

1: General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches - Wikipedia

2. *Unitarianism and education*. 3. *Ideals into practice: Unitarians and women* s 4. *To 'loose the female mind': Unitarians and women Part Two* 5. *The Unitarian Context*. 6. *Schooling for Unitarians*. 7. *Knowledge is Power: Gentlemen of England*. 8. *Unitarians and education for the working class: a gendered concern?* 9.

In her fiction she examined some of the the social issues of her time, particularly those associated with industrialization in midth century England, the rise of the middle class, and the status of women. Although her books do not mention Unitarians explicitly, a number of her characters express general Unitarian values or are modeled on Unitarian originals and the plots of the books teach the lessons of her particular form of Unitarian theology. Elizabeth was born in Chelsea, then a rural suburb on the western outskirts of London. Her parents, William and Elizabeth Stevenson, came from long lines of Dissenters: The Hollands were related to their fellow Unitarians, the Wedgwoods, and, through them, to the Darwins. Rejecting the idea of paid ministry, he went to Scotland and apprenticed as a "scientific" farmer, Unlike his friend James Cleghorn, Stevenson was not a success at farming. He was next a teacher and journalist in Edinburgh, ; then in London a civil servant until death, at the same time writing books and articles on agriculture, topography, and naval history. Elizabeth Stevenson gave birth to eight children, of whom only the first, John, and the last, Elizabeth, survived. John disappeared on a voyage to India around She lived just thirteen months after the birth of her daughter. She called Aunt Lumb "my more than mother. Her father remarried when she was four and raised another family in Chelsea. She visited this family but never felt close to them. Elizabeth was educated, , at a boarding school in Warwickshire, run by the Byerley sisters, great-nieces of Josiah Wedgwood. The school, which taught modern subjects in a comfortable, domestic atmosphere, attracted the daughters of a number of Unitarian families, including the niece of Harriet and James Martineau and the granddaughter of Joseph Priestley. In Elizabeth went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne to stay with her distant relatives, the family of elderly William Turner , minister of the Hanover Square congregation. William and Elizabeth had a happy marriage, based on shared interests in language and culture and a common optimistic faith. Elizabeth depended on her husband for stability, and William looked to her for her gaiety and liveliness. As Unitarians they did not believe that wives should be submissive to their husbands. Elizabeth certainly was not. William encouraged his wife to develop her own talents and to assert herself in promoting them. She did not find the path to her vocation an easy one. She and William had four children who survived: She also began to write poetry, notably "Sketches among the Poor, No. Many of the short stories that she published much later, after she had become a well-known literary figure, were written or at least begun in odd moments during the s and s. She nevertheless taught at the Unitarian charity Sunday School, visiting the homes of her pupils and thus learning about life among the poor. In Willie, the only boy in the family, died of scarlet fever. William encouraged his wife to write a long story as a way to get through her grief. The resulting novel, *Mary Barton*, , revealed the desperate poverty of the millworkers of Manchester. Rich mill owners, and her own middle class in general, were portrayed in a relatively more critical light. The book created a sensation, and sold well. Although the book was at first published anonymously, her identity quickly became known and she was forced to admit authorship. Unitarian mill owner and friend, William Rathbone Greg, wrote a harsh review. But he felt that her sympathy for the working class "too exclusive and indiscriminating. The much-loved novel, *Cranford*, , did not involve Gaskell in controversy. In it Gaskell pointed out the hypocrisy of a society which condones sexual adventures for men but condemns women for even a single slip. As the heroine was treated sympathetically by the author, the book was criticized severely. Ruth is graced by two good-hearted religious characters, Rev. Thurstan Benson and his sister Faith. They are identified as Dissenters, their values and beliefs a mixture of Unitarian values and Evangelical doctrine. The Eccleston parsonage was modeled after that of Rev. William Turner in Newcastle. Benson, of indeterminate theology, was also an indecisive character. Harriet Martineau labeled him a "nincompoop. In her Manchester novels Gaskell demanded that the wealthy owners of the mills address the ills of the industrial age. She believed their Christian charity and good-heartedness could bring about the needed social change. Many of the most effective of these pieces were tales of mystery or the

supernatural. Cranford originated as a set of stories in Household Words. The cordial business relationship between Gaskell and Dickens deteriorated over disagreements about North and South. He thought it "a difficult and dangerous subject. Dickens vented his frustration to a friend, "If I were Mr. Gaskell, O heaven how I should beat her! The two visited each other only twice, but kept in close touch through correspondence. Gaskell traveled to Haworth, where Charlotte had grown up, and to the school where Charlotte had studied and taught in Brussels and interviewed all who had known her. This led to threatened legal action. While Gaskell was in Italy, her husband and the publisher agreed to a settlement. She unhappily accepted the need for a public apology and a change in the next edition. It is a testimonial to a woman who managed, under severe handicaps, to balance obligations to her family with her imperative need to write. In her own life Gaskell was doing the same thing. Even her holidays on the continent were likely to be working ones, as she wrote short stories and travel articles to pay for them. As she began a new novel, a large advance allowed her to do something she had wanted to do for a long time, purchase a home in the south of England where she and William could live when he retired. On a visit to the new house in , she collapsed and died, leaving her last and greatest novel, *Wives and Daughters*, , not quite complete. In *Wives and Daughters* Gaskell returned to her childhood roots, depicting people of various classes in and around a town like Knutsford. In its wit and social observation *Wives and Daughters* is a worthy successor to the novels of Jane Austen. Moreover Gaskell draws more widely and delves deeper into the social scale. She portrays a changing society, in which achievement will soon count for more than social position. Most of her works have become widely available. Gaskell is no longer regarded as a minor Victorian novelist, but is esteemed as peer of William Thackeray and surpassed as a writer only by George Eliot and Charles Dickens. During her formative years Gaskell had been brought up amongst Unitarians of a Priestleyan cast. These included Turner, Robberds, and her husband. The plots of her more serious novels conform to the necessarian pattern, sometimes apparently compromising the logic of her social messages. In a crucial scene in *North and South* she depicts three people, an Anglican, a Dissenter, and an "infidel," kneeling together in mutual tolerance and reconciliation. According to scholar R. In her personal letters, however, there are many clear expressions of her religious opinions and affinities. In a letter to her daughter Marianne she wrote, "one thing I am clear and sure about is this that Jesus Christ was not equal to His father. About doctrines, she wrote to Charles Eliot Norton, "I am more and more certain we can never be certain in this world. Gaskell frequently attended Church Anglican services as well as Chapel. She enjoyed the spiritual feeling of the high church service. She believed and acted on a religion of works, "the real earnest Christianity which seeks to do as much and as extensive good as it can. Those who have should help those who have not. For her such charity began at or near home. She took her motto from Thomas Carlyle, "Do the duty that lies nearest to thee. They have been gathered and issued in print, however, in J. Gaskell, edited by A. These and some others are collected in Laura Kranzler, editor, *Gothic Tales* The contemporary critical response to Gaskell has been compiled by Angus Easson in *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Critical Heritage* A Habit of Stories More theologically sophisticated, however, is Robert K.

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7: About Unitarian Universalism: A Reading List “ Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society

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