffield in the late 1820s. See Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies*, pp. 121-23.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Poovey, *Making A Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Chapter Three, p. 116. See also Eileen Janes Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996), Chapter Three.

pamphlet, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufactures in Manchester*, had stimulated the formation of the Manchester Statistical Society on its publication in 1832. The statistical movement, however, was by no means confined to medical men. In Sheffield, a survey into education had been carried out by the Reverend Thomas Sutton in 1838, while Holland's study had been suggested by Thomas Asline Ward.<sup>33</sup> The statisticians were, in Eileen Yeo's words:

the newly-enfranchised men who sought political dominance in their localities. They based their claim to public authority on their probity, their industry, the comprehensiveness of their knowledge, and on their religious service towards the local working class.<sup>34</sup>

The concerns of both the statisticians and many of the contributors to the 1843 Report of the Royal Commission were shaped by missionary discourse. Indeed, in their emphasis on the importance of the collection of facts and the basis of knowledge in observation, the statistical studies had a direct descendant in the activities of the SBCP, the pioneer of the 'science of the poor', which was still operational in the 1830s. They also shared a common concern with the relationship between familial and domestic order and civilisation.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For Ward, see Chapter Two, pp. 83-86, above.

<sup>34</sup> Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> Discussing the success of James Kay-Shuttleworth's 1832 pamphlet, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufactures in Manchester* (1832), Mary Poovey reflects on its origins in late eighteenth century political economy: 'Kay's formulation proved successful partly because it drew upon fantasies and fears already shared by many of his middle- and upper-class contemporaries. These fears, which were addressed in the texts of social and political science with which Kay supplemented his medical studies, had first been given a local habitation by Thomas Robert Malthus in 1798...' Poovey, *Making A Social Body*, p. 61.

The home features as a motif throughout a number of G. Calvert Holland's investigations. His *Inquiry into the Moral, Social, and Intellectual Condition of the Industrious Classes*, published in 1839, had criticised the role of charity in preventing the development of working-class self-reliance. Here, he made connections between dependency and the state of the homes of the poor, placing a particular emphasis, like Kay before him, on Irish immigrants.<sup>36</sup> In 1841 he had read a paper to the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society on the number of unoccupied houses in the town as an indicator of the level of distress, reflecting not only over-provision but the problem of overcrowding.<sup>37</sup>

In *Vital Statistics*, Holland drew on much of this earlier work to develop a dual focus on the conditions of work and the domestic situations of the poor. Short chapters devoted to each of the trades that made up Sheffield industry - the silver and plated manufacture, saw manufacture, edge tool trade, spring knife manufacture, file trade and fork grinders - raise questions concerning the employment of women, trades union membership and sick clubs, and the wages, physical condition and relative comfort of workers. In central chapters of the book, Holland focuses on the issue of the moral and domestic condition of the poor.

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<sup>36</sup> Holland wrote: 'I am at present attending three, whose homes are scenes of wretchedness that could not be surpassed by anything in Ireland. It is often necessary to insist on their going into the workhouse, simply for protection from cold and hunger.' George Calvert Holland, *An Inquiry into the Moral, Social, and Intellectual Conditions of the Industrious Classes of Sheffield. The Abuses and Evils of Charity, especially of Medical Charitable Institutions, Part 1* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1844), p. 104.

<sup>37</sup> See also George Calvert Holland, *Unoccupied Houses; or, what evidence do they afford of existing distress, read before the Literary and Philosophical Society, 5 November 1841* (Sheffield: Ridge and Jackson, 1841).

Here his argument is that industrialisation, with its over-crowded living conditions and the insecurity of employment, had produced a working-class culture characterised by moral decay. Such decay, Holland maintained, was evident from the poor state of working-class family life. A culture in which men indulged excessively in drink, children grew up ignorant and unhealthy due to their employment from too young an age, and women were forced to deny their natural femininity, labouring alongside men in workshops which proved 'a very indifferent school for the future wife', mitigated against the reformers' vision of the working-class home as a site from which individuals and families would be connected to 'make one social body'.<sup>38</sup>

Holland's particular concern was with the twin evils of overcrowding and poverty:

The influence of this circumstance extends widely, and counteracts much of the good that education would otherwise produce. The frequent associations which in consequence take place among the sexes in very early life - the vicious habits which are formed, and the marriages which result, with little thought or provision for the future, render the domestic hearth not one of comfort to the husband, nor a school of virtue to the children. Ignorance, wretchedness and dissipation, are the evils which spring luxuriantly out of such circumstances, and are multiplied in the successive generations.<sup>39</sup>

Holland mapped out the repercussions not only for subsequent generations, but in terms of the social body. The darkness of the 'ill-ventilated rooms' of the homes of the poor paralleled that of their lack of education: 'let the masses have light, otherwise they will become fearful elements of discord.'<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the

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<sup>38</sup> Holland, *Vital Statistics*, p. 141; Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, p. 62.

<sup>39</sup> Holland, *Vital Statistics*, p. 143.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

crowding into 'narrow lanes, filthy streets, alleys and yards' was an indicator of a wider disorder, of a 'spillage' from the domestic to the social and political.<sup>41</sup>

Holland placed the blame firmly with external factors: with the vicissitudes of trade and long hours of employment, and with the inadequacies of education. As a former president of the Mechanics' Institute, he was evidently sympathetic to the reforming aims of voluntary educational provision. He was also increasingly aware of its limitations, both in the failure of the Mechanics' Institute to appeal to members of working class beneath the position of artisans, and the absenteeism and narrowness of curricula which racked other institutions intended for their improvement, such as the day and Sunday schools and the Church of England Instruction Society. Only the Mechanics' Library met with Holland's approval, but even this was attended by a good many people 'above the condition of artisans'.<sup>42</sup> While he voiced reservations about the preference of many educationalists for overseas fields (discussed below), his main criticisms were levelled at the government officials who prioritised the implementation of the New Poor Law and the building of prisons over pressing for legislation for a shorter working week and greater educational provision. In his analysis, therefore, while the poor needed to be taught moral independence and responsibility, they were nonetheless the victims

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p. 139.

<sup>42</sup> Holland, *Vital Statistics*, Chapter Twenty. Similarly, the membership of the Mechanics' Institute was not quite the working class that its benefactors had hoped for, its popular education programme attracting many clerks, and junior shopkeepers, most of whom were at least partially educated. See: *Sheffield Mechanics' Institute Annual Report*, 1836, p. 4-5. See also Edward Royle, 'Mechanics Institutes and the Working Classes'.



of an unenlightened system, and required a collective, middle-class cultural and political intervention.

Such concern for the state of working-class culture and its repercussions was replicated in the Reports of the Children's Employment Commission of 1843, supervised in Sheffield by Sub-commissioners Jelinger Symons.<sup>43</sup> The C. E. C., which was one of over a hundred Commissions established between 1832 and 1846, was instigated for the purpose of investigating the physical and moral condition of children working in trades not covered by the educational provision of the Factory Acts. The process of inquiry followed a now familiar structure, whereby recommendations to government were based on the observations of an 'impartial' sub-commissioner who had amassed testimonies drawn mainly from the social elite, including the clergy, doctors, manufacturers and employers, the police, and the ladies of the Bettering Society. Their aims were twofold: to disseminate information concerning the ages at which children worked, their hours and conditions of work, including time allowed for meals, the prevalence of ill-health and accidents, and the education that they received; and to improve their physical and moral condition through the regulation of working hours and the compulsory provision of education.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Symons had been involved in the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the mines in 1842. See Angela John, *By the Sweat of their Brow: Women Workers in Victorian Coal Mines* (London: Routledge, 1984), Chapter Two, especially pp. 40-41.

<sup>44</sup> See: Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, pp. 76-83; Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, Chapter Three.

Symons' *Report* corroborated Holland's evidence concerning education. While impressed by the National and Lancasterian schools, testimonies revealed the high degree of absenteeism and provided shocking information concerning religious knowledge, citing children who, for example, thought Galilee was in heaven and that the apostles were lepers.<sup>45</sup> The main value of the Sunday school was in its capacity for policing, keeping some 8,000 children off the streets each Sunday: 'They do little to impart knowledge', Symons concluded, 'but much to prevent vice.'<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, the problem of children and especially young men on 'the streets' was central to the shocking testimony to urban disorder, the picture of the near-savagery of British working-class culture, provided by Symons' account. Reminiscent of missionary accounts of the savage overseas, Mr Ashley, a teacher at the Lancasterian school, reported his horror at witnessing 'cruel and barbarous scenes' at dog-fights - those 'pugilistic contests' - on Sundays.<sup>47</sup> The ladies of the Bettering Society reported that they 'found it impossible to visit... whole streets in some parts of the town' due to 'the annoyances to which they are exposed in them.'<sup>48</sup> Elsewhere throughout the Report, attention focused on those aspects of popular culture deemed threatening to Britain's identity as a civilised nation:

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<sup>45</sup> The Report states that between 26-47% of children were continually absent from day Schools. Symons, *Report on the Trades of Sheffield and the Moral and Physical Condition of Young Persons Employed in Them*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

prostitution, teenage sexuality and illegitimacy, gambling, dog-fighting, card-playing, crime, and general 'irregular and intemperate habits'.<sup>49</sup> These were seen as a result of disorder in the domestic sphere. Lady visitors reported of 'mothers [who] are, generally speaking, idle and dissolute. They spend their time, whole mornings together, in smoking, gossiping, and often in drinking...'<sup>50</sup> Samuel Earnshaw cited 'large families, domestic difficulties, parental improvidence, mismanagement, ignorance, drunkenness, and indifference to their children's welfare' as impediments to the improvement of the children.<sup>51</sup>

The neglect of religious instruction and the absence of parental control left a child without any internal restraints. In the words of one local vicar, such indiscipline:

removes moral subordination, gives independence without the means of self-government, and surrenders the child up, a victim to his uninformed mind and undisciplined passions.<sup>52</sup>

Described as 'a Race' who 'have suffered general physical deterioration from hard labour, and also from intemperance', such 'savagery' had serious implications, not only for subsequent generations but for the social body and the assumption of

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 15-24.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22. See: John, *By the Sweat of their Brow*; also, Sophie Hamilton, 'Images of Femininity in the Royal Commissions: The Construction of Female Sexuality', in Eileen Janes Yeo (ed.), *Radical Femininity: Women's Self-Representation in the Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6-7

improvement implicit in the model of social progress.<sup>53</sup> In a vivid statement, Ebenezer Elliott described the degeneration within the working class. 'Education in Sheffield', he wrote:

does not keep pace with the increase of population; and ... the rising race of workmen in Sheffield is inferior in morality and intelligence to the race which is just dying out... Let any stranger, who happens to have formed a high opinion of the intelligence and morality of the workmen of Sheffield, take a walk on a Sunday morning through the Old Park Wood, or visit the lands and footpaths adjoining the town, and he will be surprised to meet group after group of boys and young men playing at pitch-penny, or fighting their bull-dogs, and insulting every decently-dressed passenger. Our Mechanics Institute has not on its list of members *one* physical-force Chartist; no, it is among the dog-fighters that physical-force orators, and other hirelings of monopolists, find applauders... The horrid words of the incipient sage and legislators; their ferocious gestures; their hideous laughter; their brutal, bloated mindless faces appal and amaze the stranger; and in their looks thoughtful men see a catastrophe, which is probably destined to cast the horrors of the first French revolution utterly into the shade.<sup>54</sup>

Here was a racialised popular culture, characterised by undomesticated men of brutal and inhuman appearance, whose personal, moral and domestic disorder had implications for the social body and for the future of civilisation.

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<sup>53</sup> The same witness connected such disorder with political radicalism. There was, he wrote, 'a perceptible and unfavourable change in the character of the children in our Sunday-schools since the prevalence of Socialism.' *Ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

### Part Three: concluding comments

Discussing the inadequacies of popular education in Britain, G. C. Holland expressed his fear that, in their fervour for evangelising the heathen overseas, missionaries were neglecting the heathen at home. He regretted that:

we have looked to remote regions for a field on which religion might exercise her influence and teach important truths, when the millions at our own door were vicious in their habits, wretched in their condition, and ignorant, not only of spiritual truths, but of the simplest rudiments of knowledge. In the transactions of private life, it is possible to be generous before we are just, and the same error may show itself in the expansive wish and ardent zeal that lose themselves in the contemplation of human degradation at a distance. We honour the benevolence that commands the Universe in its view, but the first duty of benevolence, is to study the wants of mankind at home.<sup>55</sup>

As I have demonstrated in this thesis, evangelicals with an interest in or direct experience of overseas missions tended not to be indifferent to the conversion, education and reform of the poor at home. James Montgomery, Hannah Kilham, George Bennet and Mary-Anne Rawson, along with many of their missionary colleagues at both local and national level, saw domestic and overseas missions as part of the same project.

Missions to the heathen at home and overseas had emerged at the same moment in the 1790s and early 1800s, and had drawn not only on the same individuals for their support, but on similar resources and technologies. Their concern was not merely with benevolence, but with reform and study: with the inculcation of domestic order, morality and habits of industry and the production of new

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<sup>55</sup> Holland, *Vital Statistics*, p. 146.

knowledge concerning the subjects of their mission. Notions of race and class were mutually constitutive, and contributed both to the 'othering' of different cultural groups and to the self-definition of the British middle class.

Hannah Kilham, who vacillated on the issue of whether to give priority to domestic concerns or to follow her desire to remain in Africa in the 1820s, expressed some of the complexities of the relationship between 'home' and overseas' in her journal:

In some quiet situations in England, we might imagine, if we looked not further than the immediate vicinity, that the world was in a much better state than it really is, but it is otherwise here.<sup>56</sup>

From the vantage point of West Africa, Kilham was able to see both the desirable 'quiet situations' at home, and the disorder beyond, both in Britain and the world. Her global perspective enabled her to have a new view of the domestic and of the process of improvement which saw the British middle class, working class and heathens overseas placed at different locations within one hierarchy of civilisation.

This thesis has explored the construction and meaning of this hierarchy for the missionary men and women of Sheffield's early-nineteenth century middle class. Tracing the local expressions of the missionary impulse from the formation in 1803 of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, through the missionary philanthropic and educational bodies of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, to the more 'secular' Anti-Slavery Society, Literary and Philosophical Society, and Mechanics' Institute of the 1830s and 1840s, I have

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<sup>56</sup> Biller, *Memoir of Hannah Kilham*, p. 409.

suggested that the civilising mission was central to the processes of domestic class and cultural formation. During the 1830s and 1840s, as newly-empowered social groups investigated Sheffield's poor, their practices continued to be shaped by the focus of missionary discourse on gender and familial disorder and the progression from savagery to civilisation. Within the changing context which, from the 1840s saw the greater fixity of ideas about race, the ideas and practices of the 'civilising mission' continued to inform domestic social movements, including the Association for Social Science and early feminism, giving shape to the sense of responsibility for 'progress' which characterised the mid-century and beyond.

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