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Religion, Gender, and Industry in the Eighteenth Century

Models and Approaches

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Taken individually, the three coordinates of this collection of essays—religion, gender, and industry in the eighteenth century—have been the subject of a great deal of research, although that research effort has not necessarily been split equally between the topics. Moreover, the bulk of this research has been carried out by historians working on one rather than two, let alone all three, of these themes, since they have most often been viewed not as a trinity of interconnected topics so much as three separate historical deities. By and large, these deities have only occasionally spoken to one another, although when they have done so, it has been with significant consequences. But in general, they have had their own tribes of votaries and acolytes, who have operated within their distinct intellectual and academic traditions, practices, and agendas, with scholars often working in completely different departments and faculties (such as theology, humanities, or social sciences), and publishing in different journals and meeting at different conferences.

Of the three, certainly until the early 1980s, the lion's share of the research effort was devoted to the goddess Industry (of which more

later).[1] Until then, work on eighteenth-century religion tended to fall into some well-defined and predictable channels, and was generally pursued along denominational lines. In the shadow of Norman Sykes (a quondam Dean of Winchester Cathedral), who in a series of studies published between the 1920s and 1950s had offered a qualified rehabilitation of the Anglican Church against the then dominant view, shared by both Evangelicals and Tractarians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that the eighteenth-century Church had been corrupt and pastorally stagnant,[2] there was what G. V. Bennett (a onetime chaplain of New College, Oxford, and himself a student of Sykes) referred to as "a minor industry"[3] of biographies of bishops and leading Churchmen, often published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and usually written by Anglican clerics.[4] There were also thematic studies of Anglican piety, liturgy, and worship, as well as some work on church parties.[5] In similar fashion, there were a number of studies of the Wesleys and early Methodism, almost without exception written by scholars who were themselves Methodists,[6] including of course that

1. Much of this research was conveniently summarized in Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain, 1700–1914* (London: Methuen, 1969).

2. Norman Sykes, *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934).

3. G. V. Bennett, *The Tory Crisis in Church and State, 1688–1730: The Career of Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) vii.

4. G. V. Bennett, *White Kennet, 1660–1728, Bishop of Peterborough* (London: SPCK, 1957); E. Carpenter, *Thomas Sherlock, 1678–1761* (London: SPCK, 1936); Carpenter, *Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury: His Life and Times* (London: SPCK, 1948); W. M. Marshall, *George Hooper, 1640–1727: Bishop of Bath and Wells* (Milbourne Port: Dorset, 1976); A. Tindal Hart, *The Life and Times of John Sharp, Archbishop of York* (London: SPCK, 1949); C. E. Whiting, *Nathaniel Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham (1674–1721) and his diocese* (London: SPCK, 1940). Note also the biographies written by Sykes: *Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, 1669–1748: A Study in Politics and Religion in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926); and *William Wake: Archbishop of Canterbury, 1657–1737*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

5. W. Lowther Clarke, *Eighteenth Century Piety* (London: SPCK, 1944); G. W. O. Addleshaw and F. Etchells, *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship: An Enquiry into the Arrangements of Public Worship in the Church of England from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Faber, 1948); G. Every, *The High Church Party, 1688–1718* (London: SPCK, 1956).

6. Such as Maldwyn Edwards, *John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century: A Study of His Social and Political Influence* (London: Epworth, 1933); Edwards, *Family Circle: A Study of the Epworth Household in Relation to John and Charles Wesley* (London:

lapsed Methodist E. P. Thompson, whose provocative chapter eleven of his *Making of the English Working Class*, first published in 1963,[7] ensured that for a time in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, all social historians of the late eighteenth century had a take on Methodism, class, and industrialization without having to read any Wesleyan or Methodist primary documents. There were also studies of Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians, and other religious denominations,[8] again almost always from an "insider" point of view, or what social scientists call "emic" perspectives. But there was very little on popular religion (apart from an article by John Walsh on "Methodism and the mob"),[9] and there was very little social history of religion (apart from R. F. Wearmouth's older studies of Methodism's contribution to working-class consciousness, and those whom he called, in a phrase which now seems to belong to a bygone era, "the common people").[10]

There was also very little of what might be termed "the history of religion in a local setting." In 1980, apart from editions of visitation returns which would provide the raw source material for future studies of this kind,[11] there were only a handful of articles,[12] a number of

Epworth, 1949); F. C. Gill, *Charles Wesley, the First Methodist* (London: Lutterworth, 1964).

7. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963; rev. ed. 1968).

8. G. Bolam, R. Thomas et al., *The English Presbyterians* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968); R. Tudor Jones, *Congregationalism in England* (London: Independent, 1962); W. T. Whitley, *A History of the British Baptists* (London: Kingsgate, 1932); William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

9. John Walsh, "Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century," in G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker, eds., *Popular Belief and Practice*, Studies in Church History 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 213–27.

10. R. F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Epworth, 1945).

11. For example, *Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns*, 1743, ed. S. L. Ollard and P. C. Walker, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 71, 72, 75, 79 (1928–35); *The State of the Bishopric of Worcester, 1782–1808*, ed. M. Ransome, Worcester Historical Society, n.s. 6 (1969); *Wiltshire's Returns to the Bishop's Visitations Queries*, 1783, Wiltshire Record Society 26 (1972).

12. J. Addy, "Bishop Porteus's Visitation of the Diocese of Chester, 1778," *Northern History* 13 (1977) 175–98; M. R. Austin, "Queen Anne's Bounty and the Poor Livings of Derbyshire, 1772–1832," *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* 92 (1972) 78–89; N. Caplan, "Visitation of the diocese of Chichester in 1724," *Sussex Notes and Queries* 15

unpublished theses, and really no more than a couple of published monographs on the Church in a particular locality, namely those by Arthur Warne on Devon and Diana McClatchey on Oxfordshire,[13] most typically represented by a diocese, and for the purpose of this volume the most obviously relevant of these was William Marshall's 1978 PhD thesis,[14] half of which was devoted to the diocese of Hereford in which the parish of Madeley lay. In this, eighteenth-century Church historians lagged behind their colleagues working on the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, who had for the previous two decades and more been producing seminal case studies of the impact of the Reformation in particular localities and regions, and also behind colleagues working on the nineteenth century who had published on the churches in various localities, towns, and cities (in particular London).[15] And the research into religion in eighteenth-century localities which did exist was overwhelmingly focused on the study of the clergy, the services and functions they provided, and institutional and organizational structures, without giving us much sense of lay religion and lay piety, although in part this was because of the nature of the surviving source material where, in particular for the Church of England, institutional records predominated, and were bound to give a clergy's eye perspective.

Even more tellingly, perhaps, in 1980 religious concerns were seldom incorporated into the wider political and social studies of the period, which makes Thompson's inclusion of religion in his seminal work of social history stand out, although it was a rather backhanded compliment since his view of Methodism was that it went against the progressive story he was wanting to tell, and was, for him, a chillingly

(1962) 289–95; A. Whiteman, "The Church of England, 1542–1837," in *VCH Wiltshire* 3 (1956) 28–56.

13. A. Warne, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century Devon* (Newton Abbott: Daid & Charles, 1969); D. McClatchey, *Oxfordshire Clergy, 1777–1869: A Study of the Established Church and the Role of its Clergy in Local Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960).

14. W. M. Marshall, "The Administration of the Dioceses of Hereford and Oxford, 1660–1760," PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1978. This has recently been published as *Church Life in Hereford and Oxford: A Study of Two Sees, 1660–1760* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2009).

15. For the earlier period, see A. L. Rowe, *Tudor Cornwall: Portrait of a Society* (London: Capo, 1941); P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500–1640* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1977); and for the nineteenth century, see H. McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1974).

repressive force. Instead, religion was seen by political, social, economic, and intellectual historians as a discrete entity, viewed almost as of antiquarian interest only, with no real purchase on the wider history of the age, and so could be safely left to denominational insiders. Moreover, in overviews of the period, religion was either hardly mentioned, or was relegated to a separate chapter, often tagged on to the end of the volume almost as an afterthought which readers and students could study as an add-on, if they so wished, but only after they had covered the really important topics of mainstream political and social history.[16]

This neglect in 1980 by mainstream historians of religious topics could be explained by two separate but interrelated factors. First, the overarching model of the century was one of secularization (and even historians of religion tended to subscribe to this),[17] where religion and the churches played an increasingly marginal role in political, social, cultural, economic, and intellectual life, and thus those who studied religion were studying a topic which was apparently losing force—hardly a shrewd thing when entering the job market. Second, the Church of England (by far and away the dominant religious body, to which even in the 1790s perhaps over 90 percent of the population at least nominally belonged) was, despite the efforts of Norman Sykes, still often seen as lethargic, if not corrupt, and distanced from the bulk of its parishioners, or at best just worldly and lacking any "real" sense of religion.[18] Here, in most of the overviews of the period, Parson Woodforde's "Diary" was usually cited as evidence of the model of the this-worldly cleric, and reference was frequently made to the fact that the only matter that Woodforde seemed to be interested in recording was what he had to eat (which is in fact a gross misrepresentation of the unabridged source, and misjudges the nature of the text).[19] As late as 1982, a final examination paper in the School of Modern History at the University of Oxford asked

16. Textbooks written on the eighteenth century in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s are indicative in this regard: see J. H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950); Dorothy Marshall, *English People in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longmans, 1956).

17. See A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel, and Social Change, 1740–1914* (London: Longman, 1976).

18. Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) 184.

19. For the full version, see *The Diary of a Country Parson*, ed. James Beresford, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924–1931).

candidates whether they agreed that the eighteenth-century Church was "a servile appendage of a semi-pagan aristocracy,"[20] a slight variant of R. H. Tawney's view (first articulated in 1926 in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*). I answered that question and have in some ways been trying to respond to it ever since.

The eighteenth century was, after all, "the Age of Reason," and home to the Enlightenment, which for most historians working before the early 1980s was seen as a distinctly secularizing force, although ironically Roy Porter, who elsewhere, and in his *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (published in 2000 in the United States and in 2001 in the United Kingdom), celebrated its secular nature, had, as early as 1981, in one of his brilliant synoptic essays, argued that, in England at least, piety and reason went hand in hand, and that the English enlightenment worked *with* rather than *against* religion.[21] The secularizing model of eighteenth-century society raised some complications (which were seldom thought through) for those interested in topics such as the rise of Methodism and the Evangelical revival. How should they be fitted into the supposedly increasingly secular period? One answer was that Methodism (and Evangelicalism more broadly) was a countercultural movement, reacting against the dominant secularizing forces of the day. But within this there was some debate about to what extent Methodism was in essence a reactionary and backward-looking movement, representing a kind of last gasp of religious fervor, or a sort of religious death rattle before secularization kicked in, or was it more of a forward-looking force, anticipating movements such as Romanticism, and forging new kinds of social and religious communities?[22]

20. The original phrase referred to bishops as "servile appendages to a semi-pagan aristocracy": R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, new ed. (London: Murray, 1948) 193.

21. Roy Porter, "The Enlightenment in England," in R. Porter and M. Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 1–18. However, in some of Porter's later and more extended considerations of the themes, he tended to see the Enlightenment as a secularizing force: R. Porter, *The Enlightenment* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990) and *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2001). See also Sheridan Gilley's pioneering article: "Christianity and the Enlightenment: An Historical Survey," *History of European Ideas* 1 (1981) 103–21.

22. For a discussion of the Wesleys and Methodism as countercultural and reactionary, see David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 11, 32, 201, and, in a different way, Thompson, *Working Class*. For the for-

So much for the state of the study of eighteenth-century religion in about 1980. What about the study of gender in the eighteenth century at around that date? In the early 1980s, gender per se was still in its gestation period as a research topic for historians (remember, this was the world before Joan Scott had published her "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" in 1986),[23] although work had, of course, been done on aspects of the history of women in the eighteenth century (but not necessarily within the feminist paradigms of "women's history"). There were some studies of royal and aristocratic women, although at that date biographies of people such as Queen Anne, and the duchesses of Marlborough and Devonshire, tended to focus on them as apart from mainstream political life (and the latter's canvassing for Whig votes in the 1784 election was seen as something of an oddity).[24] There was also work which could be fitted into a longer tradition of "women's history" by such pioneers as Ivy Pinchbeck, whose *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850*, first published in 1930, was an early exploration in what would be a highly influential model of describing the large-scale shift from a preindustrial family economy to an exploitative wage economy as a consequence of the development of capitalism, and with profound consequences for women (although historians differed over which century this happened in: was it the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, or in fact the nineteenth century?). For Pinchbeck, the transformation in women's work could be attributed to the period between 1750 and 1850 (the period of the "classic" Industrial Revolution), and the move from shared agricultural labor or domestic industry to factory work and work outside the home. In this model, then, historians have seen the changes in work patterns associated with the Industrial Revolution as having a profound effect on gender roles, replacing cottage industry with the factory system, and thereby removing women

ward-looking and "progressive" effects of the Wesleys' message, see R. F. Wearmouth's trilogy: *Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England, 1800–1850* (London: Epworth, 1937), *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Epworth, 1945), and *Some Working Class Movements of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Epworth, 1948). For the "proto-Romantic" nature of Methodism, see F. C. Gill, *The Romantic Movement and Methodism* (London: Epworth, 1937) 63–71.

23. Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91 (1986) 1053–75.

24. For a corrective, see Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1997).

from "work." Although, in common with other studies in this tradition, Pinchbeck noted the negative effects this had on women economically in the short term, she actually argued that in the long term industrialization brought women more economic and social independence, and ultimately better education. Weighing up the positive and negative effects of the Industrial Revolution for women remains a debate within women's history.

In addition, by the late 1970s, some historians of Methodism, such as Thomas Morrow in his *Early Methodist Women* (1967), had explored the new opportunities for women as preachers and class leaders, and these studies could be seen as part of a line of interest in such issues starting with Zechariah Taft's *Biographical Sketches of the lives and public ministry of various holy women*, first published in 1828 and interesting for our purposes, since Mary Fletcher was one of the "holy women" he included, and when some of the women he mentioned (such as Mary Tooth) were in fact still alive. But there was in 1980 very little on "men's history," save for a couple of articles by Randolph Trumbach on London's homosexual subculture,[25] although some feminist historians had argued that most history was in fact men's history since women were by and large ignored. There was nothing on eighteenth-century "masculinity" per se, since this, along with "femininity," was not yet seen as an "historicized" issue.

Against the rather internally driven work on religion in 1980, and the rather scanty, if not nonexistent, work on gender, the large volume of publications on industry by that date (much of it emanating from what are tellingly now defunct departments of economic history) can be explained by the fact that up until the early 1980s the eighteenth century was unquestioningly seen as the period of "the Industrial Revolution." It was this, and its concomitant developments, such as urbanization (and secularization) which, so the argument went, thrust England into the modern world, and for the onset of global modernity the English Industrial Revolution was deemed to be as crucial as, if not more crucial than, the American and especially the French Revolutions.[26] The Industrial Revolution was regarded as eighteenth-century England's

25. Randolph Trumbach, "London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behaviour and Western Culture in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Social History* 11 (1977) 1–33.

26. See the discussion in Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789–1848* (London: New English Library, 1962).

vital contribution to world history, and it put England, and indeed the world, on the road to capitalism. Historians were thus preoccupied with debating the causes of industrial takeoff: what precisely was it about England that made it the first industrial nation? Was it technological inventions, key natural resources, the existence of an entrepreneurial class, or a relative liberalization of trade, to name some of the most often cited explanations?[27] Historians were also concerned with the consequences of the Industrial Revolution (part of which was the "standard of living debate").[28] As such, the "Industrial Revolution" could be put alongside (and was often seen as the culmination of) other supposedly "modernizing" revolutions within eighteenth-century British history—some seemingly obviously related, such as "the Agricultural Revolution," and others where the connection was less clear-cut, such as "the Glorious Revolution," and where the precise relationship between that and the later economic revolutions were vague and ill-defined (with scholars positing necessary or contingent connections between constitutional democracy and the free market). In all these cases the very word *revolution* indicated a complete transformation and a break with the past, and the setting of a new paradigm. The revolutionary model in all these spheres of activity implied radical and usually sudden change.

What is interesting to note for our purposes is that alongside the Glorious, Agricultural, Industrial, and French Revolutions, other historians had discerned a religious revolution, commonly called the "Evangelical Revival," and indeed to spell out the comparison with all those other revolutions, Bernard Semmel wrote in 1973 of *The Methodist Revolution*, although long before his book of that name historians had viewed Methodism as a religious and spiritual revolution.[29] That "revolution" could be viewed in both senses of the word. The Methodist revolution—in the older meaning of the term—could be seen as going back full circle to "primitive Christianity," or conversely it could be seen as transforming the status quo. These historians (often Methodists themselves) stressed the novelty of Methodism (at least

27. R. M. Hartwell, ed., *The Causes of the Industrial Revolution in England* (London: Methuen, 1967); C. Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship, 1603–1763* (London: Longman, 1966).

28. Arthur J. Taylor, ed., *The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1975) collected together the articles written by the leading participants in the debate during the 1950s and 1960s.

29. Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1973).

within its eighteenth-century context), and social and economic historians (many of whom had probably read little Wesley and had certainly never investigated how Methodists actually behaved) found it easy to assimilate and absorb this view into the "revolutionary agenda," and their cursory reading of Weber helped locate Wesley as one of the makers of the capitalist work ethic.[30] The Methodist Revolution, as the first part of an Evangelical Revival (or Evangelical Revolution), could be seen in a number of ways—the stress on the religion of the heart, the development of field preaching, the use of lay preachers and the class meetings and the new social communities Methodism engendered (explored for instance by Wearmouth)—and these changes made it adept at adapting to, and perhaps even helping to create and shape, the new socioeconomic contexts found within Industrial society. Those two landmark projects in the history of Methodism—Townsend, Workman, and Eayres' *A New History of Methodism* (published in 1909), and Davies and Rupp's first volume in *A History of the Methodist Church of Great Britain*, published in 1965—were both able to fit Wesley and Methodism into the overriding picture of eighteenth-century change and incipient modernity, with Methodism both creating and reflecting that change. If Methodism itself shaped new social relations, it was also dependent on new contexts. W. J. Townsend, for example, noted that without the new road and communications networks, the Methodist connexion would have been impossible, and, he argued, improvements in lighting provided the necessary conditions for the evening meetings which became such a staple of the new Methodist religiosity.[31] This view of the period as one dominated by modernizing change was implicitly shared by most historians writing in

30. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (first published in 1905) where ch. 4 has a discussion of Methodism. See also Yuki Kishida, "John Wesley's Ethics and Max Weber," *Wesleyan Quarterly Review* 4 (1967) 43–58. On eighteenth-century Methodist and Wesleyan attitudes to work and property, see John Walsh, "John Wesley and the community of goods," in *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, c. 1750–c. 1950*, ed. Keith Robbins, Studies in Church History Subsidia 7 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 25–50, and Walsh, "'The Bane of Industry'? Popular Evangelicalism and Work in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Use and Abuse of Time in Church History*, ed. R. N. Swanson, Studies in Church History 37 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002) 223–41.

31. W. J. Townsend, "The Times and Conditions," in Townsend, Workman, and Eayres, *A New History of Methodism*, 2 vols. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909) 1:77–133, and "English Life and Society, and the Condition of Methodism at the Death of Wesley," 1:335–78, at 82.

the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth century, whatever their own political and religious standpoints. This interpretation owed much to Thomas Babington Macaulay's *History of England from the accession of James II* (1848), and in particular the famous third chapter which measured the social improvements in England by the early nineteenth century when compared with the situation in 1685. Townsend, for example, contrasted the period when Wesley was born, with that when he died, highlighting progress in economic, social, political, and cultural life from around 1760, which anticipated something like the modern world.[32] In a similar vein, Herbert Butterfield, writing in the Davies and Rupp volume, emphasized the changes in all aspects of eighteenth-century life as his context for the rise of Methodism, claiming that changes on all fronts after circa 1780 were like a "tidal wave."[33]

While, as I noted at the outset, the bulk of the research into the three areas of religion, gender, and industry has usually focused on one of these areas, nevertheless, within this paradigm of "revolutionary change," a number of powerful interpretations of the period have attempted to explore the interrelationships and connections between two, and even three, of the coordinates of this volume, although those interrelationships and connections have sometimes been assumed rather than actually researched, in part because of the logistical difficulties of being expert in all three fields. In some ways it was possible to make (or suppose) the seeming connections between the developments in all three of our fields of enquiry because they could all be understood within the "revolutionary paradigm." If there was an Industrial Revolution, a revolution in work practices which affected both men and women, and a revolution in religion, then it was easy enough to see them operating somehow in tandem. It has, for example, long been a commonplace to assert that the Church of England was "threatened" and "challenged" by both "the Evangelical Revival" and "the Industrial Revolution."[34] I say "assert" because in fact both these assumptions were not really based on research into the situation in any given locality. It was

32. Townsend, "English Life and Society," 342.

33. Herbert Butterfield, "England in the Eighteenth Century," in R. E. Davies and E. G. Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 1 (London: Epworth, 1965) 3–33.

34. See Gilbert, *Religion and Society*. For a similar framework, see A. Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society, 1700–1850* (London: University of London Press, 1973).

assumed, rather than necessarily proved, that the Church's stronghold was rural England, and that with its medieval parish structure it was simply overwhelmed by the new industrial towns and settlements. Both the Evangelical Revival and Industrial Revolution have often been seen as dramatically changing traditional patterns of behavior, thought, and feeling, and according to some interpretations they must be linked. For example, Wellman Warner's *The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution* (1930) argued that Methodism must be understood as an *amalgamation* of social, economic, and religious change, arguing that the "affinity of the economic and religious movements was so close that the vitality of one injected itself into the other."[35] Warner not only saw connections between the Evangelical and Industrial revolutions, he further suggested that this affected Methodist women because they were accorded a "working equality" with men that reflected a working equality among the industrial workforce, and thus the relationship between Wesleyanism and the Industrial Revolution helped women gain religious and social recognition. A more modern take on the connections between Industrialization and Evangelicalism was made by Alan Gilbert, who, in *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel, and Social Change, 1740–1914* (1976), argued that, along with urbanization, the Industrial Revolution was one of the factors which not only weakened the position of the Church of England in favor of Evangelicalism and Methodism (creating the rigid cleavage between "Church" on the one hand and "chapel" on the other), but also marked a vital stage in the secularization of English society. In his *The Making of Post-Christian Britain; A History of the Secularization of Modern Society* (1980), Gilbert talks of "the great discontinuity" caused by the Industrial Revolution.[36] So the Industrial Revolution, for Gilbert and others, becomes responsible in this model both for creating a religious alternative to the Church in the form of the Methodist revival, and ultimately for causing secularization. (But I am not sure that the potential contradiction and tensions between the two developments in Gilbert's model were fully resolved: how does the Industrial Revolution help both a religious revival *and* secularization?) Another tension within Gilbert's analysis is that he seems

35. Wellman Warner, *The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Longmans, 1930) 166.

36. A. D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society* (London: Longman, 1980) 42.

to veer between seeing the Industrial Revolution as causing unstoppable structural damage to the Church, and blaming the Church itself for its poor showing.[37] Indeed, for Gilbert, the West Midlands, which I take it is where he would locate Madeley, was one of those areas of the country where "institutional decay and clerical negligence had seriously weakened whatever hold Christianity had managed to obtain over the hearts and minds of local communities."[38]

Another influential way of connecting the themes of religion, gender, and industry was Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, first published in 1987. This book, which has been hugely influential for women's history and gender history, saw changes in the economy (specifically the development of the capitalist enterprise in business) and changes in religion (specifically the rise of Evangelicalism) as the twin crucial factors in creating a shift in ideas about gender in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in particular the emergence of a particular form of family organization among the middle class, one that stressed separate spheres for men and women, demarcating distinctions between "public" and "private." It offered an account of the economic, associational, religious, and domestic lives of middle-class families in Birmingham, Essex, and Suffolk, and argued that gender played a crucial role in structuring an emergent middle class culture, and that it was the ideology of domesticity and separate gender spheres which gave characteristic form to middle class identity.

This then was the state of play of research into religion, gender, and industry around 1980, and some of the models which attempted to see connections between them. But research over the last twenty-five years or so has challenged, or at least qualified, most of the statements I have made so far. What I want to do in what follows is to explore how some of this research has modified our understanding of eighteenth-century history as outlined above, and as such I hope to provide a vital context for the rest of this volume.

What has happened to the ways in which religion in the eighteenth century is now understood? The secularization thesis which used to be taken for granted even by historians of religion, and in which the eighteenth century was deemed to be the crucial step on the ladder, has now

37. Gilbert, *Religion and Society*.

38. Gilbert, *Post-Christian Britain*, 70.

been criticized from several directions: its start has been delayed until the nineteenth or even the twentieth century; some have argued that in England this only occurred in the 1960s (and according to Callum Brown, this can be dated precisely to 1963),[39] others have denied that it happened at all, and what was assumed to be the "inevitable" trajectory not only of Western European but of world history looks less convincing in the early twenty-first century when religion can be viewed as being at the center of world affairs.[40] On a related point, one of the most significant historiographical developments during the past twenty years has been to widen and to complicate what might be meant by "the Enlightenment." Traditional scholarship, based on a French model of "the Enlightenment," viewed it as an antireligious force and as an important marker in the birth of a secular society. More lately, scholars working on British history have argued that the Enlightenment was not necessarily antireligious at all, and the relationship between "religious" and "enlightenment" concerns is now one of the most fruitful areas of research. Jane Shaw's *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, for example, has demonstrated how a large range of commentators were able to balance "religious enthusiasm" with "reason," and her reading incorporates elements of the supernatural into an enlightenment worldview which clearly challenges older models of an enlightenment hostile to religious sensibilities.[41] Moreover, Phyllis Mack's stunning *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment* sees interesting and complex links between the religion of the heart and the ideals of the enlightenment, which transcends older models which saw religion and enlightenment as polar opposites.[42] So, if religion itself is now understood to be more central to eighteenth-century life than it was in the 1970s, then it is not surprising to note that its role in mainstream history has been reemphasized. In many ways the most overt and revisionist statement which has helped to put religion

39. Hugh Mcleod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800–2000* (London: Routledge, 2001).

40. David Nash, "Reconnecting Religion with Social and Cultural History: Secularisation's Failure as a Meta-Narrative," *Cultural and Social History* 1 (2004) 302–25.

41. Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

42. Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

back into the center stage of political and social history continues to be Jonathan Clark's highly influential *English Society, 1688–1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancient Regime* (1985, rev. ed. 2000). Clark applied the model of "the confessional state"—a term which was being used at around the same time by historians of early modern Europe, and in particular Germany, to denote the interplay of religion and state building, whereby a state had a single confession of faith to which the whole population conformed,[43] to England between the Restoration and the constitutional changes of 1828–1832. Although, as some of Clark's critics have emphasized, sections of the English population did not conform to the Church, nevertheless he is surely right to argue that the centrality of the Church's legal position had a profound impact on political and social life, given that the State, the English universities, the army and the civil service were Anglican strongholds, and in the localities clergy were often a justice of the peace and as such were responsible for the administration of local government. In this regard, perhaps a more accurate description of the Church's position is not Clark's "confessional state" but, as he himself has suggested, an Anglican hegemony,[44] which is indicative of the ways in which, although its position was contested, the Church effectively dominated and sought to marginalize those who challenged its social and political role. In similar ways, in a series of studies, David Hempton has integrated Methodism into the broader political and social history of the period.[45]

Furthermore, where traditionally the eighteenth century was seen as a nadir in the history of the Anglican Church, and a byword for lax standards and pastoral negligence, during the last twenty-five years or so there has emerged what might be called a revisionist school of historians whose detailed work, particularly on what the Church was doing at the local and diocesan level, has modified and in some cases reversed the more negative opinions of some of their predecessors.[46] Rather than

43. J. C. D. Clark, "England's Ancient Regime as a Confessional State," *Albion* 21 (1989) 450–74.

44. Clark, "Confessional State."

45. David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750–1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1984); *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion, c. 1750–1900* (London: Routledge, 1996); *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit.*

46. Contributions to this reassessment include: *The Church of England, c. 1689–c.*

dwelling on the failures and shortcomings of the established Church, they have highlighted instead its successes and strengths, and have argued that in many respects the Church was more effective than at any time since the Reformation. And, perhaps surprisingly for someone who is often seen as one of the Church's sternest critics, as late as 1787 Wesley could preach: "it must be allowed that ever since the Reformation, and particularly in the present century, the behavior of the Clergy in general is greatly altered for the better. In so much that the English and Irish Clergy are generally allowed to be not inferior to any in Europe, for piety, as well as for knowledge."[47] The Church is now seen as having been more pastorally dynamic than traditional interpretations allowed, which has raised questions about the relationship between Methodism, Evangelicalism, and "mainstream Anglicanism." Recent scholarship has emphasized the ways in which, long before Wesley's "conversion" in May 1738, Anglicanism had itself been undergoing a movement of renewal and reform. This was witnessed most obviously by the creation of the religious societies (from about 1678, first in London then elsewhere), the SPCK in 1698, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in 1701 (all of which John and Charles Wesley and the Methodists were influenced by, and drew on). It is thus possible to argue, as I have elsewhere, that the Wesleys and the Methodists can be seen as emerging from within an Anglican Church which was itself experimenting with developments in pastoral care.[48] I have also suggested

1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism, ed. J. Walsh, C. Haydon, and S. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Mark Smith, *Religion in Industrial Society: Oldham and Saddleworth, 1740–1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Judith Jago, *Aspects of the Georgian Church: Visitation Studies of the Diocese of York, 1761–1776* (Cranberry, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996); Jeremy Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform, 1660–1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and Their Diocese* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); J. Gregory and J. S. Chamberlain, eds., *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660–1800* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003); W. M. Jacob, *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Robert G. Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century: Thomas Secker and the Church of England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007).

47. *The Works of John Wesley, Sermons, III,* ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986) "On Attending the Church Service," 470. This sermon is a defense of the efficacy of the Church, even when clergy might be deemed unworthy.

48. See my "'In the Church I will live and die': John Wesley, the Church of England and Methodism," in William Gibson and Robert Ingram, eds., *Religion and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 147–78; and "Charles Wesley

that that Methodist "innovations" can be seen within a long tradition of providing spiritual extras and add-ons to the normal pastoral provision, rather than as something intended to rival or contradict it. The Wesleys' insistence that Methodist meetings should not be scheduled to clash with Church services is an obvious point, but what we need to know more about is what went on in the local setting.

Other work has examined in painstaking detail the relations between different religious denominations on the ground, particularly after the Toleration Act of 1689. Keith Snell and Paul Ell in *Rival Jerusalems* (2000), though ostensibly on Victorian religion, have provided a model (gleaned from religious censuses) of the fragile and often short-lived nature of dissenting and nonconformist meetings in the eighteenth century.[49] Their model is not one of hard-and-fast divides but one where dissenting meetings could fail as much as they could rise, and that moreover membership between them and that of the Church was far more porous and permeable than is sometimes supposed from imposing Victorian denominational models and practices back on to the eighteenth century. To complicate what used to be seen as a sharp divide between the Church and nonconformity, some social historians of religion have pointed to the fluidity with which parishioners moved between religious groups.[50] The vicar of St. Alphege's, Canterbury, reported in 1786 that "many go to the Cathedral in the morning, to the Presbyterian meeting in the afternoon, and to the Methodist meeting at night."[51] We need to work through what this might mean for people's allegiance to the Church, to dissent, and to Methodism. This statement is also a reminder that since 1980, we have begun to uncover the religious views of the laity, although there is much still to do here. William Jacob's study of lay piety (1996) was a landmark project,[52] as was in some ways the publication of the diary of the Sussex shopkeeper Thomas Turner

and the Eighteenth Century," in *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature, and Legacy*, ed. Kenneth G. C. Newport and Ted A. Campbell (Peterborough: Epworth, 2007) 18–39.

49. K. D. M. Snell and Paul S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

50. See Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 6, 14, 45, 77.

51. Quoted in Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation and Reform*, 273.

52. See footnote 50.

(1984), which gave a vivid portrayal of how religion and the Church were central to his life.[53]

All this has greatly nuanced our understanding of eighteenth-century religion since about 1980. Yet it still strikes me that all this new work has not really yet made much of an impact on social historians in particular, and there is still the paradox that while many recent studies have emphasized the pastoral diligence of the eighteenth-century Church, few writing outside what might be deemed "Church history" are aware of it. In this respect, Carolyn Steedman's *Master and Servant: Love and Labor in the English Industrial Age* (2007) was groundbreaking and was arguably the first major study by a leading social historian to take seriously the revisionist approaches to the eighteenth-century Church, where the master of the title and the hero of the book is a late eighteenth-century Church of England cleric, whose charitable attitude to his unmarried pregnant servant, and then her daughter, makes him almost a model of the clerical professional. It will be interesting to see how far Steedman's book is to be a pattern for future social history.

How has our understanding of the Industrial Revolution fared? Downplaying the "revolutionary" character of industrial change for the eighteenth century, research on the Industrial Revolution since 1980 has instead stressed the persistence of "traditional" work practices well into the nineteenth century. A number of historians have argued that the social and economic developments of the time were less transformative than was once thought and that, in most regards, these changes were accommodated within long-established forms of organization and behavior. Despite undoubted advances in industry (and agriculture) and a marked population growth—which were, it is now often maintained, more *evolutionary* than *revolutionary* in character—the qualitative changes relating to quantitative growth, it is contended, happened in the nineteenth rather than in the eighteenth century.[54] But if much of the emphasis on industrialization proper now lies in the nineteenth century, the long lead-in of population growth, commercial development, and

53. *The Diary of Thomas Turner, 1754–1765*, ed. David Vaisey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

54. Roderick Floud and Donald McCloskey, eds. *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); N. F. C. Crafts, *British Economic Growth During the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700–1820: Industry, Innovation, and Work in Britain* (London: Fontana, 1985).

urbanization in the eighteenth century has given rise to the concept of pre- or proto-industrialization (although it must be said that the very concept is fraught with issues and depends on a Whiggish reading of developments.)[55] In general, work on the Industrial Revolution has tended to create a growing awareness of the sheer complexity of the changes taking place. In addition, some of the presumed effects of industrialization, such as the breakdown of community and the development of "anomie," have been questioned. For example, Keith Snell, this time in his *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity, and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (2006), does not "believe that industrialization between c. 1750–1870 destroyed local attachments and community." Rather, he claims that "there was often more community in the epicentres of industrialisation than there ever was in those districts before. Across the country, the Industrial Revolution coincided with strong and often heightened senses of place and belonging, as well as with an intensification of regional cultures and local pride."[56] Instead, Snell feels that it is the process of deindustrialization that has most damaged the sense of community and place. In all this, where does Madeley fit into these models? On the one hand, Madeley might be a prime example of the red heat of the Industrial Revolution, and Philip de Loutherbourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night* (painted in 1801, but looking back to the 1770s and 80s) might be taken as a representation of the revolutionary nature of industrial change in this local setting. But, of course, industrial development in the parish can be seen as evolutionary and occurring over a longer timescale. Abraham Darby's 1709 furnace is itself evidence of the longer durée.

What about work on gender since 1980? Starting from its low base, it is clear that over the last twenty-five years, gender history has made a significant impact on the writing of eighteenth-century history, although only now are we really taking seriously Joan Scott's point that gender history requires us to look at men as well as women, and that we should be doing comparative investigations (and again, this is where Phyllis Mack's book has made such a contribution not just to the history

55. L. A. Clarkson, *Proto-Industrialisation: The First Phase of Industrialisation?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985); Berg, *Age of Manufactures;* D. C. Coleman, "Proto-industrialisation: A Concept Too Many," *Economic History Review* 36 (1983) 435–48.

56. K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 499.

of religion, but to gender history by taking women and men together.) There has, of course, been a large increase of published research into eighteenth-century women, and at all sorts of social levels. Put simply, we know far more about women in the eighteenth century than we did in 1980. Edward Gregg's biography of Queen Anne,[57] which came out that year, has been followed by a number of studies of royal and aristocratic women, which have helped locate them within the wider political, social, and religious structures of the age, including a number of biographies of the Countess of Huntingdon,[58] and Elaine Chalus' *Elite Women in English Political Life* (2005) is the major text here.[59] One broad modification has been to challenge the creation of the separate spheres model for gendered behavior, and particularly in its influential reincarnation in Davidoff and Hall's *Family Fortunes*, which now looks in some ways as a continuation of an older thesis rather than a new model. Their work was indeed criticized in Amanda Vickery's spirited review article "From Golden Age to separate spheres?" in which Vickery pointed out the problems with their interpretation: there were restrictions long before the eighteenth century and, conversely, she argued that developments in the later eighteenth century opened up opportunities for women as much as confined them.[60] For our purposes, it is Hall and Davidoff's (and Vickery's) treatment of Evangelicalism that needs some comment. While they have opposing views on the effects of Evangelicalism on women's roles (Davidoff and Hall seeing it as narrowing women to the domestic sphere and Vickery as a factor which took them in to the public sphere), both interpretations are agreed that Evangelicalism was a new factor and represented a novel injection of religious ideology into thinking about gender. Davidoff and Hall, for instance, contrast "traditional" eighteenth-century views of masculinity—with its codes of "sport," "honor," and "drinking and wenching"—with the "new"

57. E. Gregg, *Queen Anne* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

58. These include Edwin Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim: A Reassessment of the Life of the Countess of Huntingdon* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995) and Boyd Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists: The Countess of Huntingdon and the Eighteenth-Century Crisis of Faith and Society* (Bishop Auckland: Durham Academic Press, 1997).

59. E. Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

60. Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres: A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *Historical Journal* 36 (1993) 383–414.

Christian manliness associated with the Evangelical Revival.[61] But in many ways this is to take Evangelical rhetoric at face value, and to exaggerate the differences between pre-Evangelical and Evangelical views on gender (and on much else). A decade ago, I pointed to the religious elements behind eighteenth-century understandings of eighteenth-century masculinity, and more recently, William Van Reyk has explored ideals of Christian manliness throughout the long eighteenth century and has concluded that there was nothing new about the Christian manliness promoted by Evangelicalism.[62]

One of the ways in which research over the last twenty years or so into religion, gender, and industry has developed in tandem is that all three topics, to a greater or lesser extent, have been sensitive to issues of region and locality, which makes this volume all the more timely. A common research agenda, particularly with religion and industry, has been to question or modify our older assumptions and generalizations by detailed examination of a locality or a place. For the Church of England, in 2003, Jeff Chamberlain and I brought together some of the findings from several of the key diocesan and parish studies that had been produced in the 1980s and 90s,[63] and it is clear that there are probably enough new studies completed since then for a further volume to be published. As we noted in that volume, one of the dangers traditionally associated with "local studies" is that they can easily become antiquarian in nature, but one of the marks of local and regional research into both religion and industry is that they have kept the big questions to the fore, using the local picture to refine, modify, or confirm the general picture, and a key strength of local or regional work is that it allows for detailed investigation of a local community. One of the fruits of this has been to note the differences that could exist in different areas. Of course, one of the major questions is how far those differences overrode elements of similarity, and there is also the issue of how far those differences are "real ones" or how far they are the product of the use of differing sources,

61. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 110.

62. Jeremy Gregory, "'Homo religious': Masculinity and Religion in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *English Masculinities, 1600–1800*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (London: Longman, 1999) 85–110; William Van Reyk, "Christian Ideals of Manliness during the Period of the Evangelical Revival, c. 1730–c. 1840," DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 2007; and Van Reyk, "Christian Ideals of Manliness in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," *Historical Journal* 52 (2009) 1053–1073.

63. *The National Church in Local Perspective*, ed. Gregory and Chamberlain.

or even the different mind-sets of the investigators. Take, for example, the case of the Church of England in Lancashire, the heartland of the Industrial Revolution, where the damp, mild weather conditions provided the ideal environment for the spinning of cotton, and thus a natural starting point for the birth of the textiles industry. During the 1980s and 1990s three studies appeared, all with rather different conclusions.[64] In particular, the differences between Mark Smith's interpretation of the fortunes of the Church in Oldham and Saddleworth (in his *Religion in Industrial Society* [1994]—a twist on Gilbert's title) and Mike Snape's investigation of Whalley (in his *The Church of England in Industrialising Society* [2003], a take on both Gilbert and Smith)—the two parishes being barely twenty miles away from each other as the crow flies—call for some comment. Was it really the case that the Church in Oldham and Saddleworth was doing so well, able to reach out to new areas of industrial growth with its chapels of ease, and by and large working with Methodism as part of a united evangelical front, when the Church in Whalley seemed to be losing out to Methodism, and seemingly increasingly detached from ordinary parishioners? While the first might present us with a fairly optimistic account of the state of the Church of England, the second is much more downbeat and pessimistic. In any case, it is not as if we need to try to iron out or ignore these differences. Although at first sight the differences between the selected localities may seem to be structural and organizational, they were also the result of human agency.

In a similar vein, research on the Industrial Revolution has developed a regional approach, such as Barrie Trinder's work on *The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire* (1973), which took a long view, from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, and work of this kind almost predated the "revisionist" views of the Industrial Revolution. Interestingly, Trinder's study did include recognition of the role of John and Mary Fletcher in the locality, which, as reviewers noted on its publication, was rare in these kinds of economic histories.[65] Some of this work was brought together in a collection of essays edited by Pat Hudson and titled *Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution*

64. Jan Albers, "Seeds of Contention: Society, Politics, and the Church of England in Lancashire, 1689–1790," PhD thesis, Yale University, 1988; Smith, *Religion in Industrial Society*; M. F. Snape, *The Church of England and Industrialising Society: The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003).

65. B. Trinder, *The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1973).

in Britain.[66] Taken together, these essays argued that industrialization in Britain (and elsewhere) occurred first and foremost within regions rather than in the nation as a whole, and that attempts to understand the "first industrial revolution" as a fundamentally important economic, social, and political process are best undertaken with the regional perspective at center stage. The volume emphasized the need to evaluate aggregate studies of "national" variables in the light of contrasting regional experiences.

Gender history, too, has developed a regional slant. Hannah Barker, in her study of businesswomen in northern towns after 1760, has recently argued for their involvement in the economic life of towns and, in particular, the manner in which they exploited and facilitated commercial development, and this forces us to reassess our understanding of both gender relations and urban culture in late Georgian England.[67] In contrast to the traditional historical consensus that the independent woman of business during this period—particularly those engaged in occupations deemed "unfeminine"—was insignificant and no more than an oddity, Barker presents businesswomen not as footnotes to the main narrative, but as central characters. She shows that factors traditionally thought to discriminate against women's commercial activity—particularly property laws and ideas about gender and respectability—did have significant impacts upon female enterprise. Yet it is also evident that women were not automatically economically or socially marginalized as a result. The woman of business might, according to Barker, be subject to various constraints, but at the same time, she could be blessed with a number of freedoms, and a degree of independence that set her apart from most other women—and many men—in late Georgian society.

Thus this volume, with its aim of exploring religion, gender, and industry in a local setting, intervenes at a pertinent juncture in the historiography. The essays that follow explore how far the lives and beliefs of the men and women of Madeley confirm, complicate, or challenge the models and approaches I have outlined here. What does Madeley tell us about religion in the eighteenth century, and in particular, what does it tell us about the relationship between the Church and Methodism?

66. P. Hudson, *Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

67. H. Barker, *The Business of Women: Female Enterprise and Urban Development in Northern England, 1760–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

What do the experiences of these Shropshire men and women tell us about gender relations, and how were they affected by the economic and industrial contexts in which they lived, worked, and worshipped?